

**Our Fight with Sin-Part 8**  
**Seeing Obedience as an Act of Worship**  
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If you've been around Compass Bible Church for more than a week or so, you've likely seen our eight core values plastered around all over the place: on our bulletin, our web site, they're everywhere. We sometimes call them our "eight distinctives." And most of those distinctives are pretty cogent, pretty clear, pretty simple, pretty forthright. But number 3 seems to cause people to pause and kind of wonder what we mean by that. (1:01)

Distinctive number three states our resolve to always try to maintain a high view of God, and that one's sometimes hard to articulate to friends, and what exactly do you mean by that, and it's just hard to unpack. That third distinctive is not meant to be purposefully ambiguous. It's just that the concept that it represents is really difficult to put into one simple phrase. It's a lot like the ideas that, you know, it's trying to capture, the idea of God, and trying to say, Well, we need to think of God in this particular way. (1:39)

Now a high view of God is clearly setting contrast to a low view of God, which often is easier to identify. A low view of God we see all the time. We grate against it almost intuitively when people speak of our Creator as "The Man Upstairs," "The Big Guy." I heard someone last week call him "The Big G." You know, or even, "My Co-Pilot." You know, when we see God expressed in those terms we intuitively grate against that, and we think, Well that's not right. You know, that stands in stark contrast to what we find in the Scriptures. (2:08)

As a matter of fact, any prolonged exposure to the content of the Bible will lead us to dismiss these caricatures of deity, and start to retool and redefine what we mean when we talk about God. Consider the words of Solomon. After building the most ornate and expensive building on earth for worship, after he was done he stood there and he said, But come on; is God really going to hang out here? He said even heaven and the highest heavens cannot contain you, much less this temple that I built for you. I mean he understood, after spending the major work of his life, poured all of his money into this and he said, You know, come on, God, you know God's not going to hang out here. That stands in stark contrast to a culture that likes to think that God can easily fit in their back pocket. I mean, that's where we really live. People have the tendency, the propensity, to want to bring God down to a level that's much more comfortable. And that, of course, is not what we find in the Scripture. (3:08)

And it's not, by the way, a mere discussion or wrangling about words. This is not an academic discussion. As A.W. Tozer rightly said, the gravest question before the church is always God Himself. Did you follow that? The gravest question is always God Himself. He says the most important thing about us is what we think of when we try to conceive God. I mean that really, just everything flows from that. As he went on to contrast, he said, an inadequate view of God, a low view of God if you will, is really the cause of a hundred lesser evils among us. And if we don't understand God biblically, if God becomes this buddy, this friend, this guy upstairs, this grandpa, we will never get the Christian life right. (4:00)

Which is why, by the way, after eight weeks of studying Hebrews 12, we find and it makes sense that the writer of Hebrews would bring us to the last part of this chapter and say to us, You know, it's a lot has to do with how you view God. The end of chapter 12---and if you've been with us for eight weeks now, we've been dealing with this topic that was brought up and it started with this verse, that we need to throw off every encumbrance, and ever sin that so easily entangles us; we need to get rid of that. We need to fight this battle with sin. And we've all got our things that we trip up in, and then the transgressions that we fall into. And he says you got to fix that. You've got to fight to be a godly person. You've got to fight temptation. Grace does not relinquish the responsibility of being a godly person. As a matter of fact, it instructs us to be a godly person. And

so it is that we spent eight weeks now trying to untangle this calling in Scripture to be sanctified, to be more like Christ. (4:57)

Well it ends with this statement, if you'd turn there, in Hebrews 12. He brings us to a perspective that is, kind of retooling our view of God. He takes our view of God to the heights, if you will. He brings our perception of God and reminds us who we're dealing with here. And we kind of got this set up for us last week, if you remember. We compared, or the writer of Hebrews did for us, we just followed that thinking, the experience the children of Israel had on Mt. Sinai, and the experience that we have. And he drew the comparison there, and he said this is two different things, isn't it? And a lot of us will say, Well, yeah, we can track with all that. We know that the God of the Old Testament, he seems angry and upset, and he's kind of uptight; but the God of the New Testament, whew! Thankfully he's a God of grace and so we're cool with him. (5:42)

But notice where this goes now in verse 25. He says if you think just because you have mediation, you have a chance now to fellowship with God because of Christ, that we can somehow take his word less seriously—look at verse 25—he says see to it that you don't refuse him who speaks. Which, by the way, is how the book of Hebrews started, wasn't it? God has spoken through the prophets in many portions, many ways, but now in these last days he has spoken to us in his son. His son is the mouthpiece. His apostles explained him. The word of God, the new covenant, tells us how to live. Not only to trust him and repent of sin, but how we are to conduct our lives. And he says don't refuse that. And he says, now he makes the comparison again: if they did not escape when they refused them who warned them on earth—and the context, just glance back up at it, was the Mt. Sinai, giving of the Law. When Moses got the Law and the people said, Wow, this is kind of a dreadful sight. This is amazing. This is scary. This is foreboding. This puts me at a distance with God. There's caution, yellow tape all around this thing. He says, You know, if they couldn't disregard the word of God in the old covenant, if they couldn't escape the punishment of that; he says how much less will we if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? (6:57)

