

Seek Understanding, Not Miracles, Part 4

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I'm sorry we've been breaking up this passage—especially the first point. I wanted to do the whole passage, and then I was going to preach on point one, and now this is the fourth sermon on point one. We will finish up today, Lord willing.

If you remember back three weeks, we were in Luke 9:37–45, an interesting text that [contains] many spiritual truths. It records for us what happened immediately after Jesus came down off the Mount of Transfiguration, having been up there with Peter, James, and John, showing them His glory. This section in Luke is showing us some of the failures of the disciples right before Jesus ends His Galilean ministry and then heads to Jerusalem, where, of course, He will be crucified, die, and rise again.

So, some of the failures included [the disciples] falling asleep while they were supposed to be praying, [and their] missing the whole purpose of the Mount of Transfiguration. While they were up there, messing up, the nine [other disciples] below are messing up [because] they are trying to cast a demon out of a demon-possessed boy [and] they can't get the demon out. So, they're failing because they're not trusting God [and] they're not asking God in prayer to help them. Because they fail to act in faith, this gives an occasion for the scribes to begin to argu[e] with them, [saying things like], "I told you so! You don't have any power. Jesus isn't the Messiah," [and] just attacking them. So there's this big argument going on.

Mark tells us that Jesus comes down off the mountain with Peter, James, and John, the disciples are in this argument and the crowd—this huge crowd, we don't know how big it is, the text doesn't say, but Jesus is at the pinnacle of His ministry, [so there] may be [as many as] 20,000 people—and they all run toward Jesus, and they all want something from Him. Most of them, though, are unbelieving.

That is the context of what is happening [in this passage]. Follow along as I read Luke 9:37–45.

On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him. And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, “Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy, and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves. I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not.” And Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.” While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, “Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.” But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

At first glance, this is your typical miracle account. You know, somebody's got a demon, Jesus casts it out, and voila. But as we look at it, we

see that Luke includes this particular healing situation for bigger purposes than just the fact that Jesus is going to heal the demon-possessed boy. It is clear that Luke includes this because it shows another failure on the part of the disciples and teaches us several other important truths.

I've looked at this text, and I've identified four hindrances to spiritual vitality that we need to avoid in our lives so that we can walk with the Lord in a manner pleasing to Him [see 2 Corinthians 5:9]. We have stopped at the first [hindrance] and dug in. So we're still on that point: Don't be unbelieving. We looked at [Luke 9:]40, where Jesus has come down [from the mountain], the [demon-possessed boy's father] has probably pushed his way through the crowd, he's holding his son, and he says, "Teacher, I beg you, look at my son because he is cruelly demon possessed," and then gives all these really nasty symptoms, probably in an attempt to try and make Jesus empathetic and passionate [so that He will] say, "OK, I'll heal him." That is where we are when we get to verse 40. Then the man adds this: "I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not."

Remember [that] in the beginning of [Luke] 9, Jesus gave the disciples power to cast out demons and heal all manner of disease and sickness [see 9:1]. So what's the problem? You see, they already had everything they needed to deal with this demon-possessed boy, but the man says they couldn't do it. This, then, causes Jesus to say in verse 41: "You unbelieving and perverted generation."

We spent two sermons on the word "unbelieving," [and] learned that there are four categories of unbelievers. There is, first of all, the religious, God-hating atheist, the person who doesn't believe in God, is just an unbeliever in the very, absolute, and complete sense. Then, [second,] there is the non-practicing, religious professor, who says, "Yeah, I believe in God. Of course, I don't go to church, I don't read my Bible, I don't serve God, I don't know anything about God, but yes, I believe in *a* god." Third, there is what you would call a practicing, professing, religious unbeliever. That is the person who goes to church—maybe he is involved, maybe he's teaching Sunday school, maybe he's doing good deeds in the church, serving,

faithfully attending, learning lots about the Bible—but he never has really repented of his sin and given his life to Christ. He is still as unbelieving as the God-hating atheist.

