

Grief

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[0 : 00] Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would fall, continue to fall upon us. We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would both humble us, but at the same time, Father, that your Holy Spirit humbles us.

May your Holy Spirit fan into flame within us a hunger for you, to know you, to be known by you, to be yours. Father, we ask for this double work of your Holy Spirit this morning, to both humble us and fan into flame a deep hunger for you.

And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. I'm getting older, so I'm allowed to be curmudgeonly, although I have to be careful I don't become too curmudgeonly.

But for a long time, even before I got older, I've had problem in churches when they applaud the praise band. Not that we've done it here, and not that we couldn't clap our hands for Jeremiah and the band, but on my holidays, I go in some churches, and they sing a real rock and praise song, and then everybody stops and claps their hands for a while, and then they sing another song, and then they all clap their hands and hoot and holler.

And I have to confess, I always feel very conflicted when I'm there. In fact, if you saw me, everybody's clapping and doing all this and clapping and doing this, and I'm just standing here like this, because I just feel, it sort of feels funny.

[1 : 34] It feels a little bit like when you watch a lot of sporting things, and after somebody's done really a good job, they say, I'm the man. I'm the man. I mean, how would it, you know, I just, I, like, we're the church.

Whoa, you know, like, listen to us sing. Whoa, I just, it feels, it just feels funny to me. You know, I know that, you know, I know it's, it's, I know that it's not the case that churches where everything is really solemn, like a lot of Anglican churches where nobody cracks a smile, like to crack a smile is to sin against the Holy Spirit.

Whoever she is, that's how a lot of Anglican churches would say, speak. And, or whoever it is, and you're allowed to crack a smile. You have to be completely and utterly serious.

And, you know, there's, you know, immaculate, whether it's a band or a choir and everything's immaculate. And, you know, it doesn't, it seems as if you don't have, I understand sometimes that people just get really excited and joyful and they want to clap, and it's, I just, I feel conflicted by it, you know, a lot of times.

And I also know that it's not the case, that it might very well be the case at that church that I visit where the band has just really pumped out something and then everybody cheers and claps, that the band is completely and utterly, it might very well be the case that the band is completely and utterly unmoved by it and they don't take the glory onto themselves.

[2 : 54] And that the solemn, somber church that would no more clap after something than, I don't know, than, you know, they would say, drop the F-bomb during the service, that the organist or the minister or the choir or the band might walk away just feeling really like, wow, did I ever do a good job?

Like internally they have, you know, externally they have the solemn face, but internally they're going, I'm the man. I'm the man. Did we ever knock that out of the park today? I'm the man. But, you know, somber on the outside.

But it, don't you, it's, I, anyway, I feel conflicted when churches applaud the band. You know, I mean, I do sort of like listening to Joyce Meyer and she makes a good point and the whole auditorium bursts into applause and I wish it would happen to me occasionally.

But I guess I just don't speak as well as Joyce Meyer. We often have supper to Joyce Meyer, by the way. So those of you who listen to CHRI know roughly when we eat supper, we go from Joyce Meyer to focus on the family.

But anyway, the Bible text here talks a little bit about glory and the dangers of glory. And maybe after we've read these next few verses in the Bible text, it'll just, you will, I will have given you the gift of being conflicted about applause in church.

[4 : 15] So let's just turn to it. And because the text begins with a sort of actually a very, very powerful insight into human glory and angelic glory and sort of what it is and how we easily misread it and misunderstand it when it's sort of going on in our own lives.

And as always, there's Bibles up at the front. If you didn't bring your own Bible, you can have it, use it during the service, take it home as a gift if you'd like. And we're looking at Revelation chapter 18. And it's back of the Bible if you're not familiar with the Bible.

And verse 1 is where we'll begin. And just to give you a bit of context, I'm not going to give you the context for all the book of Revelation as we're preaching through it. But in chapter 16, there's sort of a final cycle of judgments.

And then the book of Revelation, John sees something different. He's sort of looking at the same thing from a different perspective. And he sees sort of a pronouncement made on Babylon, the great city.

