

The Sad Path to Transgenderism

Transgenderism

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I was a teenager when Bruce Jenner won the gold medal in the Olympic decathlon in 1976. I was a middle-aged man when he made other headlines. On April 24, 2015, the television program 20/20 aired an interview by Diane Sawyer with Jenner. Jenner at that time announced that he was transgender and would now be known as Caitlin Jenner, and on June 1, 2015, Jenner tweeted to the world and I quote, "I am so happy after such a long struggle to be living my true self." He was born a male, he lived as a man, he competed as a man, but now he considered and considers himself a woman and he lives as a woman, and many people point to Jenner's interview as the time that transgenderism came to age, transgenderism being the idea that somebody has a soul that is different from the body in which they were born and so they live across the gender, the sex that they were born with, and Jenner's out-coming was, you know, was the first really public splash on this that really transcended so much of our culture. But here's the thing, beloved, we were walking the transgender path long before then, and so tonight we're starting a series on transgenderism, the Bible and transgenderism, that I don't intend to take very awfully long to get through, but I believe that it is critically important for us to address this matter from the pulpit for a few different reasons. On a pastoral level, I know that some of you are already encountering this in your workplace environment and you're receiving employee manuals that are requiring you to if not affirm transgenderism, to be sympathetic and remain silent about it and not to speak out against it; others are dealing with this matter within their immediate family or within the extended family and wondering just exactly what to do. There are important pastoral reasons to do this.

On a broader level, what I want to show you this evening is my sense of the fact that the transgender moment as it has been called, is far more than simply individuals and the way that they choose to dress and live and present themselves. The transgender issue is actually a monumental conflict between truth and lies, and between what is a true worldview and that which is false, and as we go along, I think what you'll find as we study this issue and this matter together, is that the contrast between the worldview that produces a transgender mindset, a transgender ideology, the contrast between that and the biblical worldview is a clash of ultimate truth in a way that I don't believe I am overstating the issue at all. What we will find as we study this together in the weeks to come, is that discerning what lies behind transgenderism is actually going to clarify for us what it means to have a Christian worldview, what it means to have a biblical mindset about all of life.

The sad reality of it is, I suppose you could call it sad, in one sense it's quite exhilarating to me at least, is to recognize that the church, the true church of Jesus Christ is all that stands between truth and this transgender error sweeping over and taking over everything else. Corporations, the media, celebrities as we've seen, everyone is sympathetic to this transgender movement so much so that even recently there was a transgender woman, meaning born a biological male and now living as a woman, strong masculine "woman" in quotes, won a female bicycling championship in record time for the second consecutive year, and the whole sporting industry affirms that as being something that is good and right and proper without regard to the way that it affects those biological females and their desire to compete on equal terms. The issues go in a lot of different directions as you will see in the coming weeks. Here's the thing, beloved, I have a lot to say about this. I've been working on this behind-the-scenes for many many months, and what I need to ask you as the congregation of Truth Community is this, I ask you to stay with me on this, to pray for me as I teach this series and to support me in the midst of this. It's quite possible that our church could be a great help to many people in what is said here in the coming weeks. With that said and the reason that I ask for your support in that way, is that you and I have to kind of step outside of our normal comfort zone in order to do this well.

Tonight what I want to do is sketch something out for you, sketch out what I believe is the intellectual and the cultural path that led our world inevitably to transgenderism. What we are seeing in the rise of this which is so foreign to so much of our experience, certainly those of my age, this is all new in one respect, new in the sense of just within the past three or four years; it wasn't that long ago that I hadn't even heard the word and it took me a long time to figure out even what they were talking about. Well, this is the world now in which we live and we need to be prepared to understand and how to respond to it, how to understand it, how to raise our families in the midst of a world like this, how to deal with our little ones and to protect them, how to engage those who are in this world and how to consider it as a church. There's a lot that goes into all of it.

Now I realize, I realize that some might question the value or even the propriety of having a series like this and I did wrestle with it, you know, there was a time, two, three, four years ago where I thought, "You know, I'm not going to say anything about this at all. I'm just going to let it go and, you know, and we'll just kind of sort things out." But the longer it went, the more that I interacted with the elders of our church, you know, it was increasingly impressed upon my heart that these things need to be said. I want to be the one to say them to you, I don't want to delegate that to someone else, and so that's what we're going to do for a time here. My plan is to address this one time on Sunday, this coming Sunday just so you know, then on Sundays after that we'll return to our verse by verse exposition of Philippians and we'll deal with this largely on Tuesday evenings.

