

# The Need for Justice

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Date: 29 March 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] Those of you familiar to seeing me at Church of the Messiah, I always bring my black book up. And you're going to need your Bibles at some point in time for this. We're going to be looking at Judges chapter 19, 20, and 21, because we're going through the book of Judges.

And let's just pray. Father, we're going to look at a very, very hard passage of Scripture. We ask that the Holy Spirit would bring your word deep into our heart, and that you would fan into flame within us a deep longing and yearning, Father, to know you and to be known by you.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. I always start my timer as well at this point in time. You know, it's really, really hard to believe that on March 14th, I think that's like 15 days ago or something like that, March 14th, I was sitting in one of my favorite coffee shops working on my sermon.

That seems like so long ago. And I think a lot of us have this sense of longing and wishing that things could go back to the way they were. And it's not just sort of like a nostalgia type of thing. We actually have a type of longing and yearning, I think, many of us. So we could just go back to the way it was. Many of us maybe wish we could just go see our friend or sit in a favorite restaurant or something like that to hug somebody.

[ 1 : 20 ] I don't know, because we're missing physical contact. But a lot of us right now have a longing to get back to before. So here's the thing which is very, very interesting is that I think that most of our longings are stopped too short.

Like it's as if a longing is a bit of a direction or an arrow that goes somewhere. And I think if you think about it, we not only do we have a bit of a longing just maybe to get back to the way things were before, but our longings are deeper than that.

They go further. Like, I don't know, I'm going to give you a couple of analogies. And it just depends a little bit, I guess, how you're wired and everything like that. But, you know, some of us, we've all had experiences where everything just seems to be right.

And at the same time that everything seems to be right, excuse me, we have a sense that there should be more, that we're on the edge of something more.

Maybe for some of you, you're by yourself, you're somewhere in Algonquin Park or some other provincial park or even in some non-provincial park, some area of wilderness. And you're in a canoe, in a canoe all by yourself.

[ 2 : 28 ] And it's early in the morning and there's the steam rising off the river. And you're just there and it's still and you can see the sunrise. And you just have this profound sense of how at one you are with everything.

And at the same time, you have this great sense. You have a sense that there must be something more. You know, maybe for some of you, it's not something like that off in nature.

It's at your favorite patio and you have your friends. And I know sometimes when you have friends, it can be not go very well. But this is one of those times when you have just your best friends.

Everything is just fantastic. The food, the drink, the day, the temperature, the ambiance, the music. And you just have this profound sense. And you almost wish that this moment could go on forever.

Or maybe for some of you, it's you're in a car, whether it's with your family or your best friends. And it's just you're together. Everything is just so wonderful.

[ 3 : 28 ] And you have this sense of just the rightness of things. And you wish and you long that it could go on forever. We're going to look today at what most scholars...

This is a text that virtually nobody ever preaches on. You virtually never have Bible studies on it either. And most scholars acknowledge that it's maybe one of the darkest parts of the Bible.

A very, very, very, very hard text. It's Judges 19, 20, and 21. And it's 103 verses. It's too long for me to read from cover to cover.

So what we're going to do is I'm going to tell part of the story. And we are going to look at a couple of parts of it just so you can see it. But you might want to have Judges 19, 20, and 21 open. And you can follow along with it as I sort of tell the story.

But it's a very, very dark text. It talks about genocide. It talks about rape. It talks about murder. Very, very dark. And sort of the way it begins in Judges 19, it's sort of a little bit like if you were to connect last Sunday's sermon with this, because we looked at the story before this.

[ 4 : 39 ] It's as if, just imagine two men in a bar. Corner in the bar. And they get talking to each other. And then one of them says, So let me tell you a story. And then I want to tell you a story about there was a Levite who went from Bethlehem to Ephraim.

And the other one says, after they tell us a story, and it's a dark and terrible story. And then the second guy said, well, that was a really interesting story. But let me tell you an even darker story. I'm going to tell you a story about a man who went from Ephraim to Bethlehem. And that's where we are with this particular story. It exactly sounds, it is exactly how it works.

In this story, there's a man who's a Levite. And you might not know much about this, but in what Christians called the Old Testament, and our Jewish friends called the Tanakh, Levites, back when there were such things, there are no longer such tribes.

