Relating to God in His Fury and Forgiveness

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Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0:00] All right. I need to say some pastoral stuff. For three Sundays, I've had you, or the Lord has had us, in a verse-by-verse exposition of Genesis 19 dealing with Sodom and Gomorrah and the very, very weighty and heavy and yucky issue of sexual sin.

I know what it's like to sit under that kind of preaching and have Sunday after Sunday the weightiness of that topic just sitting on you.
Now, what I'm saying to you this morning isn't out of embarrassment. I'm not embarrassed by the topic. I got over that a long time ago as a counselor because people bring that stuff into your office and sit in front of you and you hear all kinds of stuff.
And you've got to get past that to help them. You can't make it about you in that moment, you know. You're red-faced and sweating bullets because you don't want to deal with this kind of thing. You've got to enter into that mess and help them with the truth because that's going to set them free.
So, it's not embarrassment. I'm not embarrassed for God or that that's in the Bible. It's nothing like that. It's just, as Greg and I pray for you and as we carry the privilege of ministering to your hearts, I understand and want you to know we understand that that topic is a difficult one.
[1:33] It's one of those things where if I had spent the last three Sundays in a passage that talked about drunkenness and I'd said, oh, these drunks, you know, we've got to pray for these. You'd be like, yeah, you know, we've got that.

But you start dealing in the perversion of sexual sin and all the yuckiness that the Bible described attended with that and you recognize that, boy, this is some really, really bad stuff.
This is just how deep the depravity barrel goes. You know, you just kind of go down to the bottom when you get there. So, folks, in that light, with that in mind, I want to make sure that we give you as much to put into your ammo bag, spiritual ammo bags, mag pouches, as we possibly can in the way of being able to answer for your own heart and for those in your life, these issues that revolve around and are centered in God's good and holy character.
The reason that sin is sin and the reason that sin is so terrible is because it is an offense against a holy God. And so, what we want to do is magnify the holiness of our God, not extol the badness of sin.
Sin is bad because God is good and perfect. So, as we magnify the character of our God, as we see the loving kindness of God, I wanted to do something a little different with you this morning on the heels of Genesis 19.
[3:15] Before we get into Genesis 20 and we see Abraham blow it again in the same way that he's done, you're like, oh man, are we ever going to get to the good stuff where people are just kind of praising God and living the happy life?

Well, you guys know that there are seasons in life when even we, as we walk with the Lord, deal with all kinds of issues that life throws at us. And I was, Nolan, I was talking with your mom this morning and she was just giving me a brief synopsis of some of the things that you've had to face, brother, as you've gone off to school and conversations you've had.
But praise God, brother, that you've stood strong in your faith, that you've spoken the truth in love, and we need to pray for Nolan. This is who this is targeted for is folks that we know, our kids, as they grow up and move into the adult world, they're going to face this.
In fact, you know that they're facing it at six years old. I mean, we have six-year-olds that are going to clinics and having sex change operations at six years old. And this is just blowing up all over the world.
We have a very confused world as it relates to sexuality, sexual identity, and the greater reality that they are made in the image of God and their identity is given to them by the value God places on

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them in making them.
[4:36] They want to define themselves as gay, as homosexual, as lesbian, as LGBTQT+, ABC, all this mess. They don't understand.

They don't appreciate the fact that a holy God made them and He made them to worship Him. And so we want to call them to that. Now, one other thing for our visitors, we're not saying all this to look down our noses in pride on people who struggle in sexual sin with homosexuality and lesbianism and those kinds of things.
We want to see those people delivered from what God calls an abomination. God calls those things perversion. They're not normal.
They're not good for society. They're not good for families. They're not good for the people involved in that. So in love, we want to reach out to them and bring them from that.
Now, we don't do that because we say we're right and they're wrong. We say, God says this is wrong which means there's a right and we want to call them to that right.
[5:42] Now, that right has a name and His name is Jesus. We're calling them to a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ so that they can receive forgiveness for their sins and live with God forever.

Alright, now having said all of that, what I'm going to do this morning is take several passages. I'll say this in just a moment. Several passages from Scripture and just speak for me rather briefly about answering some questions.
I know, well, three sermons in Genesis 19. Come on, couldn't you have done it in one and just got it over with? It's like the shot, you know. Doc, just stick it. Just get it over with, you know, instead of and then take and then three times.
No, now we're going to move on. So that's why I'm bringing this to you. Now, you've probably heard in your travels, if you've been a Christian for very long, maybe even as a non-Christian, the teaching that God visits the sins of the fathers on the sons.
Have you heard this? And have you heard people quote the scripture that would say something to that effect? The sins of the fathers are visited on their sons or their daughters.
[6:54] The idea is that God punishes the children for what the fathers and mothers do in their sin. All right? Now, I'm glad I see some heads shaking. No. But when we look into the scripture for the ways God deals with sin and sinners, all right, vis-a-vis the way that he's dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah, when we look at the ways God punishes sin, identifies sin, forgives it, and how he leads people to live repenting of sin, does all of that square with the idea that God punishes people, not just for the sins they themselves commit, but also for the sins that other people commit?

