



## Grace Made Visible (Part 3) – Madness

Matt Chandler – June 28, 2014

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How are you? Are you doing well? Excellent. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. Philippians, chapter 4, is where we're going to start. Then from there, I'll have you turn to one other place. I don't know that we'll be long tonight. In fact, even as I started preparing this series, I kind of had tonight as a bit of a stopgap between ideas, but I never know until actually we dive in. So let's just get going and see how it goes.

Before we get started, I do need to have a conversation with you. I need to announce some things and then from there, I need to inform you of some things. If you are a guest with us today, welcome. We're glad you are here. The Village Church is elder-governed. What I mean by that is at the top of our organizational chart underneath Jesus Christ, there is a plurality of leadership, which means there are no kings here. There's not one man who can make any decision.

We have to always in our decision-making about the church have a plurality of elders make a decision that then is rolled down, rolled back up. That's kind of how we operate. We operate that way because we believe the Word of God says that's the way you ought to operate. That is what is safest for the people of God. That is what's safest for men in power. Ultimately, that's how we function.

Not only do we function or are we governed via an elder board, but that elder board must always have a plus one majority of non-paid elders. Your campus pastors and your lead pastors are always elders at The Village Church. Then we must have at least one more than us on the board represented at any given time. We do that for financial reasons, and we do that just for accountability reasons. We do that so it becomes nearly impossible for it to become a good ol' boys club that kind of rules and reigns like it wishes.

The reason we've organized it that way, again, is we believe the Word of God would compel us in this direction, if not outright say, "This is the way you should do it." In fact, we voted several months

ago that, on top of what we have historically had a central elder board, we would begin to build out campus-specific elders (elders who are responsible at the campus level for the care of our membership).

What was happening is in a numbers spike at The Village, we looked at how many elders we had versus how many members we had. We just knew it was going to be impossible for the amount of elders we had to care for the amount of people God had brought to the church. You affirmed the bringing on of more elders who are not just central elders but campus-specific elders. Per our bylaws, I need to roll out to you a series of names of men I am laying before you as elder candidates.

Then from there, we have vetted them. Our vetting process is aggressive. Elders are easy to get, impossible to get rid of. Ultimately, we've vetted them, but maybe you know some things about these brothers we just have not found. Maybe it didn't show up in our process, but you had some dealing with them out in the business world, and they were shady as all get-out. Well, we need to know they were shady. We need to know they did something that was inconsistent with how the Bible says an elder in a church should live their life.

I'm going to give you these names today, and then you have 21 days to let us know how they are *biblically* not qualified. All right? Notice how I worded that like I needed to say it. They are *biblically* not qualified, not just that you don't like them or you get a weird vibe. None of that is going to be adequate. Your picking up on vibes won't work in this case, even if you have the gift of discernment, believe in the gift of discernment, praise God for the gift of discernment. We're going to need more than that in this case.

Let me roll out some of these names to you, and then I have another announcement and some conversation we need to have that I wish we didn't need to have, but we need to. The elders for the Flower Mound Campus (the ones I'm laying before you) are Darrell Parrish, Darell Amen, and then because we now have space (we have a plus two majority on the elder board), we're going to roll up Trevor Joy, who runs the staff here at the Flower Mound Campus and helps me, Patterson, and Miller in regard to the Flower Mound Campus, onto the elder board.

Those are the three for the Flower Mound Campus. If you know anything about these brothers that we need to know, over the next 21 days, please inform us. Email in. Now I have a whole list of men for the Denton Campus. They have already been affirmed in Denton, and yet our bylaws and policies

say all of us must have an opportunity to vet these brothers. So I want to list them out to you. You might not know any of them. You might know one of them.

Again, if you bought weed from one of these guys, we probably need to know it. It's just Denton, man. I'm just saying! I wouldn't have said that for the Flower Mound brothers, but you don't know. Here we go. I'm tired. This is what happens when I get tired...the wheels come off. Kenny Broom, Dan Neal, Luis Tovar, Jim Burke, Mike Turner, Brad Lundy, John Warren (that brother is from Portland...Portland *and* Denton), Lan Leavell, Jeremy Daniel, and Ryan Jackson.

