

**Don't Miss It-Part 2**  
**Taking Stock of What's at Stake**  
**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

I grew up in the home of what some might call a disciplinarian. You know what I mean by that? Consider the fact that he was in the Marine Corps, he was in the Air Force, and then he chose his profession in law enforcement—emphasis on enforcement, you know. And conveniently liked to discuss all the family rules while he was cleaning his gun at the kitchen table, you know. About those trash cans, Mike, let's, you know.

Seriously, though, it wasn't that my dad liked making rules for rules' sake, you know what I mean? As a matter of fact, compared to the other kids at school, it seemed like I had a lot less rules than the other kids. But when it came to the rules that my dad had, you had better heed the warning. Dad was inflexible about his rules. Didn't have a lot of them, but the ones he had were important to him, and he expected us to abide by them, and he was willing to impose some pretty steep consequences if we chose to disregard them.

He expected us to be boys of integrity, to have a heart that spoke honestly, to take responsibility for our actions. He wanted us to treat people with respect and dignity, particularly our parents and our grandparents. He expected us to be home on time. That was an inflexible rule. He had the chore list, and he said, for your mom's sake, you need to do these, and you need to make sure that you accomplish them in an excellent manner. Dad had those rules, and he wasn't going to bend on those. And my brother and I tested the rules quite often and realized Dad was serious about making sure that we did those.

Unfortunately, when you say the word disciplinarian, and when I say I grew up in a disciplinarian's home, it conjures up images, perhaps, of me in the back porch hugging the dryer. That's where we had our moments of correction. And you know what? It shouldn't immediately conjure up those images. Matter of fact, you should slow down a little bit and recognize, well, discipline as a word—I mean, look it up, do a study on it. Look at how it's used even in the Scripture. It's not just correction. As a matter of fact, discipline has to do with setting a course. Discipline has to do with making sure that we govern things so as to set someone on the right path. Oh, it involves correction, and sometimes painful correction, but it involves more importantly the heart of someone saying, "I'm willing to take you in a direction that's good." As a matter of fact, discipline comes from a heart that's good.

Turn on your Bibles, if you would, before we get to Hebrews. Turn to the book of Proverbs and read this passage in Proverbs chapter 19, and recall the depth and profundity of this truth in Scripture as it relates to parent-child relationships. Proverbs chapter 19, verse number 18. Very simple statement. Here's our word, discipline. "Discipline your son"—which again includes training, direction, guiding—"discipline your son, for in that there's hope." Hope for who? Hope for him. Now this is profound. Look at this. "Do not be a willing party to his death." Do you see that? You invert it now, all of a sudden, if I do not discipline my child, you've just indicted me that I am now a collaborator in his demise.

That's why Scripture, for instance, in passages like Proverbs 13:24 says, if you love your child, you'll discipline your child diligently. Because you can't have real love if you're not willing to set someone on a good path. And you're not a good parent, let's say in this illustration, if you're not willing, for the good of your child, to make sure they go down the right path, and if you're not

willing to correct the child so that they'll continue down that right path. That is the essence of love. As a matter of fact, the Scripture says, "A child left to his own will be a disgrace to his mother." And you know what? The Scripture says that's just not loving. You're not good if you do that. And we've all seen it. We've all experienced it.

In the book of Hebrews, if there's one thing that we'll learn as we try and teach verse by verse through this whole book, it's that the writer of Hebrews wants us to understand that God is a disciplinarian. Now the whole book isn't about his punishment or about his retribution or about his correction, but we'll see that punctuated throughout the book. The book is more importantly about putting us on the right path, and God being so good that he wants us to stay on that right path, because ultimately a God who loves us and is willing to guide us and direct us and make sure we stay on that path—if the path is good, there's no greater love than that. And the Bible says, listen, you need to know God is a disciplinarian. He believes in spanking, as I often say. And he's willing to do that in terms of inflicting pain to correct us, to stay on the right path, because the path is good and because his heart is good.

But I'll tell you what, they're truths that we choke on today. As a matter of fact, they're truths that are rejected. If you ask the average person, the average church leader, "Is God a disciplinarian?" you'd see most people, if they don't just stumble, a lot of them will deny it out and out. "No, that's not the God I know. That's not the God I worship. That's not the God I serve. The God I serve, he's loving and compassionate"—as though letting people do what they want to do is the essence of love.

Here's the danger. If we don't really understand the composite picture of the God of the book of Hebrews, who is the God of the Bible, who is the only God there is, then we will settle for something less than God, and we will sing worship songs to someone other than God, and we will, in our heart, try to build a relationship with an idol. And the Bible says don't do that. God is good, but the good of God is also expressed not just in loves and hugs. It's also expressed in the desire to see his children walk down the right path.

God is a disciplinarian. There are three components to it, and I'd like to show those to you as we jump back into the middle of this first stern warning in the book of Hebrews. And we covered verse number one. We talked about the importance of not drifting away when we hear God speak clearly in Scripture, and we hear it through preaching, we hear it through Bible study, we gather it from our own study, and we said, you know, hold on to that, because the stream is taking us down to Mexico. Remember that? No slam on Mexico, but if you remember the illustration, sorry. We're drifting. Grab the truth when you see it.

