

If you have your Bibles, grab them. Jeremiah 32 is where I'll ask you to start. We're going to be in a bunch of different texts today. So I'm going to be in one before you and then we'll flip to several others, but just for time's sake why don't you start in Jeremiah 32.

So we said last week the topic of holiness and the idea of holiness is really fertile ground for doubt. The reason that's true is the Bible is going to bear its weight on every area of your life. There is not any area of your life the Bible doesn't explicitly or implicitly set a standard that God has for you over your life. The reality is when we hear or we understand or we feel the standard of God, which by the way is moral perfection, we're always well underneath it, aren't we? It's a rare thing for us to ever hear what God has decreed, what God has commanded for our lives and have our response be, *Nailed it!* That just doesn't happen very often. If you feel that way, most of the time you are hammering into the wrong wood.

So what happens when the idea, when the topic of holiness comes up, is one of two things. Either we get this feeling we're perpetually trying to climb this mountain and never really getting to the top and oftentimes sliding back down to where we began. So that's where some of the doubt begins. Or we just don't care. *This feels impossible. Jesus isn't working for me.* And we bail. This idea of holiness becomes this really kind of fertile ground for paralyzing doubt to take root in our hearts.

So what we did last week is we just said, "Okay, if we're going to talk about holiness (and that's what we're doing in the month of July) then we can't start with you." All right? Because you're awful at it! So why we would ever start with someone who is awful at a topic is crazy. So what we have in your life and in my life is however long you've been alive, we can look at it and see an example of how not to be holy. So it's a fool's errand to start with us on this topic, because we stink at this topic.

So we said last week if we're ever going to understand holiness and if we ever have any real shot at holiness, we have to start with God. Not with us, because if you start with us, here's how it looks: Okay, here are God's commands, here are God's expectations, and here is what we will be judged by. So then, let me with determination and will conform myself to that. This is what I'm saying. That's exhausting, and by the way hasn't worked for any of us. That fuels the doubts.

What we did last week was we just said, "Okay, let's stop. Let's look at God. If we have any real shot at holiness, let's stare at God for awhile." So we said several things about God. We said God was omnipotent.

He's all-powerful. He does whatever he wants. There's not an equal force in the universe that can put its weight on God. God is all-powerful, omnipotent. He is omniscient. He is all-knowing. There is nothing he does not know. He is omnipresent. He is everywhere at once.

So this always is a strain on our brains, but you and I are inside of time. God is not inside of time. He is outside of time so tomorrow isn't something he knows about and he's looking forward to; tomorrow is actually a place he is right now. I'm not pretending I can understand that or you can understand that, but I'm telling you, he's outside of time, not inside of time. So our greatest fantasy is somehow to control time. We want the flux capacitor. We want to get the DeLorean up to 88. We want to be able to go to this date in the future. We want to go back into the past and we want to change this.

By the way, that was an illustration that had a certain age range. The younger you are, the more likely it is I just completely lost you. Maybe that's not true. But ultimately we dream about, we think about being able to go back and change something or go forward and look at this. God has no such fantasies. He has no need because he sees it all at once, being everywhere at once, simultaneously. Then we said God is not only all-powerful and not only all-present, but he's also all-knowing and omniscient.

Then we talked last week that really those three things, as spectacular as they are, there's a word that goes in front of his power, there's a word that goes in front of his presence, and there's a word that goes in front of his wisdom and knowledge that make him all the more worthy of worship, and that's the word *holy*. That God is holy in his power, he is holy in his presence, and he is holy in his wisdom and knowledge. So we defined holy as... When we talk about the holiness of God, we are talking about the majesty of God and the moral perfection of God.

So when we talk about God's holiness, we're talking about his majesty. We very quickly defined that last week as an imposing grandeur. That to look upon God is to look upon something that is massive. Awe-inspiring, but at the same time imposing. So if you've ever been to the Grand Canyon, if you've ever been to a real ocean (not a fake one, but a real one), and you've stood and you've been a part of some sort of natural order in which you have felt small and you've felt a tinge of fear...not terror; just a tinge of fear.

