

Idolatry, Unbelief and Repentance

by Michael Durham

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and overcoming the lies about God's goodness and graciousness that lead to idolatry and unbelief.

Duration: 1:02:29

Scripture: Genesis 50:20, Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:25, Romans 3:23, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 John 1:8

Topics: "Idolatry"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of believing lies about God and how it leads to sin. He uses the example of marital disharmony to illustrate this point. The preacher emphasizes that the root of sin is believing the lie that we can control and direct our own lives for happiness and satisfaction. He highlights that throughout history, humans have proven that they cannot anticipate or overcome every hardship on their own. Instead, the preacher encourages listeners to come under the leadership of Jesus and experience the glory of living life with Him.

Transcript

Romans chapter 1, we'll begin reading with verse 24. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lust of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves. Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature, rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

Amen. The power of sin's appeal is its promise to provide you with better gods. Now what is sin? Sin is merely asserting your will above God's will.

It is to transgress His blessed will or commandments for your life. In other words, it's to do life according to you. That's sin.

And sin's appeal is this, that it will offer you someone or something better than Jesus. That's its temptation. It's most unlikely that the devil will ever approach you in those exact words, because he knows that he cannot seduce you if he was to plainly expose what he's really trying to do.

Yet whether he says it or not, the temptation is just that. A promise of someone or something that will care, help, or provide for you much better than the Lord Jesus Christ. Now that, my dear friends, is the essence of all temptation.

Temptation is simply the enticement to do your will over God's will. And that is the heart of it. The beating heart of every temptation is that something or someone will care for you, help you, provide for you, satisfy you more than Jesus.

And you can know if something is an idol towards you or for you, if there is something in your life that you are trusting in to care for you, help for you, provide for you more than Jesus. You can know that. And the test is quite easy.

Is there anger? Is there resentment? Is there turbulence? Is there a disturbance in your heart and life today? If so, you have an idol. Is there any unrest, an anxiety? Is there any inward pressure that is disturbing tranquility and an inner balance? My dear friend, you have an idol. I find that Christians' most difficult task should be the easiest task.

Maintaining fellowship with Jesus. And yet we find it to be so difficult. One day, our hearts are emblazed with love for Jesus.

And the very next day, it's as if we are as cold as ice. Our fervor, our devotion, our commitment has seemed to take wings and fly. And there is nothing in our hearts.

And we wonder if, have we really been genuinely convergent? Because how could we not love the Lord with great devotion? And the reason that I think it is difficult for us to know how to maintain fellowship is because we have been blindsided by what we really believe worship is and what we believe idolatry is. And so I pray God help us here this morning to understand that if there is any anger, resentment, turmoil, a loss of joy in your life, then wherever the source of those things are, there's your idol. For example, suppose a husband and wife are experiencing strife here this morning.

The wife's world is totally out of kilter on the inside. She has no sense of internal balance, no joy, no peace because her husband is not doing for her what she expects. I understand that that can't be so in this audience today, especially after our men's retreat.

But how is this possible? It's possible that she has actually turned her husband into an idol looking to him to do for her what she ought to be looking to Jesus to do. And now the point has come in her life that she's actually built up resentment and bitterness towards her husband. And you say to me, how then can she be worshiping or have he as an idol? And the answer is quite simple.

Worship is more than just adoration. Worship is to depend or trust upon something or someone else to provide help or care or satisfy you more than the Lord Jesus Christ. My dear friends, her life revolves upon his approval for her, her, his affection for her, his treatment of her.

And that is idolatry because she should be looking only to the Lord Jesus Christ for this internal balance of her world. Now that's hard. That's a powerful punch in the face right at the beginning of this message.

I understand that. But I only have one time with you this morning, one message. And I want to get as quick to the heart as I possibly can.

This is where we live, friends. This is where I live every day. I will either choose to worship the Lord God or I will chase idols of my heart.

And believe you me, my own heart doesn't need Satan's help or aid to produce any idols. Now let me briefly explain. What do I mean by internal balance? This is extremely important.

What do I mean by having internal balance? Internal balance is simply inner harmony or a steadiness or a tranquility no matter what's going on on the outside of you. Inner balance does not depend upon your outer world being balanced and tranquil. In fact, inner balance is so wonderful that when your world is out of shelter and everything around you is not trustworthy, there's no dependability, no security in your life, you can be as much at peace as if it were.

Remember Jesus asleep in the boat when the storm was brewing fiercely. Adversity actually exposes whether or not a Christian is building any part of his or her life on an idol. Adversity.

