

Hope - God Is Just Not Fair

by Shane Idleman

God is just, but He's not fair, and we need to trust in His sovereignty and His goodness, even when we don't understand His ways.

Duration: 46:05

Scripture: Matthew 20:1

Topics: "Gods Sovereignty", "Christian Hope"

Description

This sermon delves into the topic of hope, exploring the concept that God is just but not fair. Through the parable in Matthew 20, the message highlights the difference between God's justice and fairness, emphasizing the invitation of the kingdom of heaven and the root cause of complaining as selfishness. The sermon also addresses the theological debate on God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, urging listeners to find a healthy tension between the two perspectives. It concludes with a call to rest in God's sovereignty and reflect on the hymn 'It Is Well With My Soul' in the context of communion.

Transcript

And if you've found your place, it's Matthew 20. And the title of the message is, we're talking for the next few weeks on the topic of hope. And the title is, God is just, but He's not fair.

There's a big difference there, I'm going to get to in just a minute. And it's a good thing He's not fair. Matthew 20, verse 1, For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

Now, when he had agreed with the laborers for denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace and said to them, You also go out into the vineyard, and whatever is right, I will give you. So they went.

Again, he went out the sixth and the ninth hour and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour, he went out and found others standing idle and said to them, Why have you been standing here idle all day? They said to him, Because no one has hired us. He said to them, You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right, you will receive.

So when the evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first. And when those who came were hired, about the

eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive much more, and they likewise received a denarius.

And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the heat of the day. Let me stop there for a minute before I get to verse 13. This would be like driving to Home Depot, and you hire somebody who's wanting to work all day.

And you say, I'm going to give you \$100 to work all day digging footings or digging trenches or whatever it is. And he says, Okay, I'll come and do that for \$100. I need the money.

And then a couple hours later, you see somebody else. What are you doing? You want to work? Yeah, I need to work. Okay, \$100.

Here's what I need you to do. So two guys are working on this trench. And then he'll three hours, four hours later, he goes and sees another guy sitting there.

Hey, do you need to work? Yeah, I need to work. Okay, \$100. Finish this, this trench with these other guys before five o'clock.

And then an hour before five o'clock, around four o'clock, you see somebody standing there idle and says, Do you want to make \$100? And he said, Yeah, I would like to. So go help finish this trench and we'll pay everybody five o'clock. So everybody's getting paid \$100, regardless if they got there at six in the morning, or an hour before everybody's finished.

So that's the setting. That's that's that's in at the beginning, he said the kingdom of heaven is like this. Now here's what the people said, though.

They said they started to complain, why have you paid them the same that you paid us? And he answered them, friend, am I doing you no wrong? Did you not agree with me for denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good.

So the last will be first and the first last for many are called, but few are chosen. Now I will tell you up front, I would need about two or three sermons to really, you know, dig into all of this and and really pull out a lot of things here. But for tonight, I want to talk about just a few things, mainly around what God is just not fair.

And also this last sentence, many are called but few are chosen. But there's three things initially that we can glean from this. Number one, he's showing what the kingdom of heaven is like.

It's like an invitation. That's why I love that last time we just sang the simple gospel, the simple gospel. It's an invitation.

So the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner that went out and invited come and work, come and work. And then the next thing we learn complaining happens when we view things from our perspective. He said, would you like to work all day for \$100? Yes, we're happy to do that.

So once they see these other guys getting paid the same for one hour's worth of work, now they're complaining. So he says, is my eye good? Or is your eye evil because I'm doing good? Can I give to whoever I want? And the reason they're complaining is because of selfishness. And the root cause of

complaining, I do it too, just so you know.

The root cause is selfishness, right? We're not getting our way. That's not fair and we want to complain. That's one of the things I'm worried about with the current direction of our nation, the entitlement generation, everything.

Everybody's complaining that it's just not fair across the board. And there's some problems with that. That's a whole other sermon actually.

And the third thing, God is just. God is just not fair. And let me explain that for a minute.

Fair means equal representation, equal allotment, everything's equal. Doesn't matter what you do, everything's equal. And you've heard a lot in the news, I'm not going to take time to talk about that, but distribution of the wealth and everybody needs to make the same.

And the problem with that is that's just not biblical. Hard work is rewarded according to Scripture. Now, is there problems in the system? Is there oppression? Absolutely.