So the way I try to explain it is if you've ever been to the Grand Canyon and you have your toes on the edge, you've kind of looked over. That kind of queasy feeling in your gut, that kind of shudder that goes through you, that's awe. That's grandeur. That's majesty. If you've ever been to the Sears Tower or if you've ever been to the Empire State Building and you've pressed your forehead on the glass and you've looked down, that kind of shudder, that's majesty. It is, *I love this, but I'm a bit scared. If this goes bad for me, I'm probably going to die.* That's majesty.

So God in his power, in his presence, and in his knowledge is majestic. He is an imposing grandeur. But that's not all we said. We also said God in all of this is morally pure, morally perfect. We talked at length about the problems created by that. That creates a theological issue and that creates a philosophical issue. Namely, if God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and is everywhere at once, how do we explain the horrific things that occur on this planet?

So I think the illustration I used was that last Friday night my wife and I were watching the news. I don't know when that happened to me. I don't know when I crossed the stage that Friday night I'm watching the news. Apparently that's where I am now. There's a bit of mourning in me, but that's where I am. "All right, the kids are in bed. What do you want to do tonight?" "I'd like to watch the news."

So we were watching the news, and this 6-year-old little girl on her bike rode out from her alleyway and there was somebody exiting off, I believe it was 67, never even saw the girl, and didn't even have a chance to touch her brakes. The poor woman. My heart breaks for both involved honestly. Never saw the girl and ran over the girl and killed her. Here's what you have to do if God is morally perfect: If God is morally perfect and he is all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere at once, he could have stopped it, or he's not God. But for whatever reason, he didn't stop it. So how do you mesh the idea of God's moral perfection with the loss almost all of us have experienced?

Well, I have a whole other sermon I have to preach today, so I'm not going to answer that again. Podcast is up. It's all for free online, so you'll need to go listen to that. Basically, at the end of the day, we are unbelievably limited in our knowledge and insight. He is not, and we shouldn't be surprised at tragedy. The Bible is actually filled with them. So you can hear a more robust explanation of how you reconcile God's moral perfection with some of the dark things we see on earth by listening to the podcast.

Here's what I want us to do today: The thing about God's holy power, holy presence, and holy wisdom and knowledge is they're not like clubs in a golf bag. He doesn't go, "Do you know what this situation needs? Let me look. Give me the holy power. Yeah, give me the holy power. That's what this one's going to need. No, I need my holy wisdom and knowledge on this one. Give me that one. Look how that's lying. Do you know what I need?" By the way, I'm impressing myself because I don't know really anything about golf.

So here's the way to think about it: It's not like this God is kind of sometimes this and sometimes this and sometimes this. God is *always* all of these, *always*. So he is *always* all-powerful while *always* being all-knowing while *always* being ever present, and he is *always* holy in that *alwaysness*. This is our God. So on our little journey to what it looks like to be a holy, upright, morally-transformed people, we're going to spend today just watching God in his Godness. There's not another word for when all those things combine. It's just God's Godness.

I want to show you God's Godness and then I want to give you a word of warning. I'm going to make a strong case, ask a question that's the natural progression of thought, and then I'm totally going to leave you hanging. You're going to hate it. There'll be some gasps. There'll be some, *Oh come on!* And I warned you, okay? So we're going to look at God's Godness, I'm going to ask a question, I'm going to leave you hanging. That's what you have coming.

So we're going to look at God's Godness is several different locations. I want to start with God's Godness in *creation*. Now you're in Jeremiah. I'm going to read Psalm 33:4-9 and here's what it says: **"For the word of the LORD is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD. By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!"**

Now on the back side of that text, do you see the majesty? Stand in fear. Stand in awe. That's an imposing grandeur. What is causing the fear and awe, that tinge of fear with that awe? Well, God's Godness over creation. Now throughout the Bible, the authors of the Bible, being empowered and motivated by the Holy Spirit, continually bring our attention back to God's Godness in creation, which means God created all things. If we look at in either Genesis 1 or 2 or even in this text right here, how'd he do it? With the word of his mouth.