Fourth and finally, there is the kind of unbelief that happens when a true believer chooses to not obey God in sin. We learned that every act of sin is an act of unbelief. What you're basically saying [when you sin] is, "Well, Lord, I know that You want me to do this, but I don't want to do [it]. I believe my way, indulging in this sin, is better than Your way [of] abstaining from it. I believe that going against Your truth is the best thing for me, that it will bring me the most blessing, and therefore, I refuse to believe You." There are even true believers who, when they sin, are really acting in unbelief. So, we looked at that.

Then, in our last message, we looked at Jesus' description of His generation as being "perverted," a word that means "twisted, contorted, convoluted," and, in a spiritual sense, it describes somebody who is living a life that is contrary—contorted, twisted—[to] God's will for his life. In other words, he is in sin. [The word "perverted" is] actually a synonym for sin. We saw other texts where Jesus actually used "evil, wicked, sinful" in place of "perverted" describing His generation.

This then, led us to investigate the doctrine [that] addresses sinfulness: the doctrine of total depravity. Total depravity, we learned, was not a doctrine which says [that] everybody is as sinful as they can be, but that everybody is sinful in all their parts, or being. That is, you, being a child of Adam, being a sinner, are cursed in body, soul, spirit, [and] mind. There is no part of you that hasn't been affected by sin. It doesn't mean you are as sinful as you can be. Mankind is like a sack of rotten potatoes: though some potatoes are more rotten than others—not all are equally rotten—all in the sack are rotten nonetheless. So, that's what you are, and everybody knows how rotten potatoes get.

The consequence, of course, of sin is that you end up in hell because God will by no means allow the guilty to go unpunished [see Exodus 34:7 and Nahum 1:3], and so He punishes sinners, casting them into hell unless

they believe. So, unbelief is the refusal to believe God [and to] trust God. Perversion, or sin, is the consequence of unbelief. Jesus, in one fell swoop [in Luke 9:41], condemns the whole generation as being both unbelieving and sinful. That is where we left off. Let's see if we can finish up the "Don't be unbelieving" point.

So, after all are condemned, Jesus asks two questions in [Luke 9:]41—look there—[that] reveal a deficiency in the disciples, the crowd, and the generation. First, Jesus asks: "How long shall I be with you?"

The people [want] to receive and/or witness a miracle. Even the disciples would like Jesus to back them up [and] heal the demon-possessed boy so they can turn to the scribes, and say, "Ah ha! Neener neener."

We have already learned that the disciples were unbelieving. Jesus rebukes them in Matthew for being of little faith [see Matthew 14:31]. The [demon-possessed] boy's father was unbelieving. He had to pray, as we learned from Mark, "Lord, help my unbelief" [Mark 9:24]. The crowd was unbelieving, [and] the scribes were unbelieving [as well]. We've got a lot of unbelieving going on here.

Now, if you study the Bible, you know that there is a consequence of unbelief and that is [that] unbelief puts an end to the [receiving of] blessing [from] God. God does not like to bless those who will not believe or trust in Him. One such example is in Matthew 13:58, right after Jesus gives all the parables. Jesus then goes to His hometown [of] Nazareth for a quick visit. Matthew says, in Matthew 13:58, "And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief." Unbelief, we learned, is the mother of all sins. It is the root of all sin.

After performing many miracles among [the people], Jesus, in sanctified exasperation, says, "How long shall I be with you and put up with you?" He is at His wit's end, so to speak. He doesn't like their unbelief. Remember, Jesus is running out of time: He's going to die. He's spent almost three years so far training the disciples and doing miracles in and around Galilee. You'd think [that] they would finally get it. Crowds of thousands have seen Him do miracles [and] heard His teaching. They know people

who have been healed, they've talked to people who have been healed, they have neighbors who have been healed, a lot of them have been healed themselves. The disciples need to learn to minister in the power of God, relying on the Holy Spirit, trusting God in prayer without Jesus there, and they're blowing it. They're not doing it. They're failing. They were not living by faith, which disconnected them from the power source, and so they were unable to cast the demon out of this boy [in Luke 9]. They were trusting in their own power [and] their past successes rather than God's power, which is only tapped into by faith, by believing [in] God. Instead, they were believing in self, not God.

