



How God Works in You – Part 6

The Path of Sanctification

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Well the Bible would tell us that God is holy, and one of the things that God means by that when he tells us that is that he is morally perfect. He then turns around and calls us sinners which means that I am morally imperfect to put it mildly. And the problem is that I can't have a non-adversarial relationship with God unless I were to be counted or considered holy, morally perfect. Not to mention that I would have no qualifications to be in a morally perfect world, a holy world, a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells as it's put in Second Peter Chapter 3, unless I'm considered morally perfect, holy. The good news is that God oversaw and planned all of this and he has sent the second person of the Triune God to come as human and divine to do all of the human morally perfect things that I haven't done. And God has then taken his own Son and said I'm going to treat him as though he were morally imperfect, sinful, and I can expunge the guilt and the sin, the moral imperfection of the people that I am going to redeem and I'll lay that all on my own Son.

So, I have opportunity as a Christian now, you know, at least the call of the gospel for me to see my problem of moral imperfection as a problem, a problem that's a damnable problem and one in which I'm ready to renounce and say I see the problem, I recognize that I have contributed to that problem and I want to be done with the problem. The biblical word for that is repentance. I want to repent. And then I want to see that Christ has provided that moral perfection and then he expunged my moral imperfection and all of that through a just transaction in his own suffering to where if I were to see that as my solution then I can have all of that attributable to me. That's called faith, trusting in him.

Now, that arrangement in the Bible is one that is repeatedly told to us that it has nothing to do with what YOU are bringing to the equation, or in this scenario, what I am bringing to the equation and saying, God, here are my moral deeds and maybe you can make up for what's deficient or maybe somehow I can contribute through maybe giving, or sacrifice, or worship, or prayers, or good deeds, and I can do some things that will maybe make this transaction possible. The Bible says, no, that's not part of it at all. You don't get to contribute to this through your moral behavior.

That's in essence the gospel and I'm trying to speak in terms of that concept of holiness, God's moral perfection. With all that said, it's important that we see what the Bible has to say AFTER we are declared to be, considered to be, counted to be morally perfect before our creator and no longer have that adversarial relationship with our creator. And I think the best passage to go to before we ever get to the book of Acts this morning would be First Peter Chapter 1. So if you could turn in your Bibles or call up on your devices First Peter Chapter 1, I want you to scroll down to a... Well, let's just start right here in the middle of it where there's a discussion in verse 13 about getting ready, preparing for action.

The old Greek phrase that translates our English phrase here "preparing for action" is literally "to gird up the loins of your mind," which is the reason they don't translate it directly because



most people don't know what that means. But in ancient Near East they basically wore these cloaks that were like long dresses, and I've never worn one but I'm assuming that it's hard to get around in them. So if you're going to run somewhere to do something active and you're going to get around quickly, you've got to take it and tuck it up into your belt. That's the "gird up the loins of your mind," oh, my mind has no loins. But the idea is get ready, get mentally prepared, which is why they translated it the way that they do, get prepared, preparing your mind for action.

Even before we read this I guess you should know that the Bible for a thousand years of the Church was read and taught and written about in Latin. Jerome famously translated the Vulgate. Vulgate. It's called that because the vulgar language of the people simply means that it is the common language of the people and the common language of the people as the Church moved west is Latin and the word that translates "Qodesh," the Hebrew word "holy" or the Greek New Testament word "Hagios," holy, is brought into the Latin Bible for a thousand years and translated into the word "Sanctus." And sanctus, we get all kinds of Bible and Christian theological religious words from the word sanctus. One of the keywords I want to focus on today is the word "sanctification." Sanctification comes from the Latin word sanctus and sanctus translates the word qodesh and hagios, which is holy. And holy, one of the things holy means is moral perfection. And so in this passage, it's talking about you need to get ready for something, you need to prepare your mind for actually being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And what a grace that will be when we are as morally imperfect beings treated as morally perfect beings because of the work of Christ. And when he comes back and he establishes a holy world, a holy society, there will be an amazing sense of grace that you can't believe that we are here or belong here, because we don't deserve to be here but we are counted as holy or morally perfect because of Christ's moral perfection.

But in the meantime, between now and the time we get there, which, by the way, when you think about the series we're in Acts 22 and 23, it's about a testimony. Paul's giving his testimony in Chapter 22. And as I said at the outset of this series, a testimony has three parts, right? My "B.C. Days," Before Christ, my encounter with Christ. How Christ got ahold of my life and brought me to repentance and faith, and then my A.D. years, my Anno Domini years. The years that I've been walking with the Lord, what's that like? And so I think about the part after I become a Christian, I need to be sanctified. And that's what this text is about. And it's saying you need to be obedient children. You're not in a hostile, adversarial relationship with God, you're like his child now. He's no longer your judge who is going to condemn you. He's your father who has provided for you and brought you into an accepting relationship, a loving relationship as a child.

This says, "Do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance." Before you became a Christian you did a lot of things you felt like you wanted to do because you could get away with it and you didn't care about God's rules. You weren't obedient to God. You did what you wanted. Some of it happened to maybe reflect God's categories because it was convenient for you or whatever reason you did it. But for the most part, the passions of your



life, what you thought was best, you did whatever you felt was best, and that was your life before Christ. You were ignorant. You weren't rightly related to your maker.

But now he's called you into a relationship with him. You're his child now. You should be obedient. And another way to say that is you are to be holy, right? You should be holy like God is. He who called you is holy. You are to be "holy," morally perfect, "in all your conduct." Now, of course, we know the rest of the Bible is going to say you're going to be imperfect at that. The Wesley Brothers were wrong. Moral perfectionism in Christianity sanctification is wrong. We can't be morally perfect. We all stumble in many ways. We're all going to have trouble with this but we're aiming at, to use the phrase from First Corinthians, aim at perfection. We want to be morally perfect in every category of our lives, as imperfectly as we will aim at that and hit it. We won't hit it all the time but that's our calling. "Be holy in all your conduct." "Since it is written," now he's quoting the Old Testament, which is full of all kinds of things that tell us what God's moral perfection looks like. He doesn't lie. He's faithful. He tells the truth. He's a reliable God. He's a good God. All the things that he is, "We are to be holy, for I am holy." He quotes this from Leviticus. We should be that. It's a long-standing, ever-existing command of the Bible.

