



Christian Love-Part 8
Loving God's Gracious Patience
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, now that we are commencing with summer, I know for a lot of our church families it means summer vacations, family excursions, trips that we're going to take together. And I remember when our kids are young and that's happening they get very excited as we announce our vacation plans to them. They look forward to all the fun and the excursions and we tell them all about the great things that are going to happen. When it comes to our expectations for them it's really nil, it's zilch. I mean, we'll tell you when we're leaving and that's all they worry about is the fun they're going to have on the trip. But of course with any trip it's not just all fun to be had. There's planning, there's work, there are schedules, there's lots to do.

And the older that our children get, don't you start to then let them in on that and you even start to give them responsibility and you expect for them now to prepare along with you. There's luggage to pack, there are devices to charge, there are snacks to get together, there are backpacks to load up, there are apps you got to download so you know what you got going on there, there are things to save for that you're going to have to purchase when you get there, there are schedules to be kept, there are airports to traverse, there are, you know, pets to be accounted for, there's a house that needs to be secured. You start to say, listen, there's another side to this and the more mature you are the more you need to recognize that and there are things you need to do to get ready.

See, in maturity it necessitates giving up a one-dimensional view of these great trips that we take as families.

Well, as we come to the end of Luke Chapter 17, Jesus says as much to us, his disciples.

He says, you know, the more you understand about the greatest trip that we will take as a family, the coming kingdom, it's going to be good and you are to pray for it and you should expect it, there's another dimension to this, there's another side to it and it's a side that you need to understand. And if you don't understand this other side, that is sobering, that makes us stand back and say, "Oh yeah, wow, I didn't even see that side of it. I was just thinking about the fulfillment and the joy and the absence of all the bad, mundane, terrible things we deal with in this fallen world."

You really have to stand back and say, that's really just another whole aspect to it I hadn't considered. It makes us stand back, not only to appreciate the kindness of God, but frankly to stand back in awe of the severity of God. It makes us recognize in a sober way that there's things that we need to do to prepare for this that it's not all fun and games. Matter of fact it will lead us to get out of our spiritual immaturity and to step into a kind of full-orbed picture of what's coming when we start saying the king is coming and the kingdom is coming and it's going to be great and Christ is coming again. We have to see the whole picture. If we don't see the whole picture we'll get locked into a spiritual immaturity and really, in many ways, we'll be unprepared.

Oh, we may be prepared in that we're in the family and God is going to take us but we will not have the kind of preparation God would expect. I know the first time we heard that Jesus is coming as a new Christian and it was a great thing but there's a lot more to it as our passage will tell us.

And if you haven't already turned there, let's look at the last section here of Luke 17 as we continue



our study. We come to verse 26, when after talking about the arrival of the kingdom, as we saw a couple sessions ago, there's this inauguration of it that really is all about the king, the kingdom here is in your midst and it's about Christ and you better get related to him. Then Christ is going to come, not in some invisible way, but in a very visible way he'll be here and then he brings this up. Verse 26. "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day," the very day, going about their business, "when Noah entered the ark." Oh yeah, that ark was about saving them from a flood "then the flood came," and here's a word that will sober you, "and destroyed them all." Oh, wait a minute, I was planning a wedding, I was getting ready for this party, I had this thing going on, I was preparing a meal. Hmmm, destruction.

"Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot," remember Lot, nephew of Abraham, "they were eating and drinking in his city, buying and selling, planting and building," and, yet what happened? Verse 29. "But on the day when Lot," was going out, he "went out of the city of Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven," and there's our word again, "destroyed them all - so it will be on the day," that day I told you to pray about, that day I told you to expect, that day that's supposed to be the fulfillment of all of our godly and righteous desires.

"So it will be on that day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let the one who is on the housetop with his goods in the house, not come down and take them away, and likewise let the one who was in the field not turn back," speaking of turning back in that scene with Lot, "remember Lot's wife."

You might remember that story. God said don't look back and she did and she paid with her life. And then he gives a very familiar principle that he's taught before in Chapter 9, he said this, "Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it but whoever loses his life will keep it. I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding," they're grinding out the meal, getting their flour together. "One will be taken and the other left. And then they said to him, 'Where, Lord?' And he said, 'Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.'" Well, talk about sobering side of the return of Christ. I mean, this is a heavy passage.

A passage that makes us think, well, I guess it's not all fun and games when we look ahead to the coming of Christ. I understand that it is the thing that the Bible says, all the way back to the Old Testament, will be all that we really want to see happen, the crooked made straight, the rough places plain and the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all flesh will see it together. But it's not good news for all flesh. It's good news for those who are prepared.

Let's take this one section at a time and make a few observations that might be helpful, particularly because we've been looking at the kingdom in a very positive way. But at the arrival of the kingdom, see, it's not only a commencement and an inauguration of the rewards and blessings for God's people, it's also the beginning of God's justice and retribution.