Now here comes the passage, verse number 2 of Hebrews 2, that's going to tell us: make sure you understand there's a lot at stake if you don't grab the dock. If you're willing to drift on by, there's trouble. Pick it up in verse 1 just to get context. "We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we've heard so that we don't drift away." Now he says, listen, just think about the character of God. Think about the God of the Bible. Think about the past. Think about the old covenant that was mediated through angels. It says in verse 2, "For if the message spoken by angels was binding and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, then how shall we escape," rhetorically speaking, "if we ignore such a great salvation?"

Now, we've already established in the first chapter of Hebrews, Jesus is in charge. I mean, he is greater than angels. He's greater than anyone. He is in charge. He is the one that God has enthroned

as King of kings and Lord of lords. And now he's calling us to heed what he says, to do what he says. Don't drift past it. And now he says, you just got to understand, God is a God where he is so concerned with us grabbing the truth for our own good that if we're not willing to, man, there's consequences if we don't grab it.

If you got your outline, it's filled with a few extra lines this week, and you're going to expend, I trust, a little extra ink on your paper. But this is important because I think in the culture in which we live, the God of the Bible is being contorted and twisted and morphed into something that is nothing short of idolatry. So we need to get back to who is the God of the Bible, who is the God of this text.

And as we look at that first phrase in the first part of verse number 2, it brings up an image that's hard for people to swallow, but it's the truth about God. Look at it. It says, "For if the message spoken by angels," or messengers, "was binding." Look at that word, underline it. If the message they spoke was a message in which—that word means he is inflexible about. You can't talk him out of. If he says, for instance, to Israel, you cannot make graven images and bow down to idols, he means it. And you can't go to him and say, "Well, can't I please, just on Tuesday afternoons, just a little bit?" You can have all the discussions you want with God, and he will be inflexible.

The word binding, it means he's not moving on his rules. If he says to the children of Israel, leave Egypt, follow Moses, he is your leader, and he's going to take you into Canaan, the promised land, and if you want to complain about it, I'm not interested. There has to be correction. My rules are inflexible. Korah, he learned the lesson the hard way, Numbers 16. You cannot disregard the command. Leave Egypt. I know everybody wants to go back to Egypt, but my rule is you move forward and you follow Moses and you don't complain about it.

Now the question, as we look at that—here's how I put it. When you're tempted to ask this question, "Why does God make such strict rules?" Jot that down on your worksheet if you would. When you're tempted to ask, why does God make such strict rules? Why is he so inflexible? Because a lot of us parents, I mean, you know how it is. You come home from work, you're tired. You tell the kids to take the trash cans out. And you say, no, do it right now. And they come and say, "Dad, you know, can't we just do it after dinner?" And we're like, okay, whatever.

And we see it all the time—compromise. Our kids, they're born negotiators. Have you noticed that? They come out like car salesmen. They're ready to go, man. You said this. Let's see if we can mitigate it to that. You know, you want this. Let's see if we can change it to that. They're born to do that. And we parents all the time, we go, "Well, okay, whatever." And, you know, it's hard enough with one. It gets really hard with two. And when they outnumber you with three—right? When you have kids, it's like you're hopeless. You're going to bend. You're going to flex.

The reality is, though, if you look at Scripture, God doesn't flex. And the question is for us, why doesn't he flex? Why are his rules so firm? As a matter of fact, we look throughout Scripture where someone just breaks the rule and transgresses it, and God is on them. As a matter of fact, the nature of God is that he is in no way going to negotiate. That's why they say they're the Ten Commandments, not the Ten Suggestions, right? God is not a God trying to say, "Well, this would be a good idea if..." He's firm, he's emphatic, he's imperative. Why is that?

Well, our illustration is that my dad had rules for us because he had a good path for us. Because the assumption is here, his heart is good. He wants good because he loves his child, so he wants him to go down the right path. That's the assumption, right? The same is true about God. The same truths

that we learn in Proverbs about parents toward their children is the same reality that we need to grasp about God. God is strict with his rules not because he's a bad God. God is strict with his rules because he's a good God. As a matter of fact, because he's good, he has an attribute that is necessary as a good God, and it's the attribute of holiness.

I want you to jot this down. Remember this. When you're tempted to ask, "Why does God make such strict rules?" jot this down. Remember this: because God is good, he's holy. You can't be good if you're not holy. And the God that we say is not only good—he's perfectly good—has to be perfectly holy.

Take your Bibles and turn with me, if you would, to Psalm 99, right in the middle of your Bibles. Psalm 99. And I want you to recognize that if you take a human dad who has good intentions, but it's a composite of good and maybe some selfish and maybe just some misdirection and maybe some ignorance and I don't know—so it's a composite, it's mostly good—and then you try to extrapolate into a God of the Bible who is perfectly good, then you recognize there's absolutely no variation on his rules, because those rules, if they came from a perfectly good God, they must be perfectly good rules.