So with that little bit of introduction as I ask your indulgence for what lies ahead, a man said, a writer said, a biblical writer said this I quote, he said, "The minister should preach the word and only the word but this does not at all mean that he must ignore the world. It is his business to declare what the word has to say about the world." Starting tonight, I

need to declare what the word has to say to our transgender world and that's what I intend to do, Lord helping me.

Now this message tonight in isolation will not contain much Scripture but it is necessary background for the biblical content that is to follow in this series, and so I ask you to keep that in mind. We're laying a groundwork, we need to lay something out in order to refute it and to deal with it, and here's what I want you to see and to understand. If you're like me and this whole transgender thing kind of exploded on your consciousness within the past few years or so, maybe for some of you it's still new and you wonder what I'm talking about and it all seems like it's kind of arisen so recently, I want to make this point very clear: we, meaning we as a society, we as a culture, we as a world, we did not fall off a cliff into transgenderism and the acceptance and the promotion of it. No, we took the stairs down one step after another going down, and individual steps down collectively made transgenderism a virtually inevitable part of society. This is the natural outcome of centuries of philosophical thought that have developed over time, of decades of sexual license within the Western culture, and all of these things kind of flowed together. If you think about a flood, a river flooding over on its banks and you're standing downstream and you're seeing a river rise and rise and flow over and fled out the ground around it, you need to understand something and most of you would understand this intuitively, is that what's producing that flood in front of you is the result of a lot of things that were happening upstream. There were a lot of rains falling and streams that were swelling up and brooks that were filling, and as they converged together, the force and the volume of that produced the result that you see as you stand watching a riverbank overflow. There were things that were happening beforehand upstream that coalesced and came together to cause the flood that you see in front of you. Well, the whole transgender issue is like that.

Now I want to say a couple of other preliminary things because it's probably inevitable that I'll get accused of hating transgender people and nothing could be further from the truth. What my primary intent here, especially tonight and even in the weeks to come, is that we are addressing transgenderism as primarily as an ideology. What is the thinking, what is the philosophy that produces that? How can people think this way? I want to address it from that perspective and dealing with transgender individuals only incidentally much later in the series, and so that's important for us to recognize and understand.

Along with that, I just want to say one other thing that I think is just really really essential for us as Christians to recognize. First of all at the highest level, this is not a matter that can be resolved by simply appealing to one or two Bible verses and thinking that that's going to settle the matter and make it go away. That is far too simplistic and underestimates the cultural forces that are at play and the worldview issues that are at play in this. You cannot apply one or two verses as a Band-Aid and think that that's going to solve the issue. Along with that, I want to say by way of pastoral encouragement and also exhortation, is that it is not going to do anybody any good, it's not even going to do you any spiritual good to simply make this a matter of derision or mocking or joking or a quick dismissal with a wave of the hand, "Well, that's just craziness and I don't need to

deal with that." Look, all the forces that make transgenderism possible define the environment in which you are living as a Christian now, as you will see. So if I believe that if we take this matter seriously and we deal with it earnestly, we're going to have our eyes opened to a lot of things that will help us discern the world in which we live and to be able to respond to this in an earnest and hopefully more effective way and I'll just leave it there for now.

There are two paths to transgenderism that I want to show you, giving you some historical background here: the intellectual path and the cultural path to transgenderism that I'll lay out and then I'll have some biblical comments about it all here in the end. Let's consider first the intellectual path to transgenderism. Now here's the deal: the essence of transgenderism, whatever you think about the causes that produced this in somebody's mind, the idea that somebody has a conflict between their inner man and their outer man, their mind and their physical body, the question is how does somebody get to that point and how is it that people come to think that what they feel inside overrides the external objective reality of their physical body? How does that happen? Well, I want to offer this oversimplification, this gross oversimplification that I make in acknowledged reliance on other authorities in what I'm about to say. There are centuries as I perceive it, there are centuries of development in human thought that lead us to precisely this point and that's what I just want to lay out for you ever so briefly here this evening.