And all the way through the book of Revelation, Babylon, sometimes it's called Rome, sometimes it's called Jerusalem, sometimes it's called Egypt. But it's a consistent vision of the city organized in contempt against the living God and in rebellion against the living God.

[5 : 30] Babylon sort of becomes a symbol throughout the book of Revelation for the city and all that the city means. That means culture, it means government, it means education, it means commerce, it means just the normal way that life is organized and the city is organized in a preeminent way in contempt against the living God and in rebellion against the living God.

And in chapter 17, we see it described and we're told of its doom. And in chapter 18, we now sort of get the judgment that God makes on it and two types of responses to that judgment.

But it begins with this interesting comment on glory. Look at verse 1. After this, I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. Sort of notice that here, and it's a very easy thing for us to misread what's happening in text. Look at it again. Having great authority. I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory.

I like watching movies. I like watching superhero movies. I'm looking forward to seeing the next Captain America movie that's already come out.

[6 : 47] I haven't seen it yet. I enjoy the first Iron Man movie very much and the other ones to certain degrees. And the problem is that, not the problem, but if you've watched Iron Man movies or have watched any of the Avengers movies, I'm going to maybe get some of the details a little bit wrong because I'm not a Marvel comic geek that always remembers all the details of the made-up science and mythology, but Iron Man is, of course, a billionaire who, of course, is good-looking, who, of course, is witty, who, of course, is a genius, and, of course, he's able to invent a metal suit that allows him to fly, and it's all powered by, I think it's some type of cold fusion type of thing that's just a little small thing that goes right there in his chest, keeps him alive, and it creates enough power.

I don't know, they said an early thing about, I don't know, it could power all these cities for all these decades forever, and he doesn't need all that. It means he can fly faster than jet planes and do like this with his hands and knock walls down and tanks and people, and what guy wouldn't be able to like to do that?

I can't speak for girls, but what guy doesn't wish he could just do that and go, woof, and the power just knocks things down? So anyway, this is Iron Man, but in many ways, what happens to us when we think of glory, we think of something like Iron Man, because Iron Man has all the power in and of himself, right?

And so when we think of this angel coming down, we think a little bit of like Iron Man coming down, because you see, in our hearts of hearts, all of us like to say, I'm the man, I'm the man, because we sort of think that there's glory in us that comes out.

But every time the Bible talks about glory, and especially in the book of Revelation, it's really trying to communicate a very different image to us. Image would be something like this.

[8 : 41] I'm out maybe somewhere, you know, I'm lost in the woods or something like that. I'm with maybe my little granddaughter, Bria, five years old, and we come across, you know, like sort of an old cottage, and we're sort of going to take some shelter in there.

And for some reason, I want to go and look at something. Maybe I think I can hook something up. And I can't get any light. I don't have any matches or anything. But I notice that there's a mirror. I take the mirror down and I give it to my little five-year-old granddaughter, Bria, and I say, Bria, if you just stand here right like this, and the sunlight will come in and hit this mirror.

And if you just point it like this, the sunlight will come and hit the mirror and bounce into the spot that I want to see and get some work done and maybe it'll help us. And virtually every time in the Bible, every time in the Bible, actually it's talking about true glory.

The image we should think of is a five-year-old little girl holding a mirror that catches the sun and shines into a dark place. We should never think of Iron Man.

We should think of a little five-year-old girl holding the mirror that reflects the sunlight into the darkness. Here's the first point.

[9 : 55] There is no autonomous glory. The Bible says there is no autonomous glory. Period. All true glory of created things is a reflected glory from the living God.

There is no autonomous glory, a glory in and of ourselves, an Iron Man-type glory. There is no such glory. We might think, I'm the man, I'm the man, you know?