Will God punish me and hold me accountable for the sins that my dad committed while raising me or relating to me or my mom or my brother or my sisters?
Does God do that? Now, to answer that question, I've chosen three passages of scripture that will shed light on this issue. So the title that I'm working from this morning, and I know this is unusual because this isn't a typical exposition, we'll get back to chapter 20 in Genesis next Sunday, Lord willing, relating to God in his fury and in his forgiveness.
Now, we see in fury and forgiveness these two sides are the same coin of God's character. God is a God of wrath, but he is also a God of forgiveness. How do we reconcile those things?
And better, how do we understand them that we might better relate to the Lord, particularly while we're witnessing to other people who are living under the wrath or fury of the Lord in their sin because they've not yet come to trust Jesus for forgiveness of sin.
[8:42] So three passages of scripture that we're going to look at today to help us establish how God relates to sinners in their sin. Do these people get God's fury or God's forgiveness?

Now, the first example that I want to bring to you dealing with God's wisdom and handling individual sinners comes from a man named Thomas Chalmers. And a few of you will know that name.
Thomas Chalmers was a pastor in Glasgow, Scotland. He was a professor of theology at the University of Edinburgh in the early 1800s.
And he has this sermon or treatise from Isaiah 27 titled Fury Not in God. And it deals with balancing God's fury against sin with God's benevolence for sinners.
Now, I read this and took this material from an appendix in John MacArthur's book, Loving God. Back in the back, I don't know, appendix F or something like that.

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[9:47] And he reproduced the sermon that Chalmers took this from. The passage that we want to look at with this in Isaiah 27, Isaiah 27, if you'll go there with me.

Now, I'm going to focus, as Chalmers did, on verses 4 and 5, but we'll read from verse 1 just to walk you into the context of what we're dealing with.
I'll read from 1 down through 6. And I'm reading from the New American Standard version of Scripture. Isaiah 27 deals with Israel's deliverance.
In that day that he's referencing here, the Lord will punish Leviathan, the fleeing serpent. So there's some metaphorical issue going on here. With his fierce and great and mighty sword, even Leviathan, the twisted serpent, and he will kill, that is, he, capital H, God will kill the dragon who lives in the sea.
Now what I want you to do here for the sake of time and just see that this is a pronouncement of judgment, isn't it? This is judgment. Now verse 2, In that day a vineyard of wine, sing of it.
[11:00] I, the Lord, am its keeper. I water it every moment so that no one will damage it. I guard it night and day. Then he says this very interesting thing, I have no wrath.

Should someone give me briars and thorns in battle, then I would step on them, I would burn them completely. Or let him rely on my protection, let him make peace with me, let him make peace with me.
So we have a very interesting statement in verse 4 where Chalmers is going to zero in, I have no wrath. And then in verse 5, the way my translation begins, or.
So we have some contrast going on here. And this is how Chalmers would break it down. He says, there are three distinct lessons in this text, verses 4 and 5.
The first is that fury is not in God. The second, that God does not want to glorify himself by the death of sinners. And he parenthetically mentions who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle.
[12:14] The third is the invitation. And that references, take hold of my strength that you may make peace with me. And you shall make peace with me.

Now the first thing that Chalmers had to confront was the fact, as you well know from the last few sermons, that scripture clearly demonstrates that God is a God of wrath.
wrath. His wrath is his holy anger that he pours out on his enemies and on the enemies of his people. Now haven't we seen that clearly demonstrated in the last few sermons in Genesis 19? He not only destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah in his judgment on those wicked folks, but there were other cities in that valley that were also destroyed. Now he spared one of the cities, a very, very small one that was in that valley because Lot fled there.
You remember the name of that city? Zoar. Very good, Aidan. And Zoar means small. Small. And that was the argument that Lot made as he lobbied the angels not to make him go up into the mountains to live and flee from God's wrath, but to go to a city.
[13:29] Let me go to where I can be at least a little comfortable and be around what I know. And so he did, but he ended up in the mountains anyway. The point being, God not only destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, but he destroyed all the cities of the valley and made it desolate so that he destroyed every plant and every living thing.

When Abraham awoke the next morning and went to the hilltop, the rise, looking down into the valley, it says that all he saw was what? Smoke and ash.
Smoke and ash. This was the panoramic view of God's judgment and the destruction that God brought. Now, what church, what was the number one issue or sin being expressed in Sodom and Gomorrah that the scripture itself brought out to us and said, this is why God's judging these people?
What was it? Homosexuality. Now, we cannot escape that, and I spent three sermons carefully unpacking that for you because I know what you hear.
I know that you hear that the Bible doesn't speak against homosexuality. And you get all these weird gymnastics going on with texts and people who really don't know what they're talking about, trying to justify it.
[14:47] Now, Chalmers had to say, okay, we have this God acting in wrath throughout the scripture, but then we see in this text that he says this.

I put it up on the screen. I have no wrath. How do we reconcile that? Well, the answer comes in the context of these verses.

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If you go back and look at this with me again, beginning in verse 2. In that day, now he's talking about that day of judgment that's being described in verse 1. In that day, now look what he says, and this is all that he says in verse 2.
A vineyard of wine. Sing of it. Now, doesn't that just not fit very well at first with what you're seeing in the way?
A vineyard. I'm going to do this terrible destruction. Now look, a vineyard. Oh, wonderful. Sing of it. And you think, what? What is going on? I, the Lord, though, am its keeper.
[15:50] I water it every moment. Every moment. So God is showing us, I am tending this garden with great care, affection, and attention. So that, look, no one will damage it.