If you are experiencing, again, any kind of discomfort this morning, it proves that you are not worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ, that you're worshipping an idol. That discomfort will prove either you are or you're not worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ. Because problems detect whether or not your life is built solidly on the rock.

Did not Jesus tell this to us in the story of two houses? It was not the fair sunshine and great weather that determined the stability or instability of those two homes. No, no. It was the storm.

It was the difficulty. It was the adversity that proved one to be true and the other false. Salvation then is not just a deliverance from sin's penalty.

Are you listening? Salvation is not just deliverance from sin's penalty. It's also deliverance from its power and its appeal to worship other gods. And that's what the apostle is telling us here as he recounts the history of man's delusion.

He exchanged, verse 25, the truth of God for a lie, and he worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever. Amen. There's your problem, and it is always the problem whether you're a saint or a sinner, a Christian or a non-Christian, a believer or unbeliever.

The issue of interbalance and tranquility or not is an issue of worship and believing the truth or believing a lie. And if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, but there is inner turmoil and a lack of interbalance, I am here as, I pray, a spokesman, just a representative, just a brother, to say to you from God's Word, you are committing idolatry this morning. And God is here in His mercy to deliver you.

Because salvation's deliverance goes beyond just the penalty of our sins, but to its power. Jesus is not here to condemn you for your idolatry. He's here to deliver you! This is good news.

This is something we ought to be happy in anticipatory. Joy should be flooding our hearts that this morning I can be delivered. You can be set free today if you learn how to trust and to recognize the lies that would persuade us to look to someone else other than Jesus for the care and satisfaction we need.

So, let's see if we can go a little deeper here. All I'm telling you is what the text is saying. As Paul is recounting man's idolatry and rejection of God from the garden to today, he says it's all about sin being the result of believing a lie about God.

That's all it is. Sin is about believing a lie about God. Yea, hath God said was the words of the tempter.

Can you be sure? I don't think so. I think he's trying to tell you something that misleads you. Because he knows if you eat of the fruit of the tree, you'll be like him knowing the difference of good and evil.

He's withholding something from you. He's keeping back something from you. He doesn't want you in on all of his privileges and powers.

And the lie of temptation will always be about one of four things or a multiplicity of these four things, a combination of these four things about God. Number one, a lie about God's goodness. Secondly, a lie about God's graciousness.

Thirdly, a lie about God's greatness. And lastly, a lie about God's gloriousness. Let's take a look just for a few moments about the lie about God's goodness.

Sin's appeal is that something else can treat you better than Jesus. Someone or something else can give you the sense of goodness and care for you better than Christ. And so the child of God is tempted to believe a lie, to exchange, literally exchange truth about God, that God is good for the lie that God is not good.

That's what's happening. That's what the text is saying. And so we say things to ourselves.

Our subconscious, the very soul, betrays us. If God was good, why would He be allowing this to happen to me? We've all said that one. Internally, we would never dare breathe or utter it to another soul, but we believe that, that if God was good, He would not be allowing this to happen in my life.

The bill's past due. You're doing the best you can do, and you wonder why God is doing this to you. You doubt His goodness.

We doubt His goodness. Now, there's two reasons why I think I or you would struggle believing that God is good. It's because, number one, we've become convinced that we deserve better treatment.

We have highly esteemed ourselves. I don't know if I have my mother-in-law's permission, but she's not here, so... My mother-in-law lives with us. She has since our youngest child, Victoria, was born, born with Down syndrome.

And she retired and came to Paducah and moved in with us to help us care for Victoria, who requires 24 hours, seven days a week supervision, even today being almost 18, still can't communicate, has to be fed, has to be just completely taken care of. About two years ago, we discovered that she was going blind in one eye, and then the last year she's gone going blind in the last eye, the other eye, and today she's completely blind. She's been serving her Lord since she was 12.

She's 78 now. All of her life, she has served and walked with God through many storms and adversities and conflicts. She's been faithful to the Lord when she or lesser people would have thrown in the towel and said, if this is the way you're going to treat me, I'm not walking with you.

And God has helped her to be faithful all of these years. But this adversity has really exposed some things. And it's been amazing to watch God in her life these last two years.

For example, early on, she was just absolutely resentful and bitter. And I heard her say, I don't understand. I don't understand because I've served the Lord all of these years.