They're kind of like the man who needed to cut down some trees on his property. [He] went to the chainsaw shop, and said, "Hey, I need a chainsaw."

And the guy [at the store] says, "OK," [and sells] him the saw.

The guy goes home, he works and works and works, [and he becomes] exasperated because the saw is no good. He takes it back [to the store and] says to the owner, "This is a piece of junk. This saw does not work. I have labored all morning and I haven't even cut down one tree yet."

Then the owner, in surprise, says, "Sir, this is the best saw we carry. Let me see it." So he turns on the switch, pulls the starter cord, [and] it starts right up with a roar. The man who purchased it jumps back, looks startled, and [the owner] turns it off, and says, "What's wrong?"

The man [asks], "What's that noise?"

See, every true believer has "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" [Ephesians 1:3]. They have the Holy Spirit, God Almighty, and Christ dwelling within them. They don't need a bigger engine. They just need to tap into the power through faith. Ephesians 3:20 says, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us." You've got the engine, but how many people hear the roar of God's blessing like that? How many people actually sit down at home at night, and go, "Whoa! God has done exceedingly, abundantly above and beyond all I could ever think or imagine

through me.” Well, there’s only one reason that that doesn’t happen, and that is unbelief. We have the power, we have the blessing, we have everything we need.

So, if you’re ministering and there’s no power, and God’s blessing isn’t flowing, guess what? It’s not God’s fault; [it’s] operator error. You have unplugged the power source. You’ve turned off the switch. The solution to that is to humble yourself before God, ask Him to search your heart, see if there be any wicked way in you [see Psalm 139:24], to confess your sins, to trust God in prayer, and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God will work through those who trust Him.

God never says, “Hey, I know you want to trust in Me, but no.” He never says that. He says, “*Please* trust in Me. *Please* ask Me. *Please* rely on Me.”

We go, “Hey, God, I’ve got it.”

Faith is the key [that] turns the power on, [that] causes the power to flow. When faith is absent, blessing either ceases to flow or just slows to a dribble. This is why Jesus is exasperated [in Luke 9:41]. [The people] have seen the miracles, [the disciples] have the power, and He comes down [from the Mount of Transfiguration] and all He sees is unbelief and sin. He says, “How long shall I be with you and put up with you?” This implies several things. One, that Jesus had been with them; two, that Jesus was not going to be with them; and three, that Jesus was putting up with them, bearing up with them, tolerating them.

Thomas and Gundry, in their *Harmony of the Gospels*, say that this may be the only time in all four Gospels where Jesus shows what seems to be some exasperation. [The people] are trying omnipotent patience here. They’re provoking the Son of God. Unbelief and sin were begging God not to bless the people and the people were asking for the blessing. See the problem there? That was the tension.

Now, you may be out there thinking to yourself, “Well, Jack, OK. This already happened. That whole generation is dead. Jesus went to Jerusalem, died, [and] rose again. So what does this passage have to do with us?” That’s true—those things are true. However, we are a different “unbeliev-

ing and perverted generation.” We have the same problem they did. Think with me here. What is the basic concept of Jesus’ statement here—“How long shall I be with you and put up with you?”? What is that basic concept? The basic concept here is that time is running out.

Let’s first talk about believers. Is there any way that time is running out for believers? Yeah, you bet. Job 7:7 says, “Remember that my life is but breath.” The psalmist in Psalm 144:4 says: “Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow.” James in James 1:10 describes us as the “flowering grass” that passes away, and in 4:14, “a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.” Your life is going—fast. [The] next time you have that little perfect cup of coffee or tea and put all your fixings in it, and you’re sitting there and you’re kind of clutching [your mug], and you see those little vapors, then just look there and say, “That’s me.” That’s it. You are the vapor. You are the withering grass. You are the shadow that appears and disappears.

This is why Paul says in Ephesians 5:15–16: “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.” It all starts with living by faith. Make the most of your time, “because the days are evil.”