Now that's a major statement. Because of us a lot of us think it's a lot more casual in the New Testament, and there's a lot less, you know, foreboding feeling of 'Well I'd better get this right.' The Old Testament, that was the Old Testament. And he says just the opposite here. No, no, no. Now in the new covenant, the ante hasn't gone down; the ante has gone up. Now all of a sudden it is a bigger deal if you disregard the words of him who speaks. He says we're not going to escape if they didn't escape, the argument from lesser to greater. And then he gives the example of verse 26, because we saw this last week, there was a shaking of the earth when the Law came down and God said, "Here, do this." He said at that time he shook the earth. But now he has promised, and he's quoting Haggai 2, that old, the little minor prophet in the Old Testament who looked forward to a time of judgment on the world—and he says, he quotes it, saying, And once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens. (7:56)

Even that; think about that for a second. The greatest judgment of God has yet to come. I mean we often think of God as the angry guy in the Old Testament. Right? I mean he's the guy who flooded the world. He's the guy who judged everybody. He had Israelites march into those Canaanites and kill them all. What a, wow. He was uptight and really took sin seriously. I'm glad we have Christ now because, you know, it's not as big of a deal. He's reserved the greatest judgment for the future. It hasn't even happened yet. I mean, if you think the flood was a big deal, according to this passage he's going to, uh, he's going to shake not only the earth but the heavens as well. (8:25)

And he describes what that means in verse 27. The words once more indicating the removing of what can be shaken. Shaken is just an analogy. Right? It's not about earthquakes here. He says when God talks about shaking the heavens and the earth, he's talking about that time of judgment which Peter says—and we've read this a few times in this series in 2 Peter 3—it means he's going to reserve this place for his ultimate judgment. He's going to say that sin has to be

judged, and my patience now is over with mankind. And the Bible says it's going to be removed. Everything that can be shaken, that is, verse 27. He's talking about created things, so that what cannot be shaken may remain. (9:04)

And there's not a lot of things that can't be shaken. As Paul put it, the temporal things we see, but it's the things we can't see that are eternal. The mediation of Christ. My relationship with God. My commitment to follow him. The kinds of things that he summarizes now, in verse 28, as his kingdom. Therefore since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. We've got this relationship with God. We're in his family, adopted into his family. Now that can't change. And since we are safe in that "ark", he says, now we should be thankful. Let us be thankful. And let us so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe—and then he blows our mind with this quotation from Deuteronomy 4—for our God is loving teddy bear. Underline that. Do you see that there? What does it say? Our God is a—awe man, I thought that was Old Testament stuff. Do you see how in the Scripture it's very clear that God has not changed? The grace of God has appeared. And that means that he's given us an opportunity to be forgiven. But the God who is repulsed by sin hasn't changed his mind about sin. As a matter of fact, when he tells us to do the right thing and forsake the wrong thing, he's just as serious about it now as he was then. And if we have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken, if we are experiencing a relationship that will never go away. Well it doesn't let us off the hook. It actually, according to this text, it ups the ante in a few ways. (10:30)

Let's jot down four reasons, according to this passage, we should obey God. I mean that's what it gets down to. This is what this passage is all about, and it ends this way. We've got to obey what God says. We've got to do it. So that we can earn our way into heaven. Right? Correct me now if I'm wrong. [pop] We got an extra hour's sleep. You guys are with me, right? We're doing a bunch of good things so we can earn our place in heaven, right? (10:52)

(Congregation: *No*)

Thank you. That's what everybody else teaches. That's what religions teach. That is not what the Bible teaches. We are not doing good things to earn our way into heaven. We are doing good things, in this text, for a number of reasons. Let's start with this one. And to get this, we'll weave our way through this and just look through what we've just read. (11:11)

Number one, he's got this authoritative voice. Look at verse 25. I mean, we can't refuse him. He is one who speaks with authority. He shook the earth, verse 26. I mean when he spoke in the old covenant and he promises some kind of dominion over the future, and he's going to shake not only the earth but he's going to shake heaven too. And then, if for nothing else, if you want to paint a picture of the God that is presented in this, you want to talk about a dreadful picture: in verse 29, he's described as a consuming fire. Not he WAS a consuming fire, he IS a consuming fire. (11:43)

Let's jot this down. Number one, the flavor of this passage leads us to this statement. We must obey God, okay, because you and I recognize—number one—that he is the absolute authority. Number one. We need to obey God because he is the absolute authority. He is presented this way in the text. And that again gets back to what we say, all the time, at Compass Bible Church: we need a high view of God. One word we could put, which wouldn't capture the whole essence of the value, is that he is the authoritative one. He is the ultimate authority. He is the absolute authority. And when God speaks, he's not Dr. Phil, or Oprah, or Dr. Laura. Right? He's not just giving you nice opinions and hey, why don't you try this? This might work. He's not giving you an opinion. When he speaks, see, he speaks as the absolute authority. He is your creator, he is the judge of the world, and he is, if you want to give him some kind of imagery here, a consuming fire. (12:42)