Why is He doing this to me? It was an honest inquiry. I don't understand this. If God is good, why would He allow me to lose my eyesight after all of these years of being faithful? Many of you are nodding your heads because you understand, though you may not have had the trial of blindness in a prayer you never will, you know what I'm talking about.

You've been there. You have uttered words very similar. And if you peel back the layers of why we say these things, why the heart has the audacity to assert such a proposition, it's because underlying, underneath our souls, is this belief that somehow I've deserved something better.

God shouldn't deal with me in this way. Let Him deal with the renegade, the rebel, the man that rejects Him. But I'm a child of God.

How can a good father do this to me? My hero is Charles Spurgeon. And like any good Baptist preacher, as I was listening to you, brother, I had flashbacks of Spurgeon. And even though I've never met him, I want to make sure that's understood, I've not met Spurgeon.

I'm getting older, but I'm not that old yet. He would have been very pleased to have heard what I heard today. It was beautiful and powerful, talking about God like he did.

That was a blessing. Nobody could do that like Spurgeon. But what we don't know about Spurgeon, he was a man of great affliction.

Breit's disease, gout, other issues. And one day he was in a meeting in a room with a few men, and the pain was so severe. He said it was an attack like he had not had ever before.

And tears were starting to well up in his eyes because it hurt so badly. He asked the men to dismiss themselves. And then he cried out to God and said, Father, Father, this hurts so bad.

I would not do this to one of my children. Please, Father, give me reprieve. And the father immediately intervened and the pain left.

But he never was healed. And at the age of 58, he died a young man, a combination of all those diseases. And you look at a life like that and you wonder, is God good? Is this the way an employer pays his laborers? Well, dear friends, he is good.

There's another reason why I think we may doubt the goodness of God is because we forget that through much tribulation we shall enter the kingdom. It's not God who's being mean to us. It's not God bringing retribution for our lack of obedience as his children.

No, no, God disciplines, he chastens. But that's an act of kindness, as you would for your own child. God is not a retributive God towards his children.

We forget that we are living in a world that is plagued with helter-skelter. A world that is rife with wickedness and where sin abounds. There can be no harmony and balance in this world.

No way there can be order in this world because man has rejected God's leadership. And if we forget that this is the environment in which we live, if we forget that therefore because we too are not perfect, still yet corrupt, still flawed, with bodies that are less than perfect, then we will often want to say that God is not treating us fairly. But the Bible says, Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord.

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Now listen, I said this to the men this week, and I want to say it to us today.

Taking things by faith is absolutely essential. We live by faith. But what do you mean when you say you take something by faith? For most of us, we simply say or mean, I agree, God is good.

I agree, oh yes, the Lord is good. Oh, I agree, taste and see, the Lord is good. We recite the very verse.

But that's not what the psalmist is saying. The psalmist is saying, taste. In other words, there is a responsibility here.

He's not asking for a mental affirmation. He's not asking, do you agree with this theological point? He is saying, I want you to engage, my goodness. I want you to be involved.

I want you to experience. Experience, my goodness. I want you to taste it.

I want you to engage it. And find out firsthand that the Bible is just not a series of declarative truths. They are truths that are to be experienced.

To be lived. To be known. In reality.

So, if you have an idol that has caused you to doubt God's goodness, my friend, the remedy today is to engage. Taste. Reach out.

Desire at this moment within your soul. Grab your heart, man. And say, we will seek the Lord and find Him and taste Him.

Know He's good. Because when you experience God, you experience goodness. What man is there among you who if he has a son, asks for a bread, he will give him a stone.

Or if he asks for a fish, he'll give him a serpent. If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in Heaven give good gifts, things, to those who ask Him. God is good.

God, quoting Spurgeon, is too good to be unkind. Did you hear that? God is too good to be unkind. Too wise to be mistaken.

And if you cannot trace His hand, you can trust His heart. The idol's lying to you, friend. It's time to exchange the lie about the idol for the truth of God.

There's another lie. The lie about God's graciousness. This comes in many different ways.

One that I've struggled over in the past. Can God really be that merciful to me and that gracious? I've been at Oak Grove Baptist Church now for, as you heard, 23 years. And in that 23 years, I've pastored three churches all in the same building.

When I first went there, it was a fighting, feuding church. There was no such thing as order and decency. And God, in His miraculous intervention at about a year and a half point, delivered us from the contention and the fighting.

And from that moment, the church began to take off. And in just a few short years, we went from 50 to 125, 130, nearing 150. We had no room in the sanctuary, the tiny room.

