

The Four Horsemen

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[0 : 0 0] Father, you speak to us hard words, and as you speak your hard words to us, Father, if we are honest, it opens up to us our confusion and our ambivalence and our desires to hide from you and to run from you.

Father, we know that even your hard words are in fact words of mercy, that our calls and appeals to us, Father, to turn and come to you, to receive grace and mercy from you.

So, Father, we ask in your mercy and in your kindness that your Holy Spirit would gently but deeply fall upon us as we listen to your word and as we think upon your word.

And may your word work with power in our lives. And this we ask in your name, Jesus. Amen. Please be seated. Thank you.

Suffering. What about suffering? One of the things I tell people when I give advice about preaching is don't treat sermons like school or like university lectures.

[1 : 2 0] You know, in a university lecture, they can say, well, in the last class we looked at this and today we're looking at this and sort of never say something like that in a congregation. Hopefully the minister will remember his sermon long enough to give it and hopefully it will have some impact in his life.

But you shouldn't assume that church is like a lecture hall where everybody's taking notes and they're coming for the next installment in the lecture. But just having said all of that, we're preaching through the book of Revelation.

And last week we looked at Revelation chapter 5. And when we were looking at Revelation chapter 5, if there was sort of one overarching point that we wanted to try to, we sort of could discover in Revelation 5, it was this.

That the only one who saves is the only one who is in control of God's unfolding plan for the future. And we spent, you know, about 40 minutes sort of unpacking that and talking about that and seeing how it was in the scripture and sort of what it meant that the only one who saves is the only one who is in control of God's unfolding plan for the future.

And while I was sort of all week as I was working on the sermon for last week, the thing that kept going on in my mind is that surely a lot of people will wonder if that's the case, if it is the case that the only one who saves is also the only one who is in control of God's unfolding plan for the future, then what about suffering?

[2 : 5 0] What about all the terrible things that go on in the planet? Like how, George, do you handle that? And how does the Bible handle that? And I never made a single comment about suffering last Sunday.

And that's because I knew that in Revelation 6 we'd be looking at it. And we'll look at it in Revelation 5, I mean Revelation 8, we'll look at it in Revelation 9, Revelation 10.

We're going to spend a lot of time thinking about things like suffering over the next few weeks as we go through the book of Revelation. The other thing sort of about these sermons is I don't know if you've, I don't have actually a bulletin up with me, but if you look at the bulletin in the notes, and I think it comes up at some point in time in the sermon notes, I'm not sure about that, the slides, but all of this, all of my sermons in the book of Revelation have a title.

And the title is, Following the Lamb in the Dying Days of the Dragon. That's the overarching sermon series title, Following the Lamb in the Dying Days of the Dragon.

And so last week in Revelation 5, that's where we actually met the lamb for the first time. And today, as we talk a little bit about suffering, we don't yet meet the dragon. What we meet are some of the dragon's friends.

[4 : 08] First we meet the dragon's friends, and then we meet the dragon, which will be in a few more chapters. So it would be a great help to me if you were to turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 6, and let's meet some of the dragon's friends, at least in Scripture.

Revelation chapter 6. We always have some free and available Bibles up at the front if you've forgotten to bring your own Bible. Those who use your iPads and phones to follow along the Bible, that's really great.

Just don't check your Facebook status or update at the same time. Try to stay focused on the Bible. That would be great. So Revelation chapter 6. Let's read it. And Nora did such a spectacular job of reading it, didn't she?

When she reads a text like this, it grips us, actually. And that makes it far easier to talk about it after having her read it.

Verse 1 of chapter 6. Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, Come.

[5 : 19] And I looked, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him. And he came out conquering, and to conquer. And I just sort of want to pause there for a second.

And here's the really striking thing. I don't know how many of you noticed this, but it's actually quite striking. Andrew, if you want to put the first point up for Rebecca, here's the thing which is quite striking.

The Lamb who was slain opens the seals. I don't know if you noticed that when Nora was reading it, and we're going to look at the text again. The rider that comes out conquering, and to conquer.

The rider that comes out with the power for people to fight each other and kill them. The rider that comes out and is given the power to bring famine. The rider that comes out and is given the power of death, and of famine, and of pestilence, and of all sorts of civil unrest.