But by balancing everything out, you're actually going to take away from things. I remember reading, I think it was a book by William Bradford who came over one of the pilgrims and they were harvesting corn and planting a lot of corn. And they designed a communal system where everybody, you have one acre of corn or you have 50 acres of corn.

It's all the same, we'll all throw into one batch. And actually it started to fail. Nobody was working hard, they were lazy, nothing was growing, they realized they were going to starve.

So the governor there said, whatever you grow, you can keep. And that motivated the people to work harder and to work their land and to be rewarded for their efforts. And it's biblical, hard work, God blesses the hard work.

God blesses those who are diligent in what they do. And when we start to reward laziness, that becomes a problem. And that's what we have many times, the 10% of people who need our help or the government assistance and they do need it, there's a big percentage taking advantage of that.

And it's just laziness, there's no work effort there. So we come into an entitlement mentality, not realizing we should be thankful for every dollar we get. So God is just, he's not fair.

Fair would be across the board. And I see this all the time. Fair would be, if you have kids, you can relate, they all want the same thing, right? I finally found some good vitamins that taste good for kids, multi-mineral vitamins that taste good.

Well, do they want one? No, they want 10 gummy bears or something, right? So at certain ages, the oldest gets four, three, two, and the little one gets one. I almost have to hide it now. I can't let the little one know because I want three more, it's fair, it's fair, it's fair.

But see, that's not right because that would hurt her. That's not just. So just because we look at things wanting to be fair, it doesn't make it right.

Also happens at dinner time many times, the oldest will get more food and then the next, and then the next, next, next. Then the little one wants more food, why don't I get more food? So this mentality that

sometimes I think we've all been guilty of it, we need to be fair. Parents need to be fair across the board.

And parents will love their children differently, and they'll do what's right, and somebody might get something, nobody else. But God is the perfect judge. And trust is, in my opinion, is this, God is doing what is right.

We're trusting in God's sovereignty. Justice will be served someday, won't it? When Jesus comes again, everything will be balanced out. And I've noticed a minimizing of God's sovereignty is directly related to a magnifying of worry.

Anytime we minimize the sovereignty of God and who He is, worry goes up. You know those old scales you used to, you could push down? If you push down the sovereignty of God and don't hold it high and don't trust Him, then what comes up? Worry, anxiety, it's directly related. R.C. Sproul said this, most Christians salute the sovereignty of God, but believe in the sovereignty of man.

And you know what, that's true. I said another way, most Christians believe in the sovereignty of God, but they actually really believe in the sovereignty of man. I mean, we say it, and we do believe it, we do, but it's hard.

Because the sinful nature wants, yeah, but God, I know you're sovereign, but I don't know if you've got my back in this area. In the Bible, many times throughout the Old Testament, we would read, why do the wicked prosper? God, why aren't you just? Why aren't you just? Why are the wicked prospering? And we see that everywhere, everywhere. I mean, you look and go, how is that happening? But we also have to remember that many times justice is served.

It is served many times over. But we want perfect justice. There's something created in us that we want to see everybody receive with their penalty now.

You do this, you do. We want to see perfect justice, and it's not going to be on this side of the cross. When Jesus comes again, great white throne judgment, final justice will be served.

But until that day, we've got to patiently get through society, get through the challenges of life. And I don't know if it was timing or what, but I read three news stories this week, or two actually, about a burglar, you might have read, who got caught in a chimney. And the homeowner actually started a fire.

And by the time the firemen got there and different things, they knocked down the top part of the chimney, he was dead with smoke inhalation and burned. Justice, right? We see that. And there's another guy, I believe he was in Florida, running from the police, decided to hide by a lake in Florida, and he became lunch for an alligator.

11-foot alligator pulled him right under the water, he drowned, and they found, well, just leave it at that, he ate a little bit of him. Justice, right? He's burglarizing homes. So we see that, and we want that to happen every time.

You know, it's like, well, not necessarily, I better be careful what I say here. But we want to see justice, you know, that was a little hardcore, but I think a bite of his arm would have taught him a good lesson there. But we want that, I want justice in everything, we see the courts, and we see how can these people get away with, I see ungodly organizations, the ACLU, and different things that are, separation church and state, and they're fighting for the rights of things that shouldn't be, they'll demean Christians, they'll put

down Christians, they'll put Christians in jail, but they want pedophiles to have no jail time, no jail time, just rehab, get them in a, you know, and there's no justice there.