Because here's the deal: you're never going to obey anyone you don't respect. Right? Really. You, I mean, you are not ever going to obey or follow someone that you don't see as an authority. And you open God's word, and it says here's how you ought to conduct yourself at work; here's how you ought to conduct yourself in your marriage; here's how you ought to raise children. You're never going to take that seriously unless you see him as an absolute authority. The reason

we call him Dr. Phil and Dr. Laura, because we want to remind you that they are “authorities.” But see, in our cultures, authority is just a potpourri, cacophony of advice, and we’re getting advice from the Scripture. Don’t ever use the word advice when you open up the Bible. It’s not about advice. You know that, right? This is a command from God. God has spoken. He is the ultimate authority. He is a consuming fire. (13:30)

And again, I know, flag on the play. Well, Old Testament, isn’t? You said that was a quote from Deuteronomy 4. Turn with me, if you would, to 1 Timothy 6. And by the way, if you want to know where he got this, if you’re taking notes you might want to jot down in the margin Exodus 24, just to throw out some more confusing numbers, verse 17. Exodus 24:17 says, The children of Israel looked at the mountain, and they perceived the glory of God. Here’s what it says: It was like a consuming fire. So that’s the picture in the old covenant of God. God comes down to visit us, he gives us a bunch of rules, and we stand back and go, “Oooh, he’s a consuming fire.” Big time authority. We can’t go and just hang out with God. Too majestic, too big, too powerful. (14:15)

Now. New covenant. Same context as Hebrews 12. It’s about being godly. Paul writes his protégé, Timothy. He is the pastor in Ephesus. And he’s saying to him, you need to be godly. You need to teach people to be godly, and you need to be godly. And he just talked about materialism, and he says in verse 11, Hey you, man of God, flee all of this. He just talked about materialism, love of money, and he says, and pursue—this is about righteousness—pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. And, verse 12, fight the good fight of faith. And I know the, you know, LA sports caster, “fight the good fight.” It’s not about sports, right? This is about fighting sin and temptation. This is about walking the path of righteousness in a world that wants to say no, don’t be righteous. We’re fighting that fight, of trusting in God and keeping his rules. And he says, take hold of eternal life to which you were called, and you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses in the sight of God—who by the way let’s remember who we’re talking about; now note the connection between sanctification, being godly, and our view of God. (15:17)

Here it comes, he’s going to unpack some things about God—who gives life to everything. Do you realize that? Everything. Go watch National Geographics. There isn’t a creature on the screen on the Discovery Channel that is not living because God is sustaining the life of those cute, cuddly little creatures on Sunday afternoon on channel 21. Every single one of the lives because God’s powerful word sustains them. That’s what the Bible teaches. He gives life to everything and of Jesus Christ who testified before Pontius Pilate and made the good confession, I charge you—verse 14, here’s the command to be godly—to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time. (16:00)

And then let’s talk about God again for a second. God, the blessed and only Ruler, capital R on that right, the ultimate absolute Ruler, the King of king—now here’s the problem with a statement like that: you don’t know any kings. Right? You may know a boss, you have seen the president. You don’t know a king. Kings—if you knew a king, you would be totally impressed with his sovereignty and authority. They can kill people with a word. They can toss people out of the country with just a—there’s no congress, there’s no checks and balances, they are absolutely sovereign and absolute in their authority. That’s what kings are, and if you knew one in the ancient monarchy of the ancient near-East, you would be like, Wow, kings. And you know what? They’re nothing. In this passage, because he is the King of kings. Every king has to answer to this one. And he is the Lord of lords, who alone, by the way, is immortal. Have you thought about that one lately? I know you think you’re going to live forever, but you had a beginning, right? Unless you’re really kooked out, you know you had a beginning. God is the only one, including angels: Gabriel, Michael, all the archangels. All of them had a start. God alone, the triune, perfect, harmonious, eternal fellowship, called the triune God—he’s the only one that’s immortal. He alone is immortal. He alone is immortal. (17:11)

And he lives—see this?—in the clubhouse that we go visit at church on the weekend. Is that what it says? He lives where? In unapproachable light. Does that sound like a consuming fire? Can't go there. Can't hang out there. That is a statement of majesty. Who no one has seen or can see. Now where are we? In the Old Testament? This is Deuteronomy we're reading from, right? Leviticus? This is new covenant stuff. This is near the end of the Bible here. To him be honor and might forever, the Bible says. (17:46)

You're not going to obey someone you don't respect. The Bible makes it clear in Hebrews 12. You want to be a godly person, say no to temptation, yes to righteousness, you'd better learn to respect God. He's the absolute authority. And, okay. Another flag on the play. People say, Well that's great, but you're talking about the father, and I've learned enough in the Bible to know, he's the, kind of the one who's out there, he's kind of dispassionate, disjointed, he's away. But Jesus now, that's by buddy. Jesus, my bud. Because Jesus, I've read about Jesus and he's a cool guy. And when I meet him, high five, how you been, what's shakin' dude, my savior. Jesus. He's my friend. (18:24)