And in Psalm 99, it speaks of his rules like this. Let's get all the context. This is not a very long psalm. Let's just read it. It says, "Yahweh reigns," verse 1, "let the nations tremble." He's in charge. That's what Hebrews 1 was all about. Christ is the mediatorial king who rules over the nations. "He sits enthroned between the cherubim." The Scripture says Yahweh does. "Let the earth shake. Great is Yahweh in Zion. He is exalted over all nations. Let them praise your great and awesome name"—he is holy.

That word is perfect. He is set apart. That's what the word holy means. Set apart from all that's not perfect, all that's not good. He couldn't come up with a bad rule if he wanted to, because he's perfect and he's good. "The king is mighty." Look at the things that he loves. "He loves justice, and therefore he's established equity. In Jacob"—underline this phrase—"you have done what is just and right." He can't help but do that.

"Exalt Yahweh our God and worship at his footstool. He is holy." He's perfect. He's good. Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel among those who called on his name. They called on Yahweh, and note this, he answered them. He spoke. And when you call on a perfect God, a holy God, and he speaks and he answers, guess how he answers? Perfectly. "In the pillar of cloud they"—that is, the priests, Aaron and Moses—"kept his statutes and the decrees that he gave them." Because he couldn't help. If you're going to call and ask the perfect God a question, he's going to give you a perfect answer. And so we see that heroes in the Bible, like Moses, for the most part, they kept his statutes and decrees.

"Yahweh our God, you answered them. You were to Israel a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds." Oh, you were a God of correction. "Exalt Yahweh our God and worship at his holy mountain, for Yahweh our God is holy." He's perfect. You ought to stand back and say, whatever he says, man, this is going to be right, and it's going to be good. He doesn't make superfluous laws. He doesn't make rules that aren't good. He doesn't sit back and go, "Well, that wasn't a real great one. You know, command number nine, I don't know. Should I have that one? I'll talk. You want to talk about that? Let's talk that one over." He's not going to do that. God is perfectly good.

And we intuitively, I think, we recognize that, especially as parents, because all of a sudden now we reach this level of love that maybe we've never experienced before. And we see this dependent small child. And all of a sudden now, intuitively, we require what's good. You may not think you're a rule maker, but you are as soon as you have a kid. You have this kid and they come out—and I know they're born negotiators—but before they even get to the place of being able to talk, they're doing stupid things, right? I mean, let's just face it. They want to lick everything and put their mouth on everything. And moms intuitively know, don't lick the pavement, right? That's bad. Don't do that. And she is willing to enforce that rule. And it is a rule that she has. She doesn't sit back and go, "Well, I love my kid so much. You know, if the kid wants to lick the pavement, okay."

Playing with the outlets, right? Boy, we battled with our kid on that one. Does your kid like to do that? Let's stick everything in. As soon as he learned to crawl, let's stick everything we can—and if it's metal, that's better—into the outlets. And I don't know why they put them there. They're perfect height for the—like, toddler crawls up right to it, and it says, here, play with this. And Mom says, no. And she's a rule maker. Immediately, we can't have that. Why? Because Mom has good rules that intuitively come out. They're firm and binding, because in the goodness of her heart, she knows that's not good for you. Licking the pavement's not good. Sticking your finger or paper clips into the electrical socket, not good. And so I'm going to be inflexible on the rule.

And the more love that a mom has for that child, and the more concern she has, and the more responsibility she feels for the child, the more emphatically she wants that rule to be enforced. She has to have that. She's not going to negotiate about it. And she's not going to say, "Well, I don't know. Do you really want to play with the outlet? Oh, okay. Just for a little while," right? No, no, no. Inflexible, because she's good.

The Bible reveals God is holy, and that means that his rules are going to be good. And he's just not going to flex on those. Therefore, let's put it this way, just in light of that text, that great text in Psalm 99. Look at this last phrase. It's a therefore. It's got an exclamation point. Let's jot it down this way: God reveals his binding directives. He reveals his binding directives.

And if you picture a mom watching her kid downstairs on the basketball court, and Junior puts his face against the paint line and just starts licking the ground, Mom doesn't sit there and say, "Well, you know what? I don't want to be known as a rule maker, so I'm gonna—I don't know. I know it's wrong and I know Junior shouldn't. I don't want to—I just don't want to be seen as a rule maker." Mom doesn't care how she's seen. She cares more about the kid. Therefore, she is going to disclose the rule and try and make the correction.

God is a God who has revealed his binding directives. And I love the word directive. It's the word command, but it has that of discipline in that it wants you to go down a certain path. God is a God who is so good, he must, in his goodness, reveal to you his perfect standard.