"And if you call on him as Father," you're in a good relationship with him now, "who judges impartially according to each one's deeds." Really that comes into sharp focus at the Great White Throne judgment in the book of Revelation. He's going to call everybody up, open up the books and judge them according to their deeds. They're going to be punished according to their deeds. Now I'm calling on Father, this one now who accepts me, but I know the people who have not been brought to repentance and faith, they are going to be judged for their deeds. When I think about that, man, I should care that the Father that I'm calling on Father as my Savior, as my King. He is a righteous God. He cares about righteous behavior and he punishes unrighteous behavior. Well, I want to, in light of knowing who he is, I want to conduct myself with fear. What kind of fear? A fear that a child has for a father when the child knows what the father wants to do and stands for and enforces the right thing.

Like my dad being a cop in Long Beach it wasn't that I thought I was going to jail or be beaten with a nightstick or be shot by his gun, but I knew that he stood up for what was right in our society, patrolled the area around our home, and of course he's patrolling the area in our house and I should do the right thing. I know what he stands for and I should care about that. Not that I think I'm going to be punished the way a criminal is going to be punished but I care about pleasing my father. And that's the idea here. "You call on Father the one who judges people's deeds," you ought to "conduct yourself with that kind of family fear," as the Puritans like to put it in their own words, "throughout the time of your exile." Because in this world they're not all about that, right? The world, we feel like we don't fit in. We're aliens. We're exiles. The world is not about pleasing God. They're all living in their "former ignorance" because they're stuck in their ignorance.

Verse 18, "Knowing that," this didn't come easily, "you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, that of a lamb without spot or blemish," which is a picture of moral



perfection. It was just like those animals had to be perfect in how they appeared. Christ was perfect in how he lived and that's what it took. The crushing of the Son of God, the perfect one to count me as morally perfect. And so, man, just to remember how it was at first, you ought to care about being holy, sanctified. Paul tells his story in Acts Chapter 22 to the crowds there on the Temple Mount, and he talks about his life before he became a Christian, his encounter with Christ and how he came to repentance and faith. And by the time he had just mentioned a word like "God then was going to send me to the Gentiles," there was a lot more to that speech we never got to. What's your life been like since that time? Well, that was years ago. What's it been like, Paul? Well, we couldn't find out because the crowd erupted, threw off their cloaks, they picked up rocks, they wanted to kill him.

And so the tribune, the Roman leader, had to take him. They already had him in custody. Standing on the steps of Antonia Fortress they had to bring him into the barracks. And then we saw last time as he was in the barracks, the Romans started to strap him to a post and start to whip him. But before they whipped him he pulls out his Roman ID card and says, "I'm a Roman citizen." And they go, "Oh no, we didn't try him and we were about to beat him to get information out of him. We ought not do that." And so we saw last time, the last verse of Chapter 22 of Acts, he says, we're going to send him to the council, to the Sanhedrin, to the top ruling class of judges and law teachers in Israel that meets right across the Temple Mount in their little forum there. We're going to send Paul there. We're going to get ears on the ground. We're going to hear what's going on. We're going to find out what's going on with this guy. We can't beat him. He's a Roman citizen. But we're going to let the Jews deal with this guy who they think that he's overturning Judaism by inviting Gentiles into the temple, which he wasn't. But he's all about the Gentiles. And so let's listen to the problem be played out here in the court of the Sanhedrin.

So he never got to tell us about his life as a Christian. Now, I guess we could think he's going to tell stories about his missionary journeys and all of that. But we think about our testimony, right? We think about here's my life before I became a Christian. Here's what happened when I became a Christian. What's my life since then? It ought to be characterized by one word and that is sanctification. We should be increasingly sanctified. And what I want to do today is look at actually in real time how Paul's sanctification plays out. We're only going to look at five verses in Chapter 23. These go together you can see even the paragraph heading starts at the end of Chapter 22 and it goes into Chapter 23. We're starting now the next day as he goes before the council and as he's standing before the council we actually see his sanctification playing out in real time.

And the elements of his sanctification, I want to say how do I get sanctified? Because I should say to you, you should feel the pressure to be increasingly holy. You should be more morally better, perfect, more morally perfect in areas of your life this year than you were five years ago if you've been a Christian for more than five years. You ought to be doing better at this. You ought to be conformed as an exile. I know it's hard as an exile in a world where no one's listening to the truth, you ought to be conformed to the truth of what Christ says is moral perfection. How do I get more of that?



Well, Paul is going to show us in a scene that Luke records and I want you to look at it, a long introduction but Acts Chapter 23 verses 1 through 5. Take your Bibles, turn there, look at this text and let's pick it up in verse 1. Paul is now brought before the Sanhedrin and we're going to watch something play out where we can take some notes on this and say, well, here's how his sanctification worked. Here's how my sanctification ought to work. We can note it in our past, which I hope we can do, and we can resolve ourselves for the future. Here's what we should be doing to be more what God called us to be. "To be holy like he is holy." Sanctified, that's the word.

Verse 1. Are you with me on this? Verse 1, "And looking intently at the council." We're standing before this top-class legal ruling Jews. They're all under the watchful eye of Rome but they're there as the Jewish leaders. And Paul says, what's the first word here? That's kind of daring. If I take you to the Supreme Court this week and say go talk to the Supreme Court. I hope you're going to say, "Your honor," and "If it pleases the court." You're going to say stuff like that, right? Because you're not teaching law at Harvard, right? You're not a judge. Paul may use this word. Actually, if you look at the Greek text, some of you know the language or you can look at your software at two words here. "Men," and "brothers." Right? "Anēr" Adelphos." It's a kind of an equalizing term. I don't know if I should read too much into this, but I think it's got their attention that he calls them, like, man brothers, which is what he calls them literally.

In Philippians 3, if you know that passage, he tells his testimony. He talks about being a Pharisee of Pharisees. Of course, we've already learned in Acts that he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, a real hot-shot teacher of the Jews. So we know he's probably looking at people who he went to school with. He's looking at people... I mean, Paul's a PhD himself in Jewish studies and he's looking at these guys who are teachers of the law. I mean, these are in many ways professionally his peers even though he's broken away from all of that. Nevertheless, I don't know how much to read into that. But brothers, it's interesting. He said that when he's talking to the crowds on the Temple Mount, that's one thing to call them brothers. But he calls these guys brothers for what that's worth.