Turn to Revelation 1 real quick. Were you with me at Compass Night on Thursday night? I challenged you to do this. I don't know if I even said it, but I thought it. A lot of things I think and don't say, and I think I said them. But on Thursday night, I was talking about the fact that our view of Christ is deficient. Because we always picture him in that short little period, that 30-33 year period of humility. Jesus is no longer existing in a humble state. You realize that. According to John 17, and I think I did throw this out on Thursday night, he prayed just before he went back to the Father, and he knew he was going to receive the glory that he had before the incarnation. Which means that right now, with the exception of 33 years, Christ exists like this. He's not the guy with—do you ever, did you have a children's Bible when you were a kid? My mom gave me my old children's—I don't know if they were cleaning out the closet or what, but she brought me my old children's Bible. It had my name scrawled in the front, and every third page has one of those watercolor pictures of Jesus. Aww, beautiful! What a great guy. I want to hang with him. (19:28)

There was no picture on this page: Revelation 21. Because this picture is the picture of the reality of Christ now. And unfortunately, he didn't as well as the other one. Revelation 1:12. Are you with me now? Now John, remember we established on Thursday night, John is the same John. James and John. Peter, James, and John. The fisherman, the one who hung out with Jesus for three years. Is John—John and Jesus, are they friends? Yeah, you bet. They have stories, inside jokes? Oh, I'm sure they do. Well he's about to meet up with his old friend. Verse 12. Let's see how that reunion goes. High fives and hugs is what I anticipate. That's not what I find, though. (20:13)

I turned around, John says, to see the voice of the one that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man—which, by the way, was Mark's favorite phrase for Jesus. It's all over the gospels. That's what he liked to call himself, the son of man, which by the way came from the book of Daniel, which was an expression of God incarnate living among people as their king. And he's going to. The humility though was for the redemption. Stop me. Keep reading. (20:40)

He was dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet with a golden sash around his chest. Okay. Oh, he's got a nicer outfit. He's been to, you know, the Men's Wearhouse or whatever. He's looking better now. But it gets worse. He's not—they're not going to high five here. Verse 14: His head and his hair were white like wool—now that's not how you picture him, is it? You picture him with brown hair, don't you? Maybe black. Coarse. Beard. Now, he doesn't have that. Erase that image from your mind. That was a short period of his life. Now his existence, this is what he looks like, and he doesn't have brown hair or black hair; he has white hair, as white as snow, as white as you can picture it. His eyes, by the way, were like blazing—what?—fire. Ooh. Hmm. Okay. There's that fire image again. (21:28)

His feet, verse 15, were like bronze glowing in a furnace. And if you haven't thrown bronze

and burnished it in a furnace lately, this is glowing. This is imposing. And his voice by the way was like the sound of rushing waters. And I know we only hear it through our little tiny three-inch speakers on our television, but if you were to go out into the wilderness and stand at the base of rushing water, right, it's got some resonance and some bass, and some power tour subwoofer just can't provide. Right? This is authoritative voice. His right hand he held seven stars, which we learn later are the seven messengers of the church in the seven churches he's writing. And out of his mouth came a sharp, double-edged sword. See? That's why they didn't paint this on the page on Revelation 1. That just looks weird. Right? Out of his mouth, *bjjjt!* He's got white hair, his eyes are like fire, and out of his mouth came a sharp, double-edged sword. Does that remind you of an image in the book of Hebrews? What's the double-edged sword? Word of God. The spoken word, the propositional truths of God. And his face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. And make sure all the fog burns off, but go outside after church and just stare at the sun for a while. Oh, wow. That's like looking at the face of Christ. That's why it doesn't paint very well either, in all of its brilliance. (22:48)

When I saw him, John, didn't give him a high five, didn't hug him, didn't say Great to see you, couldn't wait to be here with you; he falls at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said, 'Don't be afraid. Sorry, this is how I look now. Remember, I'm the first and the last, I'm not gentle Jesus meek and mild. I'm the beginning and the end, the Alpha, the Omega. I'm the living one. I was dead and behold, I'm alive forever and ever and I—look at this, the guy with the keys—I hold the keys to death and Hades. Keys. Authority. Leadership. Power. Eyes like fire, face like a sun. That's a little different image of Christ than most of us have. I mean, we could spend a lot of time on this, but we need to elevate our view of God. You will never obey someone you don't respect. We need to realize that God who speaks to us is not Dr. Laura, right, who gives us advice about good living. He is the creator of heaven and earth. He is the authoritative one. Even his son, who we picture as gentle Jesus meek and mild, is one who speaks with a double-edged sword coming out of his mouth. (23:48)