Israel used to be in 12 tribes. There's a special group of people set aside for God, set aside to worship God, to help with the worship of God, and they have a special obligation, in a sense, to maintain his word, his command, and the religious ceremonies and the prayers and the sacrifices, which were important to the people.

[ 5 : 52 ] And there's this man who lives up in Ephraim, and he has a concubine. Now, here's one of the things you have to notice about the story. Just about it, nobody in this story is going to look good.

Everybody does terrible things. This Levite shouldn't have a concubine. Why? Because a concubine is sort of a half-wife. It's a person, a woman, who's both the man's slave, but also a second-class wife.

And the Bible doesn't condone that. It doesn't permit it. And he shouldn't have one. But anyway, his wife, it's not clear in the original text whether she commits adultery, cheats on him, or whether she just flies into a blind rage, or both.

But something like that happens, and she runs away from him, and she goes back to her home in Bethlehem. The Levite, four months later, decides he wants to go and get her back.

So he makes a trip down to Bethlehem to go get his concubine back. Now, this is another part of the story, which is just really weird. Let me tell you, if some man married one of my daughters, first of all, made my daughter a slave, and then married her, that wouldn't be something, I wouldn't be happy about the man, to put it very mildly.

[ 7 : 10 ] But when this Levite goes to see, to find his concubine, the concubine's dad welcomes him warmly. They spend three days eating and drinking and having a great old time.

Then the Levite wants to go home, and the dad says, no, no, stay and party a little bit longer. Same thing the next day. And then finally, on the fifth day, the Levite said, listen, I really have to be going home.

And so even though it's late in the day, and we can't travel that far, he gets off on the road. And as he's walking with his servant and his donkey and the concubine, and it's starting to get dark, he comes to what we now call Jerusalem, but used to be called Jebus.

And the servant says to him, let's go and spend the night in Jerusalem, Jebus. And the Levite says, no, I don't want to spend time with a group of people that aren't Jewish.

I want to go to a Jewish community. So let's keep going and get to Gibeah. They come to Gibeah, and they come to the square of the village, the small city, and nobody welcomes them into their house.

[ 8 : 13 ] There's no hotels or anything like that back then. And nobody welcomes them into the house. And they start to set up as if they're going to spend the night in the town square. But an old man comes and he looks at them and says, listen, you guys shouldn't spend, and there's actually a bit of an ominous part in the original text.

If you're looking at it, it's as if there's something evil about the town square. And the man wants to rescue him from that evil and says, you should come and spend the night with us. And so the Levite does, and they start to have a great old time eating and drinking, et cetera, et cetera.

And then something absolutely terrible happens. A large group of men from Gibeah come and start banging on the door, trying to break into the house. And they say, that man that's come to visit you, that Levite, we want him to come out.

We want to assault him and rape him. Now, this old man, who sounds like he's a really good man, you now start to realize that he's not actually that good a man because what he does is he shouts out through the door and says, listen, this man's a guest of mine.

You shouldn't come and rape and assault him. But how about if you take my young daughter? Instead, we're the man's concubine.

[ 9 : 34 ] And then the Levite doesn't say, no, you can't do this. I mean, really, these two men should be defending the women. They should try to sit it out. Like, why is nobody in the community trying to stop some terrible thing like this happening?

The end of the day, what happens, or the man, the Levite, sends his concubine, quickly throws her out the door, maybe when the crowd is looking for some other way to get in. And this crowd of men sexually assault her and physically assault her all night.

And in the morning, the Levite very callously opens the door and says, okay, dear, so to speak, let's keep going. And he finds that she's dead.

What he does then is even more callous. He picks her up, takes her the rest of the way to go home, and when he gets home, he cuts her into 12 pieces, 12 pieces, and connects each piece with some type of a message and gets 12 couriers to go to each of the 12 tribes of Israel so that, to say, look at, with a message of what the people in Gibeah have done.

Now, this ends up enraging the entire nation, all except Benjamin, which is the tribe that Gibeah is in. And it enrages the nation. And so they gather from all over to see what on earth they should do.

[ 10 : 55 ] And the Levite gets up and speaks. And if you go back and read it in the beginning of chapter 20, you'll see that what he does is he tells part of the truth, but he fundamentally lies about his own role in what happens.

He doesn't tell them about the fact that he actually voluntarily gave the concubine. He tells some things which are true and other things which paint him in a very good light and are fundamentally a lie.