In fact, he goes a step further and says he actually breathed the stars out. How did the stars get into the heavens? God breathed. His breath. So they continually call our attention back to God's Godness in creation. I don't what you read or what you dial into, but do you know that if the earth was spinning just a few miles an hour faster or slower then life as we know it would be impossible? If the sun's temperature was different in either direction, life on this planet would be next to impossible.

Do you realize the billions and trillions of things that have to be governed in order for life to be sustained in any way? Do you know how complex just you are as an individual person? Scientists and doctors and people who look at the human body are constantly baffled at what the human body will come up with. So it's why you get statistics and bell curves, because ultimately they don't know. They're guessing based on a swatch of people. How is that possible? They get to cut open. This isn't the 1400s or 1500s. They're allowed to study the human body without any guilt and shame, without any kind of religious, "That shouldn't happen." Total freedom to explore and to watch how the human body operates.

That human body continually operates in a way where they're like, "That doesn't make any sense. That shouldn't be happening." Ask a doctor how much is mystery. Ask a doctor next time you're in how much is mystery. Now very educated, very able to guess, but there are times the body does stuff that it's just out of range. So that's just a body, one body. Not the universe! Not ecosystems and what's necessary for an ecosystem to thrive and flourish. Not how salty the ocean is. All these little things are God's Godness made visible in creation.

But that's not the only place we see God's Godness. We also see God's Godness in *providence*. When I talk about providence, what I'm talking about is the reign and rule of God over details. So I'll give you an illustration and then I want us to read this text. Several weeks ago my wife and I went to a concert on Friday night and then she was scheduled to fly out early on Saturday morning to speak at a conference in Orlando. So we got up early, got her to the airport early, dropped her off, and I headed home to take care of the kids. I get this call from Lauren. I thought she was telling me she was on the plane, "I'll call you when I land." She is just in tears. I'm not going to drop any airline's name, but you know who you are.

She did not make her flight. She checked her bag. Bag was on the plane. Bag actually got to go to Orlando. So my wife is scheduled to speak to several thousand women and is now on standby. The airline in question had overbooked all their flights to Orlando that day by at least seven people. So my wife does not travel like I do. She has no kid of status. She very quickly was like number 40 on the standby list. They were offering \$500 vouchers for people not to fly who had tickets. So I have a bit of a status, so I call. I'm just trying to get her in. Even they're telling me at the desk, "She's not making it to Orlando. We're sorry, Mr. Chandler."

So my wife is crying. I don't know how your spouse is. It's kind of crying rage where you're not really sure what to do. *Should I comfort? Should I enter? Should I not? Should I just give her space?* It's really a life-and-death kind of scenario. So she's crying, but she's angry, and so she's at the gate. The woman asks my wife, "Is everything okay?" So Lauren says, "Well, I was supposed go to this conference in Orlando. They're expecting me. I was going to speak on God being the stability of our times," which I just thought was great!

"I was going to do this talk on God being the stability of our times. I'm not going to make it now. I know I'm not going to make it. My husband just called. He said I wasn't going to make it. He's on his way up to pick me up, and I'm just heartbroken. I really felt like the Lord wanted me there." So this woman wants Lauren to give her talk to her. So Lauren starts sharing he'll be the stability of our times and sharing our story and sharing how God has been so faithful. This woman tears up and had felt abandoned by God and had felt a bit lost. That's providence! That's God revealing his love to this woman at Gate A26. (I probably just gave away the airline!) In that, God revealing his love for this woman. That's providence.

If we had an opportunity here and had longer services than we're able to have, you'd be able to come up to the mic and you'd be able to talk about times where God intervened at just the right time either through a friend or through a scenario or through a situation. Sometimes it was God not giving you something and sometimes it was God giving you something...the right word of encouragement at the right time, the right word of rebuke at the right time, not getting a certain job, getting a certain job, finding a church, not finding a certain church, and on and on and on I could go. God's providence. He shows his Godness in and over providence.