And he says, "I've lived my life before God in all good conscience up until this day." We'll be talking more about conscience in a minute. But the idea of him saying "good conscience," in other words, I was not doing anything subversive or being sneaky. When I opposed Christ from Nazareth and was against it with a totally clear conscience. I thought that was the right thing. And then I had this encounter with Christ. He knocked me off my horse on the way to Damascus and now I've been sent to the Gentiles. I did everything according to what I thought was the right thing in good conscience. Now, he didn't get any farther than calling them brothers and saying my conscience is clear and has been up until right now. I've been doing everything according to what I know is right. Internally consistent. And at that, verse 2, "The high priest Ananias commanded him who stood by him." Okay. So whoever brought him, some court clerk or whatever, "to strike him on the mouth."

Have you ever been hit in the mouth? I mean, not by a soccer ball, like someone punching you in the mouth. Not a pleasant experience. It rings your bell. You know, your eyes water, it



hurts and this is bad. It's tough. Right? He gets hit in the mouth. "And Paul said," look at this, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall!" Now, if I'm looking for an insult, I can probably do better than that I would think, "whitewashed wall." But you should know this hearkens back to the words of Christ, which clearly were on the street, if not written yet by this time, when Jesus in Matthew 23 calls the Pharisees a bunch of hypocrites and he calls them whitewashed tombs, whitewashed tombs.

Recently, in a cemetery that has the section that a lot of them have, the mausoleum, where you have these nice marble white walls. And of course, in each section you've got, if you got a plate on it, you know that they've slid a body into that, a deceased body into that, and everyone that's got a name there's a body in there. But the outside, the cemetery I was in last week, a week before last, they keep it up. It looked nice. It looked clean. But all you got to do in your imagination is go, "Oh, what's it like inside of there?" Well, I don't know. Look at the dates and you start to imagine what it's like inside of there. Well, Jesus says that's what you're like. "You're like a whitewashed tomb on the outside," you're nice and clean, "but on the inside you're full of dead men's bones and," all iniquity, all wickedness, "your uncleanness," I think, is what he calls it in Matthew 23.

So this is a statement of hypocrisy, right? You look good on the outside. Everyone who walks into this hallowed hall, this courtroom, they see you as very righteous. But you're not righteous. You're not righteous. On the inside you're something different. This is really, by the way, the very colorful definition of the word "hypocrite." We take that word directly from Greek, compound word "Hypo", the first part means "under," "Krinō" is the second part of that word which means "to judge" or "to make an evaluation." And we make an evaluation under the surface differently than we would on the outside, looking at the surface. To be a hypocrite is to have someone look at you and think one thing as soon as they get under the surface they see something else. And so Paul is saying you're hypocrites by saying this. It meant something to the Sanhedrin. It was it was clearly something they could understand.

And then he explains it. "You are sitting to judge me according to the law," right? That's what they are, teachers of the law, adjudicators of the law, enforcers of the law. "Yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck." Now, if your reference Bible doesn't have this reference you should put it down, Deuteronomy Chapter 25 verses 1 and 2. Next to this passage you should put Deuteronomy 25 verses 1 and 2, because in that passage it reminds us that the Jewish law said you could enforce corporal punishment on people for infractions of the law. Depending on what it was the elders of the people were to decide once the case was heard if you're found guilty it may require 5 lashes, 15 lashes, 30 lashes, but no more than 40. That's the requirement in verse 2 of Deuteronomy 25. You couldn't have more than 40. You might remember Paul talking about from the Jews he's received 40 lashes minus one. In case we lost count we don't want to violate God's law. We can give you up to 40. And so you could have a corporal punishment response from a court of Jewish leaders, but only after he is found guilty.

So Paul is saying you're a hypocrite. You're asking for me to be struck which you could do but you're going to have to make sure I'm guilty before, and I didn't even get a sentence out of my

mouth before you told me to be struck. So you're a hypocrite. You're not living consistent with Deuteronomy 25 because he knows his Bible, verses 1 and 2. That's how we would reference it. But he knows that text. "Those who stood by say," wow, you're pretty testy here toward the high priest. Why would you revile God's high priest? That word is translated elsewhere and in all the lexicons you'll see the word "abuse" is part of that, which is like when you're slapping someone around, right? And your words are slapping our high priest around, you're reviling him. "And Paul said, 'I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest.'" Commentators scratch their head on this. How in the world would he not know that? Especially after verse 1, "And looking intently at the council."

And yet we have often had people say, well, remember throughout the writings of Paul, he talks about things like his problem with his eyes, and he does that in a few ways when he comes to the churches of Galatia. He says, you receive me well and all that. And basically thanks for treating me so well when I came there. You're not doing so well now in the book of Galatians. But he says, 'You would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me,' if that would have helped. In other words, whatever his problem was, one of his problems was health problems when he got there was his eyesight. He had an amanuensis for most of his letters and an amanuensis is someone who's like a dictating secretary. So he dictates the letters. But at the end he would write his own salutation at the end, and at the end he would say things like, "See with what big letters that I'm writing with here with my own hand." There's a Mike Fabarez paraphrase. And so why big letters? Because probably because of eyesight.

Well, "looking intently," I'm not sure what Luke had in view here with that phrase, but Paul's not shying away. He's bold, I think that's probably what he's communicating. But maybe Paul just couldn't see clearly and he couldn't see that it was the high priest. But he knows someone said, maybe it was a din of noise, I don't know. But he says, I didn't know, "For it is written," now he's going to quote more Bible here. "You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people." Now your reference Bible surely has that passage in the margin. Exodus Chapter 22 verse 28. You're not supposed to "speak evil of the ruler of the people." Well, this is the top ruler in Israel. And I just call him a whitewashed wall because I got popped in the mouth by the court clerk. And I said, you know, basically you're a hypocrite and God's going to strike you. And I guess that was a little much. And I should look at Scripture here and I should know that Scripture should tell me not to do that. And I did do that. And there's an implied apology here. Now for the economy of words of Luke here we don't have some mea culpa here, but we certainly have Paul being corrected by the Word of God. Okay.