And so we had started building plans. And all of a sudden, here comes God with His wrecking ball to all of my plans. We had met with an architect, and we had said, we want at least, we want a sanctuary that'll at least seat 1,000.

Because this is where I was going. And I knew how to get there. And I was on my way until God showed up in His mercy.

But at the time, it didn't feel very merciful. It didn't feel gracious. God would intervene me and keep me from my prideful ambition, which would eventually destroy me.

I know it would have. He was so kind to destroy those plans. One of the closest men in that church proved to be a Judas to me.

The heel of my familiar friend was lifted up against me. It broke my heart like it had never been broken before. And with that, He took a bunch of people.

And it seemed like when I prayed, I couldn't get God to hear me. Couldn't get God to move. Couldn't get God to pay attention to me.

And when I'd stand up, oh, I hated to go to the pulpit on Sunday. I was like Jeremiah. I was longing for that wayfaring place where I could take the wings of a bird and fly and escape.

And when I'd stand before the people on a Sunday like I'm standing before you, it was like there was a glass wall. I could see them. They could see me.

But I just felt like they weren't hearing a thing I was saying. And I just began to tailspin because I saw God disband my structure. My works.

And I came to the conclusion that maybe God doesn't love me. Because if He loved me, wouldn't He be blessing my ministry? If He's really gracious and good, wouldn't He be allowing it? I mean, souls to be saved? People to be added to the church? Isn't that the way God shows His love and kindness? He blesses you with good things. Wonderful gifts.

So that's not happening. And I began to exchange the truth of God for a lie. And I began to doubt God's grace to the point I didn't even know if I was a Christian.

I got that low, brother. I got that low. I called up my dear friend and closest friend besides my wife, Mike Morrow.

Some of you have met him. I said, I've got to talk to you. Let's have lunch together.

Went to lunch. And I just told him. I said, I'm not even sure if I'm saved, brother.

Mike looked at me and said, well, I don't know what to tell you. I wanted to choke him so badly. Went home.

Back to the office after lunch. Buried my head on my desk and wept and wept and wept. And then wept some more.

And all of a sudden, I tell you the truth. Ephesians 2, Aking 1. For by grace are you saved through faith. That not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. And immediately the clouds dispelled.

The depression left. And the sun shone. And has been shining ever since.

He's gracious. Even in the providential acts of adversity, He is gracious. You can believe that even in His frowning providence, He hides a gracious smile.

You find it difficult to believe that His grace will be sufficient to enable you to overcome. How many of you have been there? I'm in this extremity. And I know what I need to do.

But my heart doesn't want to do it. And you cry out and you ask God to help you. And nothing happens.

And you begin to exchange the truth of God for life. You begin to say, I don't think God's coming through for me. He'll do that for Brother Lee or Brother Phillip.

He'll help the elders. He helps preachers like that. I hear their testimonies.

But I guess I'm not as good as they are. Friends, when you look at your goodness. Your deservability.

When you look at you, you're doubting God's goodness and graciousness. This is not about us and our performance. It's about His performance.

That He loves the unlovable. And He's good to the undeserving. Another way in which we lie to ourselves about God's graciousness, we often try to impress others because we don't believe God's favor is enough.

We try to impress. We want people to like us. Why do you want people to like you? I challenge you to answer.

Why do you like people to like you? Because there's something internal that says, the more they like me, the more it validates me. The more it proves that I'm somebody. And you reject the value that God has placed upon you.

Listen, these people out here are imperfect. God's perfect. And God being perfect does love you and accept you in Christ the Beloved.

And by the way, I want you to know He even likes you. God likes those people He calls children. He likes you.

He delights over you. He sings over you with dancing. He rejoices over you.

He knows what He's doing with you and what you're going to be. He's not worried about it. Trust in His grace.

To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace, which He made abound toward us in all wisdom and truth. My favorite verse.

One of my favorites, not the favorite. 2 Corinthians 9.8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. A lot of all's and every's in there, is there not? God's grace is sufficient.

Don't doubt it. Another lie we believe about God is His greatness. We doubt the sovereignty of our good God.

We give more homage to the devil and his cunning than we do to the power and providence of God. Is there a disturbance in your life right now? Is there inner turmoil? Is there a lack of joy? Assuredly, there's an idol there. Maybe more than one.

In that idolatry, there may be this lie, that God's not in control. And you've got to be in control. The heart is so willing to believe that lie.

Because we like control. We love. How many of you really, truly seek the Lord for His will, that you will not make a move about major decisions where the Bible may be silent? And you will not do anything until you've heard from God.