God is its protector, its guardian. I guard it night and day. So, whatever this is, whatever metaphorically this is referring to, it's very, very special to God.
And on the heels of that, he says, I have no wrath. Now, what is he talking about in this? Well, once again, look at verses 5 and 6.
Or, or, the or is referring to what he just said at the end of verse 4. Let him rely on my protection. Let him make peace with me.
Yes, let him make peace. In the days to come, Jacob will take root. Israel will blossom. There's that garden metaphor again, and sprout. And they will fill the whole world with fruit.
[16:49] Now, this will happen because of Jesus, the Messiah, in the future. All right, now, what are we dealing with? Here's the deal that Chalmers wants to make clear.

God is inviting people to come to him to be reconciled with him. That is the context. That's the flavor or tone or tenor of the passage.
Those outside God's vineyard are invited to come into and partake of the benefits of his vineyard. Don't stay outside of it.
Come in and then sing of it. A glorious vineyard. In other words, the salvation of God. Come to the salvation of God. You are being invited to partake.
Now, this is the tone and heart of the passage. And so, you have to hold on to that to help you in the context interpret and understand this very brief statement, but very powerful one.
[17:46] I have no wrath. All right, you're with me so far. I need head nods or something because you know I'll back up and do it again. You know what I was taught out at Masters, right?

How did they say this? I always get it backwards sometimes. A fog in the pulpit creates a mist in the pulpit creates a fog. Anyway, if I'm not clear on it, then I'm only going to make it more muddy for you.
So, yeah, you're with me? Okay. I hope the context here is being made clear. Now, let's let Chalmers weigh in in what he said because I can't improve on it and I want you to see his take on this.
He says, fury will be discharged on those who reject the invitation. But we cannot say that there is any exercise of fury in God, note, at the time of giving the invitation.
In fact, our text explicitly, and I just tried to show you that, and directly states God's assurance to the contrary.
[18:55] Listen, God's assurance to the contrary. I have no wrath in me in this moment of offering to you the invitation for you to come and bear the salvation that I freely give to you.

And we know that that salvation is offered in the person of? Jesus his son. We must have a relationship with Jesus his son. And God through the miracle of our rebirth makes that a reality. You have that reality living in you. I do. This is the heart of God. I don't want you to miss what is the heart of our God in this. After seeing God judge Sodom and Gomorrah, we saw the glimpses of his salvation as the angels grabbed the hands of Lot and his wife and his two daughters had to put hands on them and literally pull them out of the city.
Do you remember that? What did the Bible say? I made a big deal. He hesitated. And as he hesitated with God's wrath getting ready to be poured down, the angels grabbed them and literally led them out of the city, didn't he?
So much was Sodom in Lot. And yet Hebrews tells us he was a righteous man. So that's why I preached that the way that I did these last few sermons.
[20:17] If you look with me again at verse 5, or let him rely on my protection. My Bible interprets that word there as protection. Yours may say strength, my strength.

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So God's invitation to salvation is not wrath. That's the point. God is not saying, look, this is going to fall a little short, but it'd be kind of like you relating to someone that you care about and that you're trying to help in some way, but you look at them because of something they've said or done and you look at them and say, you know what, I hate you.
I don't even want to be around you. Okay? Hey, what do you want to do for dinner tonight? You want to go out? You laugh because that's silly.
But can you have times when you're angry but also times when you're not angry and you're very inviting? And this is what God is saying.
In these moments that I'm making this invitation to you, I'm not angry with you. I'm not wanting to pour my wrath out on you in the moments I'm inviting you to come to me.
[21:32] Do you see that? Do you see how that can be both and? not either or. And again, folks, I'm trying to help you with this because people out there are going to try to twist you up with this.

They're going to try to tell you, you know, I don't want to have anything to do with a God who does things like I read in the Bible to people killing babies and women and destroying entire cities of people.
Who would want to serve a God like that? They miss the context of who this God is and that God must punish sin. They don't think enough about what God has done to deliver us from that punishment.
What He Himself has suffered literally on the cross to bring us out of that punishment by taking that punishment on Himself. This is where we need to help people spend their time thinking.
So God's invitation to salvation is not wrath. God's strength in verse 5, God's protection, strength, to overcome their sins will be their salvation so that God will make them to be at peace with Him.
[22:40] Now that's a miracle. These are people who are enemies of God and He's going to make them be at peace with Him. That's a miracle. This peace is the treasure of being with Jesus in all you face in life.

That's how we understand the peace of God explained to us in the New Testament. In fact, look at this. Jesus said, Peace I leave with you.
My peace, the peace of Jesus Himself, I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. No, it's not that. It's not false peace, not false security.
Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. And Jesus drives right in to where we live. The troubles and the fears that come our way in the seasons of life.
the peace that's being described here is a peace that Jesus Himself is. Jesus is peace and ministers peace to us.
[23:40] He comes to live in us and that peace is in us. And then we, we are called to live in that peace with Him each and every day. Now folks, what doesn't this say?

It does not say you won't have issues. It doesn't say that you won't have problems. You're no different than anybody else in the world in that regard.
We're all human and we're all living in a fallen world around fallen people and we ourselves struggle with sin, right? Now listen to this. While He didn't say that we won't have troubles, He said you don't have to live having those troubles define you.
And so your heart doesn't have to be in a constant state of being troubled, weighed down, worried, anxious, and what does He say? Fearful.
Fearful. That's a choice. If you live like that, you're making a choice. And so you can't blame it on God.
[24:42] Now hear me, please hear your pastor. And you cannot blame it on someone else. So and so makes me so angry. So and so does this and does that and so keeps me in this spirit or this attitude of fear or anxiety.