Let's start at the bottom of this passage. My whole goal is trying to help us be sanctified and we should care about it, we should feel the pressure to be sanctified, and we ought to move, and I don't want to get too theological here, but from the concept of simple monergism, which is the sense that I know that God, Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 1, that "We are dead in our transgressions and sins," and all of the work not only in leading us to Christ, but certainly in the work of my salvation, I don't bring any of my moral effort to that. It is all Christ. Christ does it all. He's the solo worker. That, by the way, is the definition of monergism. Solo worker. "Ergaz" is the Greek word for "work," "Mono," of course is "one." There's one person working



to save us and Christ does that. But after that, our sanctification now there's something we would call, I think rightly so, theologians call it "synergism." There's a sense in which "Sune" the word "together," I'm together working. God's got work to do in me. But I'm working out my salvation with fear and trembling.

There's a great passage using the word *ergaz* in two senses, right? "To work out your salvation with fear and trembling." And I'm working at it. But God is at work in you. So that's synergism, together we're working. When it comes to this first one, I know this. Your Bible did not float off the shelf this morning and hover over your face and start reading itself to you, right? That happened to nobody. Good. So we have counseling available here at the church because it didn't happen. You had to, if you spent time in the Bible this morning, you had to do the work of getting up, getting your Bible out and getting it in your brain. That's what needs to happen. Do you think the Bible is in Paul's brain? He's quoting Exodus 22. He's inferring by the fact that he's claiming they're hypocrites, Deuteronomy 25 verses 1 and 2. These are clearly passages that are bouncing around in his brain because he's saturating his mind with the Bible, and that's important.

Number one, you ought to do the same. Here's what you know when it comes to sanctification. "Fill Your Mind with God's Perfect Rules." When God says, "You shall not bear false witness." That's a perfect rule. When it says, talk New Testament now, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth." Right? We know that's God's truth. Romans 13. You ought to pay your taxes. You ought to do that with to whom honors are due, tributes are to due, taxes are due, pay them. You must do that because God's Word says that. And when you do what God's Word says you are increasingly becoming holy, like he's holy. You're doing the morally right thing. The Bible is that guide.

Now, to kind of take synergism one step further, I want you go to First Corinthians Chapter 2 to remind you that you say, well, okay, it's all about me. Well, it's not really all about you in the sense that God is at work in you, in your sanctification. Now we're really leaning into the title of the sermon, right? God is at work in you, and he's working in you to sanctify you. And one of the ways he does that is through your interactions with the Bible. And it's not just, you know, some clinical, sterile thing where you read the Bible, it's in your language, and then you just get up and do it. There's more to that. There's something to it that should be so clear. When you look back at your former ignorance and you think of the rest of our culture that's living in their ignorance and you realize they don't get it, they don't get it.

So let's look at First Corinthians Chapter 2 and see if we can make sense of some of the synergism that takes place here as it relates to the Bible. Now, if you ever heard me teach in First Corinthians Chapter 2, this is a real hermeneutical key in this text. You got to know what the context is about. It's about Paul as an apostle with his prophetic work, as an apostle, bringing God's truth to the people. God is revealing his truth and Paul's becoming the agent, the conduit of that, that he is like the Old Testament Hebrew word "Nabi." He is the mouthpiece of God bringing these oracles and revelations from God to the people. So the "I" and "we" in this text are about them. It's not about us. But he does talk about when he brings



that to them what's the experience of people getting the Bible? Now, it's fresh New Testament revelation that he's bringing in New Testament times here. But what is that like?

Verse 6. Well, "Among the mature" people who are Christians, they're growing in Christ, "we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or the rulers of this age." If you want wisdom about your internal life, don't run to the psychologist to figure it out. If you want to know about the future and macro trends of history, don't look to the sociologists, to the historians. Right? We got to look to what God says, right? The wisdom is not the wisdom of the world. Right? We think about last week. We talk about cyclical history or linear history. God's got answers to this and it's the mature person in Christ who gets the wisdom and understands the wisdom, the wisdom of this age, rulers of this age, what do they know? They're "doomed to pass away," right? We can't just pull a bunch of USC, UCLA, UCI professors in here and say tell us what it really is. Help us understand how to raise our kids. Tell us how we should think about economics. Tell us how to think about natural rights. We can't go to them for this, right? They're not rightly related to God. They're still in an adversarial relationship with God.

I'm not saying there's no general revelation that is out there in the knowledge base of the world, but the wisdom that we get in the Bible is different. And the apostles and prophets, they're imparting, verse 7, a secret and "hidden wisdom." Hidden from whom? From the world. They don't get it, right? "The wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages," I love this, "for our glory." When I stand up and say marriage is between a man and a woman and a man, I mean, we're talking about the sexual biological difference between man and woman, and that's all that marriage is. I can call on the governors. Hey, governor, Mr. smart guy in charge of our state. Tell us what you think it is. Do you think Mike Fabarez and Gavin Newsom are going to disagree on that? You're going to sit silently on that question? No, we're not going to agree. We're going to totally disagree. Now he's got a better car, a better office, a better mansion, a bit more respect, he's on TV, he's a smart guy, whatever. But we totally disagree. He doesn't get it. And I'm going to say I do get it, because I have the information imparted from God through the apostles and prophets and here is the wisdom of God given to me and I understand it. And it's been given to me. Right?

He is going to, verse 6, "pass away." But I guess what? Get to experience the glory of doing things right. Right? I know what gender is. I just know it. Right? I get it. They don't get it. I get it. I get it because it's "our glory" to get it. I get it all the way down to pay my taxes, which doesn't sound very glorious but I get it. Doing what God tells me to do becomes "our glory." Now, "None of the rulers of this age understood it," because I guarantee you this, "if they had," Paul says, verse 8, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Talk about glory. Did Jesus do everything right? Absolutely. Did he do the right thing in healing people on the Sabbath? He did the right thing. Did he do the right thing in the way that he taught? Absolutely, he did the right thing. They hated him for it.

Now, if they had wisdom, they wouldn't have crucified him in the glory of his human perfection. And yet they're not going to be the ones to tell me how to live a morally good life. Moral perfection is found from God, in God's Word he's going to give it to us. Now, he's going



to talk about them being the means of all of that. The apostles and prophets in verses 9 through 13. But let's pick up the narrative in verse 14, and we're going to get back to how we receive it or don't receive it. Verse 14, the natural person, verse 14, "does not accept the things of the Spirit of God." Hey, Gavin, here's the thing, you're wrong. Can I tell you what gender is? Because God has revealed it. Here's what marriage is. Let me just tell you about it. Here's what sexual ethics are about, right here. Let me tell you about it. He won't get it even if I open my Bible and start reading it to him. Even if I said, this is what God has said from Moses to John on the island of Patmos. Here's the truth of God through the apostles and prophets. He wouldn't get it. A natural person "doesn't accept the things of the Spirit of God." They are folly to him.