Oh, there's no better passage. Are you still in Psalm 99? Go to Psalm 19. This is a great text. And on your questions this week, if you do the questions on the back, which I encourage you to do, and our small groups are going to use these for a platform for dialogue and discussion, I'm going to turn you to this in your study, the follow-through of the sermon on the back. But let's just get a little homework done ahead of time—a little homework done here in class. Psalm 19. Let's just ponder this, why this makes so much sense. God is good. He is good, and he wants us to know what that goodness is about as it relates to us. He is a faithful God. He wants us to be faithful. He is a truthful God. He knows that would be good for us. So he reveals his goodness. And therefore, the practical

side is we'll sit back and say, wow, I guess this needs to be the most important thing. It is clinging to his binding directives.

"The law," verse 7, Psalm 19:7, it says, "the law of the Lord"—it's perfect. "It revives the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple." The precepts of Yahweh, they're right. They give joy to the heart. "The commands of Yahweh are radiant." They're like a big light bulb. They give light to the eyes. "The fear of Yahweh is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of Yahweh are sure." They're inflexible. They don't move. They're solid. They're firm. "They are altogether righteous." Look at that statement. "The ordinances of Yahweh are sure. They're altogether righteous." Therefore, verse 10, they're more precious than gold to the psalm writer, than much pure gold, than sweeter than honey, honey from the honeycomb. "By them your servant is warned, and in keeping them"—here's the key—"there is great reward."

Why is God so strict? Why does he have those rules for us? Got that curfew rule, or he's got that faithfulness rule, he's got that truthfulness rule, or if I'm going to do business, it really feels constricting and I don't like his... See, the immaturity of our Christian life sometimes chafes against God's rules. Look at the maturity of this text. Can you imagine your teenager coming up to you and saying, "Dad, your rules are perfect. They just revive my soul," right? "Your statutes, man, they're so trustworthy. They make wise my stupid brain." Look at verse 8. Picture your 14-year-old. "Your precepts, man, they're right. They give joy to my heart. Commands—your commands are radiant, man. My eyes, they're dark, but when you give a command, Dad, it might just—my eyes light up. Ordinances, man, they're righteous. Oh, I just love your commands, Dad. So good, Mom, when you give me that curfew. I love that. It's like I'm eating a Snicker bar. It tastes so good to me. Thanks for warning me, Dad. Keeping your rules—oh, I just know I'm going to be a better person."

Your teenager ever said that to you? No? Why? Because they're immature, right? Do we think our parents were all that hot when we were 14? Remember that old adage: they got a lot smarter in the next 10 to 15 years, right? All of a sudden, my parents got—they're just genius now. What happened? Nothing happened. I grew up. And I started to recognize those rules are important. As a matter of fact, those rules kept me out of some places that would have been terrible for me.

My dad didn't have a lot of rules for us, but I'm telling you, one of his rules is the reason I'm here preaching to you today. Do you realize that? One of his rules for me was, "You've got to go to Bible school, kid." And I said, "Dad, I do not want to go to Bible..." Did you want to go to Bible school when you were 17? Not a chance. No stinking way. "Well, I think I'll clean my shotgun right now, son." "But Dad, but Dad..." It's like Esau in Hebrews. "I sought his blessing with tears," right? So as the Scripture says, I sought a change of mind. With tears, I couldn't get it.

And I had every reason, man. I had just met Carlin. We were dating in high school. It was love, true love, right? And I'm telling you what, to leave and go to Chicago, last thing on my list. I'd earned a scholarship, a full four-year ride to a South Orange County university. I said, "Dad, I got my ticket. It's right here. My college is paid for. I got my girlfriend. I'm not going to leave her," you know. Dad said no. And you know why he said no? Because he wanted to ruin my life, right? Why did my dad say no to everything I wanted as a 17-year-old? He said no because here was his thinking: I want my kids to go to college. Your mom and I, we didn't go to college. I want you to go to college. I know enough about college to know there's a lot of non-Christian pagan professors out there that might want to take you away from the truth of God's Word. I want you to go where there's Christian professors and at least do that.

All my dad asked for was two semesters. Go do two semesters. Then you can go to any university you want. “Dad, you don’t understand. They’re not going to keep this four-year scholarship hot for me here. They’re not going to wait, Dad. I’ve got to go now.” “Sorry, son. You’re not going.”

Because I had learned that my dad wasn’t a rule maker for rules’ sake, that he was someone who had my good in mind. And when I kept his rules, I learned enough as a brainless 17-year-old to know that in my teenage years, Dad’s rules were for my good. And with a broken heart, I said, “Okay, I guess I’ll have to write letters to Carlin, and I guess I’ll have to give up on my dreams,” and off to Chicago I went. And you know, God was good to me because of my dad’s rules.

My dad was inflexible with his rules. My heavenly Father is inflexible with his rules. But in keeping them, there is great reward. I wouldn’t want it any other way. I’d be in some bar, right, playing some nightclub music for tips in a jar tonight, were it not for my dad with his inflexible rules. Don’t let your immaturity chafe against the inflexibility of God’s disciplinarian set of rules. He’s inflexible because he’s good.