In every one of these cases, as this suffering unfolds, as this suffering and hardship comes to earth, it comes as the Lamb opens the seal.

[6 : 37] Just as I was between these two services, the 8 o'clock service and the 10 o'clock service, I was in a coffee shop going over my notes, and I sort of rewrite my notes slightly between the two services, because, you know, just sort of sometimes moving things around.

And I couldn't help but overhearing that every single person in the coffee shop, and probably on the street outside, heard this street person talking to another street person. And it was very, very interesting. He was talking to this other street person, obviously post-hangover, or maybe present hangover, post-drinking present hangover.

And he had a loud, loud, smoker's raspy street person voice. And he was explaining to the other guy, as I'm sitting down, preparing to open up Revelation chapter 6, how, you know, people, I just finally understood, and people need to understand that the way everything is, and the way I am, and the way everything is, it's just all because of mutations.

It's all just because of chance and mutations. There was a mutation, and then another mutation, and another mutation, and another mutation. And here I am, and here you are, and here everybody else is.

And it's, in fact, the governing story of our culture was being articulated by this street person.

[8 : 04] Part of the governing story of our culture, that these blind, irrational forces over time created what is now life on earth, and everything that we see.

And in the context of a culture that believes that it's blind, irrational, or non-rational, irrational forces that bring about the things that we see, the book of Revelation has a very, very powerful, different message.

It isn't that the way that things are are a result of blind, powerful, huge, irrational, uncaring forces.

But the Lamb who was slain opens the seals. Why is this really important? If the Lamb who was slain opens the seals, repentance is always an option.

If I'm just a product of mutation, who can I call to? What can I do?

[9 : 15] If everything that's going on in the world is completely and utterly just due to the military-industrial complex or global oil or capitalism or socialism or the modes of production doing their unchanging, doing their sort of inevitable changes to bring about certain types of social constructs and situations, then what on earth can we do?

But if, in fact, the Lamb who was slain opens the seals, even though the seals are going to describe great hardship, and they're going to describe more than just hardship, as we're going to get to in a moment, but if this, in fact, is true, and it doesn't mean that there isn't a military-industrial complex, it doesn't mean that there aren't economic forces, it doesn't mean that there aren't those things, that they don't exist, but it means that they have a vastly different power context than our culture tells us.

It means that repentance is always an option, that prayer is always an option. But it's very, very important to just hear this as we go through each of the seals.

Now, just one other thing very, very briefly. Some of you have maybe been wondering when I'm going to do something, which is usually what ministers and churches in North America do when they talk about the Book of Revelation.

Some of you are saying, okay, George, I have, okay, I've licked my pencil. Okay, is this before the rapture or after the rapture? Is it before the tribulation, in the middle of the tribulation?

[10 : 54] Is the tribulation going to have these four stages? And here's, you see, what often happens with people who talk about the Book of Revelation in North American churches. They have this sort of timeline, which they've sort of developed from reading the Book of Revelation and 2 Peter and 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

And they've developed it from reading Daniel and Ezekiel and Isaiah and Zechariah and a whole pile of other books, which would take us too long to list. And they sort of have this timeline, and there's the rapture, and there's the tribulation, and there's the judgment, and then there's the millennium, and then there's this, and then there's that.

And so what they do is that while they're reading the Book of Revelation, what they really do as they read the Book of Revelation is they don't actually preach the Book of Revelation. I don't mean to put anybody down. What they don't do is actually try to preach the Book of Revelation.

What they try to do is place everything in the timeline. I'm not going to do any of that. If you're hoping for a timeline, you can listen to CHRI.

I think MacArthur is doing another sermon of series on this, and he can tell you the timeline if you want. I'm not going to talk about that at all. I'm going to preach the Book of Revelation. Here's one of the problems with looking at the Book of Revelation and trying to fit it into a timeline.

[12 : 16] Before we get into it, this is just a bit of a time-out learning moment. Just skip down to Revelation 6 and look at verses 12 and 13. Chapter 6, verses 12 and 13.

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth. The full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

So turn your page to Revelation chapter 8 and look at verse 12. Two chapters later, verse 12. The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened.