And if he were in a room, say, in some nice Burbank studio for some nighttime comedy show, and Newsom and I are on, guess who's going to have the crowd with them? It won't be me, right? It won't be me. They're going to laugh at me. They're going to laugh at what I say. They're going to laugh at the things I say to reflect the truth of God's Word. You know that, right? You know that. And that's how it is. It's folly to them. And guess here's the thing, poor governor. He's "not able to understand these things because they are spiritually discerned." Right? I am able to understand God's Word and read it, even though I could read it to him and he is going to retort with a lot of things that might even sound like God things, spiritual things, religious things. "Well, yeah, but Jesus, you got to love, love, love." He could talk a lot about that people in the crowd would go, "Yeah, that's it man. God's love." And all of that could be said in a spiritual context in his mind. But it is not spiritual because he can't even understand the Word of God that's clear. It's cogent, it's together. It's a body of truth. It doesn't contradict itself.

And I can understand it. Why? Because, verse 15, I'm a "spiritual person." God has made me alive together with God. "The spiritual person judges all things." And you could too. You and I with an open Bible could look at every editorial in every paper in the country. We could look at every talking head, every podcast. We could lay it out. And if we took enough time, we could open up our Bibles and we could judge them all. We could say, nope, wrong here. Yep, right here. No, wrong here. Now, somewhere in between. We could judge it all. But guess what? "He himself," this spiritual person, "is judged by no one." Oh, but I am judged, God. You haven't lived down here. Yes, he did. He was judged and crucified. You know what? He knows what it is to be judged. But it's not the judgment that matters. Why? Verse 6, all of those leaders "passing away." The leader who judges me is God, right? That's the judge ultimately I'm concerned about. I'm judged by no person down here, "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" Right? Newsome's not going to tell God a few things he didn't understand and go, oh yeah, you're right. No one's going to convince God that he's wrong on these things. Right? "But we have the mind of Christ." Now the "we" again, we get back to the apostles and prophets. But praise God, they've imparted that to us. And we have the body, the corpus of revelation, the oracles of God written before us in propositional sentences. We can understand his Word.

Here's the synergism of all that. You got a Bible on your shelf. You got a Bible on your phone. You got a Bible on your computer. You can understand that if you are a Christian in your A.D.,



post-conversion life, you have an ability that the non-Christian who lives next door to you does not have. You have the Spirit of God that allows you to understand the Word of God. And that is something I'll bet if I opened up the microphone and called you up on stage and said, can anybody tell me about your understanding of the Bible before you got saved and the understanding after you got saved? Do you think anybody in the room could say obviously totally different, totally different? I've seen it so many... I've seen it as a preacher because I'm trying to preach God's Word. I've had people say to me... This is not the way to start a conversation with me by the way. They'll say, "I hated you when I first started coming here." That tests my sanctification to hear those things. But then it's like they're trying to set me up for a compliment at this point. "But I love it now," right? (long pause) I don't want to say anything about that. (audience laughing)

What are they saying by that? They're saying not like your sermons got better on May 15th, right? No, no, no. YOU got born again. YOU got a new life. YOU got a new mind. You got the Ezekiel 36 new spirit placed within you and God's Spirit placed within you. And guess what? Now you spiritually discern the Word. That's the difference. And it's the same way when you read the Bible, read a good Christian book. All the things that torqued you and made you so offended are now the words of life to you. That's the difference. And so I'm saying God has done that for you. God has given you a book, the most detested book, the book that is most testified to in all of antiquity, the bestselling book of all time, the most replicated book of all time, the first book to come off the printing press. This book has gone everywhere. God has given us a book and then he said, hey, Christian, I've given you the ability to understand it. This is the doctrine, by the way theologians, of the Doctrine of illumination. Illumination. Does that sound like a word you know? Light, right? The light bulbs come on now that you're a Christian when you read the Bible, show me wonderful things in your Word. We have the ability to understand it and now it becomes the source of our sanctification.

Psalm 119 verse 9. "How can a young man keep his way pure?" A middle-aged man, old man, young woman, old woman? How? "By keeping it according to your Word." The Word, though, has to be understood and God's synergistic work in you is to give you understanding of the Word. Not only that, go to First Peter Chapter 2. First Peter Chapter 2. Actually let's start in Chapter 1. First Peter Chapter 1 before we ever get to Chapter 2. I'm going to get to Chapter 2 in a second because that's the punch line. But let's start-up in verse 22 just for some context. "Having purified your souls," this is First Peter Chapter 1 verse 22, "by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from the heart" Why? How can I do that? Well, "Since you've been born again," this new capacity now, "not of a perishable seed, but an imperishable."

How did I get born again? How did God put this new spirit within me and now it's growing and getting strong?" How? "Through the living and abiding Word of God." It's the Word of God that is the agency of your conversion. Then he starts quoting a passage about the revelation of God from Isaiah 40. He does that in verse 24, "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." It doesn't change. It is immutable. It's there. It's given to us. We understand it and it's the means of our conversion. Look at the last line of verse 25, "And this word is the good



news that was preached to you." That's what made you saved. Now the Word of God, agency of your conversion, you understand what it was that you were morally imperfect. God was perfect. You needed to be counted perfect. God's Son came and provided all that. You repented. You put your trust in God.

Now, let's talk about sanctification. First Peter Chapter 2 verse 1. "So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy, and envy, and all slander." The list goes on in other passages. But how do I get there? The same way you got saved. There's an agency of your growth. It's the same thing. It's that same book. "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation." My salvation is yet to come. I'm legally saved but I'm not yet saved because I'm not in the new holy new world, "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." But I'm heading there. I want to grow up. I'm going to be more and more like Christ. How do I do that? Through this word. It's like milk to you. It's like food to you, right? If indeed you're a Christian, verse 3, "If indeed you've tasted that the Lord is good." If the seed within me, the imperishable seed of God's work within me to regenerate my life, agents through the Word of God, the Word of God is this eternal truth, this message from God. And it's worked by God's grace to bring me to life. The dead become alive.