Hebrews chapter 2. It’s not the rules that I struggle with, because I know a lot of parents that have a lot of rules. The problem comes in the bottom of verse 2. Here’s the real problem. Here’s what I don’t care for. I can have my dad say, this is a rule, and it’s non-flexible. But here’s the problem. If you got a dad who’s a disciplinarian or a heavenly Father who’s a disciplinarian, here’s what happens: “Every violation and disobedience receives its just punishment.” Because it isn’t the rules I struggle with. It’s the enforcement of the rules that I struggle with. Am I right? That’s the problem. I struggle with the fact that they’ll be enforced.

There’s a crossing guard in Florida. I read this story this week. And he was a guy who crossed kids in elementary school down this really busy street, I don’t know, six lanes or whatever, and the cars constantly went down the road. Now, the signs were clearly marked. Everyone knew the speed limit. But the problem was everybody’s late for work, man, right? So this crossing guard was just going nuts. The crossing guard just totally, you know, was frustrated. He would wave his sign at the speeders as they went by. He would jump up and down. He was, “Hey, slow down.” Nothing.

One day he went home, he got an idea. He got his wife’s old blow dryer, and he wrapped it in electrical tape. He brought it to his little corner there by the elementary school, kept it on his chair, and would pull it up and just point it at cars as they came down the road. Now, everybody driving that street, seeing those signs, they know the speed limit, they see the little yellow sign—crossing, school crossing, slow down—but now all of a sudden, they see this guy with this gun that they think is a radar gun, and he said it was amazing how everybody slowed down. The article said, he said, “It’s almost comical how quickly the brakes just...” What’s the difference? It’s not the rules. It’s not the knowledge of the rules. It’s not the revelation of the rules. It’s the enforcement that changes people’s lives.

And God says, I’m not just a rule maker. Now think about it. He didn’t make a ton of rules for rules’ sake. He didn’t tell us when to meet or where to meet. Thank God he doesn’t say that, right? But he’s got certain rules for how we conduct ourselves. God is not a God for rules’ sake, but the rules that he makes, he says, I’m going to enforce those. And Galatians 6 puts it this way: “God is not mocked.” God’s not mocked. “Whatever a man sows”—I know it’s an illustration—“a man reaps.” The point is, God is not mocked. If he makes a rule, you’d better keep it, because if you don’t, there will be consequences for that.

And you're not going to sit around and go, "Oh, God, you know, he's..." Go to Costco and stand in line. Inevitably, you'll be there behind this lady with a kid who's sitting in that little thing in front of the gal, and he's doing all kinds of wrong things. The mom, I've seen this so many times, is great on making rules. She's great on expressing rules. She's just absolutely horrid at enforcing any rules. And Junior knows it. And as Junior's there throwing things out of the cart at the people next to them, as Junior's screaming and yelling, Mom's, "Oh, no, no, no, no, no. No, no, no, no, no, Susie. Don't do that. No, no, no, no, no." I must have heard no one time when I was there literally 172 times. And I felt like—and I've come close. My wife has stopped me on several occasions—going up to the lady going, "You are pathetic. This two-and-a-half-year-old has got you wrapped around her finger, and she's stepping on you now. You are absolutely incompetent."

Not because you don't know what's right. Not because you don't tell Junior what's right. Because you have no intention of enforcing what's right. And you'd better learn, lady. You don't love your kid just because you got rules, and you don't love your kid just because you tell them the rules. You don't love your kid if you don't enforce the rules.

And Scripture's clear: every violation and every disobedience receives its just punishment. That's God's track record. That's the way he works. When you're tempted to ask—if you haven't written this down already—here's the question I think a lot of people ask: "Why is God so judgmental?" That's what they want to know. Why is God so judgmental? He's just so ready to whip people as soon as they step off the path.

See? Remember this. Because God is good—here it comes, second line—because God is good, he's just. And justice requires a response to transgression. You cannot be good if you're not just. And if you're just, you will respond when there's a violation and when there's disobedience.

Job 34:12, it's a good passage just to jot down. I love the way this is put. Elihu's talking to Job, and I know there's a lot of opinion in the book of Job, but here he lands on a statement that is absolutely true. In Job 34:12, he simply says this: "It is unthinkable that God would do wrong." Why? Because he's holy. He's good. "And that the Almighty would pervert justice." It's an unthinkable concept.

Now, the problem is with us. We'd love for God to be just as long as he's just with other people, right? I don't want him being just with me. I know that because when the guy speeds around me on the road as I'm heading down, and he cuts me off, and I see the cop, the real cop with the real gun, pull him over, I go, "Yeah, you got yours," right? And I'm quick to say this: "You deserve it." I just don't like it when the cop pulls me over. Rarely do I say when I'm getting pulled over, "Oh, I deserve this. I was speeding. And you know, speeders deserve tickets. So I'm so glad here that Sheriff Johnson is showing the goodness of the County of Orange and displaying his own personal goodness by enforcing the law. I'm so glad. Where do I sign that little yellow slip?" I don't like it.

