

God: Untameable and Good

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- [0 : 0 0] Let's bow our heads in prayer for a moment. Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would gently but powerfully move in us this morning, in the very center of who we are.
- And Father, one of the things we ask is that you would awaken, that you would inflame the true longings and yearnings that we have within us, the longings and yearnings to know you and to be known by you, to be in your presence.
- Father, please awaken and inflame these yearnings and desires in us. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.
- Please be seated. So often when I tell you stories about what happens at coffee shops or other places, I mix up a whole pile of the details just in case one of the people who've been talking to me listens and they wouldn't necessarily know that it was them.
- But today I'm going to do something a little bit different. So yesterday I go into my local coffee shop in the morning, as I usually do on a Saturday to do a bit of work on my sermon.
- [1 : 1 2] And as soon as I come in, one of the guys that's a friend of mine is there and he says, oh, I really wanted to talk to you about something. And he buys me a coffee. And we go off to the side.
- And he says, George, what about that Kenyan death cult? That's a Christian thing, isn't it?
- Like, what do you think about all those Christians out there in Kenya starving themselves to death? Now, of course, I've been thinking deeply about this on my way over there. No, I'm just joking.
- So just anyway, a little bit of a shout out to my friend if you happen to be watching either now or downstream. Thank you for being my friend. Thank you for asking great questions. Thank you for buying me coffee as well.
- And so I gave him a bit of an answer. And the conversation moved in different ways. We talked for 10 or 15 minutes. And then as soon as he left, I realized that the text that we're going to look at in Ezra today talks directly.
- [2 : 1 5] Like, if he had asked me to show him in the Bible where those two or the three types of things I basically said to him, I realized afterwards I could have shown them in Ezra. How Ezra responds to a Christian critique of a Kenyan death cult that claims to be Christian.
- So we're going to look at it. I encourage you to get your Bibles. We're going to be looking at Ezra chapter 7 and 8. And just so you know, it's 68 verses long.
- And that's way too many verses for me to read all of them in the text. So basically, chapter 7 and 8 tells you one long story and just a little bit of a geeky type of moment to place what's happening.
- Here's the big story of Ezra and Nehemiah. Like, every week we can look at it and you can see all the trees and not notice that there's a forest. But in chapters 1 to 6, it tells the story of this astounding thing that happens that nobody would have predicted.

The Babylonian Empire gets defeated. It's replaced by the mighty Persian Empire. And Cyrus, the pagan emperor of this mighty empire, he says, I would like Jewish people to go back and build the temple.

[3 : 31] Well, good grief. Who saw that coming? Like, how on earth did that happen? So Cyrus declares this. And then if you read chapters 1 to 6, you know, they go back.

A whole group of them go back. Not all of them, but a whole group of them go back. The Jewish people had been taken out of their homeland like 60, 50, 60 years earlier. And they've settled in the center of Babylon and Persia primarily.

They have a new life there. You know, 60 some odd years after, or 50 some odd years, that's like a long time. Hardly anybody would even remember. Like, I mean, just, I'm not going to ask for a show of hands, but if I was to, if we were to talk about something, how many of us were even alive 50 years ago?

Well, I was. I'll put my hand up. But many of you weren't even alive 50 years ago. Like, why on earth would you want to make this journey to a place of rubbles that you've never heard of? And it's a Persian emperor who says, let's do it.

And not only does he say, let's do it. He says, by the way, here's a whole pile of stuff from your temple that you can use. Here's a whole pile of money. And here's a whole pile of instructions for people to respect you.

[4 : 41] And then what happens in the rest of chapters 1 to 6 is there's all this pushback from the locals who hate them, hate the Jewish people. And it ends up, they rebuild the altar so they can worship, but they can't actually build the temple because there's so much blowback and pushback and hatred and hating on them.

And then, lo and behold, after the work stopped for 17 years, another Persian emperor by the name of Darius says, I want you to finish the temple. Who saw that coming? Like, who saw that coming?

I want you to finish the temple. Well, here's the orders. Tell all those haters to step down and get in line and let them build the temple. And the temple's built. Now, chapters 7 to 10 takes place 57 years after the temple has been built and dedicated.

57 or 58 years depends a little bit. Numbering is a bit loose back then. 57, 58 years later. So in terms of us, if you just think about it for a second, 57 years ago, that's 50, let's say 58 years.