Let's look at Jeremiah 32:17-24. So to catch you up, Jeremiah is in prison. I always like to show you people who are in prison or about to die just so you'll know that following Jesus doesn't always end up with you being wealthy, healthy, and everyone loving you. Because there's a bit of that out there today, and I just want to continually point out that actually, in the Bible, it rarely, if ever, works that way. In fact, never. So here's one of those cases. Jeremiah has been saying everything God wants him to say. He has been obedient to all God has asked him to do, and he finds himself now imprisoned by his own countrymen as the Chaldeans are about to overthrow Jerusalem.

So Jeremiah said, "Repent. Turn to the Lord or the Chaldeans will burn this place to the ground." He keeps prophesying this and prophesying this. The leaders of Israel get tired of him. So they put him in prison. So here's Jeremiah. Here's faithfulness. He's now in prison, the Chaldeans are at the wall, it's almost over, and when this is all said and done Jeremiah gets to go into captivity with the people who imprisoned him and didn't heed his call to repent and see the city saved. Tough ministry.

Let's look at verse 17. **"Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you."** So we're going to keep reading, but I want to point something out. Look at the spirit inside of a man in horrific circumstances when his eyes are on God and not on his circumstances. I have no doubt maybe you've come in here a bit busted up. You are not this busted up. You are not.

I mean, your life might be on fire. You might be losing heart. This is a man who is in a far more difficult spot than you whose eyes are on God, not on himself. What's his response? "Ah, Maker of the heavens and earth! Nothing is too hard for you." What confidence in the face of what? I mean, it's over. He's going into captivity with the people who imprisoned him. So when you are a prisoner of the people who are about to be prisoners, that's a dark spot. Let's keep going.

**"You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them..."** We'll talk a bit about that next week. Not a ton, but it will be implicit in next week. **"...O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are**

open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds.

**You have shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day. You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror. And you gave them this land, which you swore to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey.**

**And they entered and took possession of it. But they did not obey your voice or walk in your law. They did nothing of all you commanded them to do. Therefore you have made all this disaster come upon them. Behold, the siege mounds have come up to the city to take it, and because of sword and famine and pestilence the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it." Listen to this. "What you spoke has come to pass, and behold, you see it."**

Now what you see happening in this text in particular is Jeremiah in his prayer praying to God and praising God for his providence over the life of Israel. When God comes to Abraham in Genesis 12, he says he's going to create a mighty nation out of him. Then in Genesis 15, he's going to tell him that mighty nation is actually going to be enslaved for 400 years, and then he's going to lead that nation into this land flowing with milk and honey. He's going to do it with signs and wonders.

His thing is, "All you have said you would do you have done. All you said you would accomplish you are accomplishing." You see God's providential hand at work in the nation of Israel. Not only that, even this part of the history of Israel is simply preparing the way for the Messiah to come. As the Jews are dispersed throughout the ancient world (it's called the Diaspora), as they're spread out across the ancient world, when Paul begins to plant churches, when he comes into a city, do you know where his first stop is? Synagogues.

What are the synagogues? They are little outposts of Jewish life and thought where he would go and he would preach the gospel, and if he were rejected there then he would go to other halls, other public venues in which to teach and preach, but he always started in the synagogues of the Diaspora. God is setting the stage for the arrival of the Messiah and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is God, and his Godness is seen in his providence. But that's not the only place where his Godness is seen.

God's Godness is also seen in *nature*. So go to Psalm 107. Now I know you might be going, *Well, didn't you already do this one?* So I want to tell you why I'm doing creation and then nature. There are certain objective evidences that demand for there to be a Creator, okay? The bulk of the scientific community

would agree that something cannot come from nothing. Now there are theories (i.e., steps of faith), nothing proven... There are steps of faith that have them thinking that maybe something can come from nothing. But in general, science has said something can't come from nothing. There can't be nothing and then all of a sudden *boom!* a cat. That can't happen, okay?