One moment, I thought all the stars fell from heaven. How, if they all fell from heaven in chapter 6, could there still be stars in the sky to fall, a third of them, in chapter 8?

See, here's the thing if you read the book of Revelation. How many here, I can't really see, oh, here I can see. How many people here have seen the movie Groundhog Day? Okay, probably half the congregation have seen Groundhog Day.

[13 : 26] Okay, for the other half of you, if you want to understand most of the book of Revelation, watch the Groundhog Day. I'm only partially joking, I'm serious.

Because the literary structure of the book of Revelation is that the first six seals have this progression, then there's an interlude, and then the seventh seal, what does the seventh seal do?

The seventh seal introduces the seven trumpets, and then the six trumpets go right back through destruction, then there's a long interlude, and then the seventh trumpet, and what does the seventh trumpet do? It goes right back, it goes to the bulls, and all of a sudden it goes right back through the entire same process.

In fact, what you have is the Groundhog Day. That what you have is a recapitulation, that you're having a description of increasing series of judgment, deepening judgment, and deepening offers of mercy, and deepening sense of the choice between the two different paths.

And in a literary way, it sort of develops it, and then there's a pause, and then it develops it, and then there's a pause, and it develops it, and then it gets to the end. It gets to the end. In fact, most of the book of Revelation, from chapter six on almost to the end, is describing life between the crucifixion, resurrection of Jesus, and the second coming of Jesus.

[14 : 53] And so some of you might say, well, does that mean then, George, that what it's talking about with the horses and the riders and all that, okay, is it, are they demons? Are they humans? Are they demons?

Are they humans? Are they, is it sort of something which is happening today? Is it something that's going to happen at the end of the day? What do you think? And my answer is yes.

Yes. It's all of those things. It's something which is true of life today, and it's something which will, when the final end does come, will also see it far more clearly for those who are alive when Jesus finally comes back.

But it describes life. It describes our experience. It describes what's going on in the world from the moment of the crucifixion, the resurrection of Jesus, and chapter five of Revelation describes the resurrection and ascension of Jesus and what he's like in heaven and what's going on between now and his return.

But all the way through this, the lamb who was slain opens the seals. The lamb who was slain opens the seals. Some of you might say, okay, George, this is, okay, that's sort of interesting and maybe I hadn't thought of that before.

[16 : 15] And I'm a little bit relieved that you're not going to spend the rest of the book of Revelation saying things like that the first horse is the United States, the second horse is Iran and the Ayatollahs, and the third horse, which is black, is North Korea, and the fourth horse is Russia.

Like I'm, you know, many of us, some of us are very disappointed, I'm not going to say that, and others are maybe very relieved. But what on earth does it mean? Okay, George, we sort of have a bit of a sense that to understand that it's the lamb who was slain opening the seals does mean that, in fact, repentance is always an option, that we can't take the governing story of our culture in terms of blind forces determining so much of what exists, and we can understand that, in fact, there's a chance of action, that there's always choices for human beings, that we can take action, that we can pray into things, that we can call people to repentance, that we can call the U.S. administration, the Canadian administration, we can call the Russians and Iranians and Israelis and the left and the right and the Republicans and the Democrats, we can call people to repentance, but what on earth is going on here?

Well, let's look. Let's go back and read verse 1, let's go back to chapter 6, and let's look at the four horsemen of the apocalypse. Now, I watched when the lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures, sorry, just back up if you weren't here last week, chapter 5, God has a scroll in his right hand, and his palm is open, and there's a scroll line across it, and it's a scroll that's sealed on the outside with seven seals, and the lamb takes the scroll from the one on the throne, who's the father, and the implication is that the scroll contains basically God's plan for the future, and the lamb who is slain takes the scroll and begins now to open the seals.

So verse 1 of chapter 6, now I watched when the lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a loud voice like thunder, come, and I looked, and behold, a white horse and its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer.

Remember I said that, you know, are these creatures, what they aren't is angels. Actually, Rebecca, put up the next point, and we'll have that in the back of our mind as we read all of these, the four horsemen.

[18 : 50] The lamb who was slain in mercy allows and limits the four horsemen to do as they desire. The lamb who was slain in mercy allows and limits the four horsemen to do as they desire.