And yet God would not be good if he were not just. And our court system would not be good if it were not just. And if someone wrongs you—and you know what I'm talking about—and it's such a heinous thing that they do to you or your family or your loved one, and they get dragged into court, you do not want the judge on the bench going, "Well, I'm a loving judge. That's all right. Get out of here, kid." You don't want that, because it violates your sense of what is right. And what is right is what's good, and what's good is what's holy.

And God has to. He must. He has no option. The day God fails to enforce his rules is the day he ceases to be God, because he will no longer be good, and he will no longer be holy. When you're

tempted to ask, why is God so judgmental? Remember that it's unthinkable for God to do wrong. And if God makes a rule, he must enforce it. Therefore, let's put it in biblical terms here, or at least some clear terms. Therefore, God requires retribution for all rule breakers. It's just what he requires.

And again, I just don't want it for the rules that I break, but I want it for the rules that other people break, especially when there are things that begin to impugn my sense of what's good. You know what I'm talking about? When I watch the news, do you ever watch the news and sometimes you just think, oh, you just want to jump through the tube and strangle these arrogant criminals who just have a total disregard for what's right? Is that just me? Too much caffeine or something? You feel that way too sometimes? You just want to... You know what that springs from? A sense of goodness and justice.

God is a God, though, who is impugned by our disobedience, not when it makes the evening news on Channel 7. He's impugned when we lie, when we cheat, when we steal, when we do anything—anything—covet our neighbor's car. God says, oh, it impugns his perfection, because he's so much better than us. He is so much more perfect than us that we have no concept of the kind of pain involved when he watches disobedience.

I think what's better for us—you know, I think of kids. Kids are a good illustration when we do wrong. We're quick to forgive. And I think, and it's been popularized in books and everything else, but my wife and I had picked up the terminology that we don't want to say to our kids when they say they're sorry. And we don't want to teach our kids to say to each other when one kid says they're sorry. We don't want to say, "That's okay," right? Because it's really not. Sin just doesn't evaporate into thin air. We want to be able to say, "I forgive you." And that's different, isn't it? "I forgive you." That's different.

Always, sin needs to be paid for. God always has to retribute rule breakers. Always. And I think sometimes in a triad, when we have another person that's wronged, and as a parent who is enforcing something with a child, we recognize that to disregard the wrong would be completely bad. In other words, if Johnny, for instance—I got two kids that play baseball all the time—if they break the neighbor's window, see, I would be bad if I said, "Quick, get in the garage. Come on. Come on." In my depravity, I'm tempted sometimes to do that. But I know it's just—it's not right. No, it's not right.

He breaks that. Can I forgive him? I can forgive him. But someone's got to pay for that window. It needs to be paid for. And I am a bad parent if I do not want to see the account settled. That's what the word retribution means. Retribution just means a settling of accounts. It's like if you've worked in retail, at the end of the day, you've got to settle the cash drawer, right? That's how it works in God's economy. At the end of time, he has to settle the cash drawer. And he says that the debt and the product going out has to match the cash coming in. It all has to reconcile. If you're like me and, like, rarely try and reconcile your checking account because you're too many months behind, and so you just... God's not like that. That's just—that's not like God. God has to settle the account. But that's good, ultimately, just like we expect it from employees, from our children. God expects that of himself because he's perfect.

By the way, there's a principle in Scripture, a couple passages, at least one. Let's jot this one down. Revelation chapter 19. You can read this later, verses 11 through 13. And I'll call to mind the statement that Jesus made repeatedly in the Gospels, and that is that all judgment has been given to the Son. Remember that? And in that sense, you see the triad working out. You see the kids in the

playing field of earth breaking the heavenly Father's windows. And you see the Son now has been commissioned to settle the account.

And Revelation chapter 19 says one day he will, and the period of grace is over. See, there's a period of grace, and there always is. Not always. There are times when God inflicts immediate retribution. But usually there's a grace period, just like when you miss your bill for your Visa card or whatever. There's a grace period. But eventually there's a day of reckoning and accounting that's to come.

I mean, we are here in this building—Temple Beth El is a guest. Well, one day, one of our young and very aggressive CBC kids, bless his heart, threw something—I don't even know what happened—and broke one of these nice big plate-glass windows. And of course they're all bulletproof or whatever, but our kids can break them, and so just busted it up. And I don't know. Somebody's kids. It's not a problem. I think it's great. I broke a lot of windows too. It's not great. But we got to settle the score with Temple Beth El. Now, Temple Beth El, they're really cool because it wasn't like, you know, get it fixed today. We got to get it fixed, but we got to get it fixed right. We got to make sure it's all settled. You and I would both say we're terrible people—terrible people—if we just say, well, let's just keep putting that off. And eventually, if we put it off forever, it's not good.

Second Peter says there will be a day of accounting. Second Peter chapter 2 and chapter 3 makes it really clear. There will be a day when the account is settled. The grace period will be up. And when people say, "Well, it's been so long, I guess we're not responsible for it anymore," and I suppose in the mind even of a child who breaks a window and it takes a lot of time for the glass company, it takes a lot of time for this and that, and just graciousness extends the period—in a kid's mind, three months is an eternity, and they think, "Well, I guess I don't have to pay for it anymore," right? No, you need to pay for it. We need to pay for it. Whether you pay for it or we pay for it, we're in this together, but we got to pay this window off.