It's not what it says. If you're a Christian, Jesus says, my peace I give to you. Now it's up to you to take it, to receive it, and to live in it.
If you don't know how, come talk to us. That's what we're here for. Now Chalmers summarized this first section saying the day of the fury of the Lord is approaching.
You see this on the screen. The terror of his wrath on that day will be more horrible than all the rest of the destruction of the universe. Now I don't have time to take you there, but he's referencing 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 10 and following where it talks about the earth is going to be destroyed in a great fervent heat of fire and flame, right?

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And it's all going to melt. It's going to be so intense. And he's saying that day's coming and it's going to be more horrible than all the rest of the destruction of the universe. But then he adds this.
[25:58] Listen, he adds this. I'll put it up here on the screen. But what I have to tell you on this day is this. Such fury is not now in God.

Now is an opportunity to make peace with God for all eternity. And if you will only hear on this day of your merciful visitation, you will be born off in safety from all those horrors.
Amid the wild war and frenzy of the reeling elements of divine judgment, you will be carried by the arms of love to a place of security and everlasting triumph.
Folks, there's your peace. You need to put that in both hip pockets and say, there's my peace right there. What can the world do to me? Now, the second lesson from this text concerns this.
Should someone give me briars and thorns in battle, then I would step on them and I would burn them completely. Now, I totally understand that this is a little bit difficult to kind of comprehend.
[27:10] Thorns and briars then are biblical metaphors for the unbelieving who set themselves as enemies of God. Now, the issue here is those who rebel against God set themselves at odds with God.

And maybe they don't even realize that's the reality of it. See, Satan blinds them to these truths. That's why we have to preach and teach and share. We have to be God's instruments to help the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit works in us to help them hear the truth of the Lord and then trust the Spirit to open their eyes just like he did us and say, oh my goodness, yes, I've never thought of myself in that way before, but that's what God says?
Yes, yes, you're his enemy. You set yourself against him to live as your own little God, do what you want to do, have nothing to do with the God who made you and brought you into the world.
And so in that way, he's saying you are doing battle with God. Now, battling God is the problem as I put it up here on the screen. It's not a problem for God, but for them. For them.
And Chalmers' point is this, the outcome of this battle between God and unbelievers is this, in his wrath and judgment, God would easily step on these people and burn them up utterly.
[28:33] Is that not what we saw in Sodom and Gomorrah? In other words, no contest. No contest. This is an unfair fight. God does not enter into fights in an equal way.

He enters in to win. And he wins every single time. yes, now you know why she said amen? Because in God's fight for my soul, he won.
Now, am I supposed to say, oh, well, you know what? That's not fair. I didn't what say did I have in that? Well, I'll tell you what say I had in it.
I was chasing sin and self. And God grabbed me and said, I don't think so. And he won the fight for my soul. Now, we'll let you decide then at that point, who's the hero of that story?
God. Jesus. Amen. This is what we celebrate. We don't get all hung up on this Sodom and Gomorrah thing or this punishment thing.
[29:40] We all know that we deserve God's punishment and that we get his mercy. We receive from him the power to live a holy life by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. And so we're grateful for that.

This is the point that he's trying to make here. God would easily step on them and this would be no contest. I'm going to take you to one other place real quickly.
I had a couple here. Let me take you to Hebrews. hold your finger there in Isaiah and go back to Hebrews. Now this is all over the Bible. But we'll just do it here.
Chapter 6 and I'll read in verses 7 and 8. And I'm doing this because Greg mentioned this being in Hebrews and all. I want to take a passage from there. Hebrews chapter 6 beginning in verse 7.
for ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled receives a blessing from God.
[30:46] But, verse 8, if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed and it ends up being burned.

Yes? Now, what are we dealing with here? I just wanted to point out for you contextually what we're talking about here in this falling away from God. People who refuse to come to the Lord or who make a pretense of religion and then run away from what they've seen and heard.
Listen, in verse 7 we have believers receiving a blessing from the Lord and the fruit of their lives in the Holy Spirit showing that. In verse 8 we have something useless.

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This in the sight of God are unbelievers. People who set themselves against God. They are thorns and thistles and worthless to God. They will be cursed and end up being burned.
This is the punishment. This is hell. Do you see that? This is all over it. Now, Chalmers makes a comment here. Is that where I want to go?
[31:55] Let me make sure I'm where I'm supposed to be. There it is. Why set up then a contest so unequal as this?

Why would we allow people to be in this position of proudly stiffening themselves against God as if they can stand against the Lord and do their own thing?
Why battle God? Why put the wicked in battle array against him who could go through them and devour them in an instant by the breath of his fury? So God is saying in the text that this is not what he is wanting.
He does not want to set himself forth as an enemy or as a strong man armed against them for battle. It is a battle he is not at all disposed to enter into.
The glory he would achieve by a victory over a host so feeble is not a glory that his heart is at all set upon. He would rather that sinners take hold of his strength, that's the protection of that verse, and make peace with him.
[33:04] Do you see that? Isn't that good? Now that's the heart of your God and folks as much as we have to tell people about the bad and the wrong of living in sin against God we want to be able to hasten to this heart of the Lord that says come to me and make peace with me.