And that's going to be a problem as we go, and you're going to see a culture getting farther away from God's justice, and more and more perverted. That's why he said the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who invites people to work, that's what the kingdom of heaven is like, and I'm glad he doesn't just give this illustration, he gives many more, the mustard seed, and the wheat and the tare, and the planting the seed in different soils, he's showing the people what heaven looks like. But I want to talk for a minute on this verse, for many are called, but few are chosen.

Many are called, but few are chosen. And this has been an area of debate for about 2,000 years. So it's not going to be settled tonight, anytime soon.

The reason, I think, is because there's truth on both sides of this equation. Many are called, but few are chosen, and if you get down to looking at it that about salvation, is that about God's will, and different things. But let's look at first the word, many are called.

Called is a summons, it's an invite. Many are invited, many are called, but few are chosen. And that word chosen actually is where we get the word election from.

Election, Ephesians 1, and different things. And election is clearly taught in the Bible, I'll be the first to admit that. And what happens in this area, many are called, but few are chosen, some groups believe that only God's elect will be saved.

So many are called, but God only chooses a few. It's called election, it's part of a system of theology. And election is true, and we see some of that throughout Scripture, but we also see whosoever.

Whosoever believes. And that's what I want to talk about for a minute. And I try to think, and no analogy does this justice at all.

It's very, you know, to bring human perspective into spiritual truths is difficult. But it's almost like if we said, after this service, I'm going to invite everybody. Everybody is called to addition for the worship team.

But I'll tell you right now, there's only a few that'll be chosen. Now their ability, they're gifted, and that doesn't apply in spiritual truths, because it's not about our ability, our good works. But there is something that we can do to be chosen.

The Bible says, repent and believe in the gospel, and be chosen. And I've read Spurgeon, I've read John Calvin, I've read Wesley, and they both have different views, and hyper-Calvinist, hyper-Calvinist would be a group of people who believe you shouldn't even preach the gospel. Because God will draw his elect regardless.

And by me preaching the gospel and saying, whosoever will, I'm pulling against your will. And that's not right. And this might be, I didn't know how deep to get in this whole process, some people like this type of debate.

But for the vast majority of people, we just need to know that God is sovereign. We don't choose God as if he's up in heaven, hiding from us, and we're waiting in a corner. He chooses us, he draws us, he seals us, he saves us, he gets all the credit, but we're still responsible for our actions, to repent and believe.

So how that all unfolds is a mystery. And I think there's a healthy tension for a reason. Some things are not explicitly taught in the Bible.

For example, I get emails maybe every other month, do babies go to heaven? If they die. So I just say, here's John Piper's YouTube video, listen to this four minute video. He lays it out wonderfully.

But what about the Bible said, if they die before the age of six, boy, parents would be, we would be just hurry, tomorrow's your birthday, you got to, and it's probably some cult would arise, it would, you know, start killing their kids at six or five, and, you know, one day short, and we, you know, it's, it's, what are we going to do? And you haven't repented, you haven't been baptized, and you're turning six tomorrow, God, you're lost forever, and it would just be terrible. So there's some things I think for our good and benefit are not clearly taught in Scripture. For example, in our election is clearly taught.

But does God save the person? Does the person accept God's invitation and how that works? All we know that both are true. Salvation is God's job. It's his work.

He does it, he draws, nobody comes to the Son unless the Father draws him. And you can look that word up in the Greek. It's, it's drag, unless the Father drags them.

So it's an interesting topic because on one hand, there is a camp that says that it's, you can preach any, but it's really pointless because God's elect will come to saving faith when it's their time. And how, in this camp, how election works is actually a person doesn't repent and believe, they are, they are, they receive the Holy Spirit, and then they're able to repent and believe because they're now elect. It's called the order of salvation in theology.

And there's two different views on the order of salvation. What comes first, the chicken or the egg? So it's the same thing. What comes first, repentance and belief? And then the filling of the Spirit? They would say the filling, the indwelling of the Spirit comes first, and then you're able to repent and believe because man left on his own is, is that one of the points is total depravity.