If you are a covenant member of The Village Church, you received an email with these names, pictures. Everything from their hopes for The Village to their testimony would be on that. If you're not sure, you can go to the website, and they're all there. You as of now have 21 days to give us a reason that these men are not biblically qualified for the position.

With that said, we need to have a quick conversation. There are several ways churches can handle information, specifically churches our size. When you make moves or difficult decisions are made, you can pretend they didn't happen and just press on and just stay on with what you're doing, preaching, teaching, and doing all of that. But I think by doing that, you'll eventually discredit yourself. I don't think it's godly and right.

When hard decisions are made and moves have to be made, then you need to stand in front of the people you have covenanted with and just be honest about that and then receive whatever questions or pushbacks are going to happen because of it. All our cards are on the table. I use that phrase a lot. It's my way of saying I don't have any secrets here, no reason to be nervous or afraid.

Two Wednesdays ago, we sat down with Lee Lewis, who was the campus pastor of the Fort Worth Campus. Lee and I go back to college. I don't have a friend on this staff who I have known longer than I have known Lee Lewis. I met Lee Lewis in a class on evil and suffering in Bible college. God taught me a tremendous lesson in that class with Lee. Lee was diagnosed with Crohn's disease when he was 14, and he has suffered in and out of hospitals almost his entire life.

So when you're theologically talking about evil and suffering and you talk about it in a way that's inconsistent with people who actually have suffered, you kind of get shown out as an idiot. Lee was so helpful in that class to help me connect, hey, a theology that isn't grounded in the experience of

people tends to be wielded unfairly. If you want to talk about suffering, you had better talk about suffering in a way that's helpful for people who have actually suffered.

Lee was the one who kind of helped me put those things together. We asked Lee Lewis two Wednesdays ago to resign from his position as the Fort Worth Campus pastor. Because of how we're structured, that will also remove him from the elder board. Let me just really quickly... There was no moral issue here. There was no sin in his life. In fact, I will just stand here and say this as clearly as I can.

If you knew him and you went off to make a list of everything that was great about him, my list would far exceed yours. He is one of the godliest men I have ever been around. He loves his wife ferociously and passionately. He is an amazing father. He might just be the best biblical counselor I have ever been around in my life. He loves people where they are. In fact, the more busted up and hurting you are, the more effectively he will love you and walk with you.

I don't have a negative thing to say about Lee Lewis. If what normally happens happens and you guys want to start rumors and kind of whisper in corners, just let me kill this. He is an unbelievably godly man. So why the move then? Why the move? At the campus pastor level of a church this size, there are things that are required of you that are taxing and necessary that go beyond just your ability to love people and to counsel people one-on-one. There are teams that have to be built. There are hires that have to be made. There are things like that.

Although we had been trying to coach Lee for 18 months, one of the things we began to see is it looked like Lee was getting overwhelmed. Lee was getting exhausted. Lee was growing weary, and things weren't happening in Fort Worth that we needed to happen for his good, the campus's good, and his family's good. Because we love Lee, because we love the men and women at the Fort Worth Campus (they are us), we sat down with Lee, and we asked him to resign.

We offered him a position on the church staff. We are not just cutting him loose. That's not the way we operate. Nobody gets Jimmy Hoffa'd here. Nobody just goes, "What happened to that guy?" "Who?" That's just not going to happen. We've offered him kind of two deals. We've offered him severance if it's just going to be too hard for him to take this decision, and then we've offered him a job. We're going to take very good care of his family. We don't operate in a way that doesn't... If we're going to err, err on the side of grace.

This week we had that conversation with Lee on Wednesday. This past Wednesday, we met with the Fort Worth leadership, their deacons, elder candidates, and staff. We met with all of them, met with all of the covenant members out there. We had an extended Q&A with them, answered any questions they might have, voiced any concerns they wanted to voice.