That's 1965. So it's as if the story's gone to 1965. Once again, I don't know how many of you were even alive in 1965. Most of you weren't. And now the story continues.

[5 : 56] And this story is even more astounding. And that's what's going to be told in 7 and 8 and then 9 and 10. Because all of a sudden, another Persian emperor named Artaxerxes, 57, 58 years later, says, I want that whole region around the temple, I want them to all live their lives by the Torah.

What? Who saw that coming? Nobody saw that coming. A Persian emperor who's pagan says, I want everybody to live under the Jewish law who lives in that region.

And he doesn't just sort of say it because he was in the bathroom one day and the idea popped into his head. And then like a lot of us, we have ideas pop into our head in the bathroom. And 24 hours later, we forget about them.

But no, if you go back and you're like this, chapter 7, verses 1 to 10 sort of gives you the big picture. Then it fills in the details. And it even gives you the letter because Artaxerxes, he puts money in the game.

He picks this guy named Ezra. And by the way, in Ezra, you'll see in a moment, it says he does his cry. But actually, the literal translation is secretary.

[7 : 03] And what that means is it isn't like secretary when we think that like a big shot, you know, boss, she has a secretary to do her. No, no, no, no, no. That's like the secretary of the exchequer in Britain.

It's like the homeland secretary in Britain. It's like the secretary of defense in the United States. That's the secretary. So this guy is like a high-level bureaucrat.

He's also a priest. He's also a scholar. And so this emperor says, good grief, you know, I think all the people in that region should live under the Jewish law.

So I'm going to send my secretary. He's going to go. And he's going to, and I'm going to give him a whole pile of gifts. I'm going to give him these three letters. And these three letters say, here's all this money for Ezra to do this.

And by the way, Ezra, all of the priests in the future aren't taxed. Aren't taxed. And by the way, he gets to set, train everybody and set up the judges.

[8 : 09] And so that as long as the basic law, my basic law is met, I want them all to live under the Jewish law. Who saw that coming? How on earth does something like this remarkable happen?

Three Persian emperors all going ahead and making decisions like this. Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. And so chapter 7 and 8 is talking about this.

And so now you're saying, okay, George, well, that's sort of interesting. But how on earth does this fit in with the Kenyan death cult? And by the way, you know, when my friend asked this, he's too polite. But there's a, you know, there's a subtext to it.

And the subtext to it is this. You know, people who become Christians are kooky. And, you know, Christianity, from my point of view, often seems to be more on the side of death.

And I'm sort of curious to see, George, how you argue Christianly that it's wrong. I can understand how if you listen to the view, Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

[9 : 18] You listen to the view or you listen to CNN or CBC. I could see that if you listen to them, you want to condemn it. But if you just listen to your Bible, how are you going to speak to it? Well, let's look.

And so we're going to, I'm just going to jump around. I've told you the basic story of chapter 7 and 8. And part of that early thing, verse 6 of chapter 7, here's what it says. If you can put it up. Sometimes, I hope it's going to be on the screen.

If not, that's fine. You can just listen to me or I read it from the Bible or have your own Bible. And so look what it says here in verse 6. This Ezra, it's given the long list of his lineage. This Ezra went up from Babylonia.

He was a scribe, skilled in the law of Moses. That the Lord, the God of Israel, had given and the king granted him all that he asked. That's Ezra. For the hand of the Lord his God was on him.

We're going to look at that phrase in a moment. But notice this thing. Because you think, okay, that's weird, George. Like how on earth do you get anything to do about the Kenyan death cult from that? Look again at verse 6.

[10 : 16] Here's this statement about the scriptures. He was a scribe, skilled in the law of Moses. Okay, that's the law of Moses. That the Lord had given.

And it's this classic description of what Christians understand the Bible to be. And by the way, why do we understand the Bible to be this? That's because we learned it from Jesus. And I'm not going to give you an argument for it.

Other than to say that I think it's a very reasonable thing to believe. That if Jesus predicted he was going to die by crucifixion and rise from the dead. And he did.

It vindicates him. Like that's a reasonable thing to believe. It vindicates him. And it vindicates what he said. And that's what he teaches about the Bible. He teaches on one hand it's the words of a human being.