And the result is that the entire nation is enraged. They send messages to Benjamin saying, give up the people in Gibeah who did this. And for some reason, Benjamin, who hasn't been present at this, they say, no way, we're not going to give up these guys.

We're going to defend these guys. And so war ensues. The tribes decide that they're going to invade Benjamin and try to deal with it. Now, one of the things, those of you who know me at all know that I never want to hide hard parts in the Bible from the congregation.

I'm not going to skip over something because as you're going to see for the rest of the story, there's something that happens in this story which at least at first blush doesn't make the Lord look very good. Because the fact of the matter is is that the tribes consult the Lord, that is the God, about what to do.

[ 12 : 07 ] Look at chapter 20, verse 18. The people of Israel arose and went up to Bethel and inquired of God, who shall go up first for us to fight against the people of Benjamin?

And the Lord said, Judah shall go first. So the Lord says Judah should go first. Now you'd have to look at geography as to why they, if you see how narrow some of the valleys are, et cetera, et cetera, you could figure out why this is a bit of a thing one tribe at a time.

But the bottom line is they go and attack first and Benjamin beats them. They all come back wailing and crying. And our story continues at verse 23.

And the people of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until the evening. And they inquired of the Lord, shall we again draw near to fight against our brothers, the people of Benjamin? Note what they say, our brothers.

And the Lord said, go up against them. So the people of Israel came near against the people of Benjamin a second day. And once again, they end up losing.

[ 13 : 11 ] They end up losing. And so they come and they cry before the Lord again another time. And this time, if you jump down to verse 28, and Phinehas, the son of Eliezer, son of Aaron, ministered before it, that's the shrine in those days, saying, shall we go out once more to battle

against our brothers, the people of Benjamin, or shall we cease?

And the Lord said, go up for tomorrow. I will give them into your hand. And they do. They go up. And this time, and you can read the story about how they set up an ambush, et cetera, et cetera. And this time, the army of the 11 tribes of Israel defeat the Benjaminites. But once again, this very, very awkward and telling phrase in verse 35, just skipping down once again.

And the Lord defeated Benjamin before Israel. Note what it said. And the Lord defeated Benjamin before Israel. And then note this next bit because it's very important. I'll explain it more in a moment. And the people of Israel destroyed 25,100 men of Benjamin that day. All these were men who drew the sword. Now, if you go back and you read the story from here on in, what happens is there's a bloodlust which is unleashed amongst the tribe of Israel.

[14:34] And they end up committing basically genocide. They not only destroy, it's not just that they defeat the army, they destroy the army. They kill all of the army, all but 600 men.

And they go into the villages and the cities of Benjamin and they kill everybody. They kill all the men, women, and children. It is literally a description of genocide.

And then, and this is, this is the story just gets crazier and crazier and crazier and crazier because then after the genocide is over, the people of Israel, the troops, they gather together again and they start to cry that the genocide has happened.

And if you read the story, they actually make it look as if the Lord is responsible for it, but they're the ones who actually did all of the killing. And then you discover that the stupidity and the evil gets deeper and deeper.

They'd made two very foolish vows. And one of the vows was that none of them would ever give any of their daughters to a person from Benjamin in marriage. And the second vow that you discover that they made was that anybody who didn't join them in this battle and in this fight, they were going to kill them.

[15:41] And so here they're all trying to think, how are we going to, there's only 600, only 600 men of Benjamin have survived the battle. And so they're crying about this genocide. As if they have no responsibility for it.

So they go to the 600 men of Benjamin and they come up with a brilliant plan. But it's a terribly, terribly, terribly evil plan. And the terrible, evil plan is this. They realize that there's a little tiny area of Israel where nobody from that area came to the battle.

So they come up with this plan and they go and they kill every man, woman, and child in that area except for 400 marriable or marriageable women, young women who are of the marriageable age and haven't been married.

They kill all of their family, all of their friends. They kidnap these 400 women and they give them to the men of Benjamin. In a sense, they allow the men of Benjamin to rape them.

That still leaves some 200 short. Once again, bound by these vows that they should have repented of, that were evil to begin with and they should have repented of, they come up with a brilliant plan.