So when that happens, when you see those and intellectually you're convinced of those but you don't want to submit to an actual God, what you do then is you become a deist. A *deist* is someone who believes God started this whole thing spinning and now steps back and does not intervene in his work. So a deist would say, "Oh absolutely there's a Creator, but he is not interacting with his creation in any way. He started the machine, and now he just watches the machine."

I've never been able to really get why a God would do that. Is this entertainment for him? What exactly is this? But if you will get to the place intellectually where you'll go, *No, there has to be a Creator*, but you don't want to submit to Jesus, you don't want to submit to any type of...you want to be your own god, then you land at this camp of deism where you believe there is a God but he's an impersonal God or some impersonal force out there. But as Christians, that's not what we believe. So I want to show God's Godness not just in creation but I want to show God's Godness in and over nature. Psalm 107: This whole chapter would be great, but let's look at verse 25.

**"For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven."**

Now what you have here is actually a picture you'll see lived out in Matthew 8 with Jesus Christ. You have the picture of a storm, a massive storm. In fact, the psalmist says at the peak the boat is in the heavens, and in the troughs it's down in the depths, that the men on the deck of this ship are staggering about on the ship like drunken men who are at their wits' end. They are so paralyzed with fear in this storm that they're losing their minds.

They cry out to God, and God calms the sea and brings them into the safety of their desired haven. Now this is what we're going to see happen in the Gospels where Jesus is in the boat with the disciples and a great storm arises on the sea and it looks like all is lost, and Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves, and they obey him. God reveals his Godness in and over the natural order. So although the Creator God is the

one who set the parameters in which creation functions, he at any time can intervene and tweak whatever he wants to tweak.

He is *not* subservient to natural law! He's just not. It's what makes him God. He not only built the frame the picture is painted in, but at any given time he can open up that frame and expand it if he wants to, or he can shrink it up if he wants to. God is not dictated to by the laws of nature. He is God over them. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever present, and any time he wants to enter in and do what we would define as a *miracle*, something outside of the laws of natural law, he's able to do it because he's God, and God in his Godness is not subservient to the natural order.

Now another place (and one of my favorite places) we see God's Godness is God's Godness over the *reign and rule of man*. If you have your Bible, go to Daniel. I'm going to give you some time because that's a tough one to find. Daniel 4. While you're there I want to read you two sections out of the book of Exodus. So you go to Daniel 4. I don't know if you have a church background or how much church background you have, but if you've seen the movie *The Ten Commandments* with Charlton Heston, you'll be able to follow me.

Or if you are a little bit younger and you saw the cartoon *The Prince of Egypt*, it's that story. So Moses comes to Pharaoh at the command of God. Pharaoh...The most powerful man in the world with the most powerful army in the world, with the most advanced civilization in the world. Moses comes to Pharaoh and demands that Pharaoh let go the million-plus Jews (the nation of Israel now at this point), let them go into the land promised to them and worship their God.

In Exodus 5:2, Pharaoh answers. **"But Pharaoh said, 'Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.'"** Hardened heart! **"I don't know who this God is."** In fact, if you study it, Pharaoh believes he is God. In fact, the people in Egypt think Pharaoh is God. They think he's eternal. Here's what idolatry does to you: Idolatry almost always puts you in an untenable position. How many Pharaohs did they have? Why didn't anybody ever wake up and go, "I don't think they're eternal. This is like our third one. I don't think they're God. They keep dying"?

"Well, no, he's in the afterlife."

"He's in the afterlife?"

"Yeah, in here. Look. It's a little cat thing, and the cat's with him in eternity."

I mean, it's an untenable position.

"He's God! He's almighty. He's all-powerful."

"Well, he just died."

Pharaoh goes, "Who's the Lord that I would have to obey him? I will not let them go." Do you want to talk about stubborn and hardhearted? God begins to show his Godness over the natural order in Egypt with plagues, and he blots out the sun, turns all the water to blood. Either one of those one, I'd be like, "Get on out! Go on! We love you! Good luck! Take what you want!" But no, he actually just grows harder and harder and harder. We'll find out later in the Scriptures that the reason this is occurring is so God might show his Godness over man's power and ability.