They are, they're totally depraved. They're dead in their sins. They can't, they can't reach out and grab God any more than a dead person can reach out and grab a gift.

So they have to be infused with the Holy Spirit in order to do that. But just a general reading of the scripture, I have a tough, kind of a tough time with that order of salvation. To me, the gospel is presented, a person repents and believes and is filled with the Spirit.

But then they say, well, that's a good work. Well, we're reaching out, receiving a gift that God has given. And but the other side is, it's a salvation is my work.

It's my job. I can be in and out of salvation one month, the next. God really doesn't know what I'm going to choose.

He's kind of worried up in heaven. And it's more of man doing this and man holding his salvation together, and man, you know, so the middle ground, the biblical ground, and that's why there's confusion is there's a healthy tension. Both are true.

God is sovereign. He knows what salvation is all about. Once you once you once you're saved, you realize you were chosen.

God just pulled you up and saved you. But at the same time, we realize there came a point where I broke and I repented and I confessed Christ as Savior and Lord and I believed. And then from that belief, I was filled with the Spirit of God.

So both of those are true. And we in we on this area of election, it's interesting because John the Baptist really didn't have a choice. When you're filled with the Holy Spirit in your mother's womb, you're chosen.

So God can do whatever he wants, he goes, I chose this one to be the messenger, the forerunner of Christ. Oh, by the way, Paul on the on your way to Damascus, I'm actually going to knock you off your beast with a huge light that's going to blind you and you're going to say, Who are you, Lord? Now, Paul, you're now you're a chosen servant for me to go to the Gentiles. And Jeremiah, did you know that before I even formed you in the womb, I knew you and I called you to be a prophet among the nations.

That's election. That's God's choosing. God chooses.

It's got to choose everybody or see just, hey, I want these people on my team. You know, that's what the debate is really, okay, salvation is for everybody. But God says, I'm going to take Paul, I'm going to take John the Baptist, I'm going to take and put them on my team.

And that's how some of this comes about as people trying to see, well, both are true. Because the Bible just doesn't say, you know, well, Paul's preaching and you can see this in Paul's preaching and Peter's preaching. There's a pleading there.

It's not like, well, whoever's elect is going to come to faith today. And if that's you, would you hurry up and come up here so we can go have lunch? I mean, there's a pleading. Paul's King Agrippa, King Agrippa, I would to God that I would persuade you.

Jesus, oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you were not willing. And Peter, you stiff-necked people, turn from the wrath that is to come. You see this pleading there because they, in my opinion, they believe that man was able to accept or reject the gift that was given to them.

And it's interesting, on sermons like this, you can't please half the people. If I go too much this side, oh, I get all the emails from this camp. If I go too much this camp, it's all the, oh, well, what's the Bible say? Both are true.

Both are true. I like what Charles Spurgeon said. He said they run, these two trues run like two parallel lines and we don't know where they cross until eternity.

And we don't. Both are true. If it was all up to man and my kids, oh, I'd be a mess.

If God's like, well, I'm not going to do anything about it, either they accept me or they don't and I'm just going to go sit over here and wait and see what they do. We pray like Calvinists. We pray like, God, save my kids.

I don't know about you, but I do. God, save my kids at an early age. Why am I praying that if he can't do it? But can he orchestrate situations? Can he draw, can he put them in certain spots that would break them? I mean, he's God.

He can do whatever he wants. And it's a very healthy tension. And here's my advice.

Don't get too caught up on either side. Because then you get shot by both. And they're mad.

These groups, they're mad. It's why don't you view things like I view it? Well, the Bible, both is true. God is elect.

He is sovereign. But man must believe, and I'm going to talk about this for a minute. Could God have created man to receive his offer of salvation or reject it? Could God have created us to accept or reject his offer of salvation? This camp will say, no, he couldn't have because then that becomes a good work.

I don't see it as a good work. I see it as a hopeless sinner reaching out and grabbing a gift that God is giving via repentance. Jesus, in Mark 10, 15, I assuredly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.

How does a child receive something? They're real. They're genuine. They're sincere.

So a person has to be real, genuine, sincere. They receive the gift of salvation like a child. This ability to receive God's gift, if it does exist, does not make man good.