In verse 26, he compares to the days of Noah. In verse 28, he compares it to that city of Sodom when Lot was extracted from it and he says, in verse 30, that's when it's going to be like when the Son of Man is revealed. Number one on your outline, if you're taking notes, let's just make this observation. You and I, it would be good for us to have a full-orbed picture. We need to foresee the bad at Christ's arrival, and sometimes we miss that. We think of salvation and we look at it as a



positive thing. Even some of you have decorated your nurseries with the Noah and the ark theme and that's great, right? Jack and Jill giraffe with their head out the top of this boat and there are fluffy little lambs on the deck. I've been to a lot of these places where I've seen the Noah theme in the nursery and rarely do I see in the distance, drowning people, hands coming out of the water, people on little rocks and tops of mountains saying, "Help me, I'm drowning."

We forget that part. See, when we think of salvation, we need to realize what we're being saved from.

And when Christ comes back, he says, OK, it's time, it's time for accountability. You see the arrival of Christ really is an act of divine accountability. God is going to say, OK, now we're going to give an account.

Now I've given you options here to get out of that accountability. You can have all of your sins placed on Christ, but when I arrive the time is out, just like it was in the days of Noah. God closed them in the ark. The door closes. That's sobering.

It's good for us to remember that, particularly for those of us, when we think about Lot, when we think about Noah, we're told to get out. And we need to realize when we're told to get out and we say, yes, I want to be saved, I don't want to incur the penalty of my own sin. We need to realize that some of us would like to warm up to all of that, but there are people like Lot's wife who are heading out of the city, we think we're going to a place of safety but in reality my focus isn't where it needs to be. I'm identified externally with the saved but when the Day of the Lord comes it won't be good news for me. And you do know the Bible says for most of the world it's not good news. The rebellious, impenitent people of this world will get what they have coming.

Now jot this down, if you're in a small group in particular, I'd love for you to read before you go to your home fellowship group this week, Amos Chapter 5 verses 18 through 24. Amos is one of the two of the prophets. Most of them were given either to the southern kingdom of Judah or three foreign prophets, but there were two who went to the northern tribes when Assyria was the bad guy coming after the 10 tribes of the north and one of them was this book, Amos. They were crying out to God when they were being assaulted on the borders of Israel by Assyria and they couldn't wait for God to swoop in and deliver them.

Just like in the book of Judges. Remember the cycle in the Old Testament book of Judges? You got all these problems in the nation of Israel, the idolatry, the sin, the rebellion, the immorality. They get themselves in trouble, God sends a foreign army, then they cry out to God. Well, they were crying out to God not because they had a problem with sin in their heart, they're crying out to God because their city was about to be invaded, their country was about to be invaded and so they wanted God to deliver them. Now, this theme has been described under the heading, the banner, the rubric of the Day of the Lord, all the way through the Old Testament and into the New Testament. The ultimate Day of the Lord is when the Son of Man comes back. But they cried out for the Day of the Lord and here's what Amos said, listen carefully, this is a good passage to read before you go to your small groups to discuss the coming Day of the Lord to get us thinking about the fact that really it's not all good news. He says this in verse 18. "Woe to you who desire the Day of the Lord!" Oh, you want God to swoop in? "Why would you have the Day of the Lord?" Why do you want it? "It's going to be darkness and not light, as if a man fled from a lion." Now the lion, that's a perfect picture of Assyria because that was their logo if you will. The mascot. "And then you meet a bear."



I think I got delivered. God, help us free ourselves from the Assyrians, put that army down. And then, all of a sudden, let's just say God did show up, if God showed up, you think you're going to get away from the lion but he'll be a bear to you. In other words, it's God you're going to have to confront now.

It's like a person who fled and "went into a house" trying to get out of a jam, running from some thing and then he "leans his hand against the wall," thinking he's safe "and then the serpent bites him. Is not the Day of the Lord darkness" for you? Isn't it "gloom and not brightness?" It's not light. Why? Because they were unrepentant.

Now, here's the real interesting part, verses 21 through 24. He starts to say, I know that you're in with this group that you think you have got on your side but you're singing songs, you're listening to people read the scrolls of the scripture, but you're doing nothing about it. Your heart's not in it.

He says, when it comes down to your heart, I look at your heart and I say your feast, your assemblies, your burnt offerings, I don't like them. Your songs, I wish you'd stop. I won't accept them. Why? Because your heart's not right with me. He says, I'd much rather have "justice roll down like a waterfall and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." Can you get your hearts amended? Can you repent of your sin? Can't you see that the problem with Assyria is your own idolatry? See, a lot of people want God to show up on this planet because they look at ISIS, they look at terrorism, they look at political systems, they look at all the crime in our streets. "Oh, I just wish God would come" and God might say it even to some of you, well, I don't know that you want God to come. And here's a sobering part about the return of Christ, we really should look at it in some ways as grace. I can even, in some ways, be grateful that Christ did not come back last year because I know that there are some people who are wanting the return of Christ but if Christ had shown up last year that would not have been a good day for them. It wouldn't be light, it would be darkness. It wouldn't be brightness, it would be gloom because their hearts aren't ready.