And that's exactly what's taking place here in 2 Peter. They say, "Where is the day of the Lord? I mean, it doesn't seem to be here. I mean, it seems to go on forever, just the way it always was." And remember, he calls them to the flood, and he says, remember how it was with the flood? Eventually, there will be a day of accounting. And just like God one day retributed the world with water, one day again, he will retribute the world with fire. And that is the God that we serve. And if you think he's bad because he's a God who's just, then you don't understand goodness, because you cannot be good if you're not just. And God is a God who will one day settle the account.

Why is God so judgmental? Because it's unthinkable for him to do wrong. It's unthinkable for him to pervert justice. Where does that leave us? That doesn't leave us in a good place, does it? Well, thank God there's more to this text. Matter of fact, the sentence ends rather than verse number 3.

Hebrews chapter 2, verse 3. And though it's pitched as a rhetorical question that puts pressure on us to make sure we respond, here's the good news. Thankfully, we can respond. There is some hope in this text. Look at it, verse number 3, first phrase. "How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" And that means, you know what? I certainly feel the pressure to respond, because if I neglect God's salvation, there will be consequences. I can't ignore God's rules. I can't step off the path without some retribution. But here's the good news. In the big scheme of things, when it relates to all the things that I've done that I do not want to pay for, here's the good news: there is a great salvation available.

But the upside is, why is he so harsh about it? I mean, look at it. “How are we going to escape if you neglect this?” It just seems so harsh, doesn’t it? As a matter of fact, you got people all over this country and all over the world saying the same thing about Christianity today. They put it this way, and if you’re ever tempted to ask it, let’s jot down this question. A lot of people ask it. They say this, number three on your outline: when you’re tempted to ask, why does God demand that all become Christians? Why does he demand that?

You’ve got to know that’s what’s being said in this text. There will be a price to pay if we neglect his salvation. But I love the word stuck in the middle. It’s so great a salvation. And the point is, that reminds us that this salvation, because it exists, is good, and it springs from a good heart. God is good, he’s perfect. Let’s put it down this way. Remember this. When you’re tempted to ask that question, remember this: because God is good, God is love. And love sometimes gets demanding, especially if it’s an offer of salvation.

It is a demand. I mean, it is strong. I mean, it’s a threat. What’s going to happen to you if you ignore such a great salvation? Why would God be so demanding? Why does God want Hindus to convert to Christianity? Why does God want Muslims to be Christians? Why does God require that people that have the wrong belief system change and turn it in for the right belief system? Can’t he just say, “Well, we just let everybody believe whatever they want”? No, can’t do that.

And Christians are being asked this all the time. Is your God really as narrow-minded and as exclusive as he’s made out to be? And you know what a lot of pastors and Bible study leaders are saying? “Nah, not really. It’s been overstated. I don’t think God’s all that narrow.” In the olden days, they’d brand you as a heretic, take you out back, beat you, or do whatever they would do to you, and say, get out of here, you heretic. Today in the church, we seem to prop up heroes who say about our God, “God is not as narrow as he’s been made out to be. He’s not as exclusive.”

He is exclusive. As a matter of fact, he’s exclusive because he’s loving. Because the only way out of this mess is through Christ. And Jesus said this: “I’m the way, I’m the truth, I’m the life. Nobody’s going to come to the Father except they come through me. I’m your only hope.” And people today are preaching in big churches and have big ministries because they have appealed to the masses that their God is not all that exclusive. Heaven forbid that Compass Bible Church will ever get to the place where we put people on this platform and start to begin to speak about God as though it doesn’t really matter if you get in the ark. Because you know what? God will help you swim somehow. No. There’s no hope for you. Outside of Christ, there’s no hope.

But the point is, God is so good that he’s love, and because he’s love—exclamation point—therefore, bottom of your worksheet, he insists that we don’t ignore his salvation. He insists on it. You can’t ignore it. Don’t ignore it.

And if you need a living illustration of this, just go home and turn on Fox News tonight and watch the whole replays of all the tapes where these people were going through New Orleans and saying, “Get out.” And a lot of people were saying, “No, thanks, I’d rather stay,” right? Think about that. And all of a sudden now, you got people saying, “Listen, who are you to come down my street and tell me to get out?” They’re saying that now. A lot of people are going to die of all kinds of diseases because of all of the flooding, and they’re saying, “You know what? I really like my living room,” so I’m staying.

And before the storm they said, “Get out, because you know what? These levees could burst and there could be disaster here. You need to leave the city now.” And they’re going, “You know what? I don’t want to.” And a lot of people said that. And a lot of people actually looked at those folks and said, “Who are you to tell me that?” And they also began to say, “You’re not very loving if you’re going to insist. It should be my option.” And you know what? It was their option, because nobody shackled anybody and took them down the street and said, “You’re getting out.” Oh, they insisted. And a lot of people got red in the face denying them, but they didn’t insist. And a lot of those people now are—they’re gone. They’re dead.