Quite the contrary, it makes him utterly dependent, desperate, and without hope unless he receives what God has offered to him. And people say, oh, hold on, Shane. 1 Corinthians 2, 14, But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.

So now we have a problem here. Jesus says, whosoever receives the kingdom, and then Paul says, the natural man cannot receive the things of God. Healthy tension, right? Want me to move to the next topic or explain that one? Okay, good.

Again, it's important to look at the original language in the Greek. The word is *decamoi*. It means, let me read what it means.

It means, the word *decamoi* means to take hold of or to welcome. So in other words, the natural man definitely does not welcome the things of God, but can he accept or reject them when he sees his need? For example, I do not welcome or accept visitors at 1 a.m. But it does not follow that I cannot receive or welcome them. See, just because the natural man does not receive the things of God, it doesn't necessarily mean that he is without the ability to accept this gift that God is giving.

If you don't have a healthy tension, you don't find yourself in the middle, you'll get a big headache. Have you ever thought about eternity when you're little? Or even now? And your mind starts to explode after a billion years? And you can't process it. The same thing with salvation.

It's a mystery. It's a mystery how this works. But it's not hidden from our eyes.

It's very clear. God's calling in Romans 1.20. Here's another good verse. In Romans 1.20, we learn that we are out-excused, for since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes are clearly seen, so that they are without excuse.

John Calvin, in his famous work, Institutes of Christian Religion, said, Our will is in bondage to sin, and therefore it sins of necessity. But this necessity is voluntary. In other words, he's right.

The will is in bondage to sin. We know that. So therefore we sin.

But the sin is a conscious, voluntary choice by me. So it's this interesting circle here. But can a person be without excuse who does not have the ability to perform what is being asked? So if we're judged on rejecting a call to repentance, that leads me to believe that a good, gracious God would give me the ability to respond to his call.

If not, it's like punishing a one-month-old infant because she's not listening to my command to get up and walk. I'm going to punish her. How can I? She cannot perform what is being asked.

So any time, in my opinion, when God says, do this, it tells me I can do it. If not, it's pointless. So when God tells us to go and tell sinners, Jesus said, I've come to call the sinners to repentance.

That tells me that sinners can repent. And when he calls us to do something, and that actually is very encouraging. When God calls Christians to put on the full armor of God, you can put it on.

When God says, and this is huge right now, be anxious for nothing. I've talked to so many people this week who are dealing with anxiety and fear, and rightly so, for focusing on the wrong things. But when God says, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Do not let the spirit of anxiety dwell in you. You don't have a spirit of fear. These are command words that tell me I can respond to those commands.

But on this area of salvation, there's been huge debates, and there's two sides to this, and I just wish we could come to the middle because both are true. Just by me suggesting that a person can repent and believe because God tells us to do that. And we know, how can a person come to faith unless a person is sent and preach? And how can they proclaim unless they're sent? And the Bible tells us to go and preach, and we have this interesting thing that we don't understand, that how can God be sovereign? How can he know everything? How can election be taught in the Bible, but at the same time, how can a human be held responsible for their actions? If a person's without excuse, that tells me that they can perform what was being asked of them.

Does it not? So here's the answer for me. To be faithful to God's command to preach, to witness, and to proclaim the truth while understanding that God does the drawing, the saving, and the sealing. What I mean by sealing is with an S there.

He seals us. We can't manipulate salvation, but we can plead. We can't force, but we can encourage.

And I know that as I'm preaching, when people, and we have people a lot, especially on the radio, they come to know Christ. Without God's drawing of them, without that convicting in the Spirit, they wouldn't. They wouldn't come to saving faith.

So there should be a healthy tension between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. This issue should not create a spirit of division, elitism, or theological superiority. Those who believe that you can lose your salvation, for example, should not chide those who believe in eternal security.

Once saved, always saved, is by no means a license to sin. It's a belief in God's guarantee. This is another interesting topic.

I can mention people right now, I've gotten to know over the years, pastors that you would know well. They have their own radio talk shows, and they would believe that a person can lose their salvation, and then

lose their salvation. I'm on this side of it, where I believe that once a person repents and believes in the children of God, they are part of God's kingdom, and that cannot be taken from them.

Paul said, neither height nor death, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any created thing shall ever be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Now, not only that, here's a better one. Ephesians 1, 13 through 14.