You need to understand that at Christ's arrival he brings not only his blessing for his children, he brings judgment for the impenitent, for the rebellious. And I know some people, let me just take a little sidebar here for a second and talk to the issue of why is God so mad.

I mean, can't he come back happy? Can't he come back and just get everybody and say, you guys are all fine because I'm a loving, forgiving God, let's just forgive you? I mean, after all, these words like sin and iniquity and transgression, they're such serious, gloomy words. Why do we have to talk that way?

I always find people like to minimize the concepts of iniquity and transgression. That is, of course, unless someone's doing it against them.

Then it's a big deal. See, why can't God just overlook all of our sins? I mean, isn't that what he wants? Isn't he a forgiving God? Why does he have to come back and punish anyone?

I had someone recently, a friend of mine, have the borders of his home transgressed. Someone broke through his back window, went into his family's home, went through every single room, ransacked the house, went through every drawer, started stealing family heirlooms and money and computers and all this stuff.



And when he and his wife came home to find it that way, he didn't go, "Ah yeah, I'm the forgiving guy. No big deal. I feel fine about it." No. See, when his life was transgressed, he feels the way you do, and some of you can identify with it because you've been the victim of theft. You say, "I feel violated here. I'd like this to be made right. I want my stuff back."

There has to be some reckoning here. Which, by the way, is nothing compared to another friend of mine who had his daughter violated by some thug rapist. And when you start violating and transgressing that kind of thing, it's so personal now, you don't sit here and shrug your shoulders and say, "Well, I'm forgiving guy. No big deal." Do you know the Bible says when you and I sin we are trampling the blood of his son under our feet.

Jesus is coming back and he's real mad, as my pastor used to say. And that's true. He's mad not because he's a cantankerous, frustrated person. But because he's a God of justice. Christ comes back on a horse, a white horse with a sword coming out of his mouth to tread out the wrath of God on this planet. Why is that? Because he's a just God. He's a just God.

There are some things that are so heinous in our day. Like the man in Cleveland, Ohio who had kidnapped, tortured and killed even the children that he had conceived in these three women, you might remember a few years ago, they gave him consecutive life sentences plus 1,000 years. Now think about what kind of statement they were trying to make with that.

They're trying to make a statement that you have so violated what is right and true and virtuous that it's not enough for you to die. I mean we're just going to tell you you're in for life plus a 1,000 years. And you might remember that story. He actually hung himself a month into his sentence.

When it comes down to it, it's not just about this last generation being punished by God when he comes in that symbolic way and starts to pour out his wrath as the book of Revelation says, this is just the beginning of something called the Second Death. And God says I'm very serious about sin and when the law is transgressed, even as David said, I may have sinned against people but ultimately I sin against God. The God of the universe rightly puts down rules and laws that are correct and good and right and when we violate those the universe is put out of kilter.

It's not how things ought to be and God's got to settle the score. Now he's given us an out, it's called the ark of the cross, if you will.

And while our salvation is not some gopher wood barge it is the kingdom that we've been talking about. When you talk about it long enough all you see is like the, you know, the Star Line Cruises and you've got everything there, all you can think of is how wonderful it's going to be and all the food and all the feasting and every amenity you could ever want and that's true. But it's against the backdrop of a flood. And you can't forget that.

And the sobriety of knowing that when Christ comes back to give you this cruise liner and say, here is "the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," it's really buoyant on his judgment. That's a mature way to look at the return of Christ. And if you say, well, how could I ever feel good about that?

Well, with your perspective, when you're out of the reality of this kind of comparative thing that we



do, as I often say, it's like skunks sitting around and saying, well, that guy is really stinky, well you're all stinky, you just don't see it because you're all sinners. I can look at Ariel Castro, or whatever his name was out there in Cleveland, and say, you're a really bad man, you ought to go to jail, times a 1,000 years.

But I look at my lying, and my compromise and my outburst of anger, and I say, well, not a big deal, everybody does that.

See when a holy and perfect God sees our sin, he has to respond in judgment. But he's provided a way out and it's available today and it's there. And he says, now, the other side of my coming is you better be in it. Just like in Sodom and if you don't think we're living in Sodom and Gomorrah in this day you don't read the news. And God will one day come and judge this generation. And when he does it will be a sobering day for us. Although we will be ushered into the kingdom if we are right with him. You can see how this naturally begins to prepare us.

When we say the king is coming, remember the implications of that for the unrepentant. So it will be, verse 30 says, like Sodom and Gomorrah, like the days of Noah, no one will be ready for it, no one will be expecting it, the world will be shining God on, they don't need accountability, I'm accountable to no one but myself. They take polls. They elect officials who tell them what's right and wrong. God's told them what's right. The maker has said here's what's true. They violate it. They transgress it. They sin against it. But God says one day there will be a day of accountability when the Son of Man is revealed.