Jeremiah might leave after service going, I'm the man. George might leave after service going, I'm the man, you know? But there is no autonomous glory. You know, the President of the United States, the President of Russia, the Prime Minister of Canada, might go, I'm the man, I'm the man. There is no autonomous glory. All true glory of created things is a reflected glory from the living God. See, that's why it is that the Bible can talk about how the heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

The heavens declare the glory of God. The image underneath there is it's somehow or another the stars and the moon and just the sky and later on in other parts in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, in the trees and the rivers, that it's not that these things, and it's not that when we see an unbelievably beautiful sunset that we're seeing something autonomous and separate from God, but we see the created order properly turned at least for a moment to reflect the glory that ultimately comes from God.

[11 : 22] The glory to which we are called to, and we as fallen, bent human beings, at times, we reflect the glory of God because there is no autonomous glory.

All true glory of created things is a reflective glory from the living God. See, that's why Christians aren't dualists. It's why Christians aren't Buddhists. It's not, we're Hindus.

It's not that we think that the material world is an illusion. It's not that we think that the material world is a prison. It's not that we think that the material world isn't as important as soul or spirit.

It's none of those types of things. The soul is created. Angels are created. My mind is created. Trees are created. Rivers are created. Angels are created. Sheep are created. And all creative things have the power to reflect the glory of the living God.

My mind and my body can reflect the glory of the living God. That's what the Bible teaches.

[12 : 26] That's how we are to understand. And you can sort of see it a little tiny bit here in the text. It's more obvious than the original language. Look at verse one again. After this, I saw another angel coming down from heaven.

And it's because he's coming down from heaven that he has great glory. And it's because he's coming down from heaven that the earth was made bright with his glory. He's aligned with heaven. He's reflecting that glory. And as he reflects the glory, it illuminates the earth.

And the implication and the invitation is that for we who also are trying to align ourselves with God, that that glory goes and shines as well through us, through broken, ordinary people like you and me.

Now some of you might say, George, that's all, that's sort of very, that's interesting. But, George, the thing about this text, and sometimes, George, you do this, you know, you pick on something really at the beginning of the text.

And I'm almost worried sometimes, George, you'll stop preaching then so you don't have to deal with the fact that, you know, the problem in this text, George, for me, isn't the early parts, it's verse 20.

[13:36] It's verse 20 where it sounds like God is telling people to rejoice over the destruction of people. It's not that they're all clapping their hands to the choir and clapping their hands to the praise song or even that all of a sudden something weird happens to the congregation and it's like a Joyce Meyer congregation and they all clap every time you make a good point.

The problem isn't, that isn't the problem, George, the problem is that it's as if, look at verse 20, it's as if, it's as if after all the judgments are talked about that they're saying, okay, let's rejoice, rejoice, for God has given judgment against this city and that, George, that's the problem with this text and I hope you don't just say, oh, well, we're going to get up to verse 13 and I've run out of time and off you go.

Like, you have to deal with this, George. It's a very, very good thing. It's an important part of the text and so let's actually, we are going to get there but to get there we have to first see something in verse 2 because the text actually has a great consistency of talking about not only God's glory but of justice and of the appropriate way to respond to justice, the call to justice and it's all in the text which leads us to that verse.

Let's look at verse 2. The angel comes, sorry, verse 1, so the angel comes down and the angel, in verse 2, he called out with a mighty voice, fallen, fallen is Babylon the great.

She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

[15:17] In other words, it's become a place where no proper thinking human being would now want to go. No, if you were there you wouldn't turn your back on anybody.

verse 3, for all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living and immorality here is a, it's an image of the merchants and the kings just can't get enough of what a city organized in contempt against God and rebellion against God and we're going to see in a moment what that sort of entails, what it looks like and all these merchants and the kings they just can't get enough of that.

They just can't get enough of contempt of that. They can't get enough of that rebellion. They can't get enough of, as we'll see in the text, economic exploitation. They can't get enough of sorcery.

They can't get enough of having slaves. They just can't get enough of oppressing. They just can't get enough of killing innocent human life. They just can't get enough of that and that, the image of sexual immorality is, it's an image of passion as if when a couple, they just can't get, you know, enough of a person who's another man's wife or another, a woman's husband and they just can't get enough of it and that's the image behind it of the judgment not only on Babylon but of these other kings and the merchants and the sailors and the political class and the cultural class and the educational class and all of these classes that just, they can't get enough.