Now. Grow up here. Now, synergistic work, work to grow. You can start working on... Let's start with envy. There's a new book out on that. Envy, hypocrisy, deceit, whatever you want. Keep working on your sanctification. How do I do it? You got to ingest the word. "How can a young man keep his way pure?" The Word. It's God's written word. God provides a book. God provides understanding for the book called the Doctrine of Illumination, the Spirit of God, your spiritually discerning the truth like you didn't before. And now, as a new Christian in particular, he's giving you a desire to know the book and you need to give thanks to God for that. Some of you are new Christians and you can't get enough of it. That's why when I say the sermons going long, you say, "No, keep going." Not the old fogies who say that, it's the new Christians who say that. They want more Bible. They love the Bible. Okay.

So God gives us the desire. Sometimes, though, go to Hebrews Chapter 5, we grow in Christ, and we don't do the work that God asks us to do because our sanctification is synergistic. Of course,] God works, gives us a book, helps us understand the book, gives us the spirit of discernment in the book, he gives us a desire for the book initially, we're clinging to it, but we start to get into life and we do a few laps in the Christian life and we start to get lazy. Hebrews Chapter 5. In Hebrews Chapter 5, look at the last... What's the last word of verse 9? Just tell me what it is. What's the last word of verse 9? Okay. This is Hebrews Chapter 5 verse 9. No. Okay. Verse 10. Sorry. I mean, there is a last word in verse 9, you should have said it, right? But the last word in verse 10 is a little more exciting. What is that word? Melchizedek. Okay, some of you couldn't even pronounce it. "I don't know what that word is." Melchizedek. And that's kind of how it's gone in churches from the first century. Like Melchizedek, what's that about?

Well, it's very provocative because in the Bible you see Abraham encounter this guy named Melchizedek. He's from the ancient city that would become Jerusalem in the Jebusite part of Canaan. And here's Abraham bowing down and giving him a tithe from the spoils of his war.



And it's like, okay, interesting story. Don't know who he is. Scratch our heads. But then in Psalm 110, he's mentioned again as though he has some future, you know, that category has some future role in the coming of Christ. So all of its mind-boggling. And so here's the writer of Hebrews saying, Chapter 5 verse 11, I'd like to talk about that, "About this we have much to say," right? The teachers here, the writer of Hebrews, had a lot to say, "but it's hard to explain." And you should know it's not because he doesn't understand it. He understands it. "Since you have become dull of hearing." If you do not do the work of your sanctification, God's doing his work. You got to do the work of your sanctification, which is for you not to become dull of hearing.

That word, if you were to click on that in your Bible software in front of you, it will bring up the Greek word "Nōthros." Nōthros is the Greek word that translates "dull." Elsewhere it translates to the word "lazy." And the idea is they became dull in hearing because they became lazy listeners. They weren't really digging and they weren't leaning in, and they weren't actively listening. They weren't reading the text the way they should if they were literate in this congregation, which most of them were because of the audience he's teaching. But the point is they don't do the work, they're dull in hearing. So you've had enough time. If you weren't dull of hearing, if you weren't lazy, "by this time you'd be teachers." You've had enough years to become teachers. You could tell me, you could give me a lesson on Melchizedek, but instead "you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God." These things on the page of the Bible that God has revealed. "You need milk and not solid food," which he's bummed about.

Look at verse 1 of Chapter 6. He says, "Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity." He wants to leave the milk stuff and get on to stuff like Melchizedek, right? That's what he wants to do. But they're dull in hearing. What's the problem? Go back up to verse 13 Chapter 5. "For everyone who lives on milk is," here's another word that should bite, "unskilled in the word of righteousness." Why? Because he's just a neophyte. He's just a kid. He's like a new Christian that all he's done is have a few sips of the bottle. He hasn't had food. He's not strong. Verse 14, "But solid food," stuff like Melchizedek, "is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment, trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil." One of the reasons you can't tell what is right and what is wrong in your life is because the Word of God has not infiltrated your mind to the place where you have worked well enough with the Bible that you're skilled in being able to determine what is good and what is not.

If I scared you at all by saying we could take any editorial from any paper across the country and we could sit down with an open Bible and we could judge it, we can judge it. That's what it said. First Corinthians Chapter 2. And you may go, "Well, I don't know that I could." Well, how long you've been a Christian? Have you been a Christian for a month, two months? I'm going to give you a pass, okay? If you've been a Christian two or three years, maybe, or some of you here 20 years. Well, dude, you definitely should be able to open up the Bible on whatever the topic and say what does the Bible say? What are the principles and precepts of Scripture that should inform us in thinking about what we're reading here? The world's got stuff to say. God's got stuff to say. How do we conflate those? Well, sometimes you can't



conflate them. Sometimes it's oil and water. But God's Word always has to win over the theories and ideas of the world. And we should be able to do that.

But we can't if we're not doing the work. The Bible doesn't come off the shelf and hover over your face and read itself to you. You've got to do that. You got to study it. You got to roll up your sleeves. You got to go to Compass Bible Institute, you got to take a class, you got to read a book, you got to buy a new book this morning in the bookstore. You got to dig deeper into all of this. And this is where we ought to be.

Now, I don't have time for this, but that never stops me. So let me just say one thing about, go back to our passage, Acts 23, when Paul quotes in verse 5, Exodus 23, I just need you to remember when he quotes this passage, it's a passage that he expects should affect his sanctification. And some trendy skinny-jean pastor who is going to tell you that we should decouple ourselves from the Old Testament when Paul here by example is showing that his sanctification is affected by the Old Testament, you should just immediately be able to say, I'm going to trust what the apostle says and not what the megachurch pastor says. You have to differentiate in your own mind the idea is that even people on platforms with Bibles who sit there and tell you things like the Old Testament is passé, the New Testament is good. You need to recognize that is wrong.

Why is it wrong? Well, they think they win the argument because they start quoting things like we shouldn't make fabrics with two different kinds of material in them, right? You shouldn't sow seeds out in the field with two kinds of different seeds. Or have you been doing the Daily Bible Reading this week? If you've been reading Leviticus with us, I mean, you're going to read stuff in there that you're going to go I don't understand. Menstrual purity and purification, cutting the foreskin off your eight-day-old males. I mean, seriously man. Or how about this? You can't enter the temple compound and go serve the Lord on the tabernacle or later in the temple courtyard if you have a crushed foot. Right? I mean. Wow. Not to mention you can't eat shellfish. Right? Which is no skin off my nose because I don't like it but you like it and you're thinking I don't understand. That sounds silly. Silly. What is that?