And he gives us this very instructive section, versus 31 through 33, it's printed there for you on your worksheet, do you see that? "On that day, let the one who is on the housetop with his goods in the house not come down and take them away, and likewise let the one who was in the field not turn back." Now, this is a phrase he uses in the Olivet Discourse, for all your Sunday school grads. He's talking about Jerusalem, the attack of Jerusalem, he's looking at all the things in the book of Daniel about what's going to happen to Jerusalem during the tribulation period, the time of Jacob's trouble. As Daniel 12 says, this time of trouble and tribulation that's coming on the world that has not been like any other tribulation or trouble that's ever come upon the world, as Daniel says, since there have been nations, this is the worst. And the focus and the question by the disciples in that passage is what's going to happen to this this temple and Jerusalem and so the focus is there. And he uses this phrase to talk about the actual dispersion of the Jews in Jerusalem.

That, by the way, is, in an abbreviated way, discussed in Luke 21. We know he's going to turn his attention to that and all about Jerusalem and all about the temple and all about the people of Israel. But we're not in that section here. But he enlists this same idea. It's not to talk about leaving a town and saying don't go back, it isn't that like being on the plane where they say don't grab your briefcase or anything, just leave. That's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about a principle he's taught often to us. As I said in verse 33, he says, "If you want to preserve your life you've got to lose it." When? In the future? No, you got to lose it now. "Whoever loses his life you're going to keep it." What does that mean? He taught us in Luke Chapter 9, that means my relationship with the world, I got to be ready to say, I'm letting it go. I can't fit in here because this world is under God's condemnation. I got to step apart from the world and I got to say I'm not ashamed to be counted with Christ. If you know the context of Luke 9, that's what he says, you can't be ashamed of me or my words. If you do that in this generation, I'm going to be ashamed of you. You've got to step apart and be willing, here's the preceding verse, to take up your cross and follow



me. So I'm willing to stand apart from the world and say, I stand with Christ.

Now when Christ comes back, the Bible says in First Corinthians 15, in a twinkling of an eye, in a moment, BAM! So I have no time to get anything when Christ comes back. But if I'm going to go, if I'm in the ark so to speak, I got to be ready and how do I get ready? I turn away from my attachments in this world and I say, I align myself with the king.

That's how this passage started. What's the kingdom? I want to be in the kingdom? How do we get in the ark? Well, the king is right in front of you. The kingdom is in your midst. Now, the king is coming back a second time and when he does it'll be like lightning. BAM! And when it happens, we're not talking about you going to get your backpack. We're talking about you being ready. How do you get ready? He says it in verse 33 and then he illustrates it in verse number 32 with Lot's wife. And what was Lot's wife's problem? She so loved Sodom that when she left and clearly in Genesis Chapter 19 she was told, do not look back, look forward.

If you look back, as Jesus said in Luke Chapter 9, he says you're not fit for the kingdom.

That means you're willing to turn your back on your attachments to this world because this world is not our home. The god of this world is the enemy of God, Second Corinthians 4:4. And we are willing to say he stands condemned and so does this world and like Paul says in Galatians 6, I have crucified the world in my own heart. It's crucified to me and I to it. We don't have the same relationship we had when I was a non-Christian. I'm now an alien and a stranger and I do not feel at home in this world.

And I'm not going to be like Lot's wife. Putting my hand to the plough, saying I want to follow the king, but I'm constantly looking back, I really do love this world though. I have to be, put it this way, number 2 on your outline, I have to be prepared NOW to leave the world. Are you prepared now to leave the world? Are you right now prepared to leave the world?

Do you in your own heart say this world is not my home? Now, we've dealt with this theme throughout our study here in the last couple of weeks of our study of Luke 17. I've got to be willing to have that as a resolve in my mind so that you can sit here this morning and say, I am ready to leave this planet. That means I am ready to say, I want to be counted with Christ, whatever that costs me, and I really don't fit in here. Not that I'm trying to not fit in here, it's just I'm going live loyal to Christ and the world isn't going to necessarily like that. Matter of fact, I can guarantee you, as Jesus did, if they hated him they're going to hate you and the things they hated about him they'll hate about you.

The reality for us is we've got to let this world go. And I've got to speak to your heart for a minute because Lot's wife had a heart problem. Her body was leaving. Let's go. Going with Lot, her kids. But her heart was there. Some of you were in church this morning, you're not on the golf course, you're not sitting at a coffee shop, you're not reading, you know, the news feed, you're sitting here in church with a Bible. But I wonder where your heart is? Jot this reference down, if you would, First John Chapter 2. I hope that you remember this verse often, verses 15 through 17 would be good to jot down. It simply says this, do not love the world.

"Well, I thought Jesus loved the world?" He did. He loved us, that he died, gave his son so that we can have everlasting life, eternal life. But now he says, I've chosen you out of the world, John 17. I



don't want you to love this world. I'm not talking about the people, I'm talking about the things that this world runs on. And he names three things.