[16:48] And the brilliant plan is they tell the other 200 soldiers who don't yet have a wife that there's this celebration taking place just down the road, so to speak, just down the valley and just hide and when the celebration happens, you just rush out and you kidnap the young woman that you want.

And when the men and the families come to complain we'll just basically tell them to be quiet. And so once again, remember this all started over the rape and murder of one woman.

And now we have these people murdering tens of thousands and by the end of it 600 women have been kidnapped and raped.

And the crazy thing is when they leave, and this is all terrible, and when they leave at the end of it, they think they've done a good thing. They're all pleased with themselves, and this is in the Bible.

So, it's a terrible story. It really, really, really, really is a terrible story. So, here's the first thing.

[17:56] Some of you are going to say, George, you say this is a terrible story, but you know, I've been following along and I'm familiar with this text and when I look at the text, here's the problem, George. You say it's a terrible story and that's a really good thing.

I'm really glad you said it's a terrible story because it is a terrible story, but the Bible doesn't say it's a terrible story. You're saying that because you have virtues and values different than what the Bible says.

So, George, how can you say this? Well, here's the thing. It's not the case that I said this just because I'm a good person and the Bible doesn't say that it's terrible.

I left out one verse, the very, very, very, very last verse in the story and if you turn with me to 21, 25, the very last verse in the book of Judges, it says this, it says, in those days there was no king in Israel.

I'm not going to cover that. The very last words are the ones which are very important. It says this, everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Not everyone did what was evil in his own eyes, but everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

[19:06] In other words, the text itself is telling us that what they did was wrong and that the problem is that they did all these wrong things because they were only doing what was right in their own eyes.

The Bible tells me to recognize that the things that go on in the text are terrible things. They're evil things. But, and you know, if you think about it for a second, isn't this fundamentally true?

Like, just think of the terrible, terrible things that are going on in the Middle East and in Syria and failed states which are down there and in Iraq. And in every particular case, people do what's right in their own eyes.

All the bloodshed, all of the stealing, all of the pillaging and raping, they always do what is right in their own eyes. And you just think of so many problems that we have in life all over the place.

Like, look what happens right now in the United States as they're trying to figure out what to do about this and what to do about that and there's, you know, a hold up of this and a hold up of that and denouncing of this and denouncing of that and everybody's doing what is right in their own eyes.

[20:14] Think of what just went on in Canada where the liberal government, I'm not being political about this, but they made definitely a power grab. Everybody says that, but they did what was right in their own eyes. But here's the thing.

How do we discuss these issues when we have people doing what is right in their own eyes? What we would do is we try to have a discussion about it, don't we? If you think about it, we have a discussion. And when we have a discussion, like, you know, like you just think what happened in the House of Commons, right?

Well, we want to do this and everyone says, no, that's terrible. And you have a discussion back and forward about it. And what happens is if all you have in life is doing what is right in your own eyes and all you have to do is have recourse to power and whoever can punch the other person the most or hurt or kill the other person wins.

But they don't really win. They just win because they've eliminated the opposition. But what do we do when we have two people doing what we both think, two groups doing what they both think is right in their own eyes?

What they do is they appeal, we appeal to a moral realm or order that is over both, that is good and is binding.

[21:22] That's what we do. We think, no, no, this is the principle of justice. This is the right way to do this. And the other person says this is the right way to do this. And we have a discussion about it. But in both cases, we're appealing to, in a sense, a moral realm or a moral order that's over both me and the other person and both groups or all three groups or all five groups and there's an appeal to a moral realm and moral order that we should abide by that's bigger than the individual or the party.

But this opens the door to an inconvenient truth in Canada. You see, you think about it for a second. What could that order be? Well, it can't be completely impersonal.

It can't just be something like energy. Energy, in a sense, is no different than a rock. It can't be like a rock. I mean, a rock is just a rock. It's not right or wrong. It's just completely and utterly impersonal that whatever this moral order is that we both appeal to can't be like a rock but it also can't be something like an animal because, I mean, you think about it for a second.

What do animals do? Like a lion eats the gazelle because it's hungry and it can catch it. It doesn't care if the gazelle's mother cries.

It doesn't feel guilty about it. It doesn't do any type of moral reflection. The moral order can't be like animals. But it can't also be like nature. It can't be like everything which is a very popular way of trying to understand how the world works.