Let me love you. Let me love you for all eternity. Let me erase everything that would send you away from me forever. Let me erase that eradicate it and let me draw you to myself and then hold you dear to myself forever and ever for all eternity.
This is the heart of the Lord and he says I get more glory from salvation than I do from this. This is the idea that Chalmers is trying to put through to us and I think he's making a good point with all of this.
Now I can give you this third lesson very quickly. The third lesson as it's up on the screen concerns God's invitation for sinners to avoid their destruction by his holy wrath and to come to him so that in this protection they will know peace with God.
So this is a segue from what I just was talking about in point two. Chalmers says this, I'll just quote him and be done here with this, God will certainly be glorified in the destruction of the sinner.
[34:25] Yes he will, we're not denying that, the Bible makes that clear, but he prefers the glory that is through the salvation of sinners. It's why he makes the invitation. To destroy you is to do no more than to set fire to briars and thorns and to consume them, but to save you.

This is indeed the power of God and the wisdom of God. This is the mighty achievement which angels desire to look into. from 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 12. You with me?
Even the angels desire to look into this cross event and understand the heart of God in saving sinners. That he would give his own son to stand in the place of Jeff Jackson as a sinner, me a sinner, and take my sin on himself as he hung on the cross, and then have God punish Jesus for the sins I committed as if he committed them.
So Jesus gets the punishment I deserve, and he frees me from that punishment forever. Then, God says, I want to bless you in my son and the life that he lived which was sinless.
So I am going to treat you from now on as if you lived the sinless life my son lived. And that is why I am righteous in the sight of God because of his son.
[35:46] I get the righteousness of Jesus. I get that sense of the sinlessness of his life applied to me as if I lived it. And that is how God sees me.

That is how God sees you if you are in Jesus Christ. This is what a relationship with Jesus brings you. Forgiveness for your sin, and then God giving you by the love of his heart, the life of his son, that not only animates a dead soul that was at war with him, but now guarantees you an eternal life with him where you will never cry or be in pain, you will never die again.
I mean I can't. And you will be in a place of glory that is beyond the imagination of the human mind. You cannot grasp or comprehend the glory that it will be to be in the presence of Jesus and live in the paradise that he has made for you as his people.
Why wouldn't I preach that? Right? Now see, that gets you this, and I'm grateful. I didn't get any of that with Sodom and Gomorrah.

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Come on! It's all truth. But this is the heart of our God. This is the goodness that we all celebrate. Every Sunday we come here, we have to face the fact that we've sinned this week.
[37:11] We ask God's forgiveness. We look to the Lord in grace. We ask God to help us strive and persevere in the holiness of the Spirit of God living in us, and we move on. We move on.

We don't overlook it. We don't treat it like it's not important. We give it to the Lord, and we move forward and say, God, help me live the life that honors Jesus. Help me have more and more of his character in my life.
Help me to be more kind this week, more patient this week. Help me to have a sense of meekness about my life, a meekness that people will recognize so that I can say, that's Jesus working in me, friend.
That's Jesus. It's not because I'm a good person. It's the Lord. Now, very quickly, let me take you to one other place here before I take you to my final New Testament passage.
This is Ezekiel 18. This is Ezekiel 18. Ezekiel 18. This is, again, a passage I'm going to use to clarify God's position on punishing sinners and saving sinners.
[38:12] Now, this is a very important chapter. It's been a while since I had you here. Many of the people who joined our church within the last year or so have never heard me do anything with this.

Now, let's just read down through this because then I have to make some comments very quickly. I'm going to do it as I read through the passage itself rather than come back and have to do it all twice.
I want to save a little bit of time. So, Ezekiel 18. Then the word of the Lord came to me, Ezekiel the prophet, saying, What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, the fathers eat the sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge?
As I live, declares the Lord God, you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore. Behold, all souls are mine.
Now, do you see that? All souls. It doesn't matter. Believing, unbelieving, Christian, non-Christian, because God made every one of them. And they're precious to him. All souls are mine.
[39:22] The soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine. Now, notice, folks, the soul who sins will die.

And so, the emphasis here is individual responsibility. That's what's being taken care of here in these first four verses. This is what we're looking at.
Now, this chapter can be outlined in a couple of different ways. I'm going to choose to do it this way. Dr. MacArthur has, I think, two or three scenarios kind of outlined here. And I saw what he did as he combined some of these.
But I'm going to take them in a dose of five because I want to highlight the individuality that's happening here. I'm not saying Dr. MacArthur's wrong. Please don't hear me say that. I would never say that and be anethnic.
No. What I'm saying here carefully is that I'm just doing this so that maybe we'll make it a little more clear for us. It captures the main idea that God always deals justly right and fairly with each individual he confronts.
[40:25] All right. Now, let me show you up here on the screen what we're dealing with. The problem being confronted here is whether God is just in his dealings with sinners. Is God fair?

Do we really serve an honest, genuine, sincere, fair, just, righteous God? Or do we serve a fickle God who himself is a bit confused about how to deal with us because our situations become so complicated and sticky?
He stands back and goes, yeah, I don't know. Good luck. What's going on here? The tension being resolved concerns Israel accusing God of acting unfairly with them.
So in verse 2, look at verse 2 again, God is indicting Israel and he's asking, in effect, why are you accusing me? The proverb is their means of doing that.
And so what they're saying in that proverb is this, we are being judged and punished by God for the sins our fathers committed and it's not fair of God to do that to us. They sinned, they ate the sour grapes, but we get the punishment, the bitterness.
[41:33] The bitterness. We have to live with that. So God starts his answer to this accusation of his unfairness and harshness in verse 3. He moves on to verse 4 and sets the record straight in how he sees the issue of personal responsibility for sin.