So the first creature comes at the bidding ultimately of heaven, by the permission of heaven, and this represents the horsemen that is conquering and desires to conquer.

Look at the next one. When he opened the second seal, verse 3, I heard the second living creature say, notice when he opened, the lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, come. And out came another horse, bright red.

Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth so that people should slay one another and he was given a great sword. And this horse and its rider represents civil war, family fighting, church fighting, fighting between what used to be allies.

Verse 5, when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, come. And I looked and behold a black horse and its rider had a pair of scales in his hand and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, a quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius and do not harm the oil and the wine.

[20 : 25] Excuse me, this is a picture of famine. The ancient world at denarius was at an average working, take whatever you folks make in one day and that's, you know, if you are lucky you work five days and you live for seven days out of what you make for five days so in the ancient world a denarius was what a person made for one day and they'd have to work six or in some parts of the world every day of the week and so a quart of wheat is what one man, a working man would consume just by himself and it's describing a state of affairs where everything is ten times more expensive than it normally would be.

It's describing a famine. It's describing a situation where the grain is so expensive that people can't work enough to buy enough to eat and it's describing famine in very powerful picture language.

Verse seven, when you open the fourth seal I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, come, and I looked and behold a pale horse. In the original language it's the color of death.

it's the color that a corpse would be in a morgue and its rider's name was Death and Hades followed him and they were given authority over a fourth of the earth to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

Now why is it that I say that the lamb who was slain in mercy allows and limits the four horsemen to do as they desire? Is God causing evil?

[22 : 04] No. If you look at the text what he does is he limits he allows and he limits. Actually what he sees what we see here in picture language is something we won't turn to it right now but later on if you want to look in Romans chapter one the second half of Romans chapter one you'll get a very very powerful picture of what God sometimes does and the picture is that there's this human propensity to do wrong things and it's like the tug it's like the current in the stream and the current in the stream is sort of always there but God in his grace and mercy is always restraining that and so the picture is it's almost as if there's a boat in the stream and the boat is tied up to a dock and the stream is constantly wanting to bring that boat and push the boat in a particular direction but the boat is tied up and sometimes what God does in judgment is he unties the boat in other words he's been restraining this evil but sometimes what happens is he takes away his power to restrain and he allows the natural course of what is desired to happen and it's one of the ways that sometimes it both reveals that God as an act of common grace and common mercy is restraining human evil but that sometimes still by mercy and grace he allows that to not be restrained or not restrained as much and we see evil revealed

I see the evil in myself I see the evil around me the lamb who is slain in mercy allows and limits the four horsemen to do as they desire as they desire and that's what's being portrayed here now some of you might say this doesn't sound very much like mercy well it's just the beginning of the chapter it's the first four seals it's in the next two seals and the interlude that we see how it's connected to mercy so let's look and see how it is that it's connected to mercy how it is that judgment and God and all of that can be connected to mercy let's look at verse 9 when he opened the fifth seal I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne just sort of pause there for a moment notice now that the fifth seal isn't something of Jesus saying okay come out horsemen or those desires to conquer of conquering and conquering more and more and more and more and more and more and more it's not a matter of it being coming out what we see here now is an act of revelation that John is able to see something and what he sees and John is writing this in the mid-90s and so there have been Christians now for 60 years in fact many believe that following early church writers who wrote somebody who wrote just shortly after this that this was written while there was in fact the first sort of major persecution of Christians in the Roman

Empire and there would have in fact been many martyrs as John was writing this and John himself is writing this while he's a political exile on the island of Patmos and what he sees are those who died for Jesus again verse 9 when he opened the fifth seal the lamb opened the fifth seal I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness that they had borne that's the witness to Jesus witness to the lamb who was slain they cried out with a loud voice oh sovereign Lord holy and true how long how long how long how long oh sovereign Lord how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer here's the frightening thing until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers and sisters should be complete who are to be killed as they themselves have been please put up the next point

Rebecca the saints are in God's presence and cry out to him how long how long so the first four horsemen the lamb the lamb I said in his mercy allows these things to happen as they desire it's in a sense in a picture form what Romans 1 talks about in terms of what God sometimes does in human affairs releasing or removing his restraint and allowing freedom allowing freedom greater freedom and the greater freedom is used to evil to pain and suffering to conquering to causing famine to fighting and to sword the greater freedom is used for these things and it has all sorts of repercussions on the earth people die Christians die non-Christians die all sorts of people die and now the fifth seal is opened and John sees well here's the thing you know often in the west when we talk about what happened in Nazi