Now what I want to do for all of our campuses is have this conversation that just says clearly it doesn't get any godlier than Lee Lewis. We asked him to resign. We didn't want to do that thing, you know, when your favorite coach resigns but everybody knows he didn't really resign. We asked for his resignation. We have that, and he will tell us in the next week or two whether or not he will stay on staff with us or whether or not he wants to move on and go somewhere else. We'll inform you when he has informed us. I wanted to be clear that decision has been made.

Lee is hurting. This was a blow. Although the reasons for us making this decision were not a surprise to him, the finality of the decision was. That's been really difficult. I wanted to take a second here, and I just want us to pray for Lee. I want us to pray for Andrea. I want us to pray for his family. This is not an easy deal. He is a godly man. He aspired to this. He is a hard-working man.

Gosh! It would have been awful but easier if he were a bum. Gosh! If he were just an idiot, that would be so much easier than this, but he is just godly. For all those things, it's just he is not a good fit for that spot. He was struggling and drowning, and we needed to serve him, and we needed to serve Fort Worth.

Can we spend some time just praying for Lee? If you know him, his wife is Andrea. They have three beautiful children. Let's just spend some time praying for Lee, asking God to minister. We have surrounded him over the last couple of weeks, surrounded his family, trying to love them, trying to serve them. Let me give us just a minute or two here to pray for Lee. Then from there, I'll close us out. I want us to look at the absurdity of the prosperity gospel tonight.

Father, I thank you for Lee Lewis, his wife Andrea. There are so many in this room, so many watching this right now, who have been loved well by Lee, served well by Lee, encouraged well by Lee. Lee has sacrificed time and energy and poured out his heart into many of us. We thank you and praise you for your work of grace in him. We thank you for how hard working he is, how diligent and careful he is.

I just pray even in this moment, Holy Spirit, that you might lavish upon Lee the peace that passes all understanding, on Andrea the peace that passes all understanding. I pray, Father, you would provide clarity on whether or not he is to stay and continue to serve and love you here at this church or whether you will move him on to what you have next for him. I thank you that you love him deeply, more than I do, more than the other elders do.

God, I just pray you would minister to him in this time. I pray you might always grant us the grace to be honest and open and cautious and careful and gentle and straight. Help us. Help Lee. I pray for the Fort Worth Campus, God. Might you continue to cover them and lead and guide them in this season of transition. You are good and gracious. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

If you have your Bibles, you're in Philippians, chapter 4. Let me start by saying this. There are five books in the middle of your Bible near the end of the Old Testament. Those five books are called the Wisdom Literature. There are two books in the Wisdom Literature that are actually the same thing, just a different side of the coin. One of the books in the Wisdom Literature is the book of Job. The book of Job is about a man who loses everything and finds out that Jesus is enough.

Then the other side of that coin is the book of Ecclesiastes. In the book of Ecclesiastes, there is a man named Solomon, who was wealthier than any of us will ever get to, *ever*. In fact, he makes Bill Gates look a little broke. Again, we use that illustration again. He finds out that despite his great wealth, his wealth can't buy him happiness, but rather joy and happiness are found beyond the sun not underneath it.

You get these two bookends that serve us all well, because what happens is if you don't have a lot of money, you can believe the lie, "If you just had more money, you'd be satisfied." If you have a lot of money, you would just go, "Oh, if it wasn't so complex having all this money, and I could not have as much." There could be a simpler way of life, and you'd be happier living a simpler life. The Wisdom Literature, and these two books in particular say, "Both of you are wrong."

The poor man who just wants more money to be happy isn't going to find his happiness there, and the rich man who wishes his life wasn't so complex won't find happiness and fullness of life in a less complex life. Now the good news when it comes to money, when it comes to stuff... Here we are in the middle of this series on generosity. Again, I always want to say don't get really nervous here. I'm not taking an offering tonight. Relax.

We don't have a building project. I'm not looking for a jet. We're good. My little '08 Honda is doing just fine. It gets me a mile away and back. It's perfect. It has a radio and air conditioning. That's all I need. If I have those, you can primer the left side of that thing. If it has sound and it has air conditioning, I'm just happy. Just happy. What we do know is regardless of where we sit in plenty or in want, the sustaining force for us all is Christ himself. We see this in the apostle Paul's writings in Philippians, chapter 4, starting in verse 10. Here's what he says.