But you will rationalize and justify. And if there seems to be no difficulty, it looks like it's good, you will accept and move forward without God's approval. Listen, there's too many examples in the Bible where men of God did that very thing and tragedy came.

Joshua comes to my mind immediately. When the Gibeonites came to him to deceive him, wearing clothes that were wore out, having packed moldy bread, and they were just over two valleys or two, or a couple of hill ranges over. They weren't a far nation as they had lied.

And without consulting God and making inquiry through prayer, Joshua struck a deal with them. And regretted it every day until he died. The Bible says, But our God is in heaven and he does whatever he pleases.

All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. He does according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain his hand or say to him, What have you done? I love that.

You can ask God, Why did you do this? But that's not what Daniel's talking about. Actually, it was Nebuchadnezzar. That's not what he means.

He means you don't have the authority to pull God up on the carpet and say, Now you must give an account of yourself. Nobody can make God give an account of himself. Why? Because he's sovereignly in control and he's in control of your life, even in your insufficiencies, indeficiencies, and all of the matters that concern you that's bringing anxiety, God is Lord over all.

Therefore, we know that all things work to good to them that love God, are unto thee called according to his purpose. Why? Because he is great. He is great.

And he's reigning over you. The last lie is the lie about God's glory. We stop believing that God's worth is more than enough to satisfy every longing of our heart's desire.

That's what I mean by the glory of God. God's glory. Hard to understand in order to define what we're talking about here, but help me.

Just bear with me. I think it's something to the order that God is so self-sufficient, so amazing, so good, gracious, great, that he is valuable beyond calculation and he is enough to satisfy the longings of even the corrupt heart. And when you experience that glory, when you get a taste of that glory, joy and pleasure explode within the soul so much that nothing of this earth, pleasures, joys, carnal or good compare.

Nothing compares with the ecstasy of experiencing the glory of God. Since we've got a mixed crowd, I've got to be careful here. But you can think of the greatest joy that God has given a man and a woman in physical union.

The ecstasy, the joy of two being one and the melding not of just a physical affection, but of spirit and soul. There's a great joy. There is nothing like that in human relationships, but my dear friend, that pales, pales to when the spirit experiences the presence of this glorious God.

Don't exchange the truth of God for a lie. Because every substitute of the glory of God is just that. A weak imitation.

So what happens is we cease to see Him as worthy to make Him the center upon which our lives revolve and He loses mass in our sights. You know, the sun is the heaviest object in our universe. It has the most mass and therefore all of the planets revolve and moons revolve around that solar heat we call the sun because of its massiveness, its weightiness.

That's what causes us as a planet to revolve around the sun. And when you lose sight of God's worthiness and glory, immediately you begin to wobble out of orbit. Your life doesn't have the sensibility that it once did.

Order is being lost. Why? Because you have no center. Because your idols are not big enough to bring balance.

So what is worship? Because that's all I've been talking about. That's all he's been talking about in the text. They exchange the truth of God for a lie and worship the creature more than the creator.

What is worship? Let me tell you. Worship is not what we have done here this morning. It includes this, but it's a whole lot more than this.

Worship is so much more than a worship service. In fact, I don't think that's an appropriate title that we should be calling our gatherings. Praise service, yes.

Worship, no. Worship is this, seeing the glory and the worth of God and ordering your life around Him. That's it.

That's what worship is. It's the way you live. It's about knowing Jesus beyond just this brain and experiencing Him in such a way you say, He's it.

This is what I need. This is what I've been looking for. And therefore, my whole life is revolving around Him.

It's Romans 12.1 Therefore, brethren, I beseech you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice. It's climbing up on the altar and saying, Here I am, do with me whatever you want to do. Because you're so good, you're so glorious, you're so amazing that my life compared to your glory, it's worth it.

The experience of God on a day-by-day basis is worth being extinguished for God. Because that's what you do with sacrifices. You kill them and then you burn them up.

That's worship. You can come here every Sunday or wherever you normally meet and you can sing with robust those great hymns and you can pray prayers. But brother or sister, if your life is not ordered around experiencing the glory of God, then you're not worshiping.

You've exchanged the truth of God for a lie. So let's go back to our husband and wife example to maybe just give you a little parable. Put all this together.

And then I'm going to give us the gospel solution. It'd be terrible if I ended the sermon right now, right? I know I've been preaching for 40 minutes and that's normal length for most preachers. But boy, that would be sad if I just stopped right now.