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Nope. I deal with each person as an individual. I do not bless you or punish you based on the life of another person. You may receive blessing from being around someone who lives a godly life.
I hope you do. As you relate to them, you should feel the blessing of God on their life and how God will use them in your life. Yes, that happens. You can also live under the consequences of someone who sins around you and against you, right?
And so you can feel the negative impact. Now, when we talk about consequences that are happening as a result of sin going on in someone's life, that's different from saying that God takes the responsibility to punish you for the sin someone else does.
All right, are you with me? Now, we're going to clarify that as God takes us down through the passage. Here's the issue that's being dealt with. The soul who sins will die.
[42:46] All right, this represents an unrepentant person living in unbelief toward God. This is a person rejecting God's offer for salvation and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

No, don't want anything to do with that. Thank you very much. I'll do my own thing. Now, before I show you the passage in a little more detail, Deuteronomy, hold your finger here, Deuteronomy 24, 16.
Deuteronomy 24, 16. I thought of this and I had to put this in here real quick because this will bring some clarity.
in this list of what my title for here in this section is sundry laws, you know, various laws that Moses is wanting the people to understand they need to live by.
We come down to verse 16 and he says, fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers. Everyone shall be put to death for his own sin.
[43:57] Now, can you get more clear than that? All right. So keep that in mind. The soul who sins will die. Now we see five different souls. I'm going to call them in action and how God deals with each of these particular situations or souls, if you will.

In verses five through nine, I'll put them up here in running order as we deal with them. Verse verses five through nine. God explains his position. Now notice what happens if a man is righteous. All right. So this is a person who's living in belief, surrendering his life to God. And if he practices because of that belief, because of that relationship with God, he practices, he lives, he acts out justice and righteousness.
He doesn't eat at the mountain shrines. Those are the high worship places. He doesn't lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel. That's the idolatry or defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman during her menstrual period.
Because back in that time, they were told not to do that. If a man does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, does not commit robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing.
[45:12] If he does not, does not lend money on interest or take increase. If he keeps his hand from iniquity and executes true justice between man and man, if he walks in my statutes and my ordinances so as to deal faithfully, he is righteous and will surely live, declares the Lord.

So there's an example of a person who's trying to be rightly related to the Lord and because God has brought him to himself, this guy can live out of that work that the Spirit is doing in him.
So his actions and lifestyle show, he demonstrate, that God is doing this work in him. You with me? All right, now that's the first one that he deals with. Then he goes on to this second one, verses 10 through 13.
This is where God's punishment of individual sin is highlighted. Then he may have a, so we have a righteous father. They were talking about a father there, but he may have a violent son who sheds blood, who doesn't, who does any of these things to a brother, though he himself did not do any of these things, the other, the father.
That is, he even eats at the mountain shrines and defiles his neighbor's wife. So he does all the things that the other, his dad didn't do. He oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, doesn't restore a pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols and commits abomination.
[46:41] See, that's what God thinks about that. He lends money on interest and takes increase. So in other words, he tries to cheat people. Will he live? Will this guy live?

Should I let a guy like that live? He will not live. He has committed all these abominations. He will surely be put to death. His blood will be on whose head?

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He cannot blame shift. It's so-and-so's fault. It's my wife's fault. It's my husband's fault. It's my uncle's fault. It's my employer. It's my boss. It's no, it's not.
That's not the way God operates. Now look at this third one. Verses 14 through 20. A son who does right in God's sight. Now look how he brings it up.
Another commentator dealt with this in generation. So now we're on the third generation. Now behold, he has a son who has observed. So now the wicked son who had a righteous father.
[47:38] Now the wicked son has a son. Now behold, he has a son who has observed all his father's sins, which he committed and observing does not do likewise.

So in the third generation, this son is going to repent. He's not going to be like his wicked dad. He does not eat at the mountain shrines or lift his eyes to idols as the house of Israel.
He doesn't defile his neighbor's wife, oppress anyone, retain a pledge, commit robbery. But he gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing. He keeps his hand from the poor.
Does not take interest. In other words, he doesn't. He's not taking advantage of. He executes my ordinances and walks in my statutes. Now notice, he will not die for his father's iniquity.
He will surely live. See? Now as for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother and did what was not good among his people, behold, he will die for his iniquity.
[48:35] Isn't that interesting? Notice 19. Yet you say, uh-oh, why should the son not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity? When the son has practiced justice and righteousness and has observed all my statutes and done them, he shall surely live.

God says, I'm not like you. I don't do stuff that's wrong and unjust and fickle and, you know, good for the moment kind of thing for me. I'm consistent in my character.
I don't play favorites. This is the Lord. So verse 20, the person who sins will die. That's individual responsibility. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity.
The righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself. Now this is God. This in God's economy is the fairness.
Verses 21 through 23, repentance in a sinner's life. We're going to see this through the end of the chapter just about. But if the wicked man turns from all his sins, which he has committed, and observes all my statutes and practices, justice and righteousness, he then shall surely live.
[49:48] He shall not die. See? There's hope. All his transgressions. How many? All his transgressions, which he has committed, will not be remembered against him.