**"I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need." Then this proof text verse: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."**

Here's what the apostle Paul is saying. "I have been broke, unable to eat or just kind of lived off ramen noodles." That's not in the text. I'm just guessing. "I have also stayed in Lydia's house, and that joint was sweet. I have walked, and I have flown private. I have had steak, and then I have had Cheetos and a soda. I have lived both ways, and here's what I can tell you. It is Christ who makes having nothing seem okay, and it is Christ who, when I have everything, keeps me grounded in him."

Regardless of the resources represented in this room, the Bible would teach this: what you need is Jesus. Man, if you're on hard times and you're like, "Brother, what I need is to pay my mortgage," then we'll get to some of that, okay? We'll get to some of that. The reason I want to talk about this, the reason I want to talk now... I'm going to start moving this series into you and your personal finances, again with no offering expected. Nobody is pledging anything at the end of this series.

The reason I want to move this to your personal finances (and I've said this already) is I think your freedom and your joy are at stake. Jesus is going to talk a ton about money while never taking up an offering. The reason he wants to talk about money is that the Bible is clear when it says if you want to know what's really going on in your heart, you want to know what's really going on in your soul, you want to know what you really value, check out how you spend.

Not how you would answer what's valuable to you, not what you would say is important to you, but what does your wallet say you value? What does your wallet say you love? What I have picked up

on over the years is when money gets taught, it gets taught oftentimes poorly...extremely, extremely, extremely poorly.

Probably the biggest mistake or the most common mistake... You really have the biggest mistake (and then you have a reactionary teaching because of that big mistake about money) is some kind of incessant, horrific prosperity gospel teaching that would basically teach... I've tried to be careful here. When I first did this, it was angry. I had quotes from guys and their pictures, and I was just going to freak out.

I thought, "Do you know what? It won't be helpful. Put that guy back in his cage. Let's just let the Word of God beat people. I don't have to do it." Here's how I'm defining a prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel is teaching that God wants or wills all believers to be physically healthy, materially wealthy, and personally happy. That's the prosperity gospel.

What men will do is they'll open up the Bible, and they'll say, "Here's what God wants for you. He wants you to be physically healthy. That's what he has for you. He wants you to be personally happy, and he wants you to be materially wealthy." That sounds awesome. Does anybody want to argue with the awesomeness of how that sounds? I'll tell you as a brother who has been sick, that sounds awesome! I'll tell you as a brother who has been broke, that sounds great.

Lauren and I got married. I was making \$12,000 a year. Now we lived in Abilene, so that's like \$640,000, but... I'm going to get so many texts from my Abilene friends this week. I'm kidding. It's a joke. I mean, I think I've said this before. One of the bigger fights early on Lauren and I had... If you drank a whole Coke by yourself, that was just the most selfish... "You drank that whole Coke? You didn't split it with me?" We were just broke, man.

The only reason we survived is the church we were at gave us what they call a "pounding," which is when they brought the food they would never eat and gave it to us. It's like 400 cans of pickled beets, stuff that had like two weeks left before you should never touch it, and it was nine years old already. That's where we were at the time. Trust me. God wants to materially bless me? Yes, please. His desire is for me to be happy? I'll take it.

This is by and large globally speaking the most popular version of Christianity there is, except...look at me...it's not Christianity. It's a false gospel. It is absurd, and it is a lie. I'm not quite sure how

anybody buys it, because this certainly has not been our experience. How many of you have been in church for longer than five years? Okay. Just look around. Look around. Okay. There are a lot of us.

Of all the people you have met in church, how many could you say, "This person is personally happy, physically healthy, and materially wealthy. They're all three things always. I mean, for all the years I've known them, this is..."? I mean, that's a joke! I don't know that I've met more than two who even in just a little season were all three of those things.

Then why not? Well, it has to be their fault, right? I mean, that's the prosperity teaching. They've done something to make themselves sick. They've done something to make themselves miserable. They have done something to rob themselves of wealth. The weight of failure lands on them. I'm going to get angry. I can feel it. Do you know that moment in the *Hulk* where he is like, "You're not going to like me"? His eyes turn. He is like... I can feel it building in me just for all of the damage this causes.