There are several television shows that [emulate] real time. I think the most popular one is *24*. Most of you probably know about it. You have these episodes where the guy is saving the world from some terrorist, or some bomb, or the plague, or who knows [what]. He’s got twenty-four hours, and so every week—all through the season—all twenty-four episodes, he’s not sleeping, he’s just [spending all] twenty-four hours trying to fight against incredible opposition, the bad guys, and trying circumstances. Oh, how the main character strives with all his might to save the world! At the very end, he finally does, but what does he save? Vapor? Withering grass? An earth that is destined to perish in the flames and to be burned up with intense heat [see 2 Peter 3:10, 12]?

Listen, we need to look at our lives here. Just take your life right now. The insurance companies say [the average age to which people live is]

about seventy-one or seventy-two, [so] we'll just say seventy-two. Take seventy-two, take your age, subtract [it] from seventy-two, [and] voila that's how long you have left [to live], on the average. Life's short. For some of you, it's beyond short. You're in the negative. You're living on borrowed time. You're daring fate.

I pity young people who think that they are going to live forever. You know, you talk to some people and they just have this idea that, "Well, hey, I'm young, I'm fit, and I'm not going to die for a long, long time. I'll do the religious thing later when I get older. I'll give my life to Jesus, maybe, but right now I don't want Jesus ruling over my life, keeping me from those sins I want to indulge in. Yeah, I'm going to come to church because my parents make me, and I'm just going to try and put up with it." [Do] you know what they're doing? They're gambling with their eternal souls. They're treating their *eternal souls* like a little plastic poker chip.

I wish they could be with me a few times when I have to look at young dead people in [their] casket[s]. You know, you may be in perfect health and die today going home from church—some drunk driver could plow into you and just take you out. You [could] be like a cousin I had who was twenty-three years old, a track star, and [who] drop[ped] dead of a brain aneurism. I've buried children just weeks old, and teenagers, and young men in their early twenties who are in the absolute epitome of health who died from freak accidents. You are a vapor and there is no guarantee that you will live to see Monday. You could go home tonight, be on your little, cushy Beautyrest extra firm, [and] we could have one of those earthquakes that sometimes happen in California, and you could be crushed to death, and never see Monday.

Life is a vapor and that is why God wants you to redeem the time for "the days are evil." You are the withering grass, and to say, "I'm going to live forever," is like one vapor saying to another vapor, "Hey, I'm going to live longer than you."

Or one blade of grass saying to the other, "Hey, you're looking old. I just sprouted. I'm going to be here a long time."

But listen, there is no guarantee that you're going to die at a certain age. (Some of you who are over seventy-two are thankful for that.) Hebrews 9:27 says: "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." The time is running out for all of us. You can't escape death, but one of Satan's primary strategies is to distract you from thinking about eternity. He wants to distract you so that you don't have your mind on what's coming. He would prefer that you think about TV, and movies, and clothing styles, and hobbies, and all of these things that have no eternal significance. Mind you, I'm not just trying to say, "Don't ever have any fun, and be miserable, and stay home." But what I am saying is this: You don't want to neglect what is commanded for what is optional. You don't want to act in unbelief, and submerge yourself in that which God hates, and neglect what is commanded: faith, obedience, redeeming the time "for the days are evil." Jesus regularly told parables about this. You are the man invested with the talents [see Matthew 25:15–30], you are one of the virgins waiting for the bridegroom [see Matthew 25:1–13], you are one of the laborers in the vineyard who will give an account [see Matthew 21:33–46]. You *will* give an account.

A couple of days ago—Wednesday, the infamous Wednesday of this week—I had to do [some] things. I [had] been gone for two weeks, so I [was] trying to get my life in order [and] all these things [were] happening. I drove by this one store and I saw all these people standing in the parking lot. I was looking and thinking, "I wonder what they're doing?" It was like a convention in the parking lot. Anyway, yesterday—[Saturday]—I had to buy something at that store, and I went there and there all the people still were—four days later, camping out. So I went up to one of the more mature, cool dudes, and I said, "Hey, what are you guys doing here?"

Do you know what he said? "Nintendo Wii."

"What?"

"Wii."

"Wii?"

"Yeah, the new Nintendo [game system]."

“Oh. So you guys have been sitting out here for four days. . . .”

“Longer than that.”