Now that's not modern evangelical Christianity. I realize that. But that's what my Bible says. And when he speaks and says don't think those thoughts anymore, do you think that's a suggestion? Not a suggestion. When he says, Let no unwholesome word—is that just kind of a nice thing to do I guess if you're around church people? That's what the Bible says. That's the authoritative one who, when he speaks, shakes the earth and will one day shake, not only the earth but the heavens as well. When he says don't divorce your spouse, stay married. That's not an opinion, and that's not a you know, 'Well, I don't know; that's great advice and I'll try if I can.' That's the authoritative creator of heaven and earth telling you how to live your life. When he says to bring up your children in the instruction and training of the Lord, that's not, you know, 'That'd be great because it'd keep them off drugs; that'll probably be good, don't want them in juvenile hall, right?' It's not about bettering your life, it's about the King of kings and Lord of lords saying, This is what I'm telling you to do. (24:39)

We've had a lot of motivation in Hebrews 12 to say no to temptation. This, I think, he ends with a punch. It's the biggest one of all. He is the absolute authority, and when he speaks we should listen. Isaiah 6. Dare I turn you there? Because I know what people do. They always wait to see where we're at in time after the first point. And then they do the math. Right? We—we are going to be here forever. I promise you, the first point is the longest point. Isaiah 6. I've shown you this passage a few times, but please remember that Isaiah had no problem pointing out the sins of the people in the first five chapters. Just like you and I have no problem pointing out the sins of other people, right? We're good at that. Watch the news tonight and you'll go, 'Oh, what a jerk! What a lowlife! Look at that scum! Can't believe that person! Bah! Sinners!' We're good at that. And I'm not saying Isaiah was that, but he pointed out a lot of sins about a lot of other people in the first five chapters. Come to chapter 6 though, things change. The priority of his introspection, his evaluation,

turns on himself. And I assume that Isaiah was more righteous than a lot of people, maybe than anybody in Israel. But look what happens to him. (25:41)

Verse 1. In the year that King Uzziah died—King Uzziah? Heard of that guy. Remember him? Became the king at what age? 16. Well he was the king for 52 years in the southern kingdom, the tenth king of Judah. Which, by the way, because of his long and prosperous reign, and he was a godly man who changed a lot of things, reformed a lot of things in the country, the country became much like Laodicea, rich and wealthy and thought they were in need of nothing. And they became complacent ethically. And though he was off to a great start and had a great career, unfortunately King Uzziah's reign did not end well. It ended with some pride and hubris in his heart, and he walked into the temple thinking he can hang out with God. I don't need to be a priest. Who cares if I'm a Levite or not. I'm from the tribe of Judah. I can do this. And of course, the Bible says there was a great earthquake. The Josephus ties to that, great earthquake at the end of Uzziah's reign, and um, it was not good. His life didn't end well. And the people unfortunately had followed suit. They got casual with God. So this is significant, that it's the year that King Uzziah died. And there's some adjustments that need to take place. (26:38)

Verse 1. I saw the Lord seated on a throne. You want to talk about why we word it this way on value number three, here it comes—because he sees him high and exalted. We need a high view of God. And the train of his robe, which by the way is the ancient near Eastern sign of your majesty; it's kind of like the weddings, right? How long can my train be? Right? That's supposed to be your picture of majesty, and for a king it was the robe of authority. And his—I mean, you want to talk about a train of his of robe, look at this. It filled the entire room. Filled the temple. And above him were seraphs. Which by the way, if you want to know why that was changed, seraphim—i-m at the end of any Hebrew word, which is just a transliteration here, is plural. Seraphim is seraphs. The seraphs were flying around above him. Do you know what seraph means, by the way? I know you know it's a type of angel, but do you know the class of angel, what the word means? Seraph. Look, if you've got your study Bible, hopefully there's a footnote there, or you've got something in the margin. The word seraph in Hebrew means 'to burn.' Does that sound familiar? To burn. The burning ones were flying around the presence of God on his throne. (27:40)

Each had six wings. Two they covered their face, two they covered their feet, with two they were flying. And they called out to one another, "Love, love, love is the Lord Almighty." Is that what it says? I know we think of him that way, and I'm not saying he's not loving. I'm just saying when the angels, the seraphs, the burning ones, see God; when they dwell in his presence, the first attribute that comes to mind is not love or compassion. It's that he is holy. You know what holy means, right? Separate. Different. Set apart. Transcendent is a word I like to use. He is different. He is high and exalted. He is not like us. He's wholly other. He's completely different. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. And the whole earth is full of his glory." In this vision we see reflections of his glory in a lot of places. And the voice—I'm sorry—at the sound of their voice the doorposts and the thresholds—guess what word we find now?—Shook. Do you see the images that come up over and over again? Fire, burning, smoke, and shaking. This is an authoritative picture. (28:34)

And the temple was filled with—hey, no surprise—smoke. Woe to me, I cried, for I am ruined, Isaiah said. For I am a man of unclean lips. Now it's easy to criticize the 11 o'clock news criminals that we see. Easy. But sometimes it's hard to decipher our own sin unless, of course, you have a high view of God. And the problem with us is we live among a people that are sinful and we often think that the fighting sin, well not that big a deal because I'm a lot better than they are. Well you can stop with that. If you have a high view of God, then you will have the kind of introspection that Isaiah had to say, You know what? I got problems, too. And I am a sinner before God. I am ruined because of my sin before God. I'm a man of unclean lips, and I live among the people of unclean lips. My eyes have seen the king, Yahweh almighty. Obviously this was a vision, not the reality. (29:19)