Since this is exploding... Even I'll quote a guy later (I'm not going to say his name) who is actually in Dallas. Massive. I mean, this is massive! There are massive churches, massive platforms, global pushing out. In fact, in Africa and South America and other Third World countries, this is ravaging their hopes and dreams. "If you would just do *this* or you would just believe *that* or just sow into this ministry, then your crops will grow, and you'll be able to live a life of ease, and your daughters won't get stolen and whisked off and enslaved."

I mean, these false kind of ridiculous promises are made all over the globe, and it's inconsistent with the Word of God. It's inconsistent with people's reality, and it enslaves us to fear. It castrates the gospel. People lap it up because so many of us, what we want is not God. We don't want God. We don't want to be reconciled to our Creator. Do you know what we want? We want to be personally happy. That's what we want.

We'll go, "Okay, can God make me personally happy? Because if God can make me personally happy, then I'll take God." You don't want God; you want to be personally happy. "Can God make me materially wealthy? If I give my life to Jesus, do I get to be materially wealthy?" You don't want God. You don't want Christ. You're not in awe of the glory and grandeur of God. You just want money. You're trying to treat God like some sort of divine bellhop who brings you pillows and bonbons. Nobody treats the Lion of Judah like a butler.

"Yeah, that sounds good. That sounds great. Can I be physically healthy? Because this getting older kind of stinks. Can I be physically healthy? Because this cancer is awful. Can I be physically healthy? Because these migraines...I don't know where they're coming from. How do I get rid of these? Can Jesus do that? Will he take this from me?" What you want is to be physically healthy. You don't want the Lord. You want what you think he can bring you.

How do people fall for this since it's not been our experience, and we don't even really know a lot of people, except for the false teachers who spew this crap who actually seem to operate in it? It is funny if you really study it. The only people actually getting rich off this thing are the guys who are preaching you can get rich off this thing, because you have to sow into their ministries in order to be blessed yourself. Meanwhile, we get poorer, and they get richer.

How do people fall for this? Well, first, our flesh wants it. Second, it takes something that is slightly biblically true and perverts it. The Bible is filled with promises about how God wants to bless you, about how God is for you, about how God will work on your behalf. What you do (and I think I'd be awesome at this if God would sear my conscience) is you take certain aspects of the Bible, and you just leave off the back half of the verse, or you don't look to see where the verse is fulfilled.

Let me show you some textual gymnastics here. In Genesis, chapter 12 (you can turn there if you want; I'll put it on the screen), you get the call to Abraham. The beginning of the Abrahamic covenant is what this is. Genesis 12 starting in verse 1 says this:

**"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"**

Let's play the prosperity game. Abrahamic covenant leads to the Davidic covenant, which leads to the coming of Christ. You and I have been saved by Jesus Christ and have been grafted into the people of God according to the book of Romans. If God promised Abraham that he would be materially blessed and that all of Abraham's children and descendants would be materially blessed throughout all of the earth forever, then receive your blessing from the Lord as sons and daughters of Abraham.

Now it sounds great until you look at the fulfillment of that promise as mentioned in Galatians, chapter 3. Galatians, chapter 3, starting in verse 13, says this: **"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles..."**

There's a comma there, right? Comma. If I'm a prosperity preacher, I'm putting a period there, not a comma. Period. Now in Christ the promises of blessing to Abraham now are on us. Abraham inherited property. He owns land. He was incredibly wealthy. I could take you back to an Old Testament text and show you the stunning wealth of Abraham.

If God said...*promised*...he will bless Abraham, and Abraham was blessed with all this material wealth and now Paul says in Galatians we will be blessed as Gentiles grafted in by the same blessing God gave Abraham, then all you have to do, brothers and sisters, is sow in. Then we can go to the gospel of Mark really quickly, and we could look at if you sowed in a little, you will reap a lot. Now is the part where I transition into you sowing into my ministry, and I talk about what a good investment it is.