You don't want me to stop right now, do you? Thank you. One day I was preaching many years ago and I asked something like that. And the woman back in the back said, back there, she said, I wish you would shut up.

Brother sitting right back there, he said, no, no, we need to hear what you've got to say. Please go on. Two people were converted that morning.

At least they professed faith in Christ. Let's go back to our husband and wife spat or marital disharmony. Your spouse is not treating you as well as you think you deserve.

And as a result, you become irritable, malcontent and resentful. Your friction may even break out into heated words, terrible remarks that wound one another and your hearts begin just to drift away from one another over time. The fact that your spouse could disrupt your heart's satisfaction.

Now listen closely. I know this is hard for some of us to believe that our hearts are so delicate that this is true. But it is.

The fact that your spouse could disrupt your heart's satisfaction is because you have established him or her as an idol. If he or she was in their proper place and Christ was the center. He's the worship object.

Then even in your friction and discomfort with one another, your life could still have tranquility and inner balance. And joy. I can see it in your faces.

They betray you. You're saying, I don't believe that. That's the problem.

That right there is the problem. You don't believe what I just said. You've exchanged the truth about God.

God is enough! And your heart is shaken today to its core. And you're even wondering if you're even saved. I'm telling you, the problem is not is He enough? The problem is you've doubted it.

You don't believe it. Remember, worship's not defined by bowing down to images of gold or silver or wood or it's not confined to church services. It's valuing something or someone to the point you build your life so that it revolves around that something or someone.

The objection you might have right now is my spouse could no way be my idol. I don't even like him! How could he be my idol? How could I worship someone if I can't even tolerate him? And the answer to the

objection is although you are resentful and you complain about your wife or your husband, you do in fact worship him or her because you've built your life and its contentment on your partner. And therefore, they've become an idol.

You've put that person in a place where they could actually quite unfairly they could never ever have accomplished what you've asked of them. Only Jesus can do that. And if your life didn't revolve around your spouse, then you could maintain joy and satisfaction no matter the treatment.

No matter the treatment. But you place such an emphasis on this particular person that he or she can control your life and its joy and its contentment. Your spouse controls your world.

That's the problem. He or she makes life either good or bad for you. You may not be having problems and you're still worshipping your spouse because your definition of a good life is how he or she treats you.

And if you've got a good, what is it, happy wife, happy life? And there's a great deal of truth to that. Sadly. If I've got a good home life, got a great job, everything's going great in my life, I've got the 2.3 kids, got a three-car garage, I've got a membership at the golf club.

Man, what are you talking about? Jesus is really good. I love Jesus. And you could be a great idol worshiper because you're not really thankful to God.

You're looking to all of these things. The good life has become your idol. I'm thankful for adversity because it exposes it.

When you're living the good life, you're most deceived if you have an idol and involved in idolatry. Only God should have this kind of power and control in your life. So you believe the lie about God.

You believe God was not sovereign. Here, let me give you an example. Now, here we go.

You've believed a lie that God perhaps is not sovereign over your wife or your husband and therefore God allows this oppressive behavior to expose your heart. I've counseled so many couples over the years and so many times, this is one of the main issues. That wife, it's usually the wife, she cannot trust that God is sovereign over her husband.

That she can even come under his headship. Because he's not trustworthy. A lot of husbands are not trustworthy.

It has nothing to do with their trustworthiness. It's about the trustworthiness of Christ. Do you trust God that if He says you obey Him, He is sovereign and in control? Can you trust the man to your God? Another possibility could exist.

You could have disbelieved God's worth and therefore God's approval is not enough. You're looking to this man or this woman for your approval, your validation. And as a result, your self-worth is based upon what your husband or your wife says about you.

Or another scenario, you could have believed the lie that God was not good and therefore He's mistreating you through your spouse. Or another way to see it is you're not believing God to be the source of all delight and pleasure. He's not glorious enough for you.

And you've looked to your spouse for your sense of pleasure. But the idol cannot give you the pleasure you've desired. We could go on and on, but I do need to get to the gospel solution.

I think the point's made. Do you agree? Do you understand? Amen? Okay. You see how this works? When a lie begins to be believed about God, what happens to your life? What's the solution? The solution is real simple.

It's almost going to smack you in the face because it was so there. It was there all the time and so obvious. The solution is gospel repentance.

Now stop. The moment I said repeat right there, I didn't have to finish the word. You automatically assume what that looks like.