[ 22 : 49 ] It can't be like everything because like, well, in everything, everything includes, well, it includes cancer. It includes COVID-19 which is no respecter of person. It includes Parkinson's and disease.

It includes lions eating gazelles. Like everything doesn't give us a moral order or a moral realm. And it can't be society because, I mean, just look at the story that we just looked at.

I mean, society made, the Israelites make this terrible decision to commit genocide amongst their brothers and then make continual ongoing terrible decisions.

And we just look at the world order and groups and nations and laws make terrible decisions. so, if you see, it has to be something that's transcendent, that's over and bigger than just us and it has to be personal.

It has to be a person because we're the ones who know about the fact that there is something called right and wrong. And if that's the case, we've opened an inconvenient truth to Canadians that there in fact might be a transcendent, a bigger objective reality to which we can appeal that fundamentally is a person at which some of you might say, George, that's a very, very clever argument, but here's the problem you have, George.

[ 24 : 14 ] It can't be the God of the Bible. I mean, you just read those parts and that the Bible itself, George, shows that the Lord is implicated in all of those stories. So, I mean, you know, maybe it's going to have to be some person or whatever that we don't entirely know, but what we can know is that because the God of the Bible is implicated in this terrible story, it can't be the God of the Bible.

And if you said that, if you're thinking that, that's a very, very, very, very, very good point. It really is. But we need to just clarify what actually happened in the story, and if you want, you can go back and read it later very, very carefully about what it says and what it doesn't say.

If you think about it for a second, remember there's no police, there's no overarching government, there's just these tribes which are all loosely linked. You have a terrible evil. I mean, we can't deny that the original thing is a terrible evil.

You can't deny that if you have a large group of men who are able with impunity within this community to barricade a house, try to break in, threaten this man and end up going ahead and raping and assaulting and murdering his wife and nobody, the concubine, and nobody does anything and if on top of that that neither, the village doesn't do anything to bring the people to justice and that in fact when they go to the larger area, if you're Americans the state or Canadians the province and in fact the province doesn't do anything at all that they in fact are either turning a blind eye or in fact are supporting in what they've done that there's a problem here.

So what exactly did the Lord do in all of this? All the Lord did in all of this is he said, yes, you should begin a military action against these people to defeat them. Now, in war, defeating them doesn't mean that you kill every person.

[ 25 : 58 ] I mean, when the Allies defeated the Nazis it didn't kill every soldier, they didn't kill every German. In fact, as we know from the Marshall Plan that they in fact afterwards the Allies invested millions and billions of dollars into the German and Japanese economy.

So in fact, the Lord did a very, very reasonable thing. He said, yes, we need to deal with this so go ahead and invade them and I will help you win. But the genocide is on the people. The bloodlust is on the people.

At no point in time in the story does the Lord okay that. In fact, at the end of it, the commentary is that the problem is they were doing what was right in their own eyes. But some of you might say, George, this doesn't help.

Like, why just Benjamin? But George, by your telling of the story, I mean the Levite has done wrong in terms of having a concubine. By your telling of the story, the dad of the concubine has done wrong by allowing his wife to go back, his daughter to go back into slavery.

The Levite incites all this violence by not telling the truth and the people perform, the people of the other tribes of Israel, they commit genocide and then actually they're very complicit in murdering another group from within their own thing and kidnapping 600.

[ 27 : 18 ] Like, George, like, this, the Lord, why did the Lord only pick Gibeah? Like, why doesn't the justice go everywhere?

Once again, that is a very, very, very, very good point. It really is. But here's the thing.

You know, because what we're saying is that you see some justice but you don't see perfect justice and that real justice has to be closer to perfection and real justice goes all the way and isn't just

limited to this one particular group.

I mean, that's a very, very, very good point about this story. But there's an unforeseen problem with your point. You see, if perfect, real justice visited this story, everyone would die.

Because if perfect, real justice visited, it would look equally at every person and then who could stand. But can you start to see the problem that your good question and observation is introduced? [ 28 : 44 ] Like, if we, in fact, long and think, because you see, one thing that the story shows us is that at the very fundamental level, each one of us has a longing, not just for itsy-bitsy pieces of justice, but for real justice.

That's what we long. That's why when we read the story, we get mad at it. We get mad at what happens. I mean, if you don't, you have another problem. You get mad at what happens to the woman. You get mad at what happens in the story time and time and time again.