Here's my quote from the guy in Dallas. You sow in \$10; you get back \$100. You sow in \$100; you get back \$1,000. You sow in \$1,000; you get back \$100,000. The problem with that is there was a comma in Galatians, not a period. After the comma, it says, **"...so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."**

What is our inheritance? What is our blessing that flows through the line of Abraham? It's not property. It's not cars. It's not houses and jets and boats. It's not health and wealth and happiness. It's the Holy Spirit. You get born again! That's what you get. You get reconciled with God. That's the great treasure. That's the great wealth. You get God. He is what you need. He is what you're lacking. He is what's broken inside of you. You need to be reconciled to your Creator.

Gosh! You know, even what you have, even if it's nice, you get bored with it quickly, right? Every time you have gotten a new car, even if that's a used new car, you've made the promise you're going to take better care of it than you did the one before. You have never done it. All the excitement of newness wears off pretty quickly. These are transient things. What God is accomplishing are eternal things.

Then one I'll try not to get riled up about, but if you're like, "Wait. Are you not...?" Go to 2 Corinthians, chapter 8, really quickly. This one is a bit more personal. Another game prosperity guys will play... If you're thinking, "Why would you teach us about how other guys are teaching wrongly?" I don't have an axe to grind as much as I have concern for your soul. This kind of stuff seeps in at smaller levels than what I'm unpacking right now.

There's a little insidious seed of it in each and every one of us in here, so I'm trying to show you how to be careful and how to navigate (Lord willing) that little insidious seed inside of you that would make God your butler, that would make you get frustrated when things don't go your way as though God owes you something.

Another thing that happens often is what I'll... I've been trying to think about, "Okay, how do I say this without using theological jargon maybe not everyone would understand?" There tends to be around the atoning work of Jesus Christ an over-realized eschatology. Okay. What I mean by that is people will look at the death of Christ and the teachings in the Bible of what the death of Christ has purchased for his people, and they will begin to teach all of that has been purchased and is available now.

Since Christ died on the cross and Christ has promised to give us all of these things, that means all of those things are available now. That's an over-realized eschatology when in reality, Christ has purchased a lot of things for us on the cross that we are not enjoying right now, and we will not enjoy it until all things have been made new. They're *not* all available now. Let me show you one of the places. Again, this was taught by a guy here in Dallas, a second guy than the one... Sheesh...we're like ground zero for this nonsense.

Second Corinthians, chapter 8, starting in verse 9. **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become..."** What? **"...rich."** "Let's do work! Christ became poor because he doesn't want you poor. No, he came and was poor so you might be rich. It is the desire of God through Christ that your pockets are fat. If they are not, then you need to step out in faith. Once again, sow into my ministry so you might receive what Christ has for you."

The only problem... Well, I can't say the *only* problem there. One of the major problems was actually the text we're in. Let's just go down. Gosh. Let's just go down a few verses to 2 Corinthians 8:14.

**"...your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness."**

The whole idea of Christ giving material wealth to anyone was not so they might enjoy that wealth themselves or that everyone would be wealthy but rather that, in their wealth, they might be generous to those who had not experienced wealth. We might be able to serve those who are in need. Because I watch the news and because that word *fairness* is in there, let me calm you down before I get some sort of email saying I'm a Communist.

If you want to talk about how God views money and how God views fairness, it's not socialism he thinks is fair. In fact, let me give you two verses. Let's just get through this because, again, I'm not a political man. I've joked forever I have my Guy. I have my King forever. In 1 John 3:17, it says, **"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"**

If we're talking about fairness, let me... The rich should be generous and should serve the needs of the poor. Okay. So that's established. Let me go one more on you. First Timothy 5:8 says, **"But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."**

The wealthy should live generous lives and provide for the needs of the poor, but the poor should strive diligently for economic self-sufficiency so that they don't need perpetual generosity. That's biblical fairness. The wealthy live in generosity and meet the needs of the poor, and the poor work diligently so they are not in perpetual need. Where they are in perpetual need despite their diligence, then the church comes alongside, and the wealthy come alongside.