Germany to the Jews we call it the holocaust and holocaust means sacrifice but the more common use of the word and in fact the common use of the word in Israel is shoah which means calamity see the question is this as bad things happen to us as we suffer is it a sacrifice or is it a calamity see if it's a sacrifice it means it has meaning if it's a shoah a calamity there is no meaning there is no meaning it's just suffering it's just pain and death and no meaning and what John sees here what God shows John is that as the fifth seal is open some of those who've been affected by the fourth seals what do they do do they say

[28 : 59] I no longer believe in God I no longer trust God what he sees is he sees people in God's presence look at that in verse 10 he sees them underneath the altar it's an image of a sacrifice that their death has somehow or another been a sacrifice they cried out with a loud voice 10 oh sovereign Lord they're now in God's presence they speak to God and on one level they do call out how long if you read the Old Testament time and time and time and time again in the Psalms and in other poetry the Old Testament they cry how long oh God how long if you are in the midst of suffering right now it is completely and utterly biblical for you to say how long oh Lord how long oh Lord must I bear this how long oh Lord make it clear to me what it is that you desire me to know or do or to become grant me strength to bear up under this help me to understand father the meaning of what it is that I am going through how long is a biblical prayer and that's what the saints pray in the presence of

God to God how long and they cry out and in our version it uses the word look at that and how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth and in the original languages those words judge and avenge it brings out two things it definitely brings out the meaning of punishment but it also has the idea of vindication in fact the vindication is seen here by the fact that God's response to their cry about how long is that they were given a white robe told to rest told to rest it's a sign that they've conquered that in fact their suffering had some meaning I haven't read the rest of the book of Revelation but right now it's a promise that there is meaning in their suffering these saints who talk to God about it and pour out their heart to him and they are not rebuked he says you have conquered and they ask when will we be vindicated see this is the mercy we'll see this more in a moment when we look at what happens in the sixth seal but you see if

God both punishes and vindicates in other words he reveals to the world those who have a lust of conquering and to conquer and those who have a lust for battle and for triumph and for winning even if it means that people starve and that there are losers and that you can have pestilence as long as you survive and you can thrive and if in such a world the saints are vindicated and if it is in fact the lamb who was slain who opens the seal there is the possibility for those of us who have given our lives to evil to say one moment this powerless and weak person that I have just killed that I have caused this famine to God vindicates them and in the revelation of their vindication there is the invitation to repent and to be on the side of the lamb that's why these four horsemen where God allows what is desired whether it's by human beings using their evil for freedom or whether it's hostile demonic powers or some other reality encaptured by these images and God with limits allows it to happen that now when some of the victims who are saints cry out and ask for their vindication there is in fact an opportunity for people to say oh my

God what have I done can God have mercy this is made even more clear as we look at the next seal the sixth seal because in fact what is put before us is that in the presence of such evil that there are two responses which are ultimately possible that in fact if we have the courage to look internally into our own lives and see how it is that we respond to things that we will understand that even ourselves even those of us whose suffering is not nearly that which is described here that have not had that same type of terrible things happen to them but even if the suffering is just the fact that we have a boss that's really mean to us or a mom who never loved us enough or a dad who sort of ignored us or somebody who cut us off or it's just anxiety and it's just stress and if we look at it this is very powerful and profound why is it that we choose one way or the other look at what it says in the sixth seal verse 12 when he opened the sixth seal

I looked and behold there was a great earthquake and the sun became black as sackcloth the full moon became like blood and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale the sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up and every mountain and island were removed from its place then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone slave and free hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains calling to the mountains and rocks fall on us hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the lamb for the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand revelation 6 is centered around two questions how long or who can stand who can stand imagine that a person is coming against you and they have a gun and they come to you and you see that you're in danger and you have a choice you can look to the right and there's a person you can see their face you can call out to them for help you turn to the left and there's a rock and when they come to you with a gun you say