They can't get enough. They can't get enough of something that God ultimately is saying has fallen and that in its heart it's a haunt of demons and unclean beasts and unclean things.

[17:11] That's the image. Verse four will continue. Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share and her plagues for her sins are heaped high as heaven and God has remembered her iniquities.

Virtually every time in the Bible when it says that God has remembered you should understand that God remembers to act. That's the implication of the image. God remembers to act. When he remembers he's acting.

Verse six, pay her back as she herself has paid back others and repay her double for her deeds. Mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed. Just pause.

That's not like a double-double from Tim Hortons. It's not saying that she should get twice as much as what she's done. It's an image of full, up to the brim. When I go to Starbucks I like my coffee either black or next to black and so when they ask me how, I always say I have my coffee black because I don't want to get a coffee cup and have like an inch and a half of space between the coffee and the top.

I want them to get it right to the top. And that's the image here. Make sure that the cup is completely full. That's the image of double. Verse seven, as she glorified herself and lived in luxury so give her a like measure of torment and mourning since in her heart she says, I sit as a queen.

[18:38] No, verse seven again, she glorified herself, right? Her entire ideology, I am the man, I am the man, I am the man. That's her theme song.

Okay. And then it shows itself out in verse seven in the middle. I sit as a queen, I am no widow and mourning, grieving, I shall never see. For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine and she will be burned up with fire for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.

And this word judged here is an important word. It actually is a word that's, by pointing to this word you can get a bit of an understanding of underneath in the original language underneath a lot of the images up until here and all the way through.

It's a specifically legal image from the law courts. And so what's being presented here a little bit is an image and this might help us a little bit with understanding what's going on in the text.

Imagine for a second that there's a company that knowingly put some type of toxic substance in a whole pile of products and tens of thousands of people either died or were made severely ill.

[19 : 50] And so in our culture a class action suit was brought by these tens of thousands of people who've been damaged by this company that knowingly did the wrong thing and you go to court.

And so the image here very simply is on one hand there is the plaintiff, this company that willingly did something to cause lots of damage. And on the other side are the defendants and the defendants are the ones who've suffered underneath what the plaintiffs, what the defendants have done and the plaintiffs have gone to court about it and God is the judge.

So in this particular, the image is that Babylon is the defendant and if you go to the end of the text, go to the end of Revelation chapter 18 you'll see that the plaintiffs are the followers of Jesus and every innocent who's died as a result of Babylon's action.

We're the plaintiffs. All the innocent dead and all the followers of Jesus are the plaintiffs. Babylon is the defendant, God is the judge and Revelation 18 is God pronouncing his judgment.

Babylon is guilty, the defendants are vindicated and just as you would see in a law court if something like that was to happen today, you would see the plaintiffs cheering, that's partly a key part of the image here because it's an image of a law court.

[21 : 30] But there's something far more significant to the text to help us understand the jubilation and Andrew if you could put up the next point it's this, that God's justice is so high and so humble that when I face it and I should probably have said him, I will fall short and I will have no valid excuse or rebuttal.

God's justice is both so high and so humble that when I face it I will fall short and I will have no valid excuse or rebuttal.

Here's what I mean. A lot of people when they start to hear about the Christian faith and Christians struggle with this as well and on one level if you read through the book of Revelation and even this text it portrays the complete and utter perfect justice of God.

God is perfectly just, he's perfectly sovereign, he's perfectly good, he is the perfect creator, he is the perfect sustainer, he is the perfect end of all things, everything about God is perfect, he's in heaven, Babylon can rage against him, the dragon can rage against him, the beast can rage against him, the false prophet can rage against him, the armies can gather in Armageddon to rage against him but he is so high above them, this is all completely, this is like microbes right now being mad at us, okay, microbes in this room are angry at you and they have nothing, they're nothing, they're microbes and we're people, we don't even know they exist, not that God knows they exist, he's active in all this but God is high and so many people when they see this text and they hear about God's judgment they say, George, how on earth could me appearing before God ever be fair?