Nintendo Wii. They were sitting in a parking lot for four days—more than four days—at a chance to be the first to buy Nintendo Wii. I [had] just got[ten] through working on redeeming the time “for the days are evil,” and I thought, “That just does not work!” I mean, OK, as long as Nintendo Wii is wholesome, fine, but four days in the parking lot so [you] can be one of the first people to own it so you don’t have to wait one day and have your friend say, “Oh, I’ve had it for a day more than you”?

But many claim that, “Oh, yes, I’m a Christian. I know I’m not using my time wisely, and I know I’m not living by faith, I know I have sins in my life, but listen, I’m saved and I know I’m going to heaven. That’s what I’m trusting.” What tells you that? There are so many texts in the Bible [that] tell you the exact opposite. Why are you believing against the truth? [In] John 3:36, Jesus says, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Hebrews 5:9 says, “He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.” First John 3:10 [says]: “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.” [First John 2:4 says]: “The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” There are so many verses like that. I mean, we could just quote them [for] pretty much the whole hour. So don’t kid yourself.

[Also,] don’t be out there, and go, “Well, Pastor Jack is teaching salvation by works again.” No, I’m not. Salvation is not by works, it is by grace through faith, but [do] you know what kind of grace saves you? [It is] not some abstract concept, but grace that *changes your life* and makes you into a follower of Christ—faith that works, living faith, active faith, obeying faith. [The] point being that if you’re living in continual rebellion against God, and [in] unbelief, if you know you are sinning and yet you do not confess that sin and you do not pursue righteousness, please doubt

your salvation. Do your eternal soul a favor, because saving faith *changes* a person's life and turns them into a follower of Christ.

Now, let's just say, though, that we're not talking about anybody here because we're all saved. OK? So let's just say, we're all going to church, we're all saved, we all believe in Jesus. So what about the Christian, the true believer with the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, who now gets into this pattern of sin—[who] knows he's in sin, knows he should stop, and still won't do it? What then? I mean, is there a category like that? Yes: it's called a bull's-eye. Hebrews 12:6 says: "FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." [If] you live [in sin] as a believer, since God is a perfect Father, He's not going to go, "Oh, it's OK." You're going to be the bull's-eye of His paddle.

[Hebrews 12:]8 goes on to say: "But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons." If you say you are a believer, and you're able to live in sin and nothing happens, guess what? You're not God's child. That's what He says. God disciplines, the text says, "every son whom He receives." All true believers are partakers in God's discipline. It even uses the word "scourge," which is one of those big whips with chunks of stuff in it that tears your flesh off. [It is] a figure of speech used to describe very painful discipline, if needed.

Now, if you're out there, going, "Well, Pastor Jack, I don't know if I'm disciplined or not. I mean, no hand has come down out of heaven and [walloped] me. What does it look like?" It looks like this, from lesser to greater: First, God disciplines us very mildly. Because we have the Holy Spirit within us, He convicts us of sin and judgment. And so, [if] you do something wrong, you're convicted of your sin. If that doesn't work, then He convicts us through His Word. He rebukes us, and corrects us, and exhorts us in His Word. [It] may be through a sermon, through a Bible study, through reading a good book, or having a quiet time, or whatever. [Maybe] there's this verse, [and] it seems like everywhere you look it's always talking to you. You turn on the radio and that preacher is preaching about your

problem, [or someone] rebukes you in the foyer. I mean, you can't get away [from it]. That's God. That's God giving you little, baby swats.

And you know what? If that doesn't work—if you won't hear God through the Bible, if you won't hear the Holy Spirit—then God resorts to circumstances. These come in varying degrees of painfulness. A lot of times, He takes away things from us—possessions, jobs, family, all kinds of things—just like you would take something away from your child in order to teach him. If that doesn't work, then we may undergo church discipline, if we go to a church that does that. If that doesn't work, He may cause us to be sick. The Corinthian believers, in 1 Corinthians 11, were sick because they were in sin. They were acting in unbelief, they knew the truth, they wouldn't repent, so Paul says, “For this reason many among you are weak and sick” [11:30]. Those who wouldn't learn from the sickness, God killed. He killed them because God would rather have a believer in heaven, in His presence, perfect, worshipping Him, giving Him glory, than a believer on earth in rebellion, giving glory to Satan and sin.