We support, and we walk along with, and we encourage. We use the connections we have as privileged, wealthy men and women to help them and find a way, whether that be job training or whether that be job placement or helping them learn a language. We come alongside. That's biblical fairness. Biblical fairness! I'll tell you why the atonement one bothers me so badly.

When I got sick, there were two camps that both kind of got on my nerves. I'm out of town this next week, so this is a great time to say this. I had my kind of reformed brothers and sisters who were just saying, "Well, if God wills it..." You know? So here I am. It's like, "You're going to be dead in three years. Write letters to your kids." I'm trying to trust the Lord, hold myself together. I felt like I

would get patted on the head. "Yeah, if the Lord wills, he'll heal you. Hoping..." That was not helpful to me. It wasn't helpful. That one just bothered me. Don't pat my head. I'm a grown man.

The other one. This is the one where, I mean, I would just get... I'd try to be gracious, and I found myself being unable to be gracious and would just say mean things. Then later I'd be like, "Gosh! I have to write them an email and say, 'Sorry for calling you a theologically illiterate moron. Please forgive me.'" It was those people who literally would pull me aside.

This happened probably about 11 or 12 times. Very well meaning morons would pull me aside and say, "Brother, if you muster the faith to believe that Jesus will heal you, he will heal you because he paid for the sin that's in your brain right now on the cross. He conquered death on the cross, and he conquered disease on the cross. If you would put your faith in his conquering power, you will not die, brother."

I just couldn't *not* say, "Don't put that on me. Don't put that on me! I don't control this. Are you serious? So what? I just control God with my faith?" If I'm your pastor, let me tell you what you can expect from me when I come visit you in the hospital. My heart will break with you. I can promise you I've been there. I will cry with you. I'll hold your hand. I'll hang out. Maybe we can play some cards.

I'll ask and expect the Holy Spirit of God to heal you outright. I will be impatient. Not with you. I can be impatient with your doctors if you like me to flex. I like to do that kind of stuff. But I will pray expectingly for the Holy Spirit of God to heal you in that moment. I will acknowledge common grace and the good of common grace. I will thank God for chemo and radiation machines and scans and all sorts of pain meds and things that could...

I will just praise God for all of it, but I'm going to ask that the Holy Spirit push past common grace and miraculously heal you. I will be asking in expectancy that it happens right then. If it doesn't, I'm going to go home frustrated, and I'm going to drive home asking the Lord to heal you. When I get in my bed that night, I'm going to be bothered. I'm going to want to know why God didn't heal you.

The Lord will reveal his will to us in time. I'm going to hold you just like I hold me: with open hands. Because the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross did take care of disease forever, but it also took care of death. It also purchased for me a resurrected body. It also purchased for us the earth renewed and made new. I'm looking around, man, and if this is the resurrected body, I'm

disappointed. I'm going to be straight with you. If six-five and gangly is what we're going to look like forever, I'm disappointed. I'm going to be straight. I'm disappointed.

If what I've seen outside today is the new heavens and new earth that was purchased by the blood of Christ, then I'm disappointed. It's been purchased and paid for in full, but it hasn't been consummated yet. It's consummated when all things are made new. Don't put this on people. Don't put this on people! It's a weight that's too heavy to bear. Think about how awful it is to have your pastor come visit you and have him leave with you thinking, "If I can just will enough faith, I'll be healed." It's cruel. You deserve to get hit with something.

Can he heal? Yes. Should we ask for him to heal? Yes. Should we expect him to heal? Sure. Will the will of God be done? Absolutely. Should we hold people with open hands? I literally had a guy tell me I was going to die. "I mean, if that's what you believe, you're going to die." Well, here's where he is right. I am going to die. Eventually, something is going to catch me, and he can have the, "I told you so."

I kind of like that the Lord has worked the way he has worked. I can kind of smirk at that. "Hmm. Interesting." Who knows? I have a scan coming up next month. It could rage back and get me. I just have glory ahead of me, so I'll just ride that wave if it comes. This is devastating to teach this stuff. It wounds the soul, imprisons the person, creates fear and fake mustering of faith. It breaks up families, because if other people doubt you might be healed, "Let's get them away. Let's get all the doubt away from this." I couldn't get all of the doubt out of me, much less the people around me.