It shows that we have a longing, not just for a bitten piece of justice, but for real justice, which is equal. But once we realize that we're longing for real justice, which would actually come and visit and actually touch every person equally, then the question is for you and me, if real justice visited us today, who could stand?

Now, as we all know, there's very proud, self-righteous people who think they could stand, who think their poop smells better than everybody else's, and the rest of us don't like people who are proud and self-righteous.

But some of you might say, okay, George. George, George, George, George, George. That's a Christian. You've just described a Christian. like you've just described a Christian.

[ 30 : 00 ] That's one of the reasons so many of us don't like Christians. There's so many, like, so here's the thing. I agree that there's many proud, arrogant, and foolish Christians, but actually all this conundrum, only the gospel solves it.

Really, truly, only the gospel solves it. You see, because what you've come to acknowledge is if you acknowledge that what you're really looking for is perfect justice to come and visit and touch everybody, and we acknowledge that if perfect justice came, no respecter of person that no one could stand, all you've done is agreed with something in the book of Romans which says, as my first point, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And it's a bit of a longer sermon, but you can just take it that part of God's glory is his justice. In other words, all have sinned and fall short of the justice of God.

You see, it's a central part of the gospel, and here's the other thing, that the story, there's another possibility about why it is in this case and in any case that perfect justice hasn't yet visited every single human being.

And the possibility is that maybe it has to do with God showing mercy. There's a very interesting text in 2 Peter 3, verses 8 and 9.

[ 31 : 15 ] You can check it later on. 2 Peter 3, verses 8 and 9. And Peter says this, but do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

It's talking about God being eternal outside of time. Here's the point. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Listen to that again. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, his promise of perfect justice, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

This is a very, very important text. You see, if all we had in the Bible was Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and then Joshua and Judges, these seven books, it would leave us with a problem.

But the fact of the matter is, I mean, it would leave us with riddles, problems, conundrums. It really would. But the fact of the matter is, is if you read the book of Judges, you'll see that Judges points beyond itself.

[ 32 : 30 ] If you look at the Samson story, the key verse, and one of the key parts of the Samson story is that God is beginning to deliver through Samson, and it points beyond itself. It points, in a sense, to David.

And if you read the story of David in 1 and 2 Samuel, you'll see that David can't be that justice and that deliverer that we need, that it points beyond itself. And the riddles and the conundrums and the paradoxes and the problems which the book of Judges poses to us are all pointing beyond to something that God still has to do.

You see, what you see in this story is this. My second point is you have a yearning. You have a yearning for perfect justice and mercy, for perfect goodness and love, for perfect truth and strength in some place with someone not in this world.

Remember, I began with the story of our having, you know, the canoe, the patio, and it's just so perfect. It fits, but there must be something more. And then the whole thing about the moral realm and the one has to be a person.

That has to be that more. And then for this perfect justice, the fact of the matter is that these stories reveal to us that you have a yearning for perfect justice and perfect mercy, for perfect goodness and love, for truth and strength in some place with someone not in this world.

[ 33 : 55 ] Here we go back to Peter. Peter, that part that I read to you about Peter, it happened just before he died. And we're all familiar with people dying for causes, for ideologies, for all sorts of reasons.

But what we aren't familiar with and is very unique about Peter is Peter, like the other apostles who died martyrs death, he died because of a fact that he wouldn't give up on.

Like that's very unusual and uncommon. He died for a fact that Jesus died and then the grave is empty because he rose from the dead.

He died for that fact. If he just gave up for, gave up that fact, he could have lived. See, here's the third point. Why did he not give up on that fact?

The third point, in the death of Jesus upon the cross, human yearning became fact. In the death of Jesus upon the cross, human yearning became fact.

[ 34 : 59 ] What do I mean? See, the story of Jesus is this, his sinless life, his profound teaching, his miracles. But those are all very, very, very significant.

And in the midst of them, he continually predicted something that he couldn't possibly fulfill or just manage to orchestrate. He predicted he'd die a particular death that he couldn't orchestrate, that had to be, in fact, done by imperial Roman power, which is to crucify him.

And he predicted that he would die a death upon the cross of crucifixion. And he predicted that he would be dead for three days. And he predicted that on the third day, the grave would be empty and that he would rise from the dead and he would prove it to his disciples.