[35 : 44] I'm not going to turn to the person who has a face that I can call about for help I'm going to call out to the rock to help me rock help me mountain help me very very very powerful imagery put up the next point please Rebecca earth dwellers try to hide from God while they cry out to idols who can stand earth dwellers on earth is a world of earth and it doesn't mean that Christians don't dwell on earth but it becomes a description of those earth dwellers who are in rebellion against God in fact it starts to introduce a fundamental understanding of what it means to be a Christian a Christian is a resident alien on earth a

Christian is a pilgrim and we know from the Old Testament we know from the New Testament that we are to pray for the blessing of God upon the city but ultimately the city of Ottawa is not my home and the city of Ottawa my citizenship is not ultimately a citizenship in Canada my ultimate citizenship is the kingdom of God the kingdom of the Lamb who was slain and my true home is where the Lamb reigns and while I live here on earth not as an earth dweller but one who lives on earth I seek the good of the city the earth dwellers try to hide from God while they cry out to idols who can stand why is it when I at a very simple level why is it that when I suffer or I'm in stress why is it that I would turn to idols why is it that I would turn to alcohol or to drugs or to gambling or to spending money in a mall or to anger or to fantasies or to pornography why when I am under mild struggling of stress would I turn to one of these why would I turn to rocks and mountains why is it that these people seeing or sensing or feeling or realizing the face of God try to think that being in a cave could hide from the face of God and that an idol a rock or a mountain would help or deliver them will suffering incline my heart to God or away from it many people when we suffer we turn away from

God why is it that we turn away from God when we suffer is it that when we turn away from God and are suffering that we stop suffering is it that when we turn away from God and suffering that all of a sudden our suffering has meaning is it that all of a sudden we only are victorious and we tower over things when we turn away from God like why is it that we do that why is it will suffering and climb my heart to God or away from Him?

Why do I hide from God? Why, if God has a face, is it that I see or sense, why is it that I speak to a rock or an idol rather than God?

How can a rock help me? How can an idol help me? Why do I say that I'll only become a Christ follower if God shows up?

[39 : 32] Why would I choose to repent and have suffering? I mean, why would I not, why would I refuse the chance to repent and have suffering?

Now, somebody might be wondering, am I sane, George, are you sane, are you sort of like those people that make lots of, they make it in the news and they're just really, really, really, really, really, really, add a few more reallys, embarrassing, that when something bad happens, you get some radio preacher gets up and says, this is all because of the evil that's going on, and take your pick.

It's because there's not enough Republicans, there's not enough Democrats, there's not enough rich people, there's not enough programs for the poor, you know, fill in the blank with your favorite evil, and that's why this judgment has happened.

George, is that what you're saying? And that's not what the Bible's saying here. The Bible's not saying that God doesn't actually allow evil to happen.

I'm not saying, in that sense, that radio preacher's not wrong. The radio preacher is, and I don't mean to offend, is hiding a profound arrogance to think that he or she knows exactly what it is that God's doing.

[41 : 04] And they probably don't. They probably don't. And it's arrogantly overstepping the boundaries to talk as if you know when you don't know.

I mean, the fundamental lesson of the Bible is always to humble us, not to make us think we're smarter than other people and better than other people, but to humble us, to bring us to the point where we call out to God for mercy and say, how long?

The other problem, and I know we, maybe I'm going over time, I apologize for it. The other thing about it, though, is that when people say things like that, we get the wrath of God all messed up and confused.

Turn in your Bibles with me to Matthew chapter 26 in closing. Matthew chapter 26. It's, if you have a Bible and you're not that familiar with it, there's the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Matthew is the first book in the New Testament.

And turn in your Matthew chapter 26 to verse 36. And in the flow of the book of Matthew, Judas is off to betray Jesus.

[42 : 19] Jesus has just instituted the Last Supper with his friends. He's told them he's all going to die. He's going to be captured within 12 hours of the Last Supper. A few hours, in fact, less than 12 hours, he would be captured.

He'll be falsely accused. He'll die a criminal's, a slave's death upon the cross. And he's told them all of this and they don't understand what's going on. They're all confused.

And he goes to the Garden of Gethsemane and then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane and he said to his disciples, sit here while I go over there and pray. And taking with them Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled and he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful even to death.