One of the seraphs, the burning ones, flew to me with a live coal. That's what you would imagine them having in his hand. He's the burning one. He's got a live coal in his hand, no problem. Which he had taken with tongs from the altar. The altar was place where they barbecued their animals in the worship. Right? That's the picture on earth at least. With it he touched my mouth and he said, "See? This has touched your lips and your guilt is taken away, and your sin is atoned for." And that's what we were celebrating last week. It is great that we have forgiveness in Christ. Does that free us then from service? Does that free us then from being righteous people? No, as a matter of fact, God's got something he wants us to do. In this case he's got something for Isaiah and he says, Who am I going to send? He heard of the voice of the Lord saying, Who am I going to send? Who's going to go for us? And Isaiah didn't say, Well, I don't know. That's another night out this week, and I'm really not sure I have time for that. I got a lot going on with my family. Which I hear all the time, by the way. Can't serve the Lord that way. I'm busy. He says, Here am I. Send me. I recognize my sin. I understand the authority of God. You are high and exalted, and if you say something, I'm ready to do it. (30:16)

That's what this passage is all about in Hebrews 12. God is the absolute authority. And Christ when he speaks, he's not Dr. Laura, he's not another opinion, he's not your mother-in-law telling you what to do. It is God Almighty. And I don't what your sin that so easily entangles you is. It's materialism, lust, greed, power, I don't know what it is. But whatever your thing is that comes to mind when I said, What's that sin that always trips you up? You got to realize that it's God speaking to you about that. The ultimate authority. Maybe we need a view like Isaiah had of God. A high view of God. (30:47)

All right. Hebrews 12. No math right now, but we're on to point number two. Yea! No cheering, no applauding, but we are on to the second observation. We'll do these last three so fast, you will go, 'Wow! We're done?' Watch how fast we do it. Verse 25. See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not—circle the word—escape when they refused him who warned on earth, how much less will we—and now it's assumed, it should be, that can be repeated if you want just for the sake of clarity—how much less will we escape, right, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? Here is a statement about God that carries through from old covenant to new covenant, and that is simply this. That there are consequences for disobedience. And you and I ought to fear that. (31:30)

Number two on your outline. We ought to obey God if for nothing else because we fear the consequences of disobedience. If in the Old Testament there were penalties for sin, do you think there are not penalties in the new covenant? There are penalties in the new covenant. Now, wait a minute, I thought we were forgiven. We've been through all this. Yeah, you are forgiven, and grace forgives us. But there are consequences for sin. Look up in the chapter, chapter 12 told us that God is so loving he doesn't let us get away with sin. And I know that's exactly the opposite of what we're taught in 21<sup>st</sup> century evangelical theology. We're taught he loves us and he lets us get away with it. He doesn't let us get away with it. He loves us so much that he disciplines his children. If he says it's true about us, think that through, that if I don't discipline my son I hate my son, and that if I love my son I will discipline him diligently, that's what the proverbs say. If that's true of me and my children, the Bible says it's certainly true of God. And the point is God is going to respond when you and I sin. Because he loves us, and he knows that sin for a variety of reasons in this passage—let's just give you one, real quick. (32:31)

Verse 1 in chapter 12. Do you have your Bibles open? Look at verse number 1. Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race that's marked out for us. If there's a path for me to walk, a course for me to run, and there's a finish line there, and if I get to that finish line I accomplish all that God has for me, I don't want to get hindered or entangled in anything that will keep me from seeing that realized. And at the end of your life, you don't want God to say, Well here was the course I had for you, but you only got to

here because you kept tripping up. You want to see your spiritual potential fulfilled. (33:01)

Why does God respond to our sin? Because he cares about stuff like that. Or how about last week? We looked at verse 12. I'm sorry, verse 15. Look at verse 15. See to it that no one misses the grace of God or that no bitter root grows up causing trouble and defiling many. God does not want your sin to cause trouble and contaminate many people. Remember the turd on the pizza illustration? What? No, you were here for that, right? Or was that just the last service? The turd on the pizza? No? OK, good. Thank you. You were here for that. He doesn't want turds on your pizza. Some people are saying, I was starting like the church, but now I just don't think so. What is he talking about? Contaminates? That's the word. Defiles? Because God doesn't want to see you contaminate your relationships. He doesn't want to see you cause trouble. He doesn't want the damage that comes from sin. He is going to step in and bring consequences for disobedience. (33:46)

Do you respect your father enough to know that there are consequences for disobedience? I know you may not believe in spanking—I've said this a hundred times—but God does. You may not think that it's loving to always discipline your children, or to be a disciplinarian as a father. God believes in that. And he loves you so much he's going to bring consequences into your life for sin. Galatians 6:7—God is not mocked. A man is going to reap whatever he sows, and God will ensure it in the lives of his children. Fear the consequences of disobedience. (34:15)