He says the "desires of the flesh." The world says, hey, the things that you feel, the visceral feelings you feel, the pleasures that you want, whatever those pleasures are, without regard to God's rules, those are the things you ought to do. You only go around once in life, live for now. If it makes you happy, do it. That's the lust of the flesh. That's the passions of my fallen body that say, this would be pleasurable. Whatever that is, the world is saying that's what you ought to do. And this world system is designed to constantly kindle that desire in you.

All you gotta do is look at the entertainment of this world, all you gotta do is look at the advertisements of this world. All those things are designed to inflame more of that, satisfy your pleasures and desires, whatever makes you feel good. The lust of the flesh.

What's the next one? You know it Sunday school grads? The "lust of the eyes." Whatever you think is beautiful, that's the goal. Whatever you think is beautiful. In the mirror? Go for that. That's important, that's the most important thing.

In other people? I want that. Whether it's a thing or a person, someone's body or someone's house or someone's car, I want that. Whatever you see, satisfy yourself by having the beautiful things around you because that's what matters and the world says, that's the priority. Pleasure, beauty, without reference to God. We're not talking about the pleasures of God at his right hand, we're not talking about the beauty of Christ. We're not talking about any of those things. We're talking about that base, fallen human desire.

And you know the last one, by the way. The "pride of life." And you know all of that, really, it all links together.

I want beautiful things, I want pleasurable things, I want to feel good. Why? "Because it's about me." You're only go around once in life, so you better serve all the people you get. "No, it's about me." You ought to go for it, you ought to have what you want, if it feels good, not to them, but to you, well then you do it. No one should tell you what to do.

I mean I've been to my share of graduations this last week and a half, right? That's all I hear from these teenyboppers behind their podiums. "So, it's all about... do anything you want, experience life, have fun, it's awesome, yeah!" If your daughter was giving one of those, I'm sorry but... nauseating. And not only nauseating, let me say this, satanic. "Just have fun, it's about you being fulfilled." I guess they're not letting boys speak anymore at these things, all I saw were these girls up there speaking. I need some young men to step up and talk about things that matter. Just like these young ladies, if you're going to be a godly lady and you get a chance to speak to your generation, tell them that the stuff that the world craves, as the next verse says in First John 2, the world and it's desires are passing away, but the one who does the will of God will abide forever. There's a message our world needs to hear and guess what, if you give it the message, guess how many people will not applaud for you.

I bet you won't get a standing ovation. You might even end up on the news having to talk about how your commencement speech was edited by the school district.



Why? Because they don't want to hear that.

That's what really matters. The most important message you could give to your generation is what? What matters is God and his will, doing his will, living for him. Why? Because the world and its desires are passing away. Therefore, here is how it all started, don't love the world or the things of the world.

The desires of the flesh, the desires of the eye, pride of life. They're all passing away. They are not from the father. If you love the world the love of God cannot be in you. These are absolutely antithetical things. And here's someone, Lot's wife, walking out of Sodom, her body right next to her husband who was going to be safe, heading to the city of refuge where God's judgment wasn't going to be, but her heart was back there.

It would be good for you maybe to review that series. Luke Chapter 9 verses 57 through 62. Three would be disciples, they all said I want to follow Christ and all of them had a heart problem.

And the one where Jesus says, no one is fit for the kingdom if you're going to put your hand to the plow and say, yes, let's go to the kingdom, and you keep looking back, you're not going to make it. How many people I wonder sit in our churches and they're like Lot's wife.

Oh, they'll dutiful go to church. They'll even go to small groups, they'll do a little discipleship, Bible study, read a Christian book here and there.

But they love the world, man. If you love the world the love of the Father is not in you. It's an either or proposition.

You know this world is your home or it's not your home. Either you're going to live for the kingdom that's coming and store up treasure there, or you're going to say, I just want to have fun and a good time and feel good in this world. Prepare now to leave the world. If you want to preserve your life, you're gonna lose it.

By the way, I was quoting where this is quoted earlier in Luke 9, one of the lines in there you cannot miss, is after saying this statement in Luke Chapter 9 he says this, "What would it profit a man to gain the whole world?" What if you had every pleasure you could ever want? Every pleasurable experience that your fanciful mind could ever imagine, every lust fulfilled.

Every dream car parked in your garage and you got a thirty-five-car garage. What if you had the greatest house in all of Orange County looking over the best part of the beach in Orange County. What if you had everything, private jets, you had people waiting on you. What if you gained the whole world and then the flood came, and you were left to God's judgment.

"What would it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" Prepare now to leave this world. You've got to foresee the bad at Christ's arrival. But the good news is there is an ark. The good news is there is a city of refuge. The good news is there is a place where God's wrath has already been and that's a place that's available to you and I. To get our spot in that ark and say we're here and we're prepared.

Verse 34. There are some people prepared and some people not. "I tell you, in that night there will



be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together, preparing meals. One is taken and the other left." Now, think that through for just a second.