Remain here and watch with me. And going a little farther, he fell on his face and prayed saying, my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. Just put your finger there for a moment. If you go on and read the rest of it, you'll see that three times Jesus says this same prayer, my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

[43 : 28] Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. This happens just a few hours before the cross. And it's a very, very powerful image. It's a very common image in the ancient world, in Jewish scripture and in pagan, in the pagan world, for the cup, in this particular case, to be an image of God's judgment and wrath.

And it's a very, very powerful image that Jesus, who understands that he's going to go to the cross and not that he's done anything wrong himself, but he will go to the cross and he will die upon the cross and his death upon the cross will be that he experiences the wrath, the judgment, proper to me, that he will drink the judgment of God, the proper anger of God at evil.

My desire is to conquer and to be conquered. My desire is to put myself forth first even if it means that others starve and are in famine. My desire for conflict.

My desire to triumph. All of those things that I have done that are wrong. All those things that I love about the four horsemen in my life that deserves the judgment of God.

And those are things in my life and in yours. And that which properly deserves the judgment of God because the saints are crying out how long and I am implicated in that cry of how long.

[45 : 02] And Jesus goes to the cross and on the cross he takes upon himself that cry of how long that I deserve and he drinks the cup of God's wrath for me.

and the amazing thing about this image is that you know there's lots of times in our life we go through really really really really hard times and we say to ourselves if I had known about how hard it was going to be in advance I would have never done it.

We can always worry about the cross that Jesus says okay yeah I'm going to die for the sins of George he gets up on the cross and afterwards it's way way harder than he thought it was going to be. And here we see that God lets him know in advance how hard it's going to be.

He tastes the cup and he still says I will go. And so it's not just that Jesus who is the Lamb of God who was slain for me it's not just that he takes upon himself that anger and judgment which I properly deserve and it's just something as if God has now just sort of that he now stands for merely in terms of suffering for me in my place but also his act of obedience his willingness and love to actually after having tasted the cup to still take the cross both aspects of who Jesus is stands for me.

The cry of the rich and the poor the generals and the powerful and the slave who turn to rocks and mountains and say who can stand? And a Christian the saints who are underneath the throne of God and are speaking in the presence of God to God himself their answer isn't well I've lived a completely and utterly blameless life and that's why I can stand.

[46 : 52] Their answer is to humbly say I can only stand because the Lamb of God took upon himself the wrath of God that I deserved.

Put the final point up please. Out of love for me the Lamb who was slain bore the wrath of God that I deserve. Please stand. Most of us today not all of us are able to stand on our own strength.

This Bible passage says that there will be a day when we have to stand before the throne of Almighty God and we will not have the strength and the strength to stand. And the Holy Spirit is convicting some of us maybe to turn to Jesus for the first time to understand what he's done for us on the cross and for others just to realize that my desire to conquer my desire to be first my desire for conflict my desire for anger my desire to hide myself from God that's even though I'm a follower of Jesus that's become far too strong in me.

I'm going to say a prayer in closing which if the Holy Spirit is convicting you to pray that I invite you to pray with me. I'll say it to you very quickly and if it suits what the Holy Spirit is convicting in your life then I'll say it a second time slowly so that you can pray it with me.

Dear God I try to hide from you I call out to idols to avoid you please forgive me please deliver me I thank you that Jesus drank my cup of your judgment Jesus please live in me as Savior and Lord please pour out your Holy Spirit upon me today and every day until I stand in your presence as your servant thank you amen the Holy Spirit has been convicting you of the need like me to pray such a prayer for some it is the beginning of your life as a follower of Jesus for others it is just a deepening I invite you I'll say this prayer slowly and I invite you if the Holy Spirit is convicting you do not say no to the Holy Spirit's conviction do not say no to the Holy Spirit's conviction I'll say it and I'll pause and you can say it silently you don't have to say it out loud it's just between you and God dear God I try to hide from you

[49 : 20] I call out to idols to avoid you please forgive me please deliver me I thank you that Jesus drank my cup of your judgment Jesus please live in me as Savior and Lord please pour out your Holy Spirit upon me today and every day until I stand in your presence as your servant thank you Amen Amen Tiago know I can pray las

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