Fathers, mothers, your child just happens to have one of those days, or weeks, or months. And you know what? It seems like [with] everything you do—all the discipline, all the rebuke, all the correction, all the little conversations you have—they just spurn your reproof and they rebel. After a while, you start feeling like, “How long shall I put up with you?” You know what I mean. That's what's going on in [Luke 9:37–45]. But, you know, what if your child refused to believe that you were even his parents, that you had authority over his life, that you had his best interests in mind? [What if] he said, “I'm going to run away and do my own thing”? Would that push you to the limit?

But what about unbelievers? Is there any way that time is running out for them? Yeah. You bet. The one thing that Jesus hates the most is unbelief in the face of overwhelming, incontrovertible evidence. Every believer has plenty of data—outside and inside—to help him know what is right. Even unbelievers are without excuse. Paul says in Romans 1:20: “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine

nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

Paul talks about three reasons why no one is without excuse before God—even the natives in Africa. One: God has put a conscience in every man’s heart. Two: He has put His law in [each person’s] heart so everybody knows right and wrong. Three: It can be seen through creation that God exists. I mean, come on. We all read that spontaneous generation is not true, and yet that’s what most of the world believes in. Everybody knows that things just don’t come out of nothing, but here we are, so we must have evolved. There must have been a big bang.

[If you ask,] “Where did that come from?”

[Evolutionists will likely reply,] “Let’s not talk about it.”

Everybody knows that things left on their own go from complex to simple, except when dealing with evolution, [in which] everything does what it did before and something else better. That is against the second law of thermodynamics. It is an impossibility and yet people believe it. Why? [It is] because they don’t want to submit to God. And so they are without excuse.

God describes unbelief as “smoke in His nostrils” [see Isaiah 65:5]. Have you ever had that happen? [You’re sitting around a] campfire, [the] wind shifts, [you sniff and], “Uhh!” [the smoke blows right in your face]. God puts up with it.

Many people, even Christians, have this lopsided view of Jesus. I’m beginning to see this more and more, especially as the world is trying to make Christianity non-offensive and acceptable to people who hate God. They see Jesus as this pushover, [as] overly benevolent, only gracious, only merciful, only kind, and only loving—a Savior who tolerates sin, who doesn’t really [mind] about evil. His blood is sufficient, He’ll deal with it, so just go right on sinning, it’s not that big a deal. False doctrine is not all that big a deal.

Why is this mindset in the world? Why do so many—even Christians—have a lopsided view of Jesus? This is why. [There are] four reasons. First, they fail to read and study the Old Testament. The Old Testament is

seventy-two percent of the Bible—almost three-fourths of the Bible. The Old Testament is where we learn about God: who He is, what He is like, His nature, His attributes. If we fail to read the Old Testament, we are cheating ourselves of three-fourths of what we [can] know about God. Since most people read the New Testament only—if they read their Bibles at all—and maybe some psalms and proverbs, they have a deficient view of God.

Have you ever heard this remark: “Well, the God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath.”? What does that mean? It means that [some people think] there’s a different God in the New Testament, and He’s a God of grace. Wrong! There is only one God, [and] He’s the same God in the Old Testament and the same God in the New Testament: the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other God. The one God has chosen to reveal Himself in three distinct Persons: the Father, the Son, [and] the Holy Spirit, [but] they’re all one God. There is only one, there has always been only one, and He cannot change [because He is perfect]. He will never change.

It was Jesus who cursed Adam and Eve [see Genesis 3:13–19]. It was Jesus who destroyed the world with a flood [see 2 Peter 2:5]. It was Jesus who sent the sons of Jacob into Egypt where they became slaves [see Genesis 46:1–4 and Exodus 1:8–14]. It was Jesus who drowned pharaoh’s army [see Exodus 15:4]. It was Jesus who wiped out [an] entire generation, who sent the serpents among the people [see Numbers 21:6]. It was Jesus, [at] the rebellion of the sons of Korah, who opened up the earth and swallowed up all of those men, women, children, and possessions [see Numbers 26:9–11]. Jesus did that.