In the parallel passage, it's not a parallel passage, it's really a different context, but in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, this is connected in a place, at least sequentially, where you might think being taken means being taken in judgment and I can see it read that way, I understand that. In this context, I can't see it that way because we're talking about Lot and we're talking about Noah and they're extracted from the judgment, so in this passage I got to see it, as much as the Rapture having, you know, segment of theology hates to have us say this, that what we have here is the exemption from the wrath of God. Which in the timeline of, I think, rightly understanding the time of Jacob's trouble and God's plan for Israel, is the church being extracted, the time of the Gentiles being done and the church being removed, just like it is in the book of Revelation where we no longer see any reference to the church, from Chapter 4 all the way through Chapter 19.

You have the time of Jacob's trouble, God's wrath coming on the earth and you have some people exempted from that and taken, as it says in First Thessalonians, "Harpazo" taken up, raptured. And some left. Left for what? Left for the judgment, left for the flood, left for the sulfur, left for the destruction.

Some are ready and some are not. All I'm saying is if you really want to think about God's justice and our sin, if you really are honest enough to take the mirror of God's word and look at your own life, you and I understand we deserve the judgment as much as my non-Christian counterpart that I live next door to. I deserve it just as much. Maybe more because of my knowledge of the truth.

And yet the amazing thing is that any of us are taken and exempted. It's amazing that anyone be exempted from the flood. It's amazing that anyone would not have to suffer the consequences of their own sin and in this passage the good news is there is a place, there is an exemption.

Jot this down, if you would, number three, you ought to be grateful for that. Grateful for our, and here's a word that should mean much more to you after thinking through these verses, your salvation. You should be thankful there's a place where you can be exempted. Is it all glee and joy because all you can think about is your own fulfillment? No, there's some tempered sobriety to it. The day of the Son of Man is going to be a day in which judgment will be commenced on this earth but it will also be a day when you are exempted, if you put your trust in Christ right now. They'll be people that live the same lives in the same place, some will be exempted and others won't.

They ask a question and this is a bit of a head scratcher for most Bible students. They said, "Where, Lord?" Now again I'm not here to debate some of the traditional interpretations of this text but it is a very interesting text. "Where?" is an odd question to ask at this point.

The Pharisees started with a question, "When?" and I understand that. "You're the king, when's your kingdom coming?" That was a totally logical question and Jesus gives them a very logical answer. The king is here, you can connect with the kingdom and then one day the kingdom will be inaugurated, you'll see it, it'll be there, completely visible, and I get that. But here, after saying you'll be taken away they say, "Where?" Now most commentators, most Bible students, most preachers across the country are going to look at that passage and they're going to say, they're all asking where is this going to happen. Now, I'm not so sure. Now, by the answer, that's how people end up thinking, they must be asking where it's going to take place. And I got complete, complete,



absolute respect for taking it that way, but it's not a very satisfying, logical sequence, nor is the answer very satisfying when he says, well I'll tell you where, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."

What? Let me just tantalize you just a little bit this morning with another way to understand this text. The reason everyone is convinced that this should be translated "where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather" is because that's clearly the way it's put over there in Matthew 24 in the Olivet Discourse. This is a different instruction, Jesus employs some of the same parables and some of the same sayings of the day. But here he employs it, not to talk about the lightning strike across the sky and Christ coming back and everyone seeing it, just like you would know where the body is, the corpse is, the carcass is, by looking at the vultures circling around, that I understand. Here though, he switches the word "corpse" or "carcass" and he adds this Greek word and he puts it in instead. He doesn't use the word for "carcass" or "corpse," he uses the word "soma" which is the Greek word for "body," which usually in the Bible is a positive word not a negative word.

And the word for "vulture" by the way, that's a word, if you looked it up in your Logos, you did a little Bible study on that, you said let's do a word study on that, you'd find that most of the time this is translated "eagles" because that's the word. In some context it maybe might mean "vultures" and clearly it does over Matthew 24, but Jesus employs the normal regular word for "eagle" and he switches the word "carcass" and "corpse" to the word "body."

Now if I'm asking the question, "Where?" and I'm thinking people are being taken, taken where? Now I get the question, where are you taking these people? If that's the question and it might be and it may not be. And then he says, well I can tell you, "Where the body is, there are the eagles," which, by the way, has large prophetic overtones. The eagles gathering the elect. Flying on the wings of eagles.

Having people gathered to the body, the people, the saints. That's the number one word the Apostle Paul loves for the context of the body, the community of the saints, in heaven and on earth. The body of Christ.

Perhaps this is a reference to the taking away, the gathering of God's people. Perhaps. Only because there's such a dramatic word switch there and, by the way, if you have an ESV Bible you can see the footnotes are going to tell you the word for "corpse" is "body" and it should have some kind of footnote on the word "vultures" that it's the normal word for "eagles." They weren't bold enough to translate it that way, not that they should, but they could've. That's the most normal way in a Greek New Testament class to translate this passage, "Where the body is, there the eagles will gather." Either way, I will be gathered one day. Because the Bible says that in the twinkling of an eye, I'm going to be caught up and I will be changed and this mortal body will put on immortality. And the hope of the Christian life is that one day when the world is going about their business, one will be taken and another left. One's left for judgment, the other one's taken where? To the body of the saints of God.