When we believe in the gospel, here's what it says, we are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance until the day of redemption for those who are God's. So, if the Holy Spirit seals me, and the Holy Spirit now is given to me as a guarantee, you can't undo God's work. So, once you walk into God's kingdom, he seals you, he possesses you, you're a child of God.

I don't see how that can be undone. What about this scripture, Hebrews 6? Those who have been tasted the good things of God, those who've been enlightened, those who have partook, if they walk away, there's no more repentance for them. Well, a couple thoughts.

I've never, ever seen those words used anywhere in regard to salvation. For example, Judas Iscariot partook of the ministry of Christ. He was part of that ministry.

He tasted the good things of God. He partook in it, but what was his fate? To me, these are imageries of tasting, but not consuming. This is the person who's tasting the good things.

They're coming to church, they're partaking, they're going to fellowship meetings, they're partaking, they're tasting. If they fall away after experiencing the truth, if they fall away, there's no repentance. There's no way they're gonna turn back if they've already given up the things they were tasting.

So, to me, that verse doesn't have to do with somebody who's saved who walks away from God. And there's other scriptures. And if anybody wanders from the truth, he who turns him back saves his soul from death.

Well, the context there, where he's talking about sins and the sins related to death and physical ailments. And where he's talking about, if you turn a person back, you could save that soul from death. Not necessarily death and separation from God, but just death of the body because of sickness and disobedience.

So there's two ways to look at this. And what I do is I weigh the scriptures. I mean, there's a lot of scriptures.

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Abide in the branch. All these scriptures.

But I can't, when it comes to God sealing us and saving us and he's given the Holy Spirit to guarantee. It's not a partial guarantee. He's not a down payment.

It's not like he's going to... It doesn't say he partially seals you and you better make sure you stay in this thing or else you're... And people, they're going to get mad at this sermon too, that believe you can lose your salvation. They say, well, you're causing people to continue in sin. Oh, no, I'm not.

No, I'm not. If a person continues in blatant, unrepentant sin and they like it, I would say, you're not even saved. We're even saved to begin with because a person who's saved bears the fruit.

Not perfectly. There's backsliding. There's a prodigal.

But remember, the prodigal is still the son. Have you ever thought about that? The prodigal is still the father's son. I'm not giving license to sin.

Anybody who's heard 10 messages here knows that's not true. But I can't fathom being filled with the Spirit of God, loving God in His Word, and then somehow I just got rid of all that. Now I'm not a believer anymore.

Now I hate God. And Billy Graham convicts me. Now I'm a believer again.

Man, I'm a believer. And then, a couple years later, I'm done with that stuff. I don't see that.

And here's what happens. But I don't argue with people either. I know a lot of my good friends, especially coming out of the Calvary Chapel movement, I think one of their distinctives is they would believe opposite of this in me in this area.

And I look at a lot of the Scriptures they use and I don't see those Scriptures the way they see them in the context in different things. Here's what happened. It's a miraculous thing.

It's called a new birth. You enter into God's kingdom. You can't undo that any more than you can do a physical birth.

To me, that is wonderful news. Doesn't mean I don't fear God. Doesn't mean I don't work out my salvation with fear and trembling.

Doesn't mean I'm not on my guard. It just means that God is holding me. Other Scriptures say it is God who makes us stand firm in Christ.

What do you do with these when you start to weigh them out? So here's the final point on this. These promises of God are not based on anything that we do to maintain them. They are based on what Christ did.

But we also must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Philippians 2.12 And ultimately, because the whole series is on hope, the hope I want to encourage you guys is resting in His sovereignty. We rest in it in salvation.

I think, don't we? Hopefully you do. Are you white knuckling it until you die? Oh, I've got to hold on to this. Oh, I can't fall into any sin at all.

I better not eat too much. It's called gluttony. I better not do this.

And you're white knuckling. No, there's freedom in Christ. We can rest in God's sovereignty.

And with all the terrorism, all the things going on, again, this is a great time to remind you that God is sovereign. God is sovereign. And we have to think, I mean, I've seen people die painful deaths of cancer versus you go out quickly with a terrorist bomb.

You know, we're worrying about either way we're going to see God. And I think that's why it's called terrorism. Terrorize.

And when a person's terrorized, they don't function very well. They snap at their spouse. They're rude to their children.