It was Jesus who sent famine [see Genesis 12:10], and pestilence [see 2 Samuel 24:15], and sword [see 2 Samuel 1:12] upon Israel because of their unbelief. It was Jesus who sent the Assyrians to slaughter and kill and disperse the ten northern tribes because of unbelief [see Ezekiel 23:23–24]. It was Jesus who sent the Babylonians to kill and plunder, and rape, and destroy, and burn the temple down [see Ezra 5:12]. Jesus did that. And so, the first reason people don’t understand Jesus is [that] they think He’s some

different kind of God. He *is* that God, and only that God. He has never changed.

The [second] reason people have a lopsided view of Jesus is because they only get their view of Jesus from the Gospels. Granted, the very reason I wanted to go through Luke is so you could get a good view of Jesus. But listen, everybody knows the most important Bible study principle, right? What is that? [Context is king]. What is the context of Jesus in the Gospels? Humility. Jesus, who had glory with the Father before eternity past, humbled Himself, [was] found in the appearance of man, became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross [see Philippians 2:8]. All that we see in the Gospels is Jesus humbling Himself *for a time*. But *just* for a time. That time is over.

If you don't remember that, then you get this view that Jesus is going around letting sinners revile Him, and reproach Him, and bring dishonor upon His name, and [that He is] just not doing anything, [but saying], "OK, kill Me." *No*. No. Jesus' humiliation is over. [If] you want to get a good view of Jesus—what He's like—read the book of Revelation. That is Jesus risen from the dead, now, sitting in heaven with eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like burnished bronze [see Revelation 1:14–15], judging the nations with a rod of iron [see Revelation 19:15]. Do you think [that] when Jesus is in His kingdom and people rebel against Him, He'll go, "Now, now, now." [No.] "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end" [Matthew 21:41].

Third, people have a lopsided view of Jesus because of Jesus' present patience. People [think], "Well, I sinned, and nobody got me. I sinned, and I'm not dead, and I'm not in hell." And so, obviously, they come to several conclusions: [One,] God doesn't exist. We hear people say, "Well, if God did exist, then obviously He would do something about the evil in the world." So, since He's not doing anything about the evil, God doesn't exist. Or, [two], "God doesn't care about evil and sin because I sin and God's not doing anything about it in my life." Or, three, Jesus isn't coming back to judge the living and the dead because it's been so long [that] obviously it's

not going to happen. And so, they have this lopsided view of Jesus because of God's patience.

But turn to 2 Peter 3, where Peter addresses this very thing. The whole theme of [this] book is on false teachers and their twisted thinking. This is what Peter says in 2 Peter 3:3–9:

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." [3:3–4]

Notice what's motivating them: "following after their own" perversions, "lusts," sins.

For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. [3:5–7]

Notice [that] they choose to believe against the Word.

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. [3:8–9]

It is folly of eternal proportions to think that because God is patient therefore He doesn't exist, He doesn't care about sin, and He's not coming back in judgment. He's just merely being patient until that last sinner repents and then He's going to come back, robed in vengeance, and squish the life out of [everyone] who is left and cast them into hell. That's the truth. That is the Savior we serve. That is the Savior in our text [in Luke 9:41], who says, "How long shall I be with you and put up with you?" God is long-suffering, but He is not ever-suffering. When He's tired of putting up with sinners, He'll come back and make things right, and no one will be saying, "Oh, God didn't do anything."

Fourth, people have a lopsided view of Jesus because men like to suppress the truth in unrighteousness [see Romans 1:18] and create a God [out] of their own imaginations. Now, this is a handy way to deal with it. [People] don't like what the Bible says, so [they] say, "Well, my God is a loving God *only*. He tolerates sin, He allows me to continue in wickedness, and He loves me unconditionally."

You say, "Well, listen, the Bible says that, yeah, God is loving, but He is also just and He is holy, and He is going to judge sinners, and He's going to cast them into hell."