One passage I'd love for you to turn to is this one. Let's close and wrap up with this one, first Thessalonians Chapter 5. Paul speaks often to the Thessalonians about the end times. He speaks about the reality of what's coming and he gives some very practical advice to us here. If you and I are going to be grateful for our salvation our gratitude needs to be expressed like this.



First Thessalonians Chapter 5 verse 1. Let's read a few of these verses, through verse 11, if you can follow along that long. Let's look at it. "Now concerning the times and seasons. Brothers you have no need to have anything written to you."

Why? Because he's already told us multiple times, including Jesus in Acts Chapter 1, you don't know the time, it's not going to be published, I'm not going to let you know at the next prophesy conference you go to, you're not going to learn when Christ is coming back. "Now concerning the times and seasons, we have no need to write anything." Why? "For you yourselves are fully aware that the Day of the Lord," this is what we've been preaching on, "will come like a thief in the night." Come like a thief in the night.

"While people are saying," much like they did in the days of Noah and the days of Sodom, there's "peace and security." "I got that deposit down for the wedding reception. Yeah, I'm planning to build that house. I just got a loan for that project. Yeah, we're plowing the fields for next season." Everyone's going about their business. Then sudden "destruction will come upon them." Now, note this, "as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman," which, by the way, when that starts kicking in, ladies you remember, husbands, we kind of experience vicariously, not quite like you did, but we experience vicariously. These are increasing, intensely, exponentially, worsening pains.

So at one point, as everything seems to be going along just the way the world likes it. BAM! Now, labor pains and those get more and more increased, they get more and more compact, they get more and more intense. That's exactly how Revelation Chapter 6 begins. Here it comes. The trumpets, the bowls, the seals, all these things and it starts growing in intensity. Well, all this is going to start like a thief in the night. And all this now on earth, like panes upon a pregnant woman, they won't escape. No, you missed the ark. You won't to escape. Oh, by the way, you guys that are prepared, you're not in darkness, brothers, that the day should surprise you like a thief. How is the only way I can not be surprised by the thief? The only way is if I'm always expecting the thief. The only way I can be ready is to always be expecting it and not be surprised by it. That's the instruction they had, a thief in the night.

Always be ready, you're children of light. Children of the day, verse 5. Were not of the night or of the darkness. We don't think there's no accountability. We know there is accountability and our kings coming back, the judge is standing at the door, he could come at any time. So, verse 6, "Let us then not sleep as others do. But let us keep awake," I'm ready, and here's another thing, "sober." That's a mature view of the coming kingdom. I'm awake, I'm ready and I'm not just, "Yea! I get to go on vacation." I'm sober. This is going to be bad for the world. I understand both sides of this.

Those who sleep and don't give a rip about the coming of Christ, they sleep at night. Those who get drunk, they get drunk at night. They live in the night, they live in the darkness and they don't even have the light of the truth of the coming of Christ. They don't care, we share with them, they say don't cram your religion down our throat, they don't want to hear from us, they just want to live without accountability. But we belong to the day, we live in the light in the face of a God who is coming. The living and active word is the thing that convicts us because we live our lives before the one to whom we must give an account. We live in the day, we live in the light, so we are sober and we're ready for this day. Why? Because we've got a breastplate on. What's that? Faith and Love. We trust and love Jesus. We haven't seen him, but we love him and we trust him. We're ready for this crash because we got the helmet on and it is the hope, it's not the cross-your-fingers hope, that's not the biblical word hope. Hope in scripture is an assurance, it's a confidence, we have the helmet of



the confident assurance that we are going to be saved through our salvation.

For God has not, we know this, destined us for wrath. We're not going to have that time of Jacob's trouble on us. But for us, the church, for obtaining salvation, not because we're better than our non-Christian counterpart at work, but we're trusting in Christ through our Lord Jesus Christ, through the ark of the cross we are saved. Who died for us, he incurred the penalty. It's the only place the penalty of God has ever been. So that whether we are awake or asleep, whether we live or whether we die before it happens, we might live with him. Therefore, as sobering as this all is, the kindness and severity of God all in view in some mature and sober way, that ought to encourage us, not just make us feel good but it ought to build us up. What does that mean? Prepare us, equip us. And the Thessalonians were pretty good at this apparently. He says just as you're doing. Are you ready?

31 years ago my wife and I got married and we moved into our first apartment. And it was tiny, tiny. One bedroom. Like there were other rooms just like the kitchen, the dining room, and the living room were all, like, one little square and then a little tiny other room and a tiny bathroom. That was our first house. It was all we could afford, obviously, like most young married people that was it. We moved into our tiny little apartment.

After three years and some stability and a job we were able to move into a better apartment. Another bedroom, it was awesome, a little more space, living room is a little bit more, we even get a little carport on that and it was great to keep our car out of the sun.