And I'm thinking that's probably your problem. Some of us don't know what gospel repentance is. For most of us, gospel repentance is moral or behavioral reformation.

In other words, change my conduct. That's repentance. It's only one part.

And you can have behavioral change and not have repented. Repentance is not, I quote, I used to be doing this evil behavior, but now I'm doing this good behavior. Beloved, that's not repentance.

In the majority of the evangelical world, that's what they have defined repentance to be. This person was going this direction and now they've changed and they're going this direction. And we said that's repentance.

I'm sure even some of these elders have defined repentance as a 180 degree turn, right? Because metanoia means that. That's the result of repentance. That's when you know repentance has taken place.

But if something else doesn't take place prior to, you don't have gospel repentance. Gospel repentance is, are you listening? Say amen. OK, I had more earlier.

Gospel repentance is, I used to believe this about God and did not worship Him. But now through Christ, I believe what's true about God and I worship Him. That's gospel repentance.

It goes back to not what you're doing, but what you're believing. Because what you believe will always dictate what you do. Always.

Every sin is based upon a lie about God. Evident in the first temptation, evident in your temptation. It's either a doubting of God's sovereignty, which is His greatness, His gloriousness, His goodness or His grace.

If gospel repentance takes place, then yes, behavior will change. Absolutely. But in the example of having a problem with your spouse, behavioral modification could be simply, I stop complaining about my spouse and we're ready to pat our backs and say, see, I have repented.

Or it might be stop saying harsh things to one another. True repentance is to see the lie about God and stop believing that lie and start believing the truth to say, hey, it's not my husband that gives me validation. It's Christ Jesus dying on that cross for me.

He loved me enough to shed His blood for me, to give me His ultimate sacrifice. He loves me that much. I don't need another man's love to be validated or found worthy.

It's in Christ. It doesn't mean you don't hurt when your husband doesn't love you or your spouse doesn't love you. No, it hurts.

That's okay. But is the inner balance still there? Can you even in your sorrow rejoice that Jesus is sufficiently holding you up and giving you peace and tranquility and inner balance? That's it, my friend. That's what I'm asking you today.

It may not be marital relationships. It may be something with a job. It may be something somewhere else in your life.

But look, look, look, if you're a believer today, if you're a believer today, I guarantee you there's idolatry. There's also some form of anger, resentment, disturbance of the heart, a lack of inner balance because God has brought adversity in your life to expose that idol, to show you you're believing something other than the truth about God. You've been looking to that thing or someone to give you the care and the help and the provision that only Jesus can give.

So, what would I do in the case of my marital couple here that I'm dealing with? I would say the person needs to see that Jesus, if it's a wife, I would counsel her. Jesus is a better husband. That's why Paul tells Christian husbands to remember that Jesus loved and gave Himself for the church.

He tells the wives to remember that Jesus is the ultimate husband and that they're married to and that they should submit to Him and in doing so, they submit to their husbands because they trust God. And that God will give them the grace to do so. If your problem is you don't think your husband or wife shows you the appropriate approval of your performance or proper attention, then repentance says you must cease to believe that man's approval is better than God's approval.

You've got to stop believing the lie. That's where repentance begins in here. And then it works its way to moral change, behavioral change, not vice versa.

Now, I am going to bring this to a close. There are people in this room right now who are not Christians. I don't know why I know that.

I just know there are people here that are not truly born again. You've never seen Jesus so massively, so wonderful, so glorious that you would say He's worth the control. I'll give Him the control any day because He's worth it.

If all He's asking is my life to get to order me and then take care of me and love me and validate me and provide for me and I experience that glory, it's not even a trade. It's win-win. Some of you, that's never happened.

You've prayed prayers. You've asked Jesus to come into your heart. You've gone through catechisms.

You're a good person. I remember talking to my son, my second son one day. He would have been about 17 1/2, going on 18, and I said, Son, we were shucking corn.

I had like 150 ears, so I know he wasn't going anywhere anytime soon. So we were just he and I, and I said, Son, what's God doing in your life? And here's what he said to me. Dad, I know I'm a sinner.

I know I'm a sinner because the Bible says I am, and you preach the gospel, and that's what you tell me, and I believe it. But I sure don't feel like a sinner. In that moment, my heart was pierced with a fear I had not had.

You know why I was afraid? Because I knew God was not dealing with me. He hadn't seen how glorious God was. He didn't see how good God was, how gracious he was, how great he was.