Look at verse 26 now in Hebrews 12. At that time his voice shook the earth but now he has promised once more, I will shake not only the earth but the heavens as well. The words 'once more' indicate the removing of things that can be shaken. That is, created things. Did you catch that? Everything that is created will be removed. Including your body. And you will get another one that is immortal at that point. It will not have an end to it. And the world, your job, the values of this world—let's put it this way: 1 John 2:15. The love—do not love the world because everything in this world, the desires of the world, the *epimethea*—the lust, the desire of the flesh, right? The desire of the eyes, what I see I just want it. The boastful pride of life. All these things, the world and its desires are passing away. Or if you want to quote 2 Peter 3, if the world's going to be destroyed in this way, what kind of godly people ought you to be? Everything that you are tempted to do on this earth that relates to gratifying your base desires, compromising, getting ahead, whatever it is, all that's going away. And if all that's going away, what in the world are you doing trying to invest in this world, cutting corners and following the lures and temptation of this world. Why would you do that in a world that's going away? That's the point. And that's a good motivation for us. (35:34)

Number three on your outline. You and I ought to obey God because the world will soon be trashed. And we recognize that. You and I realize, and you know, that the world will soon be gone. Everything that Satan is saying to you, come on, cut the corner here. You got to have some more of that. You got to be fulfilled in this area. You got to have this. Everything that is laid out before you as a temptation, that relates to sin, is going to go away. Why would we invest in that? That's the argument in this passage. There is judgment coming on the planet. Everything that is created is going to be shaken, and by that he means removed. And you and I ought to study that passage in 1 John 2, verses 15 through 17, and I also quoted 2 Peter 3, verses 10 through 14. We ought to be blameless, godly, holy people because the world down here, not going to be around much longer. (36:23)

Well what does the Bible say? Jesus said this over and over and over again, didn't he? He says don't invest on the planet. What are you doing investing here? Store up for yourselves treasure—in heaven. God's all into pleasure and power and riches. He's all into that. Do you hear the stuff that's being preached in the name of God? That it's all about your capacity to realize your temporal fulfillment here and now? It is not about that. The world is going to be trashed. Why in the world would I make it my purpose to be rich, healthy and famous down here on earth? Makes no sense. I want to be famous in the kingdom of God. I would like to be rich in heaven. I would like to

have pleasures at his right hand forever, the Bible says. So I'm all into that. I'm just into it in another place. At least we should be. And the world's constantly saying, well how about some here and now? No, I'm not interested in that. It's not about this world. (37:14)

I love the way C.S. Lewis puts it in his book, *Mere Christianity*. He says if Christians really learn to look in their hearts—now this means converted hearts now—they would know that what they want, what they acutely want, is something that this world can never deliver. Do you recognize that? Everything that your shooting for, that Satan is saying come on, you can find fulfillment here, it really doesn't work? If that sounds like a junior high youth pastor sermon, I'm—it's just what it is. The world is a rip off. And you parents ought to know that. And it's time for us to say we're not interested in doing all that we can to make it down here on earth. Our treasure should be in heaven because our heart is in heaven. The world's going to soon be trashed. (37:54)

That'd be great to develop that. As a matter of fact, if you want to, Hebrews 11 is a great example. Look at verses 8 through 16. That's your homework. And how often God says that godly people never got entangled in the things of this earth. I love 1 Corinthians 7 now that I think of a passage like that. You're going to have the things of the world, and you're going to have to use the things of the world, but I love the translation in the NIV in 1 Corinthians 7. I think it's verse 15. He says but we're not engrossed in the things of the world. Can you make that distinction in your life? Yeah, I got to have a house. I got to pay a mortgage. I got to raise my kids. I understand all that. But I'm not engrossed in that stuff. That's a good word. Because it has the word 'gross' in the middle of it too. It's kind of cool. (38:33)

Verse 28 and 29. Boy, those were two fast points, Pastor Mike. Thank you. Verse 28. Let's end on a good note here. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken—your relationship with God, if you are a genuine follower of Christ, you've repented of your sins, you've put your trust in God, you have Christ as your mediator, your acceptable before God because of what Christ has done for you, that's never going to go away—and the Bible says because of that, let us be thankful. Grateful. And so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire. You and I ought to be thankful people. (39:12)

How does that relate to obedience? Well I think you can see it, can't you? If you are truly grateful for what someone has done for you. If you are indebted to someone for what they've done for you. And they say, Hey, do this. See? I'm more apt and more prone to be a follower, to give my deference to, to obey someone who I feel a great amount of gratitude for. As a matter of fact, I call it to being indebted. I'm indebted to you. If someone's done something great for you, there's that sense of that. And that's the last motivation we have here. It's a motivation of gratitude for the grace of God. Because we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Jot that one down. (39:49)

Number four: you and I ought to obey God if for no other reason because you and I are profoundly grateful for his grace. We're profoundly for the grace of God. And if you're saying well this says "worship", and you talking about, you know, living godly lives, circle the word there in verse 28, "and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe." If you open your New Testaments and look for the word "worship" in the New Testament, you'll find it 80 times. 80 times. Only 11 of those times will you see the Greek word in the Greek New Testament that translates into "worship" that we see here. It's not that it only appears 11 times in the New Testament, it appears another 10 times in the New Testament but it's not translated "worship." It's translated, are you ready? Service. To serve him. There was a word in the Septuagint, the Old Testament in Greek in Alexander the Great's day, the translation in the Alexandrian Library. It was the Bible of the church. And the word described people who went out and served God as an act of worship. And that's the word here. (40:54)