And so you can sit there with your skinny jeans on and say, well see there, it's stupid, right? You shouldn't read the Old Testament. Old Testament that's where they talk about homosexuality and stuff like that which we're so enlightened now we know that's absurd, right? All the stoning laws and all that, all those clean and unclean stuff, we don't need that anymore. Well, you know what? You got part of that right. Because the apostle Paul in First Corinthians 7 talks about some of the ceremonial laws and he says about circumcision, cutting the foreskin off your eight-day-old kid, it says this: it means nothing. "Circumcision or uncircumcision doesn't mean anything, but only keeping the commandments of God." And I'm thinking, Paul, you're talking to people who don't have a New Testament, a leather-bound New Testament in their laps. So all we got is the Old Testament at this point. And you're telling the Corinthians in the first century, keep the commands of God, but don't worry about circumcision. I'm raising my hand in that class and saying, isn't that a command of God? Right?



We've got to think more critically about what we're hearing. To de-couple ourselves from the Old Testament. Never, never. Paul doesn't do it here. As a matter of fact, in the same book he writes to the Corinthians and he says this: you ought to pay your pastors. Now I haven't preached that series but it's not a bad theme. You ought to pay your pastors, and the Bible says you should have no problem putting real currency into the offering every single week to pay your pastors, to drive their cars, to pay their mortgages, to have kids and pay for their diapers. You should pay them because if they're sowing in you spiritual things it is right that they reap from you material things. I should have money in my bank account because you are fed by me spiritually. That's what Paul says. And then he steps back and says, "Do I say this on my own human authority? Or does not the law also say the same thing?"

And then he's already told us circumcision doesn't mean anything. It's a command of God, but not the command of God that I'm telling you needs to be enforced. He says this. Let me quote the Old Testament law for you, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he's threshing." What? I thought we were talking about paychecks for pastors. No, we are, we are. But here's the idea. He asked the question, "Is it for oxen that the Lord is concerned?" I'm thinking, well, it seems like it, that's the grammar of the sentence. Well, it is, and you shouldn't put a muzzle on an ox while he's treading out the grain. If the ox wants to get his gigantic head down on the floor and eat a little grain while he's treading out the grain you ought to let him do that. But he says, isn't it for us? Yes, it is for us. He's written this for us, and he says, that's why when we send someone to war for the country, the country pays for his meals, and it pays for him to be in the army. When someone goes out in the field and he works in the field, you hire someone to get your apples off the tree, they should be able to stop and eat an apple. That's the right thing. If they're milking the goats they ought to be able to drink some of the milk of the goats. He says this is the principle and the authority of God is found in the Old Testament law.

And you say, what's the difference between circumcision or unclean and clean? Or a guy with a smashed foot can't go serve before the altar? What is going on here? Well, one is ceremonial, and cleaning and unclean is a big indicator in all those passages, and some are moral. We saw all the passage about you shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife. Right? And like what is that? It's a weird way to say it but we get the point. You might have read it twice. That whole list of forbidden sexual relationships you can't have. All of those are moral laws. And you recognize that simply by looking logically at the two and saying, I get it. I get moral laws versus ceremonial laws. The third set of laws are called civil laws. You got to remember the civil laws of like how much restitution should someone pay if they were caught robbing someone of their stuff. What should happen if someone rapes someone in the community? All those things are laid out in the law of Moses because they just left Egypt which was their judicial governmental society. They could run to the courts of Egypt but now they're their own country. And God sets up a set of civil laws for the country.

But the New Testament says, now you Christians are an international group setting up churches throughout the world under all kinds of countries. And he says in Romans 13 you might be under Rome, and if you're under Rome pay them tribute, pay them tolls, pay them taxes. If you are a Christian in the New Testament you're living in an international organization under whatever country you find yourself in and God will utilize that country by



God's grace we hope to reflect something of the civil laws of the Old Testament. We would put it today we want our governments, our legislators, to reflect the Judeo-Christian principles of Old Testament law. And we should. That's why it's inscribed all over the place in Washington D.C. Right?

Now we're moving and slouching toward Gomorrah to quote that book title. Right? We're on our way to Sodom. But even still some of the articles written in the newspapers this week about the fact that it's not fair that homosexual couples or people who are shacking up don't get the same tax breaks that married people get, is a reminder that Romans 13 is still at least faintly reflected in our law code today. Right? God is saying it's right for you to be in a covenant relationship to live in the same domicile and have a sexual relationship. That's called marriage. And the government is still, at least in our day, rewarding people financially for that and penalizing you in some way, at least by the absence of the tax break, by you living together. And the government still plays that role and that's the right thing. And to the extent that it does it we praise God, in the extent that it doesn't do it we lament and we pray.

But our job is to see the moral laws of the Old Testament, whether it's don't curse the ruler of your people or don't muzzle the ox while he's threshing, or don't bear false witness, or don't, you know, have a day labor that you don't pay the same day. These principles are still in vogue. Sexual ethics, all of that is still in vogue. And it's just easy for you to excise the whole thing and throw it away. But you're a bad teacher of the Bible if that's what you're recommending your people do. So we study the Old Testament, and then by God's grace, we have a whole new thing, 27 books of the New Testament, that continually reiterate the moral law of God. And that's how we become sanctified. We read it, we study it, God gives us understanding of it, we apply it, and we have a desire for it and we have a chance now either to get lazy in it or to continue and press on and apply it. We need to become good students of the Word.

Verse 1 Chapter 23, verse 1. "Looking intently at the council, Paul said, 'Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up until this day.'" Okay? Not only should you fill your mind with God's perfect rules, you need to deal with this thing called a conscience. And the Bible is always going to say, here's the rest of the Scripture on this concept of conscience, it's an internal compass that tells you something is right or wrong, right? We should be guarding it. We should be careful with it and know that it's not always perfect. Number two, "Guard Your Imperfect Conscience." Your conscience is saying that skirt is too short. You shouldn't vacation there, right? This is not the way we should spend our disposable income. Your conscience is going to weigh in on those things. I taught a whole series on that. It's on the back. It's called the Black and White on Gray Areas. And your conscience, the Bible says, should be guarded. If you think it's too short, it's too short. If you think you shouldn't vacation there, you shouldn't be there. You think you shouldn't spend that on that, you shouldn't. You should guard your conscience.