So Exodus 12:30-31: **"And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead."** This is the Passover. This is the firstborn in every family in Egypt killed by the angel of death. **"Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, 'Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said.'"**

Then we know even after this, Pharaoh's heart is still hard, still angry, and he pursues them. Then how does that end? With Egypt's mighty army and Pharaoh himself being wiped out. This is God's Godness over the reign and rule of man. That man at his pinnacle, man at his best is no match for the power and might of God. We love this idea, don't we, of invincibility and unsinkability and unconquerable things we do? We love it. I mean, we're drawn to it. We say that stuff over and over and over again despite the fact that all we have in history is the fact that it simply is not true.

Now let me read you another one of these. Then I'll give you some historic examples. Go to Daniel 4. Again, Nebuchadnezzar basically rules the world at this time...the most advanced civilization; largest army literally rules the known world. Daniel 4, starting in verse 28, says, **"All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, and the king answered and said..."** So he's referring to himself in the third person, which I already have a problem with. I think that kind of reveals some arrogance.

If I'm like, "Well, Matt Chandler says that..." there's an issue there. So he's already talking to himself, "The king said..." Well, okay, it's just you up there, bro. Now **"...and the king answered and said, 'Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my**

**majesty?"** So, "Am I not king? Have I not done all this? Have I not built all of this as a house for my glory and as a place for my majesty?" Let's just watch here. Verse 31:

**"While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, 'O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.' Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws."**

I mean, you have kind of a *Beauty and the Beast* thing going there. Did you pick up on that? So you have King Nebuchadnezzar reigning and ruling the known world, who looks out on his kingdom and he takes all the credit for that kingdom and what has occurred in that kingdom. He's talking to himself out loud, "What a home I've built for my majesty. What a home I've built for my glory." Before that's off his tongue, God speaks from heaven. Can you imagine how terrifying that would be?

"Whose glory? Whose majesty, bro? Okay, let me do some teaching here. I want to show you that I give reign and rule to men as I see fit. So I'm going to turn you into a kind of grotesque creature for a while until you understand I, the Lord God, am worthy alone of majesty and glory and might." Nebuchadnezzar loses his mind, becomes like the beast of the field, and starts to go eat grass. He becomes some sort of deformed creature until he does acknowledge that God alone is Lord.

So what you see consistently happening in the Bible is the Bible's claim that any authority on earth governmentally, kings and authorities and powers, are given by God to people. Now that creates another problem for us, doesn't it? This goes back to understanding that God is morally perfect in all he does. Because what do you do with dictators and rulers who ultimately are cruel and butcher their people and are responsible for genocide, because the Bible doesn't say, "I put the good kings in place"? He says he puts *all* kings in place and that kings as they act out their rulership are simply working the providential plan of God.

So how do you reconcile that? Here's what I do. Here's what I would do according to the Word of God: I'm stuck inside of time. Let me be frank. I was born in 1974. I read a lot of history. I am no expert. All I know is that God is morally perfect and that somehow outside of time, those men are working for God and that even then God is morally perfect and not evil in any way. And so just a side note. It's been a while since I've

said this, but I want to perpetually lay it before you, because some of you don't like it. Some of you are like, *Ah, it's a copout*. Some of you want to shake your fist at the heavens, but I want to kind of explain it.

Everyone in this room regardless of their belief is going to bring glory to God. It's the purpose for which you exist. Some will bring glory to God by being trophies of God's grace. Some of you are going to bring glory to God by rebelling against God and receiving God's just judgment on your life. So even the most hardened man who wants to shake his fist at the heavens is simply bringing glory to God's justice. So everyone brings glory to God. Even kings and rulers who rule in an evil, wicked way are accomplishing in God's providence the purposes of God.