How can that be? My sin will not be remembered. Because of his righteousness, which he has practiced, he will live. Now folks, this is not work salvation.
He's practicing righteousness because God's put righteousness in him. And so he's living it out. And it becomes evidence that God's done this work in his life. Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked?
declares the Lord God. Rather than that he should turn from his ways and live. That's God's preference. That he should turn from his ways and live.
Notice what it says then in 24. This is personal responsibility for sin. But when a righteous man turns away from... Now this is the falling away in Hebrews.
[50:47] When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live? Can he claim by his mouth to be righteous and then live like hell?

Like devils? All his righteous deeds, which he has done, will not be remembered for his treachery. This is spiritual treachery. Which he has committed against God and his sin which he has committed.
For them he will what? Die. Now what are we talking about? Listen. Please listen. We are not... The scripture is not being inconsistent here.
We're not talking about a person that we would say truly saved or born again. We're talking about someone who was never truly in the Lord. Never had a true relationship with God where God had done a work of miracle in his or her life to save them.
This is a person who was highly religious and had the religious exterior to go along with it. But at some point in their life they fall away, they turn away, and they begin to live in this unrighteousness and they demonstrate what was really going on all along.

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[51:54] So this is not lose your salvation stuff. We don't believe that. You cannot lose your salvation. If God does a work in you, it's for eternity. Hallelujah. So this is what we're dealing with in this person.

And that goes down through 26. Will he live? No. All of it won't be remembered. He will die. Yet you say, the way of the Lord is not right. See, there's the issue. That is spiteful. Yet you say, Israel, the way of the Lord is not right.
Now hear now, O house of Israel, is my way not right? Is it not your ways that are not right? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and dies because of it for his iniquity which he has committed, he will die.
Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he's committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life because he considered. He turned away from all his transgression which he had committed.
He shall surely live. He shall not die. But the house of Israel says, the way of the Lord is not right. But are my ways not right, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not right?
[53:06] This is the problem. This is the issue that we're facing. It's the root of the sinful issue of Israel which the Lord now reveals. Israel is spitefully deluded about God and his ways.

They're trying to form God and God's character from what they know about themselves. They're humanizing God in a way that makes God this fickle, nonsensical kind of person.
He just takes each situation and tries to exploit it. That's what we do. The way of the Lord is not right. It's an assault on God's character as being righteous in himself.
Now notice, notice from the psalm that we read this morning in our call to worship. Here it is. The Lord is good to all. His mercies are over all his works.
The Lord is righteous in all his ways, kind in all his deeds. The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him.
[54:10] He will also hear their cry and will save them. The Lord keeps all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. It's both and, folks.

It's a both and proposition. People cannot hide behind blame-shifting attempts to justify their sins against God. They can't ignore it either. They can spend this lifetime apathetically trying to ignore the reality of who they are and what they need in the Lord Jesus Christ.
But all of those attempts are just those. They're attempts to deny reality. And it's going to catch up. That is not me trying to sound all holier than thou.
It is a loving warning to escape judgment. So in verse 30 down through the end of the chapter in 32, Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, because God's the only one who's set up to do that judgment.
Each according to his conduct. Do you see that? I will judge you, but I'm going to judge you individually. Each one of you according to the life you lived. Not just what your mouth said, but what you lived.
[55:18] So what does God say in verse 30? Repent and turn away from all your sins, transgressions, evil, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you.

Don't waste your life. Verse 31, Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.
For why will you die, O house of Israel? See the pleading heart of God. For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies, declares the Lord God. Therefore repent and live.
This is the plea of God. Repent and live. And this is why we can say this is the invitation we're living under right now. There may be places in our country and issues in our country that God is judging as he gives us over to what we want and we see it spiraling down into that barrel of depravity.
But the invitation is open and so God can say as I make this invitation there's no fury. I am not operating in fury against you. I'm inviting you to come and escape. Repent and live. Repent and live.
[56:28] What did he tell Abraham? Okay, fine. If I find ten righteous I'll save the city. Now he didn't find ten righteous. He found one and that one was struggling big time.

And yet he grabbed their hands and he took them out of the city. There was salvation in Sodom and Gomorrah. There was. And it was consistent as I preach with the promise that God made to Abraham.

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Alright, very quickly now I want to take you to this third passage and it's in Mark. I want to take you to a New Testament passage. Now, I preach I have an entire sermon dealing with this.
And so I can't do that today in the few minutes I have left. My third passage as I put up here on the screen my third passage helps us see God's heart of love for self-deceived sinners.
And God's invitation to them to come to Him to be forgiven for their sins and to know His peace. It's costly but it's also free. And you say, Jeff, how can that be? How can it be both costly and free?
[57:36] It doesn't make any sense. We're going to make sense of it. Mark chapter 10. This is what is commonly known as the rich young ruler. In the Gospels we pull together this idea that the guy was rich he was young and he was also some type of ruler.

He had some authority. And so in verse 17 of Mark chapter 10 as he was setting out on a journey this is Jesus capital He a man ran up to Jesus and knelt before Him and asked good teacher what shall I do to inherit eternal life?
Now that's a good question right? And Jesus replied this way why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. So Jesus is already challenging the guy do you recognize me for who I really am as God?
Are you seeing that spiritually? Of course Jesus knew the answer to that. Well you know the commandments so He took him right to his lifestyle. Do not murder do not commit adultery do not steal do not bear false witness do not defraud honor your father and mother and so on.
Now that wasn't all of them. And this man replied to Jesus teacher I have kept all these things from my youth up. Now is that pride? Can any of us say He's saying I've done all this I have not sinned.
[58:50] I've kept all these. I'm a good little legalist. Alright? Now looking up at him Jesus got really really mad and so mad his veins were bulging and he spit all over the guy telling him you filthy stupid sinner.