They don't want to get in God's word. They sure don't want to pray. They don't want to come to worship service.

And they're led around by fear. That's why I joke, but I don't really joke, that that's why ammunition cells are skyrocketing, gun cells are skyrocketing, because everybody's in a fear frenzy mode. The prayer closets are empty and the gun safes are full, right? And if you know my stance on that, I own a few and I have no problem with self-defense, but you have to have a healthy view of what God calls us to do.

I just got chewed out on that this week too. It's funny, they send me a sermon clip of my own sermon. They go, do you remember what you said back then? Yeah.

Both are true. We trust in God. I mean, if you follow it out, why don't you just leave your car unlocked? And while you're at it, leave your front door unlocked and cracked.

Well, I would never do that. What's the difference? You're trusting God. Well, Shane, that's stupid.

But right, it's called wisdom. Wisdom. I mean, there was a couple of kids and they're 18, 19, not a good looking car, hoodies on, down the curb just kind of watching the homes.

What am I supposed to do? Stupid, right? Well, no. Use wisdom. Hey guys, what are you doing down there? Oh, nothing.

Okay, good. They'll go to the next street. God gives us wisdom for a reason.

Now that could turn into a sermon too. But I wanted to take four weeks and that's why we're on the second week of offering hope and offering hope in God's sovereignty. And as Christians, I'm preaching myself here too, we have to get away from the God is fair to God is just.

God does what's right. All the time. I mean, I'll share something with you.

It's actually kind of funny. But people come sometimes, they're watching online and they'll drive like a couple hours and they're listening on the radio and they're like, I thought you guys would be thousands of people at your church. Like, okay, well, that means, I mean, you know, so you're, that's not fair, you know.

But you're gauging things on, God, if he's sovereign, he knows what he's doing. I mean, most people, I like it kind of little and smaller and more, you know, you know everybody. But if he decides to grow it because more people need to hear it, then that's his choice.

But resting in his sovereignty, resting in when things don't go well. And I wanted to read this quick introduction to a hymn. I've been doing that over the last few weeks on the background.

If you get the background of some of the hymns we sing, it will change the way you sing. Because it's not just a bunch of lyrics, it's people who went through a lot of things. And I actually talked about this this summer already.

And I wanted to do it again because it fits perfectly. And I think we're gonna do a hymn later, one that many of you will remember. It's called It's Well With My Soul.

It's an old hymn, It's Well With My Soul. And I want to read the history behind that again. It's from Horatio Spadford, who wrote the song.

1828 he was born. He was a wealthy Chicago lawyer with a thriving legal practice, a beautiful home, a wife, four daughters, and a son. He was also a devout Christian, faithful student of the scriptures.

At the very height of his financial and professional success, Horatio and his wife Anna suffered the tragic loss of their son. Shortly thereafter, on October 8th, 1871, the great Chicago fires destroyed almost every real estate investment that this person owned. I mean, I don't know too many people in this room who've experienced that.

Right there. Some I do. But most of us have not even experienced that.

Then in 1873, Spadford scheduled a boat trip to Europe in order to give his wife and daughter a much needed vacation and time to recover from the tragedy. He also went to join D.L. Moody on an evangelistic campaign in England. Spadford sent his wife and daughters ahead of him while he remained in Chicago to take care of some unexpected last minute business.

Several days later, he received notice that his family's ship had encountered a collision. All four of his daughters drowned. I mean, without God's grace, I'm checking in.

I'm checking out, I should say. I mean, if that happens, without God's grace, without His sovereignty, I can't even process this. Your son, now your four daughters? Take me, Lord.

I'm just jumping off the ship here too. Now, I'm not promoting suicide. I'm just saying that this would be immeasurable pain.

Immeasurable without God's grace. He received notice that his family's ship went down. His daughters are all dead except his wife.

And it's not in here. I didn't pull it from there. But if I remember correctly, his wife telegraphed him.

And I think it was just two words, saved alone. And he knew that it was just her and her only who survived. With a heavy heart, Spadford boarded a boat that would take him to his grieving aunt in England.

It was on this trip that he penned those famous words, when sorrow, like sea billows roll, it is well, it is well with my soul. You might sing that a little differently now. Because we can get, I mean, we just get sometimes upset at just trivial little things.