After six years of marriage we'd been blessed enough to be able to put a down payment on a condo, our first house that we owned, it wasn't a house, it was a condo, it was attached, it was a three part of a building, but we got in there and it was ours and we're paying a mortgage now. And it was great, it was like, ahh, this is good.

There was some more stability and more faithfulness and God's goodness to our life, after ten years in that condo we were able to scrape enough together to buy our first house. We didn't share walls, we were, like, this is great. 16 years into our marriage we got our first house. Bedrooms, family room, kitchen, it was fantastic.

And then 12 years ago we decided to launch this church. We wanted to come up here and invest in this community. We didn't know the future. And we said we're going to move out of that house, we're going to move into an apartment again. Now we had three kids.

I remember leaving that house that I'd save for and, in a way, I took 16 years to buy that house. And after being there for several years, and I mean marks of my kids on the wall and my workbench in the garage, it was all just exactly how I wanted it. And I had wired the house, put speakers up, it was just... this is my house, it's got a little backyard but it was my house and I've worked hard for years to get there.

And then I'm signing a lease in an apartment complex just a half a mile from here. And it was small. And I'm putting, like, kids in closets to live there. It was just tiny.

And I'm not very nostalgic and I don't get misty and all that very often, but I remember walking through the house one last time before I turned the key over. You ever had to leave a house you really like? It was tough. I looked, saw little nicks on the wall and I remember that. I mean my



family was out. I was just all by myself, room to room. It's hard.

Well by God's grace, things started happening here at Compass. We're, like, it's going to work and housing market thankfully was tanking at the time so... We had parked our money from the house on the sidelines for a year or so and we were ready to be done with this year lease at this apartment and we said, we're going to go house shopping and we found a house.

And now after all these years of marriage we were in an apartment again but we found a house and it was better than we ever thought we could afford and it was great. We were able to do it and we had a great down payment and so we moved into this new house. Which is awesome. Been there now for 10 years.

Moving out of that apartment was a lot different than moving out of that house. I didn't walk through it, I didn't care if I left stuff in it. I was just like, done. I threw things there, just haphazard, didn't care. I'm ready. Moving trucks. We're gone. I didn't think twice about it. Oh yeah, I want to get stuff out. It was good. But I was ready for that truck to leave and go four miles over to our new place and I was excited. And if I was already and my stuff was all packed, I wasn't going to sit there and wait in the truck and say, "C'mon guys, get your stuff together."

I was gonna go and get them ready because I want to go. I want to move my stuff into the new house. Couldn't wait to get there. This is so much better, I can't wait. And if my kids weren't ready, my wife wasn't ready, then I'm going to help them. We got to get out of here.

Now imagine this from a biblical perspective. From a biblical perspective there's a crane with a wrecking ball and bulldozers around the whole entire apartment complex ready to raze the thing. Knock it all down.

I'm not going to care much about leaving that place. Yeah, I've got memories there, I understand. Yeah, I lived there. Some great things happen around the kitchen table and we had our times of laughter and good and Bible studies in our living room. That's great.

But I'm going somewhere so much better. And really what I want is my family to get ready and get in this truck and let's move. What I'm saying often as I'm getting ready to go, is there anything I can do to help you? Can I hurry this up? The kingdom is coming. And the sad and sobering part is there are bulldozers around the perimeter of this apartment complex called Earth. And God will destroy it. He says, when you think about that destruction what sort of people ought you to be? In holiness and godliness. Where you're thinking for and desiring and anticipating a place where righteousness dwells.

And if you think you're ready, if you're here today and say you've talked a lot about the coming kingdom for the last three weeks, I'm ready. Great. Are you helping other people get ready. How about the neighbor? How about the coworker?

Let's get them ready. Christ is coming back. The king is coming and that's a sobering thing if you understand the full-orbed picture of what that means. But we're going somewhere. There's no looking back. There's no misty, nostalgic walking through the halls. We should be ready to go. Just like when we moved into that apartment I know we're not going to stay here, it's not our goal. I got something stored up. We're going to find something, we're going somewhere, I don't know where it



is but I know this is not our home.

Let's take as many people with us as possible and let's get ready for the coming kingdom.

Let's pray. God, help us to be grateful that salvation is available. Help us to get ready. And because the truck hasn't pulled out yet, because the ark hasn't had the door closed, I know there are other people that need to be helped. I know that we have an opportunity to get as many people on board as possible. God, we used to be called as a group of Christians, evangelicals, because we took our job seriously. I pray we get back to that place. Evangelicals are evangelistic. They share the good news that there's room in the ark, that there's an opportunity for us to be saved from this world that is really under the condemnation of their own sin, just like we were until we had our sins appended to the cross. Thank you so much that there's forgiveness in the cross. That today, someone sitting in this room, may be like Lot's wife, part has been loving the world, been about the world, just been here in their body, they can today repent of their sin, put their trust in Christ, have their hearts set on things above, and can be saved. And I pray that would happen more and more. That we might see the hastening of the coming of the Day of the Lord by the way we go about our work to see more people saved. God, thanks for this sobering reminder from this passage this morning.

In Jesus name, Amen.