But at the end of the day, it's words that God wanted to have done. And that's why it has authority. That's why we listen to it. And so here's the thing. If you could put up the first point, that would be very handy.

[11 : 14] I'm not sure if you have them. But if you could, that would be great. Here it is. The true God has revealed himself in an open, public way through his word written.

Now, you see, here's the thing I said. First thing I said to them about the Kenyan death cult is I, and I said, I almost said my friend's name, but I'll say it's Bob. I say Bob.

So the first thing you have to understand that what's going on here is a common human problem. It's a human problem that we see in lots of areas of life. And it's caused lots of heartache and turmoil throughout the world.

And I said, what it is, I said, there are people who come to believe that they know the future and that where the future is going is good and that we need to get with the program.

And it's basically, some of them times they'll have a very religious thing that it came from a law or that it came from, you know, it came from the Buddha or it came from Krishna or it came from the Bible or God of the Christians.

[12 : 17] But it has a secular form as well. Like Marxism, I'm going to upset some people here today, and I will. That's all I can say. I don't like upsetting people, but I will. At its very heart, Marxism believes that the universe has downloaded into Marx where history is going and that it's a good thing that everybody should go.

Well, one moment, February 15, 2020, nobody predicted the lockdowns for three years. Why does any human being think that they somehow know the future and that the future is good and you have to do it?

Almost all progressive thought is the same type of thought as the Kenyan death cult. Not that it's going to cause deaths like that. But somehow or another, ordinary human beings think, whoa, the universe has told me how history is going to move.

It's going to move in this direction, and we need to get with the program, and we need to do that. What? Well, that's what this guy thought. He thought he had a pipeline to God. And he suckered a whole pile of people into thinking about it.

It's a human problem. But notice what has just been said. I don't know if that first point is up here. Here's the thing which makes Christianity radically different. God's word written is open and public.

[13 : 34] It's not secret. I mean, when Matt was saying the reason we have the creed is that, in a sense, it's to hold me accountable. And it's to hold me accountable because you folks can look at the Bible and say, George, you know, you said this and you said this, but look at the Bible.

It says this. It says this. It doesn't say those things. It's an open truth. It's a public truth. Open to all. Anybody can go online and get a copy of the Bible.

Anybody can go to a bookstore and get a copy of the Bible. It's open. It's public. It's the complete opposite of a Gnostic, secret, private revelation about where things are going. But I could see my friend thinking, aren't sort of Christians ones who just believe in faith, not reason?

And don't you, in a sense, if you want to be a Christian, sort of have to kiss your mind bye-bye or at least hold it in suspension for a period of time? And yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

You know, you can say all that. And the fact of the matter is, if people say that, they've met Christians who act that way. There was a group of Christians that I was involved with about a year or so, two years after I became a Christian.

[14 : 47] And I was having severe intellectual doubts about the Christian faith. And when I tried to talk about it with them, they said, you just need to pray more. Well, okay, I always need to pray more.

I mean, that's true. But I'd actually like an answer, like, in terms of reason or evidence as to why, you know, this doubt, how I can handle this doubt.

So, I mean, there's something. But you see, when they say this, Christians who say this are often very, very well-meaning, but they're wrong. They're not speaking as Christians. Well, why, look at what comes up in verse 10, chapter 7, verse 10, if you could put it up.

And this is the end of that part that Monique read earlier on. And it sort of here encapsulates the basic biblical message from Genesis 1 to the end of the book of Revelation.

And it describes Ezra, verse 10, for Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

[15 : 55] Notice what it says. Ezra has set his heart to study God's word written and to do it. He's not studying it to find loopholes.

He's not studying it to make it look ridiculous. You know, anybody with an IQ above 60 can try to make things look ridiculous. Like, it's amazing how many, I've had so many conversations with people who, with a big, proud, self-satisfied smile, try to make something about the Bible or the Christian faith ridiculous.

And they just look ridiculous. Like, it's easy to do that about anything. It doesn't take very much intelligence or very much thoughtfulness to do that. And it's very easy to be self-satisfied about it.

And, in fact, actually, especially when it comes to things like the Bible, it's, in fact, sort of seen as a virtue to interrogate the text. And by interrogating the text, it means nitpicking over it to make it look like it's colonialist and oppressive and a whole pile of bad things.