So to again throw one out there I think you can clearly see is Rome, as brutal as they were, brought about some really spectacular things on earth, some real common graces. They built roads. They established peace. They created law and rule where that part of the world had not experienced that. Now you have the stage set perfectly with the Diaspora, with the dispersion of the Jews all over the ancient world. Then Rome comes along and builds safe roads and establishes law and brings about a peace the ancient world had not known. Then the Messiah comes and the gospel spreads like a wildfire.

In fact, by AD 350, some historians (in particular Rodney Stark, who's an expert in first century history...really the first three or four centuries) would say that 52 percent of the Roman Empire believes and professes Christ is Lord, which led to Constantine's conversion. So a lot of people will tell you Constantine made Christianity, but I think Constantine hopped on the board, because as an emperor you don't get outvoted. That's not how you leave office. How do you leave office? Getting stabbed a few hundred times usually. So historically speaking, you have the spread of the gospel through the ancient world because of common graces established by wicked nations. So outside of time it'll make a lot more sense than it does for us inside.

Just two historic examples of God being sovereign and his Godness being revealed over man's ability and man's reign and rule. Napoleon had conquered Europe and was headed to Russia. He wanted a piece of Russia. "Little man syndrome" on steroids. It wasn't enough that he ruled Europe. He wanted some of Russia. So he has this huge army and as they're heading out to Russia, one of his men reminded him that man proposes but God disposes.

Napoleon dismisses him and says, "I am he who both proposes *and* disposes!" Napoleon's way of saying, "No, I'm God. I decide. Nothing will stay this army." That army is killed in the snow banks of Russia by snow. Do you know how tiny snow is? But this army, the largest army in the world, the most well-equipped army in the world marches into Russia like future armies would and died in the snow banks.

The Spanish Armada under Philip II tries to invade England. Didn't like what Elizabeth was doing over there. So he was going to go invade England. The English hold them off for just a bit, and then the Spanish Armada tries to go north and regroup. North of Ireland, a massive storm hits the armada and destroys a bulk of their ships so that they limp home. The greatest navy the world had known in that part, a bulk of it lay at the bottom of the ocean. This is God's Godness over the reign and rule of man.

Now think about in just the last ones how many moving pieces we're talking about. Think about how many moving pieces, how many different rulers. Who's being brought up to be the next ruler? How he governs every cell in your body while managing every atom in the universe, and he does it all without ever getting tired, ever getting surprised, or ever having to huddle up. He never loses anyone. Never!

I mean, he never has to go, "Hey, what happened there? Who was on that? Did we put Gabriel on that? Gabriel can't be trusted. Knock him down. He's not archangel anymore. We need to reorg." That's not how it works. He is God, and in his Godness he never loses track of anything. He is aware of every detail everywhere, and it is not exhausting at all. If God can breathe out the stars, then managing the universe is not wearying to him.

Now let me do one more and then I'm going to make a point, ask a question, and then just leave you hanging. The other place you see God's Godness made evident is you see God's Godness over *Satan and the demons*. So I like movies. I don't get to watch many movies anymore. The movies I do get to watch usually are cartoons. That's another place I am in life. Don't know how I got there. Like, "Have you seen any movies lately?"

"Yeah. I've seen *Ice Age*, and I've seen the one with the animals, *Madagascar*. I've seen those two. They were spectacular."

"Are you going to see *The Dark Knight*?"

"No idea. I would like to, but don't know if I'm going to get to do that."

So I love movies, love to go watch movies. One of my favorites is when it's a spiritual kind of movie where there's good versus evil. Have you ever noticed that the demonic and Satan are always so much more powerful than the men of God and the forces of God? It's always kind of, *Oh no, who's going to win?* You know at the end there'll be a quasi-victory. Then the movie will end with some kind of scary little deal at the end to let you know they are going to make a part two.

It's this kind of, *Who knows who's going to win the battle? Who know who's going to come out with the victory?* And that couldn't be farther from the reality of what you and I walk in. God has complete reign over Satan and the demons. You see this in multiple places. You see this in the book of Job where God allows Satan to do things but only within certain parameters. One of the ones I kind of shudder and smile at simultaneously is when Jesus says to Peter, "The devil has asked to sift you like wheat."