It would be a little bit, George, like all of a sudden you having to go in a week's time and you go with all the engineering students at Ottawa U and you take Calculus 2 final exam, okay, let me tell you right now if I had to take the Calculus 2 final exam with all those engineering students, the only way I wouldn't get zero is if they give you a mark for spelling your name right on the booklet, okay, if they allowed me a mark for spelling George Sinclair correctly, I could go home and say, Louise, I got 1% on that exam, 1%, but if they don't allow a mark for that, it's zero.

[24 : 00] In fact, I would look at it, I was a very, very bad student in first year university, like I was a really bad student, nobody took attendance, nothing happened, I remember it was a full year course, I went to take my economics exam, no, it was a take home exam, I got my take home exam and I think, I'm just going to be able to blow this off, I'll just look it up in the book, I'll be able to answer this, I was so far behind, I couldn't understand a single question to know where to look it up, okay, and that would be way ahead of me doing a calculus exam, so you see, a lot of people when they think of God's high justice, they think, how on earth could this ever be fair, George, look at how

perfect God is, how on earth, and so, the book of Revelation not only communicates how high God's justice is, but if you look at verse six, it's a really important verse and it's repeated in different forms all the way through this text and it's a very, very important verse and it says this, pay her back as she herself has paid back others, pay her back as she has paid back, she herself has paid back others, and so, what it's doing, this is showing the humility of God's justice, so God says, so I make this complaint to God,

I'm at the justice, the final throne of judgment, I say to God, come on God, it's like making me do calculus too with all the engineering students, okay, like that's not fair, and so God says, okay George, I'm going to accept for a moment that that's not fair, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to use George's standard of judgment to judge George, that's all I'm going to do, so George, you just stand here, I'm just going to replay a little bit about when you're driving, how you evaluate other drivers, when you're thinking of other ministers, how you evaluate other ministers, when you're thinking of people's spiritual walk, how you evaluate that, I'm just going to go through all these evaluations, I'm just going to go through your evaluations, George, we'll make a list, now we're going to replay your life, and judge you by your list, and I would fail, because I'm like every one of you, I in effect live my life like a pagan god, believing I can pass judgment on others, and I myself am immune, and separate from the judgment I pass on others from that ever being applied to me, and I don't think I'm being more evil or wicked than anyone here, God will say that to every single person, okay, I could judge you, I have every right to judge you by my high exalted standard, I'll just judge you by your standard, my wife and I at different times have joked that we wish that we'd had videotaped recordings, we were the first in our family, and the first in our circle of friends to marry, we were the first in our circle of friends to have children, and for many years we wish that we had videotaped our friends without children commenting on our child-rearing practices, so that when they had children we could play it back for them, and watch them squirm, and get red, and terribly embarrassed, and for the same parents who have this little trusting two-year-old, you know, trusting two-year-olds, and we have like a 15-year-old or a 13-year-old, and the comments, well, my child will never do this, my teenagers will, we wish we could have videotaped that, and showed it back to them when their child turned 13 or 15, once again, to watch them squirm, because the fact of the matter is is we pass judgments all the time, and don't think that we ourselves have to live under it, and so verse 6 says that what God does to Babylon is God uses

Babylon's standard of justice to judge Babylon, see, that's why in the book of Romans and the book of Revelation, the message is that God's justice is so high and is also so humble that when I face it, I will fall short and I will have no valid excuse or rebuttal.

[28 : 18] How is God going to deal with evil? How is God going to deal with people who have never heard of Jesus? I don't know. I don't know. I don't know all of the intricacies of his mercy. I don't know. I know what I know about God.

What I know with unshakable certainty is that God is just. What I know with unshakable certainty is that God is merciful, that he is good. And what I know with unshakable certainty is that if you or I, when you or I, stand before God with all of their humanity, we will not hear a single judgment made by God on any single human being, and we will not say that God was wrong and that they had, that there was any excuse that they could have used.