But you should always remember with the caveat your conscience is imperfect. First Timothy says it can be callous. The book of Titus says it can be stained or defiled. And you know that your conscience based on your conditioning as it says in First Corinthians, you can have a



conditioned connection to something that makes you feel bad about something that God says is not a bad thing. For them it was eating meat sacrificed to idols and Paul says it doesn't matter what you eat. And yet he says if your conscience is defiled, well then you know what? We got to guard our conscience. But just know it's not perfect and that's why we can't take our conscience and apply it to another Christian. We can only take God's Word and apply it to another Christian. Our conscience is a matter of me dealing with God and trying to work through all the imperfections of my conscience. And hopefully, as I grow as a Christian, my conscience gets stronger and aligns more with the work of the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel 36 is an important passage. Romans Chapter 2 is an important passage, verses 14 through 16. So many passages I would take you to if we had three-hour sermons but I can't.

Acts 23 verses 2 through 4. Paul gets smacked in the face and he retorts, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall!" They said, "Ah, you shouldn't say that. That's the chief priest." Paul says, "Yeah, you're right, the Bible says I shouldn't. Sorry, bad on me." That's what he said. So I'm saying could we have avoided this? Maybe. And all I'm saying is he's got precedent in the Bible to call someone a whitewashed wall. Jesus did it. Jesus was angry, you know that. He looked around the Mark 3, right? He saw the people and was angry at them. It was Mark 3. I think I wrote that down somewhere. You should have that somewhere. How about, yeah, Mark 3 verses 4 and 5. "He looked at them with anger." And then he healed that guy. I preached on it. Matter of fact, there's a sermon on the back called When the World Makes You Mad, you should listen to that, and that'll be the third point for you. At least the idea.

It's part of the third point because it helps you realize that sometimes our emotions can be good constructive motives for things but oftentimes it's not. Can I do good constructive things because of indignation? Well, God, Psalm 7 verse 11, can be driven by indignation and so can I. And there are times it can be rightly done. But if I'm smacked in the mouth, it may be the pain of my lips that are now bombing the chief priest with invectives that maybe I shouldn't be tossing at him right now. Maybe I should sit back and say, now who was it that said that? Is this the right guy I should say something to? Right? In other words, his emotions made him react. And we can talk to Paul one day about this and maybe I'm wrong in it and the commentators might say that maybe this is not the whole story. Fine. I'm going to take the text as I read it here. I'm going to say I think, at least Paul would agree with this, we should never let our emotions just go unchecked to lead us to action, because sometimes that's not going to align with God's Word. And I won't be sanctified if I'm just a servant to my emotions.

So number three, you need to "Supervise Your Varied Emotions." And you know they swing one direction and then the other. And I'm telling you the physiology of your life affects it. I'll give you an illustration. What is it? First Kings, what is it? Chapter 18. He's there, Elijah has the showdown with the priest of Baal. I mean, talk about a high. And every preacher knows this or if you have big presentations at your job, you know this. When you're done there's this huge emotional letdown, right? All your adrenaline gets used. So here's Elijah, big emotional letdown. And he goes out in the desert because the first thing he knows is I'm not just going to my recliner after I preached this big sermon. Right? He is now on the run because Jezebel,



the Queen, who hates him is chasing him. And so he runs into the desert. When he gets out there he says this, "O God, kill me." I shouldn't live anymore.

So he has suicidal thoughts. He wants God to take his life and God doesn't come on the scene and start to reason with him. God says, you know what you need? You need some food and you need a good sleep. God deals with his physiology because his emotions are leading him to the wrong conclusions. He's got to govern his emotions so that he doesn't make snap decisions. And maybe that's what's happening to Paul here. I think perhaps it is. Maybe he's got to slow down a little bit and say maybe this is not what I should do. Take a little break, catch your breath, keep your head from spinning around here and make a better decision than just to call someone a whitewashed wall and God's going to strike them. Maybe you realized before you said it, I think that was the high priest who said that, maybe I should respond this way because I know Exodus 23. Maybe, but I'm just saying this. I know that Elijah needed a nap because his emotions were affected by his lack of sleep and his lack of food. And God says you're suicidal thoughts you shouldn't be going.

And all I'm telling you is our emotions need to be governed. That's why the Bible says in the book of Proverbs it's better for you to be able to control your emotions, your spirit, guard your spirit, govern your spirit, rule your spirit is how it's put in the English Standard Version than for you to be someone who can go "conquer a city." It's a great thing to have a ticker tape parade because you're the best warrior in Israel. But it'd be better if you could control your emotions. Which doesn't mean I can tell myself how to feel. Some days I just feel the way I feel. But I better be careful about the decisions I make based on those feelings. And that would have been a great point had I had time to expand on but you get the gist of it, right? All right. Just pretend I have an eloquent closure to all this. It's beautiful, there's a poem, there's a song, it leaves you tearful. It's like, yeah, get out there. Bible. Conscience. Don't be swayed by emotions. I'm ready. Just pretend we did all that.

Let's pray. God, so much could be said on this. We thank you for your truth, for your Word. We know we need to be in it. And maybe the most convicting part for many in this room, perhaps, was Hebrews 5. We don't want to be nōthros, we don't want to be lazy. We don't want to be dull. So get us back into the Word. Maybe have us sign up for the next semester at Compass Bible Institute, a classroom. Let us go to the bookstore right now and buy a book that's going to challenge us. Let us dig into your Word. Maybe we should just start with Melchizedek. That was the topic on the table there for them. Whatever it is, we want to be good students of your Word. We want to be protective of our conscience, knowing sometimes it's wrong. We can't enforce it on others. But we've got to be careful. It's informed by your words and formed by you because you programmed it. Even though we've tweaked it and messed it up and probably calloused it where we shouldn't have. But God, we know our feelings. They're out there too. They're in the mix and we just want to be careful that we don't make decisions about our sanctification without really slowing down to say, God, help me to guard my spirit, my emotions, and know what is right and wrong in this situation. Thanks for this church. Thanks for their indulgence and their patience and just their grace toward their preacher and everything else that goes on here in this church and give us together a great way to grow in our holiness.



In Jesus name. Amen