Is that what it says? Yeah. Looking at him Jesus felt a love for him. Now I want to serve a God like this.
I had Jesus in essence look at me that way one day. He saved me in that moment. That's what I envision. He says one thing you lack. Now He's going to tell this man the truth so this man can be set free in his soul because this man is deceived.
He is self deceived. He thinks he's okay. All He wants to do is this. Look I'm a good guy. I'm doing a good thing. I just lack one thing.
I need you to give me the key that unlocks heaven forever. I'm okay here. I need to take care there. So what's the key? That's what He's asking Jesus and Jesus and Jesus and say hold the phone self deceived person.
[60:02] I love you enough to tell you the truth. One thing you lack go and sell all you possess and give it to the poor and you'll have treasure in heaven and come and follow me. So Jesus answered him didn't He? Told him exactly.

He said I'm going to get right to the heart of the issue. You worship money and the stuff money can give you. That's your God. Renounce that God and come to me as your God and you'll have treasure beyond imagination and you'll have it forever.
And the guy said yes! You got it man! No he didn't did he? No he did not. But at these words the man was saddened and he went away grieving for he was one who owned much property and Jesus looking around said to his disciples now he's going to interpret this event.
Everybody's watching Jesus is now going to interpret what they just saw. How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God. Now the disciples were amazed at Jesus' words but Jesus answered again and said to them children how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God.
I love it when Jesus calls us children His children. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. He's just saying it's impossible for you to come to heaven on your own terms.
[61:19] Well now they were even more astonished and said to Jesus then who can be saved? And looking at them Jesus said with people here it is folks this is it with people it is impossible but not with God for all things are possible with God.

Where have you heard that before? When Sarah laughed inside of herself right? And God said why did she laugh? Is there anything impossible for me? Nothing's impossible for me.

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I do what I want to do I'll do it. You see next year this time of the year you'll have a baby from her. He'll be your son. I told you I was going to do that now I'm going to do it. And he did.
Peter said to him behold we've left everything and followed you. This is Peter saying we're good right Lord? Jesus said truly I say to you there is no one who's left house brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, farms for my sake and for the gospel's sake but he will receive a hundred times as much.
Now in the present age houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, look and I'm looking at them I got so many sisters and brothers I got so many little kids I was hugging on one this morning a beautiful little girl I have kids and grandkids and brothers and sisters a plenty more than I can keep up with and that's just here and in the age to come eternal life verse 31 but many who are first will be last and the last will be first this is God's view is anything too difficult for the Lord?
[62:54] No this wealthy young man was convinced in his own heart that he was already good so he's qualified he's qualified to receive what he needed to inherit eternal life in other words Jesus I've got this life sewn up I'm a good guy living a good life what I need now is I need to be sure that I'm going to get eternal life in the next one so if you could just help me out with that Jesus left the invitation open the man turned away from Jesus Jesus did not turn away from the man to come to heaven to receive forgiveness for sins to inherit eternal life each individual has to come to Jesus on Jesus' terms Jesus' terms now folks listen there is no fury in God as he extends his invitation for anyone to come to him by putting his or her trust for forgiveness of sins in God's holy son now some might ask why would I need to come to God why would I why what reason what rationale let me answer that in a backdoor fashion what happens to you if you don't see the prospect of what happens to you if you don't is terrifying and it's beyond what I want to say but I'm constrained to say you get a devil's hell for eternity you get punishment and death for eternity that punishment and death is a separation from God forever there's not a second chance there's no more opportunity for you to get out of hell you'll want to but you'll have to be there forever you say

Jeff God would do that to someone no that someone did it to themselves what did God say you will die for your sin you will die for your sin and your blood will be on your own head now there's a way to escape his name is Jesus he came to the cross to take on those sins that are going to get you a devil hell God put those sins on Jesus and Jesus died paying the penalty of punishment for death for those sins that you committed and I committed and now God would free us from that penalty forever having put that penalty on his son Jesus stood as your substitute and my substitute so the question why should I come to a God like that because a God like that offers you a savior like that that's why will you bow your heads in prayer with me father after we have rehearsed for several weeks the judgment that you rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah the salvation that you brought to Lot and his daughters as we have witnessed you keeping your promises to Abraham and we'll continue to see you do that we ask now father that you would help us to take into our hearts the great kindness and love of your heart for us as you have wooed us and invited us to partake of your wonderful vineyard of life in Jesus Christ and so I pray if there be anyone in this room this morning who is living in unbelief living as their own God their own rule maker that you will help them to be delivered from that deception that Satan would hold over them that you would free them from that darkness in their soul and help them see the beauty of the light of Jesus reaching out to them and offering them life now and forever more it's in Jesus name we pray and for his glory amen folks we have a couple of things we want to do now as we conclude our service
Ben and Suzanne are going to come and lead us in our concluding song that we sing praises to God in and before Greg comes to pray and dismiss us we have a brief presentation that we want to make and Greg will lead out in that and then close us in prayer let's stand together and sing to the glory of the Lord

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