"Well, what'd you say? How'd you respond?"

"But don't worry, Peter, I have prayed for you."

"Wait a minute. Can you call him back? Is there a way to get back in touch with him? Can you just call him back and say no?" But for my goofiness don't lose what just happened there. Satan asked permission to sift Peter. So I don't want to make light of dark spiritual forces. They are very much a reality. In fact, 2 Corinthians calls the Devil the god of this world. They have a tremendous amount of power and influence, but the power and influence they possess is governed and managed by God in his moral perfection.

So I think a place you can clearly see this is in Paul's thorn in the flesh. "There was given to me by God an evil spirit to torment me that I might not boast in my exceedingly great revelation." So you have this scenario in which God is blessing Paul with an extreme amount of power and revelation. If you don't know your Bible well, Paul wouldn't just pray for people to get healed; he would just tell people they were healed. Paul's handkerchief and apron were healing people. He was driving out demons. He was quite a shop wrecker for the kingdom of darkness.

To keep Paul from boasting in his exceedingly great revelation, God grants permission to a demonic being to torment Paul to keep him humble and dependent upon God. God so loves Paul that he wounds him to keep him close to him rather than not wounding him and letting him run astray or begin to boast in himself or believe in his own power over the power of God. We're going to do much more work on that next week. I want to quote Spurgeon right now, but I'm doing that next week, so I just can't do it.

So you have again the battle of Armageddon in the book of Revelation. It doesn't last for days and days and days. It's not a battle where you're just kind of hoping we pull it out. You have all the enemies of God gathered in the valley. Have you read it? Jesus shows up and says, "I am." *Boom!* Over. That's the battle of Armageddon. That's how it ends. With Jesus saying two words. "I am," and then it's over. God reveals his Godness over the power of dark spiritual forces. They are subservient to God's Godness. Now with that said, I could do several more, but I'm not.

Romans 8, starting in verse 28. If you have a church background you'll know these. If you've ever struggled with anything, someone has quoted this to you. **"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew..."** Don't let that word worry you. **"...he also predestined..."** Don't let that word worry you. That means to know beforehand and to determine beforehand. That's what those two words mean. Just relax. **"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined..."** Listen to this. **"...to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."**

Now flip over very quickly to Ephesians 1. That's just a few dozen pages over to your right. We're going to start in verse 3. **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be..."** Give me that word. What was that? **"...holy and blameless before him."**

So now here's what I want you to hear: You have an all-powerful, all-knowing, ever present God who reveals his Godness over creation, over providence, over nature, over the rule and reign of man, and over the dark and demonic forces in the universe, and he has taken all of that Godness and he is putting the full weight of that Godness on declaring you and making you holy. Isn't that what we just read? There are two pieces here.

You have a piece where there's a positional type of holiness where God views you as holy, but you have an external type of holiness here in Romans 8 (which is why we read it) where it says God in his Godness is not only giving you a positional holiness but is conforming you to the image of his Son, Jesus, the perfect One. So God in his Godness is not only giving us a positional holiness where he sees us as holy, but he is also actively transforming us into more and more and more morally upright, holy people. So here's the big question...*How does he do that?* Because that's important. So how does he go about doing that? Well, that's next week. So come on! I even told you. Let's pray.

Holy Spirit, I have to believe there are those in this place who have come in tired, weary over their struggles, weary over their wrestles, weary and doubting whether or not you love them, whether or not any of this actually even works. So I pray, Father, that now in light of who you are and in light of how your Godness is supreme over all things that our confidence might grow that you really are at work and you really are at work in our mess right now and that as difficult as our situation might be, we might trust you are at work in that difficult situation.

We don't pretend to like that or be able to see that, but I pray you might give us a spirit able to trust that God in his Godness is at work even in our mess. So I pray you would stir our hearts up to worship now, that

you would stir our hearts up to gladness, that you and all the weight of your Godness is behind making us more and more and more like Jesus and granting to us a positional holiness where you see us as blameless before you. Help us, Holy Spirit. It's through your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Love you, guys.

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