But, you know, what they actually don't do is actually listen to it. They don't stop to think there must be some reason why this book is still being read 2,000 years later, where the words of my professor or the academic article or the newspaper article that I read that's teaching me to do this, it'll be forgotten in five minutes.

[17 : 11] Like, they never sort of stop and think about that. And so here's the point. If you could put it up, that would be great. The true God desires, okay?

It's a feature, not a bug. The true God desires that you bring the best of your mind and heart to bear on understanding his word written and how you shall then live.

It means to bring your intellect. It means to bring your learning. It means to bring those rational faculties. It means to bring your creativity. It means to bring your imagination.

It means to bring your will and your attention to try to understand the word. And some of us have very, very high IQs. Just a bit of an aside.

Some of you know the apologist David Woods. He's sort of an odd duck. He has an IQ of 185. That's the stratosphere. So some of us have very high IQs.

[18 : 11] Some of us don't have high IQs. That's fine. The Bible doesn't say people with high IQs are better than people with low IQs. It's just a thing indifferent to God on one level. But the point is that to the best of your imagination, the best of your ability to read, the best of your ability to remember and to think, the best of your creativity, or to bring it to bear to hear and understand the word and then to do it.

That's what God desires. You see, it's the complete opposite. You see, once again, at the end of the day, when you have people who believe that somehow or another the universe or God has dropped into their mind where history is going, and how somehow or another we have to overlook normal morality and jump on this new morality and go there.

And whether it's something secular like we see in much of first world thought, or whether it's this Kenyan death cult leader, what they want you to do is stop thinking.

And the Bible says that's not ever God's plan. I say that not because CNN says that.

In fact, I don't even know if CNN says that most of the time. I think they just want us to accept what they say. I mean, there's a reason why there's a huge desire going on in the world right now to control information, and there's a reason why there's pushback against it.

[19 : 32] I know there's complexity issues and all that, and that's fine. But at the end of the day, the Bible wants us, and not just to that, but in general, God wants me to use my mind.

He wants you to use your mind. Wherever vocation he's called you to be in. Now, it's weird, you know, because when I was in my conversation with my friend, we ended up getting into, I ended up getting into the reality of evil in the world, and how I said to him that there's one thing about the Christian faith which only the Christian faith holds, and it's empirically provable time and time and time again, and people don't sort of recognize it.

And that is the fact, not that every single thing a human being does is evil, but that no human being can go very long without doing some evil. None of us can. None of us can. I can't.

And if you think you can, you're deluded. Sorry. And if you were to say with a straight face, actually, I don't do anything wrong, all the people around you would go, oh, yeah, they don't think they do anything wrong.

That sure doesn't pass the smell test. And, you know, I said to him, and, you know, even at an institutional level, there's, you know, you can, there's a, you know what I mean by the whiff of sulfur, and that's where we got into demons.

[20 : 55] And I said, surely you see that even in the world, there's the whiff of sulfur about a lot of things that go on. There's something demonic about what goes on. And, and, and, and, and, and, and he, you know, and I said to him, you know, here's the thing, if you read the Bible, the Bible tells you to feed people, not starve people.

That's what the Bible tells you, feed people. The Bible has feasts. There's times when you fast, but it's called to feast. It's called to feed the poor and to work hard.

You know, when the Bible says, give us this day our daily bread, in a sense what you're doing is you're praying for farmers, and you're, and you're praying for truckers, and you're praying for grocery store workers.

You're praying for all of those that those, that the coffee shops will do their work so that you can have a coffee and a muffin afterwards. That's what Jesus teaches you to preach.

And, and the whole thrust of the Bible is towards, this is what I try to tell him, is towards life. It's towards light. It's to be against the demonic. It's to be in favor of goodness.

[22 : 00] Well, let's look what Ezra, let's look what Ezra says. If you just, just jump down a little bit more in chapter 7, and you have this wonderful prayer, and, and it's, it's, it's verses 27 to 28. And one of the things, which is really cool about the book of Ezra, by the way, if, if you go back later on, you, you can look later and you'll see the, they give a copy of the, of the decree that Artaxerxes wrote.

And you don't know this in English, but in the original language, it's in Aramaic, which is the language of diplomacy in Babylon and Persia at the time. And it's actually in Aramaic.