And God was leaving him alone, and that scared me to death. And all I could do for the next three months was cry to God for his salvation and wrestle with God till God gave me assurance that he was going to save me, and he did. Some of you in that same predicament today, some of you young people just like my son, good kids, there's not a better... I don't remember disciplining my child, Joseph, maybe two times.

I could just look at him, and it was enough to change behavior immediately. Good kid, but lost. And the problem is you too have believed a lie about God.

You're not believing what Mom and Dad have taught you. You've not believed what your elders have taught you. You've not believed what the Bible says.

You have believed that willfully directing, controlling your life is the pathway to a happy life, joyful life, fruitful and satisfied life. That is the lie that started this whole mess that got us into the trouble we are in today. Hasn't 6,000 years of human history proven that that's a lie? Haven't you proven it already? In your short life or long life, haven't you proven that you at your best still cannot anticipate every hardship, every difficulty, every adversity, and know how to deal with it properly to overcome it? Your will will not work.

But all he says is this, come. Come under my yoke. In other words, come under my leadership and team up with me, and we're going to live life together, and you're going to experience what it is called my glory.

I can't describe how good it is, so I'm not even going to try. I'm just asking the Holy Spirit to show you right now that what I'm saying to you is true. I'm taking a step of faith on Him.

Not you, not me. I know my words are inadequate. I know I can't say it good enough.

It frustrates me at this moment that I can't explain the glory of God to you in such a way that you would just leap with your soul. You'd leap into the arms of God and say, I know it's worth my life. But maybe I can do one little thing that will help you.

You're not the only one who knows what it is to be between the proverbial rock and the hard place when it comes to your will. Because the one who died for you hours before in a garden wrestled with the same question. Very same question.

Father, is there any other way that I can get out from doing your will? That's the essence of the question. It's simplifying it for us. Is there any other way I can get out from under your will? You know what he's saying? As a man, he did not relish what was about to happen.

He didn't want what was about to happen. But in that crucible, in that moment of great tension, so tense was his frame, body, that the Bible says that a medical condition that has happened and has been documented a few times in human history, his perspiration literally turned to blood. That's how under great stress he was.

And the Bible says that he chose to trust his father and turn the control over to him. So you could be saved. That means rescued from you and your sin and its consequence, separation in the living hell.

So all I'm asking you to do right now is to see how beautiful that is that he was willing to suffer judgment, punishment, God's anger against all of our sins and actually God turned His back and says I curse you. The Father curses the Son. God in flesh is cursed because of your sins of your willful rebellion against Him.

Isn't that beautiful? That God loves you that much? All He's asking you is to now trust that His resurrection three days later triumphed over all of that sin and junk and rebellion and that He can live His life through you and guide you through the course of life and get you home successfully and give you the awesome awareness and enjoyment of Him who is glorious beyond expression. Believer, the answer is the same for you today in your idol worship. You need to see the glory again.

That's all you need right now. My preaching is only going to lead us so far. I know that.

I walked up here knowing that what I was going to do today was not sufficient. I'm doomed every time I get up in front of a crowd knowing that what I'm getting ready to do is not going to work unless God manifests Himself in such a way that you can see how glorious and good and gracious and great God is. If you're suffering from a worship problem, it's because you haven't seen the glory lately.

That's it. You just haven't seen it lately. Would you just lift up your heart to the Lord and say, I've sinned against you.

I've believed a lie. I've exchanged the truth about you for this stupid, stinking, sinful lie. And I repent.

I'm going to believe. I don't care what happens to me, God. If my husband leaves me, my wife leaves me, my children hate me, I lose my job, I lose my health, I lose my life! I don't care! Your glory will satisfy me like nothing else does.

And Christian, if you can't say that this morning, you are backslidden, away from God, and you're in a precarious situation that frightens me. You ought to be frightened too. You need the glory.

See Him again. Lord, would you be merciful to us to help us see you again? Please, Lord, I want to see more of your beauty. These are not just esoteric concepts, abstract words, Lord.

There's concrete meaning in them. Please help us, Lord. Please, Holy Spirit, show us Jesus right now.

He's the only one that can help us right now. God's speaking to you right now. Just trust Him.

That's what repentance... You can't have repentance without faith, and you can't have faith without repentance. Just trust Him. Just say, give the eyes of my understanding enlightenment, Lord.

Help me to see what this brother has said today. And let me taste it. Let me not just know it in my head.

Let me experience it right now. Right now. So, I'm asking you just to do that.

And God will give you the grace to obey. Because He is good and He is gracious. May God help you to obey.

Amen.

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