"Oh, but, I could never serve a God like that." Well, you don't. You don't because He is the only God. There is only one God: the God who is revealed in the pages of the Bible. We don't have the prerogative to redefine God and create Him in our image, in our own imaginations. To invent a God of your own imagination, to customize His attributes, and to cling on to the pieces of God that you want to is to commit idolatry.

This is what Jesus is seeing when He comes down [off] of the mountain [in Luke 9]: unbelief, perversion, sin, [and] people who are asking for blessing but [who] won't believe in Him. They won't even trust in God. He says, "How long shall I be with you and put up with you?" Don't think that because God is patient, "not willing that any should perish" [see 2 Peter 3:9], that He's up there and He's fine with all that's going on on earth that's sinful, or even in your life that's sinful. He is not fine with it.

[First], study the God of the Old Testament [and the book of Revelation] to get a complete understanding of Jesus. Don't form your doctrine of Jesus from the Gospels alone. [Second], when you do study the Gospels, remember the context: [Jesus] is in His humility in the Gospels. Third, don't take the patience of Christ in waiting to see sinners saved as a fact that God doesn't exist, or doesn't care about sin, or isn't coming in judgment. Fourth, don't create Jesus in your own imagination because that is to commit idolatry.

[If] you do these things, then you will begin to have an accurate understanding of Jesus, who is "the King of kings and Lord of lords" [1 Timothy 6:15]. He will by no means allow the guilty to go unpunished. You either get saved His way, through faith in Him, believing in Him, trusting in Him, or you don't get saved. That's it; [it's] very narrow. That's why Jesus says the gate is narrow, and He says [to] strive to enter the narrow way and few are those who find the gate [see Matthew 7:14].

Yes, we live in a perverted and unbelieving generation. So, if you are an atheist, an agnostic, or a religious person who doesn't practice religion, or a religious person who professes to believe in God but still doesn't really believe in your heart, you need to repent and believe. Today is the day of salvation [see 2 Corinthians 6:2]. Time is running out. You are a vapor, and [you] may disappear today.

Jesus died on the cross, He made provisions so that you, through faith in Him, could be saved, could have all your sins forgiven, and enjoy all those things that I read in Ephesians this morning and more. He's willing to wipe your slate clean so that there's no condemnation [see Romans 8:1]. He's willing to perfect you until the day of Christ Jesus [see Philippians 1:6], give you the Holy Spirit [see Acts 5:32], change you by His grace, make you into that person who more and more resembles the person who is living by faith. But you need to turn from your sin, you need to believe in Jesus, [and] in your heart you need to get right with God. It is the only way and there is no other. Don't be unbelieving.

If you are a believer, remember that every time you sin, you are acting in unbelief. Learn to confess your sin quickly. Learn that when the Holy Spirit convicts you, it's probably a good idea to listen and take action in the appropriate direction. Don't be wasting your life on things that don't matter to the neglect of those things that do. Whether you are a believer or an unbeliever, whatever you do, don't make Jesus put up with you, for that would not be good for you. Time is running out. This world is getting worse and worse. Salvation is offered today. The opportunity to serve Christ, to witness to unbelievers, to walk in holiness in a "perverted generation" is today because tomorrow may never come. So let's leave remembering that. Let's live it. This is God's will. Amen.

Father, we thank You so much for all that You have given us. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Jesus—all of who He is, God of very God, the merciful God, the kind God, the compassionate God, gracious and long-suffering, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness [see Exodus 34:6], the God of justice, of holiness, of wrath who will by no means allow the sinner who will not repent to go unpunished [see Proverbs 11:21]. Father, help us to accept Jesus for all that He is. Help us to have a correct view of Him. Help us to live our lives here and now in light of eternity. May we not lose our opportunity to serve You in a sin-cursed and perverted world. May we not get into our latter years and realize we have squandered our lives because we have believed lies and been distracted by the archenemy, wasting [them] on things that don't matter. Father, help us to enjoy all good gifts which come down from You [see Matthew 7:11], but not to indulge in them. Help us to keep our priorities balanced so that we can live in this world, enjoy the good things You have given us, but never to act in unbelief, for that would not bring You glory and that would not be profitable for us. We pray these things in Christ's name, Amen.