We don't know that because it's just all translated in English. And then it goes back chapter 7, 8, 9, 10, all keep going back to me and I language because it's Ezra's memoirs. And here we see Ezra's prayer.

And in Ezra's prayer, remember I said, who saw that coming? Then Cyrus says, I want Jewish people to go back and build the temple and worship their God. Who saw coming that Darius would say, stop the haters, I want them to finish the temple.

Who saw that Artaxerxes would say, I want Ezra to go and have all the people in that region live under the Jewish? Who saw that coming? Well, Ezra tells you why it happened.

[23 : 10] Look at verses 27 and 28. And this fits back the third point that I tried to communicate to my friend about the Kenyan death cult. And listen to what he says. Chapter 7, verse 27, 28.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.

And who extended to me, this is the Lord, extended to me his steadfast love, his chesed, his unfailing, his covenant love.

And he extended it to me before the king and his counselors, and before all of the king's mighty officers. I took courage. Why? For the hand of the Lord my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

Now, look how it begins. It says, blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers. And by the way, you can look. That phrase, blessed be the Lord, that's all the way through the Old Testament.

[24 : 14] It's a regular feature of what I call the Old Testament. My Jewish friends call the Tanakh or the Torah. It's all the way through. And here's what, in the Bible, God blesses.

And when God blesses, it means to cause, to thrive, or to flourish, in a way, in keeping with goodness and beauty and love and justice and mercy.

Okay? So it's not helping, let's say, the drug dealer flourish so that he can kill his rivals and addict more people to drugs. I mean, when I was walking here between the services, you know, I saw a guy smoking crack just a block up from here.

Well, God's not causing him to thrive by smoking crack. It has to be the thriving is in keeping with creation, God's original intention, creation, and with his intention in the new creation, the new heaven and the new earth.

And so it means it's to be in keeping with his goodness, his beauty, his justice, his love, his mercy, that God causes you to thrive. Now, when we say, blessed be God, well, here's the thing.

[25 : 24] It's actually a phrase, and in fact, in the original language, it implies that I kneel when I say it. It implies that I kneel before God and acknowledge the reality of the world as it really exists, in the world as it really exists.

God is blessed. That doesn't mean that he does good things. It means he is good. It doesn't mean that he does loving things. He does, but it means that he is love. It means that he is beauty, that he is justice.

He is mercy. He is life. He is light. He is freedom. He is these things in his very nature, and we're humbly acknowledging that when we say, blessed be God, that he is that in and of himself.

And if you think about it for a second, when in a sense it says that God blesses me, it's trying to get at, and I don't know if I'll have time. I won't probably have time to develop it, but here's the thing.

Most human thought, other than very depressed thought, thinks that there's, in a sense, a spark in human beings, a type of light in human beings.

[26 : 45] And so your religion, your spirituality, your means of human technology changing, you know, through the self-help gurus, is, in a sense, always to try to get that light to shine brighter, that George has to get his light shining brighter.

But actually, the Bible teaches something very different. And in a sense, on one level, it's very counterintuitive, but if you think about it for a second, it's actually more realistic.

I do not have a divine light within me, in and of myself. I am not a flashlight who just needs to learn your techniques of religion and ritual so that I can get better batteries and more power and shine more brightly.

I'm a mirror. And I'll be honest with you, because of my sin, my mirror is a bit warped, a bit cracked, and it's missing a few pieces.

And that's all I am. And no light comes from a mirror unless the mirror is angled to the light.

[27 : 59] And as the light hits the mirror, if it's properly angled, the light that comes into the mirror, as warped and cracked and missing pieces as it is, flows into the room of darkness.

Every human being is a mirror. None of us are flashlights. Only God is blessed.

And when he blesses me, it's that in some small way, the light and the life that comes from him is reflected from the mirror into a dark world. In a sense, salvation is, when it's as if this was a mirror, it's a stopwatch, and that's me.

Salvation is a sense when I stop running from God and let God pick up the mirror. And now, God's light fills the mirror.

That's salvation. But listen to this verse again. Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem and who extend it to me.

[29 : 17] Here's the thing. The God that is blessed, that we believe is really, really, really true, and has spoken to us by his word, he moves empires.