Then I think the big thing here is it's just a false gospel. It's not what God has for you in Christ. That's the biggest thing. It's not true. It saves no one. Now where we go from here is from a prosperity gospel since it's so prevalent and people like to swing it all the way over *here* and then they start to embrace a poverty gospel. So okay. Since there are so many words of warning in the Bible about wealth, since there are so many words of warning how dangerous it is...

I mean, it's hard for a rich man to get into heaven. In fact, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to get into heaven. If the love of money is the root of all evil, then what must be virtuous is for us to sell all we have and live hand-to-mouth. No savings. No planning. Just empty it all and live day-to-day, hand-to-mouth. That's called poverty gospel, and it is a reaction to the foolishness of the prosperity gospel.

There are those called by God to live in such ways. My family supports several missionaries. They raise funds in order to live. They literally are living hand-to-mouth to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ in places that are hard to reach. I want to make sure I say this sentence right. Since the Bible tells us our giving should be generous, sacrificial, and joyful, that must mean some of us actually need to lead money-producing lives.

In fact, the list of those in the Bible who were extremely wealthy (not just wealthy but *extremely* wealthy) is actually quite long. I'll give you just some of them. Abraham (as I've already mentioned) had tremendous land holdings possessions, including gold. That's Genesis 13:2 if you want to check that out. Joseph was elevated to a power of a major influence and had tremendous wealth given to him, the Scriptures clearly say, by God.

David knew fantastic wealth as the king of Israel as God hugely blessed his reign. That's 1 Chronicles 29. In 2 Chronicles 9:22, we see that Solomon's wealth surpassed that of all other earthly kings. In the realm, in the tax bracket, of king, nobody is broke. Solomon is wealthier than all other kings on earth. Keep going. Job was a man of ridiculous wealth, both before he lost everything or before the calamities and after the calamities. God restored all of his wealth to him.

Like Joseph, Daniel became tremendously powerful and well supported in Babylon. Joseph of Arimathea was a "rich man" (this is Matthew 27:57) who was also a disciple of Jesus Christ who got the body of Jesus and buried him in a rich man's tomb (in his own tomb cut out of the side of a mountain). The Ethiopian eunuch and the Roman centurion who came to faith (Acts 8 and 10) were both high-ranking leaders and were in all likelihood wealthy people.

Although I would adamantly oppose the prosperity gospel teaching, simultaneously I would tell you our response is not to pursue poverty. What are we to do? In fact, one of the ways I've tried to encourage you over the years is I want you to be as successful as possible. I want you at work to pursue promotions. If you can get all the way up to run that joint, run it. Just don't do it at the expense of your soul or the expense of your family.

It is a virtuous thing to work hard. It is a virtuous thing to spend your energy and time working hard for the glory of God. You don't work for your boss. You work for the Lord. Pursue it and chase it and drive it, because I know if the Lord has a hold of your heart, you're going to live open-handed lives. It's not prosperity, and it's not poverty. In fact, here's one of my favorite verses that kind of helps walk through this.

Proverbs 30:8 and 9 say: "**Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.**" The answer is definitely not the prosperity gospel, but we must not swing over to the poverty theologies that are present.

What's the right answer concerning our checkbooks? Oh, nobody uses checkbooks anymore. What's the right answer concerning our accounts? Well, we'll spend about 45 minutes on that next weekend. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these men and women, an opportunity, God, to just sit under your Word. I pray, Father, that despite the ranty nature of this sermon that you would expose in our hearts where we love stuff more than you and where we want other things and not you and where we seek to use you rather than know and love you. Will you expose those little areas in our hearts? May we be quick to confess them, quick to ask for help, quick to seek mercy, quick to repent.

Father, if we're struggling in here financially but we're diligently working hard, I pray we would be honest of our need and not too proud. Father, where we are blessed by you financially and are not marked by generosity, I pray you would press on our hearts to reconsider how we're spending the dollars you have given us, the time you have given us, the gifts you have given us. Help us. We need you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.