And the Bible says—if you want to see another reference to this, go to Hebrews 9, right across the page, or a page or two ahead of this. Here's the same exact word that we translate "worship" in this passage. Verse 14. Hebrews 9:14. How much more then will the blood of Christ—

Hebrews 9:14, are you with me?—who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God—Christ now is our offering, our atonement, he’s our substitute—how much more will he cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death—this is about righteousness now—so that we may—what’s the word?—serve. Same word that translates “worship” in our passage. Serve the living God. The point is, in our passage, because the context is about living righteous lives and saying no to acts that lead to death, sin, I mean he says you need to worship God. And it rightly be translated worship. Half the time it is translated worship, half the time it’s translated serve. But let me show you the connection in one last passage, Romans 12. Familiar passage to you. This passage ties it all together. Romans 12. (41:58)

This is what we’re talking about. This is worship, to live a life in light of his grace knowing we have something we didn’t earn, don’t deserve, that we have secured for us in heaven and as a response I’m going to live for God. Romans 12, look at verse 1. Therefore after all that’s been said in this book so far in Romans, he says, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy—that’s the first cousin of the word grace, right? Because he’s so good to us in light of our sin, offer your bodies as living sacrifices. Now that’s a little different than a dead sacrifice. Quite a bit different. It’s a sacrifice, it says, I’m here to live for you. Not just to die for you. A kind of life that is holy and pleasing to God. Which, by the way, here’s our phrase, this is your spiritual act of worship. And you thought it was singing a song. See? It’s more than that. Worship includes that. That’s a thankful expression. But you want to know the best thankful expression you can give to God this week? Say no to sin. Say no to temptation. Say no to those acts that lead to death on a variety of levels. Live a holy and pleasing life. And stop being like the world. Verse 2. Don’t conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you’ll be able to test and approve what God’s will is. And here’s a description of the kind of life we’ve been talking about for the last eight weeks. A life that is good, pleasing, and perfect. That’s his will for you. And it doesn’t include all the compromises that seem to cloud and corrupt the edges of our lives. Let’s be godly people. That’s your act of worship. (43:34)

My prayer for this series, and my real concern is—I jotted it down—what do I want to see God accomplish for the next eight weeks since we’ve been through chapter 12? Obviously I want us to expend more effort on saying no to sin. I hope that’s happened for you. I hope you’ve said, Because of our study in Hebrews 12 I am now fighting sin more vigorously. Okay, I understand that grace doesn’t let me off the hook. I’m going to fight sin. Secondly, I’ve been praying that God would make you and I more dependent on God in our fight against sin. I hope that’s been the case. I mean, we are doing this not on our own, but God throughout this passage has told us he’s willing to help us and empower us and provide us a way out of every simple temptation we face. I want more honesty about it. A lot of churches don’t want to talk about sin. I think talking about sin for two months, I hope, has helped us say you know what? We got problems and we need to fix them. And lastly, of course, and the most obvious, I hope that there has been more victory over sin. Maybe you need to look at the rest of the list. Maybe there’s not enough effort. Maybe there’s not enough dependence. Maybe there’s not enough openness and honesty with you and your spouse, your family, your friends about the struggles that you face. But the goal is to be more victorious over temptation. I hope that in some way, the last two months have helped you do that. And I praise God for the twelfth chapter of Hebrews. And hang on, because we’re going into chapter 13. I know we’ve been preaching through Hebrews for a long time. There’s one more chapter to go. And then we’re on to some other things. Let’s pray together. (45:07)

God, thanks for this great book. Thank you so much for the wonderful reminder that we need to be fighting against temptation and sin in our lives. God, your word is not an opinion, it’s not an invitation, it’s the voice of the living God who created us. And even in the person of his son who we picture sometimes so lowly, he’s no longer a lowly servant coming to bear the sins of the world. He is one who speaks as though a sword is coming out of his mouth to penetrate our hearts. And



when he speaks we need to respond. And God, we thank you for this lofty view of God that the twelfth chapter of Hebrews ends with so that we can stand back and say, Wow, we do need to take this seriously. We need to be serious about our fight against sin. We need to do our best to say no to temptation. We need to be ready because we understand the consequences. We recognize that this is our spiritual act of worship, that you are a God that is not wasting words here when you give us instructions about life. God, and I do pray, just one last time, there wouldn't be a person here that misunderstands what we're saying in chapter 12, that there's some way we earn our way into your favor. We don't. This is all a response to being people who have received this kingdom that is unshakeable. And because of that, God, we want to live godly and holy lives. This world's passing away. That's clear. That's unmistakable in your word. So God, change the way we live. Give us more victory, more honesty, more effort, more dependence in our struggle against sin. In Jesus' name. Amen.