I have that. I believe that. The more I read the Bible, the more I am completely and utterly certain about that. I'm willing to have speculation. I'm willing to talk. But the bottom line is no one will have an excuse.

That's what the Bible teaches. Now, the question then is how do we respond when we get caught? How do we respond when we, in a sense, have to stand before God? That's one of the things that really drives the text.

[29 : 41] In our own lives, how do we respond? I mean, there's us doing wrong and nobody catches us at it. But the really interesting question in our own lives is when we get caught out doing something wrong, how actually is it that we're responding to it?

Like, for a married man getting caught watching pornography, and he gets caught by maybe his best friend or by his wife or daughter or son, how does he respond how does he respond to that? Is partly how he responds is it not that is a large part of his response grieving, mourning, because he's been caught?

is it because now he has less status or prestige? Is he grieving and worried that now they're going to put some type of control on the computer and they won't be able to watch the pornography game?

Or is he grieving because what he's done is truly wrong? And there's many, many, many, many areas in our lives where that type of question, it's a bit of a subtle question, but it's a very, very profound difference, and it's this very question which the Bible text here now presses in on, that after Babylon is judged, even by its own standards, what's the response to this?

[31 : 22] Like, how is the response working? And that's what happens from verses 9 right through to verse 19, and it's an important thing to see in the text, and it's an important thing for our own lives, in terms of how is it that God wants us to respond to having his just standard come against us, so that we realize what that just standard is, and it's sort of revealed.

How is it that God wants us to respond? Look at how it works in the text, verse 9. And the kings of the earth who committed sexual immorality, that's the image I explained earlier, and lived in luxury with Babylon, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning.

They will stand far off in fear of her torment and say, alas, alas, you great city, you mighty city Babylon, for in a single hour your judgment has come.

And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, cargo of gold and jewels, and it keeps going, and the real, if you sort of skim through them to the end of verse 13, sheep and cattle and sheep and horses and chariots and slaves, that is human souls, there's a bit of a pause, this is a profound critique of slavery.

It's a profound critique of the slave labor that still exists in many parts of the Muslim world, there's a profound critique of slavery that exists in China, an atheistic government, that still has slave labor, it is a profound critique of the sex trafficking which is a very common form of slavery in our modern world, women made virtually to live as slaves to give sexual favors to men for the money of the men who own these women as chattel, for the child labor that exists in many parts of the world, people, it's a form of slavery and this is a profound rebuke.

[33 : 28] And it's specifically designed in the text, okay, the person, he has a dog, he has a cow, he has a horse, he has an oxen, he has Joe, and it's just for the slave owner, there's no difference, the dog, the oxen, the horse, the cow, Joe, Sally, Betty, and the text says human.

Human soul, it's a profound, profound critique of the institution of slavery. And then look how it goes in verse 14, the fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again.

The merchants of these wares who gain wealth from her will stand far off in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels and with pearls, for a single, in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.

And we'll just sort of pause there. You see what they're longing in their mourning? It's as if these merchants are saying, oh, Babylon's destroyed, all the gold, remember all the gold we used to have?

I'm going to miss that gold. Oh, the great meals, all the great meals destroyed, I'm going to miss that. Oh, the slaves, all the slaves I owned, I'm going to miss it.

[34 : 57] What you see in the response to Babylon's judgment, and the text is, the implication in the text is that they recognize that the suddenness of Babylon's judgment and doom indicates that something, someone like God has been at work, and they see this, and they know this, but what characterizes their grieving is that their grieving is self-centered, that their grieving consists of hiding from God, their grieving consists of wishing that the pleasure that they had will return.

The grieving they have is that they grieve that they've lost their status and their power and their prestige, but none of them says, what was I thinking owning a slave?

What was I thinking exploiting my workers? What was I thinking using my power to force people to sell things to me really cheap that I could sell them for a huge profit?