He moves empires. Let me tell you, this week, I have been terribly convicted of how puny my prayers are.

There are large, systemic evils in this world that I think are too big for God to handle, and I do not pray against them. And brothers and sisters, could you pray that this will convict me?

It might be that we as a church have to pray for decades against some of the systemic evils that go on in our world. But we are called to pray against these systemic evils, the systemic death, the systemic idolatry, the systemic darkness and evil, that God in his mercy would stop it and that there would be human flourishing as designed and created by God in intention.

And so you have this wonderful picture of on one hand, there's a God who moves empires, but he's the same God who has covenant love to a guy like me whose mirror is warped, cracked, and missing pieces.

[30 : 47] And you have this wonderful phrase that the same hand of God that can move an empire will rest on my shoulder and yours. Sometimes when I'm helping a person who's struggling with preaching or teaching, I say one of the things you can do that's really helpful is imagine that when you come to speak, Jesus is standing right beside you and he has his hand on you.

He has his hand on you. It's such a close and intimate gesture. We all know that we don't like inappropriate touch. We don't want to be touched by people unless we've given permission.

And here we have this deeply intimate picture of the God who can move empires will put his hand upon you. Could you put up the point that goes with this, please? That would be very helpful.

Here's the thing I want to challenge you with. I want to challenge you, especially if you're watching this and you're not quite sure about the Christian faith, you have a yearning for the one who can move empires yet can put his strong hand of love upon the real you.

You have a deep yearning for that. And that yearning is only answered by the gospel, by the person and work of Jesus. And you understand the message of the Bible in light of who Jesus is and what he's done.

[32 : 12] You have a yearning and a longing to connect with the God who can move empires, but also will put his hand, his strong hand of love upon you. And we have to wrap up over the next couple of minutes.

And the obvious question is, does this mean that Christians never screw up? Well, we do. We do. And this text beautifully portrays this human frailty and the fact that it's God's goodness, not our perfection.

That it's his hand of love upon us helping us amongst the trials and tribulations and changes and chances of this fleeting world. You know, he's described the letters and he's described how he gets more people and then they come to the point in time where they're going to leave to go to Jerusalem and they will end up being successful.

But they have this, they have this, you know, it's so funny because in literature or in TVs and movies, they probably describe as they have a come to Jesus moment. And it's so funny because when people in movies say come to Jesus moment, it means you have to be honest.

It's really sort of funny. It's a backhanded compliment about Christians. You're having a come to Jesus moment. It means you have to confess and be honest. And Ezra has a come to Jesus moment. Look at what happens in chapter 8, verses 21 to 26 to 23.

[33 : 37] And the text goes like this. Then I proclaimed a fast there. They've all gathered. They're about to leave. I proclaimed a fast there at the river Ahava that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, for ourselves, our children, and all our gods.

It's about a 1,400-kilometer trip. And why? Verse 22, For I was ashamed. I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way.

Why? Well, since we, but he means me, since we had told the king, the hand of our God is for good and all who seek him and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.

So we fasted and implored our God for this. And then, thank goodness, he listened to our cry. Now, it's a very puzzling text. It's a little bit, and I guess what I'd like to say, it's a fine line between presumption and faith.

And much of what he said is true. But the problem is, though, that, you know, when we left the Anglican Church of Canada in 2008, I think you could, you could bet \$100 that the Diocese of Ottawa didn't think we'd last three months.

[35 : 12] Fifteen years later, here we are. Are we a megachurch? No. Are we big and mighty and bigger than the diocese? No. Are we a failure?

No. We're here. We've borne witness consistently for 15 years. You know, if you haven't seen it, it's really neat to go and watch the Giannis interview, the star for the Milwaukee Bucks after they were eliminated by the eighth-place team, and a sports reporter asked him whether he thought he was a failure.

And it's a, you know, normally interviews with players afterwards are sort of like a waste of time to listen to, but he's really profound about why he's not a failure. And one level from the eyes of the world, I mean, on one level, they thought we'd just be, we'd be disappeared by now, and on the other hand, they might even say, oh, well, they're just tiny and they're just like a little ginger group and they have no impact.

Well, hello, GAFCON. But the point of matter, here's the point, if you could put up the point, Anderson, that would be great. The true and living God is untamed, untameable, and pure goodness and love.