And Peter is an eyewitness of that fact. And if he, in fact, did, Jesus did, predict such a death and such a resurrection, it vindicates who Jesus is.

It vindicates his message. And what is his message? His message is this. That he is, in fact, God, the Son of God. That he, in fact, is the image of...

[ 36 : 06 ] I'm going to get some... Just make it clear. If you go back and you read it, what you see is this. Every human being is made in the image of God. That's why it's only in the scriptures that you actually have a true basis for human rights.

That true basis for the dignity of woman and every different people group and every different race and ethnicity is because every human being is made in the image of God.

Every human being is made in the image of God. And Jesus is the image itself.

We are made in the image of God and the image itself comes and walks amongst us and that means that when Jesus lives his sinless life, his miracles, his teaching, what he does, it can count for every person because we are made in the image of God and he is the image in which we are made.

If something happens to him and he offers something himself, that can count for everybody. And so what do we see if we listen to the message of Jesus? We see this, that he, his sacrifice can be for all.

[ 37 : 19 ] So on the cross, Jesus who doesn't deserve death, has lived a sinless life, is in complete perfect relationship with the Father and he dies upon the cross and we know that he comes to die and what he is in a sense saying is this, you cannot stand before the perfect justice of God because I love you.

I came and sought you and as I die upon the cross, I am bearing in my person and in my body the perfect justice that if you need to deal with it will lead in your death but I don't want you to die.

So the justice that should fall upon you will fall upon me. I'm willing to take your place and I'm willing to not only take your place but offer you a trade that as I take your place, you can take my place my relationship with God.

I take upon myself the doom that perfect justice would demand of you and I offer you the destiny that is proper to me and I, you can't earn it.

It's completely, just, it's just mercy. It's just grace and I offer it to you and that's what happens in the cross.

[ 38 : 46 ] You see, on the cross, the perfect justice of God that should fall on you at the same time the perfect mercy of God says, that which you cannot survive on your own, I will provide a way by which my justice is maintained.

Justice is still justice. The mercy isn't weakening that for a moment but my mercy is perfect as well which is why I offer you this profound exchange. Isaiah puts it that the punishment that brought us peace was upon him.

By his wounds we are healed and we receive that by faith. So you see, what we can do is we can rename the longing that you have and to rename the longing that you have is this, you have a yearning to be with others at home in the garden walking with the triune God in the cool of the day naked and unashamed.

You see, in a sense, what you sort of just know is an abstraction that there must be have a longing for justice, a longing for goodness, a longing for love, a longing for mercy, a longing for truth, a longing for strength and it's not just abstractions.

what you're ultimately longing for is the source and the ground for all of those things. You're longing to be with others at home in the garden.

[ 40 : 16 ] It's the description of the Garden of Eden. Walking with the triune God in the cool of the day naked and unashamed and only by putting your faith and trust in Jesus where yearnings became fact.

Can you know that right relationship with God that begins as you put your faith and trust in Him and continues beyond the veil of this life into death and into the end of all days when a new heaven and a new earth when the garden will once again be real.

I urge you to receive it if you haven't received it. You see to understand this and to be gripped by it is to begin to live in a different story. It's to begin to live by which there is a different set of facts that you understand what is going on in your experiences and how the life works.

It begins as you think about the cross and you think about the garden and the destiny which is now in yours when you put your faith and trust in Jesus and He takes you as His own and He never lets you go and He is with you through this life every day of this life and He's with you as you enter the valley of the shadow of death and He's with you in death and onto the far side of death and into eternity and into the garden that once again will be created by God.

When this begins to grip you the story of what He's done on the cross and the destiny that you have in Jesus as this begins to grip you it gives you humility it gives you courage it gives you a heart to care for others and it gives you a confidence and joy not rooted in yourself but in Him.

[ 42 : 03 ] I urge you to consider Jesus. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father we ask for those of us who have received the Gospel that you will once again grip us with the Gospel with how mercy and justice became fact in the death and resurrection of Jesus and how those longings and yearnings that we have have been both fulfilled in His death upon the cross and that they are pointing us to this eternal destiny that we have in Him and only in Him when we put our faith and trust in Him.

And so Father grip us with this truth and if there are any here who have not yet been gripped by it Father may you help them today and put their faith and trust in Jesus. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.