What on earth was I thinking? Never enters their head. Here's the point. Put it up, Andrew. there is a godly grief that leads to life and a worldly grief that leads to death.

There is a godly grief that leads to life and a worldly grief that leads to death. And what we see here, we see it with the kings, we see it with the merchants, and we see it with the sailors, which I won't bother reading, is that in every case, they're not actually concerned that what they've done is wrong.

[36 : 47] And their reaction to God revealing himself and revealing the wrong is to hide or to flee, in a sense to retrench and get more resources and more power.

Isn't that often how it works with the powerful? That when something's about to be revealed that's going to make them look weak, our response is not repentance, but get more power.

I'm going to get in trouble, I'm going to get the better lawyer, I'm going to outspend, and I'm going to get the better lawyers to beat these, I'm going to beat the rap. I'm going to use my skills to talk my wife around, I'm going to do that, I don't want to lose my power, I don't want to lose my prestige, and there's a grieving, there's a sorrowing, there's a worrying about what's going on, but it's not a repentance based on an acknowledgement that what was done was wrong.

It's a grieving that leads to death, and God wants us to grieve in a way that involves repentance and turning to him and saying, God, I don't know, what I did was wrong, I see that it's wrong, have you any mercy for me?

Can I be relieved or delivered from this? It's the difference between a man caught watching pornography who now spends all his time trying to figure out how to continue watching pornography, or the man who says, I have a problem, and I want to amend my life, God.

[38 : 28] I want to amend my life. The Bible here portrays that there is a choice that we have between a godly grief that leads to life and a worldly grief that leads to death.

What is God's heart for you and me? What is his hope? Next point. What is God's hope for me and you? Choose life. What is God's hope for me and you? Choose life.

Choose life. Choose life. The cry of the Old Testament, the cry of the New Testament, choose life.

Choosing God is choosing life. Choosing repentance is choosing life.

Now, some of you might say, George, here's the problem, George. Okay, you're talking about sin and all that type of stuff, and you know, it just sounds a little bit like what you're just saying is, you know, the grovel, grovel, grovel, grovel, rules, rules, rules, rules, you know, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry, maya culpa, maya culpa, maya culpa.

And you know, George, if that's just, like I can sort of see how people turn their back on us. I can see how people say, let's just live and let live. What's with all this breast beating? I can see why people want to be spiritual and not religious, because religion just seems to be about, first we make a whole pile of rules, then we make a whole pile of loopholes to the rules, and then if we get caught breaking the rules, well, we either just sort of say forget about it and do something completely and utterly different, or, you know, where we just deal with the shame.

[39 : 59] The Bible here in the text shows us a profound option. We, in our world, we tend to think that the only options are being highly religious, which is going to involve a lot of beating of our breast and groveling, or just basically doing what we want, and those are the two options.

spirituality being sort of close to doing what you want, but with some different types of rules than religious people, and those are the two options. And the Bible here gives us a completely and utterly different option.

And it was earlier on in the text, it's verse 6, verse 6, sorry, not verse 6, it's verse 4. Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her my people.

Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her my people. Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her my people.

The difference between religion and being completely and utterly just, who cares about right and wrong, just going to live and let live, just going to do whatever I want.

[41 : 13] Those aren't the two options. The option is that God, out of grace and love, calls you. Calls me to a new life.

He calls me. One of the great images in the New Testament of what Jesus does for us is the Bible never portrays that there's all these Christians who never do anything wrong because we're very good at playing religious games.

And on the other hand, there are all these other people who don't know how to play all the religious games and all the religious rules. We don't know when to raise our hands. We don't know when to clap. We don't know when to bow. We don't know how to say all the words. We can't keep straight all that stuff.

The Bible doesn't say that those are the two options. The Bible says that every single one of us is in a sense a citizen of Babylon. And that what happens on the cross is that God who sees our weakness and our love for Babylon and our inability to face what it is that we've done wrong.

And God sees us in Babylon and he sends his son to die upon the cross so that the justice and the doom that I deserve, the judgment that I will not be able to withstand even under George's rules, that that will fall on Jesus.