You got to ask the question, is it unloving for someone to say there’s impending doom? Get it fixed. Get out. The Bible calls us—and here’s the hard facts about a God who is holy and just—to flee from the wrath that is to come. And the ark has been built. It’s called Jesus Christ. And if you would get into the ark, you will be saved. And people are now saying, “Why don’t you just let me go over here and lay on my bed because this is a comfortable belief system for me?” And they’re looking at us going, “You are so narrow-minded, so unloving.”

One last text, 2 Corinthians 5. And as you turn there, remember this verse: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever would trust in him and get in the ark, man, whoever would do that now, he wouldn’t perish, wouldn’t die, they wouldn’t be destroyed by God’s coming wrath, they wouldn’t have to pay the penalty for all the sin in their life. They’d be saved. They’d have eternal life.” Because that’s the reality. And we got people saying, “Well, you know what? The way I like to weather the storms, I like to watch TV, you know? Oh, the way, you know, when trouble comes into my life, I don’t like to get up and leave. I like to go into the basement and cover my head and get real comfortable. Or, you know, I don’t think storms are all that big of a deal. I’m not afraid of them. I’ve seen them before.”

Scripture says he’s entrusted to us this incredible message that is based on a knowledge of the character of God. And when we neglect the character of God, we lose this passion. Verse 11, 2 Corinthians 5—is that where he turned you? 2 Corinthians 5, look at verse 11. “Since then we know what it is to fear the Lord.” We know something about his holiness. We know something about his lordship. We know something about his justice. “We try to persuade men.” Just like those folks—picture them going down the streets of New Orleans: get out, man.

Drop down to verse 14. It’s not just that we know the fear of God. It’s that we have the love of Christ compelling us. God has paid the price, man. You don’t have to face the tribunal of eternal God and have his holiness rip right through you and cast you into outer darkness, man. There’s salvation available for you. “We’re convinced that one died for all, therefore all died. He died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but live for him who died for them and rose again,” man. Get right with Christ. The love of Christ compels us with that message.

Drop down to verse 18. “All of this is from God, who reconciled us to himself.” We’re in the boat, man, and it’s great. We’re saved. “And he gave us,” here it is, “the ministry,” the work, “of reconciliation.” What’s that mean? Verse 19: “that God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting men’s sins against them.” Why? We’ll learn in verse 21 about how in a minute. “But he’s committed to us the message of reconciliation. So we are therefore his ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”

And the world says, “Shut up, I don’t want to be a Christian.” And we go, “Oh, I’m sorry, you’re right. Maybe if you just watch TV through this storm, it’ll be fine.” That’s the modern evangelical



church. It's time for us to say no. As a matter of fact, God, verse 21, "made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." As a matter of fact, Christ took the hit. The storm hit him so that we could get in behind him and not be hit by the wrath of God. And that's called love, because God so loved the world, he gave his Son to take the hit for us.

How are we going to escape if you neglect the ark? You're not. Why does God build an ark for us? Because he loves us.

God is a disciplinarian. He's strict because he's good. God is good, and he's got to retribute lawbreakers because he's good, because you can't be good if you're not just. And you know what? God is good, and the ultimate goodness of God is seeing that he loves us so much he's willing to sacrifice his Son so that we can have all of our sins forgiven.

And the problem is, you and I are being taught if that's our belief, that's fine—just shut up about it. The Bible says it's as though God were making his appeal through us on behalf of Christ: "Be reconciled to God." Our mission on earth is to get that message out. That's why we exist as a church. That's why we're here, struggling to meet together at weird times in weird places. Because we got a message that's important. Don't forget that.

God loves us, and I thank God for my human disciplinarian father. And I thank God more than anything else that our heavenly Father is so good, that he's a God that loves us so much and is so perfect that he not only makes rules and enforces rules, but he allows us a way to be forgiven. That's what it's all about. Let's celebrate that fact this week. Let's pray.

God, help us please to never fall into the trap of idolatry. And God, it is just a terrible, terrible trend today where we have people denying the justice of God, we have people denying the holiness of God, we even have people denying the importance of the love of God by saying it's not all that important that you choose the Christian path. God, help us to recognize how significant this is, that we have the opportunity to stand in the gap between you and your truth and a lost world that's so confused, confused in large part because the church has been so confused.

Oh God, let there be crystal clarity in our mind as we lean over the rails of the ark and we say, God is so good, he's provided a way out. And thinking that he's not holy is not going to help you, and thinking that he's not just is not going to help you, and to think that his love is something that's optional is not going to help you. Man, get in the boat. God is good. He has done good for us. Because he's good, all these things are reality.

God, ultimately, that's a kind of sobering and rich kind of perspective that's biblical. It's firmly biblical. Your goodness now means something. God, thank you so much for helping us to think through this one more time. Solidify it in our hearts. We thank you, God, for being such a good God. In Jesus' name, amen.