You see, to sort of say that you'd make this correct doctrinal statement, therefore this type of success is going to happen to me, that implies that God is sort of like a labradoodle. You know?

[36 : 28] Something you can have nice Instagram posts with, they always do what you like. But God isn't a tame lion. He's not tamed, he's completely untameable, and fortunately, he's good.

And here's the thing, our God is playing the long game and the deep game. He's playing the deep game because he's trying to turn his children into a very different person, one who's fit for eternity.

And sometimes setbacks help fit you for eternity. Sometimes diminishment helps fit you for eternity. And he's playing the long game for eternity, he's playing the deep game in you.

And so you can't be, and we take these doctrines as if somehow or another God is going to give us exactly what we want right now. No, no, no, no, no, he's not tamed. He's untameable, but he's good.

And here's the other thing. Do you notice what it said? It's a bit of a scary thing. Look at what he says in verse 22 again. He says, For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way since we had told the king the hand of our God is for good and all who seek him and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.

[37 : 45] And in a sense, it describes that all human beings, apart from grace, that we have forsaken the true and living God. And it's a very powerful thing here to hear that his wrath is against us.

But you know, for those of us who are Christians, what do two gospels say that Jesus said upon the cross? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

What's my hope? If you could put up the point. When you and I had forsaken the true and living God, Jesus came to die forsaken by God so that you could truly live as his adopted child.

That's the hope of the gospel. When I had forsaken God, Jesus came to be forsaken by God that you and I might truly live.

That's what the gospel is. That's what we receive, the personal work of Christ. And it's in that context, just in closing, how we are to understand humility. Because humility doesn't mean thinking bad thoughts about ourselves.

[39 : 00] It doesn't mean belittling ourselves. It doesn't mean saying, I'm so stupid. I'm so stupid. I'm so stupid. I hate my... That's not humility. That's the devil. If you could put up the last point, that would be good.

As the person and work of Jesus becomes more real to your heart, his presence and his word help you to de-flatter. I just made that word up.

De-flatter yourself and live authentic and free in the real world. See, what's the Bible doing? I, in my pride and vanity, like to think I'm a source of light.

I'm a source of blessing. I'm a source of wisdom. I'm a source of power. I'm a source of all of these things. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. George, you're not a spark of the divine, blazing bright that everybody should marvel at.

You're a warped, cracked mirror, missing pieces. And all the light that comes through you has come from me. And you know what?

[40 : 05] To learn that is to be in the real world. That's to be humbled. It's to be humbled by the truth of God's word and humbled in a way that I don't have to be, I don't have to try to pretend.

I start to learn not to pretend, not to think more of myself because I can remember that Jesus cried from the cross for me who had forsaken God, that out of love for me he called out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

So I can become his child by adoption and grace. And as that becomes more real, I can allow the work and the person and the word of Jesus to deflatter myself by the truth.

It is very freeing to know that you are but a mirror. That Christ points to himself and into the world. That is so freeing.

The burden, pride, pride crushes you. Always being right crushes you. Never doing wrong crushes you.

[41 : 09] building your own identity crushes you. It is freeing to know that you are a mirror in the hands of the living God.

Please stand. Close in prayer. Just bow our heads in prayer. Father, Father, if there are any here who, they've been searching, they've been watching, trying to figure things out, and Father, this is spoken, you're, if there are any here listening to this as I pray to you, Father, and they conceal a pull that they know they do have that longing and that yearning and they want to set down the burden of their pride and actually to finally be authentic and free, Father, help them to know that it is you, it is your son knocking at the door of their heart, and Father, help them even now to turn to Jesus, to imagine and to say, I open the door of my heart and I ask that you would come in and that you would come in as my Savior and Lord and I give you the run of the whole place and I want to know your love and your freedom and please be my Savior and my Lord and Father, for all of us who've already maybe had that moment or realize that we've had that moment or grown into that moment, we ask, Father, that the Holy Spirit would help us to so remember Jesus and so trust his word and his goodness and his untamable goodness and love that we might trust his hands upon us and his hands on our life that he is always turning us towards you that your light and goodness and beauty and justice and mercy might shine into the world and so, Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would do that wonderful work of grace within us and we ask this in the name of Jesus and all God people said,

Amen.