[42 : 29] That will fall on him in my stead. And he calls to George in Babylon and he says to me, George in Babylon, I want you to be my people.

Come to me. Come to Jesus. In your place, condemned, he stood. The call here is not to the religious.

It's not to the people who do not need Jesus. The call is to the citizens of Babylon. That when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, the Bible describes us as being transferred from Babylon to being my people.

Here's the point. You can put it up, Andrew. In grace, he died for me. In grace, he calls me. In grace, he saves me.

And by his grace, new life is formed in me as I say yes to his call. In grace, he died for me. In grace, he calls me.

[43 : 37] In grace, he saves me. And by his grace, new life is formed in me as I say yes to his call. Because the Christian life begins when we say yes to the call of Jesus to come to him.

It doesn't matter if we've lived our whole life in Rockcliffe or if we've lived our whole life in a trailer park. It doesn't matter if we're serving on Parliament Hill or if we're living on the streets.

It doesn't matter if we have a PhD or if we're Down syndrome. It doesn't. None of the... The Christian life begins with ordinary people like you and me who are citizens of Babylon who say yes to the call of God in the person of Jesus.

And that's how the Christian life begins. And all of the revelations of God's judgment against the sin in our life as it is exposed is not just a revelation but a call to come to Jesus.

In fact, it's by grace as we realize that in my place condemned he stood that we can start to have the freedom and the hope to look at the evil that we do, the place of evil in our lives, and actually start to address it.

[44 : 53] Because we understand that in grace he died for me. In grace he calls me. In grace he saves me. And by his grace new life is formed in me as I say yes to his call.

The Christian life isn't we say yes once and then we live a life of religious rules. The Christian life is we say yes to become his child.

And then we live a life of constantly learning to hear his daily call to us to come to him. Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you. For I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest for your soul. Please stand.

If you're here and you've never understood that Jesus is calling you, I didn't say this but if you go back there in the text, the voice, for textual reasons if you look through all the book of Revelation, the voice is Jesus.

[46 : 11] The voice that calls is Jesus. You look through all of Revelation, you track it through. That's who's speaking. And if there's anyone here who has never realized that Jesus is actually calling you to be his people, his person, there is no better time than today.

Use your own words. Just say, Jesus, that's me. I hear your call. I want to come to you. I'm weak. I can't do it on my own. Jesus, please cross that infinite distance and come and take me to yourself because I now know you've called me and I want to be yours.

There's no better time than right now before God. Don't even finish, don't even stop listening to me and just say to Jesus, Jesus, I hear your call. I recognize that's the tug of my heart.

Here I am. Take me. Here I am. Take me and keep me yours forever. That's all you have. Here I am. Take me. For every one of us, God calls to us.

He never convicts of sin. Every conviction of sin by conscience is also a call from Jesus to come to him. To be gripped by the gospel and understand how because of what Jesus has done for the cross, we can be grounded in dealing with our lives.

[47 : 28] We can be pushed into new life. We can be drawn into new life. We can be shaped into new life. There's no better time than now to say yes to that call. Bow our heads in prayer. Father, if there is any here who today has just taken, not my urging, Father, it's an urging that comes from the Holy Spirit that I just, Father, try in some small way to give voice to, that the pull and tug of their heart for the first time to realize that you have been calling them all their lives and that they are

hearing your call today.

Father, may you pour out your Holy Spirit upon people. Pour out your Holy Spirit and help them to say, here I am. Take me and never let me go, Jesus. And, Father, for myself and for others who hear your call in the face of things that we do in our lives that require amendment of life and repentance, Father, we just ask that your Holy Spirit would fall with mighty power upon us.

Help us, Father, to be delivered from the idea that the choice before us is a life of religious rules or a life of completely and utterly ignoring all rules. Father, deliver us from such dichotomies and help us, Father, to hear the call of Jesus and come to him.

Father, help me to hear the call of your son Jesus and come to him. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and make us disciples gripped by the gospel, living for your glory.

And this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.