Very trivial little things. I went to one of the hospital homes on my way here and talked to another young man who's a quadriplegic. I think John, who actually is quadriplegic as well, he's gonna be at our second service for those who wanna stay and say hello.

That'd be great. This other gentleman, he can't move anything, so I was talking with him, praying for him. And I said, you know, I just asked him, how long ago this happened? He said, 17 years ago when he was a teenager.

And it was, I almost, I almost just broke down right there because I'm thinking, no, never married, no kids. And it's just, God help me. God help me.

I mean, how blessed are we? Then the Scriptures come alive about thankfulness and a thankful heart. How can we even bicker and fight? I mean, it just, sometimes we need a reality check. I would encourage you to go visit these places.

We've got four homes and we don't have enough helpers. We don't have enough people to go, and they're just sitting there. Would somebody read to me or talk to me? And it helps to put everything in perspective.

And that's why I wanted to ask you tonight. Is it well with your soul? Is it well with your soul? We can get caught up in Christmas plays, potlucks, and church services, and never ask, is it well with your soul? That's why I love that song, The Simple Gospel. I don't know if you caught that.

The simple gospel. The gospel so clear and so simple that a seven year old can fall on their knees, on their bed, and receive Christ. An atheist, an intellectual giant can bow to the cross with the simple gospel.

A hardened criminal, life sentence, can bow to the foot of the cross because of the simple gospel. So when we sing these songs, folks, we need to get our hearts right. I won't have the worship team come up just yet, but we're going to go into a time of communion.

What a perfect time for this. This is a time of communion. And the reason we have it out and don't pass it, one of the reasons is because we want to invite you to do that.

We don't want to just assume that everybody can take communion. Because when you pass the plate, everybody's like, okay, I guess I better do this. And communion is for believers.

Those who remember. That's the whole point of communion is to remember what Jesus did on the cross. And you know what I did? It brought me to tears.

I knew this was going to be a good sermon today. When I start crying throughout the day, it's a good sermon. I grabbed old baby pictures.

Thank God for my wife and taking pictures. I don't think we have one picture. Some of you guys take pictures, but selfies and the selfie stick, and I just, ugh.

But I pulled out my little daughter, holding her at one, and man, remembering. Lord, slow down life. Please, that's my prayer right now.

Lord, slow down life. And the little one, just born at the hospital years ago, and I'm remembering, and I'm remembering. And then when they walked in the door, I just grabbed them and held them, and let's take a day off tomorrow.

And my heart's remembering. That's what communion is. Jesus said, remember me when you go into a time of communion and worship.

Remember the cross. Remember that somebody was beaten, somebody was bruised. The blood fell down, and we go, and we should go to communion, I believe, with tears.

And saying, God, thank you, instead of just up there, well, okay, well, I've got to get out of here. That's not communion. That's not communion.

Communion is remembering the cross. Remembering that if it wasn't for the grace of God, I would be dead in my trespasses and sin. I mean, I don't know why this stuff doesn't penetrate our hearts.

And that's the point of communion. We don't need a long theological sermon on it all the time. What we need is hearts engaged in saying, Lord, help me, save me.

And if you don't know him, I would encourage you, before you take communion, the simple gospel is for you. Whosoever repents and believes, whosoever repents and believes, and then you're able to take communion and recognize what Christ did for you. And if you're not in a good spot spiritually, listen, there's a lot of people who aren't.

I call people or email or Facebook them every week who have drifted from God, trying to reach out, trying to reach out. I've got high school, trying to reach out. And this is a time that for them, even if you've drifted from God, all it takes is worship and a heart saying, I'm coming back, and communion helps us remember that.

So that's why I love communion. It's a time of where we're actually remembering the body that was broken. As I told you a few weeks ago, if you could have traveled to Golgotha, the place of the skull, and watched, you would be radically changed.

If people are changed by going to Israel, they come back and they say, oh, I'm never reading the Bible the same. I've been a spiritual awakening. Well, if you could see your Savior on a cross, and you could stand at His knees and watch the blood hit the ground, you would come back different.

You would come back, why don't we talk to people about Jesus anymore? Most Christians I know don't even mention Him. It's because they don't know Him in a deep way. They don't know Him in a deep way.

They don't know Him.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/G39klxWdWbk.mp4>

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