You and I, we're familiar with the Reformation, right? In the sixteenth century, started in 1517 when Luther nailed his 95 theses to challenge Roman Catholic practices at the time. The Reformation among many other things had this effect, it recovered the place of God's revelation in Scripture as that which determines what is true. The Reformation brought back to conscious recognition and submission that the Scripture is the place where truth is found, and the Roman Catholic Church kicked against that because it was the deathknell of their truth claims, but the Reformation brought us back to the reality that truth is found in the Scriptures. Jesus said in John 17:17 as he prayed to his Father, "Sanctify them in the truth, thy word is truth." So Scripture in the Reformation had the place of being that which was the source of truth claims. It taught us the place and the priority of revelation.

Now that went on for a while and the Reformation went in different directions with different groups, of course, but a couple of centuries afterwards maybe in the 1700s, that introduced a period called the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, and human thought in the Enlightenment was no longer satisfied to rely on external authorities like the Bible or like the church or the state, and did not want to grant to them the position of determining and saying what was true. The model of the Enlightenment was quote, "Have courage to use your own understanding." So the priority was placed on human reason and it was shifted away from truth being that which was given by revelation and placed in the realm of the mind and the reason of man to help determine what was true.

Now the world of the Enlightenment relied on science and technology to give understanding to life and to define the nature of progress, and it's commonly called the age of modernism, you might say, and this is just really simple and brief and I acknowledge that. Modernism preferred the new over the old and so an appeal to ancient

authority suddenly, you know, appealing to Scriptures that were centuries old suddenly was out of bounds, it was outside the realm of what was considered to be true; something that was new was better than that which was old and established. So what happened during this age? Well, moral and political philosophies arose which put man's reason in the place that was previously held by divine revelation so that man went to his mind to determine what was true rather than to appealing to Scripture and submitting to God's word.

Now one writer picks up the story from there and I quote, it says, "The Enlightenment began with great confidence that reason could lead us to the truth, but that optimism gradually disappeared when it became evident that even the greatest human thinkers could not agree on fundamental issues." So you have the best of human minds they can't agree on fundamental issues and all of a sudden the limits of reason, a man's reason were laid bare for all to see as a practical matter. Along with that in part, the progress of reason was stopped cold when it met the reality of world war. Sad. You've got two world wars within a period of roughly 25 years of each other and men found that they could not think their way out of that one. This was beyond the scope of reason to deal with and to answer and to solve.

So, again oversimplifying, in time that led to the rise of what is known as postmodernism as a worldview. It is difficult to define but the basic sense for our purposes here this evening is that postmodernism believes that truth is relative rather than absolute, and so at best in a postmodern world, the Bible is simply one competing truth claim among others but all have equal validity. And one writer explains it this way about postmodernism and I'll try to slow down here, I know I'm throwing a lot at you. He says, "According to this perspective," the perspective of postmodernism, "there is no single correct view of the world but countless views that are correct in their own way. Influenced by this sort of thinking, some in the popular culture have concluded that since there is no single true perspective we should strive to be enriched by as many different views and behaviors as possible." So the idea is there is no absolute truth which you should immediately recognize as being a frontal assault on the claims of biblical authority. There is no absolute truth according to postmodernism. Every view is legitimate. Every view has its own perspective. What's true for you may not be true for me but it can both be true. So there is this fuzzy thinking that is taking place that has diminished the very concept of truth and elevated human preferences above all else.

So as we consider this intellectual path that led to transgenderism, where does that leave us in the 21st century? Now beloved, this is really important here, this is fundamental to all that follows in this series. We are living, you and I, in a culture that has not only rejected divine revelation, it has rejected even the concept of objective truth. There is no ultimate truth to be found. There is no objective truth that can be arrived at. And that becomes especially true in the realm of human morality so that – watch how this works and you can see, let me, actually let me back up for just a second. You can see the kind of the progressive steps away here. We were in an era where the Reformation upheld the priority and the centrality of divine revelation, shifted over to human reason as being the source and grounds of truth, shifted away from reason into just the fact that there is no

truth to be found and therefore we're each on our own, we can kind of make it up as we go along and we can determine for ourselves, you and I can determine independently for ourselves what is true. What I want you to see in this simple overview is that there have just been these steps down from revelation down to human reason, down to a rejection of both so that there has been this enveloping growing cloud of darkness over the human mind and over the human heart that has taken place over the course of centuries and now we find ourselves standing on the banks of a river that is overflowing from everything that happened in years gone by. And what's the consequence of that? If every belief is legitimate, if your truth is not necessarily my truth, if every belief is legitimate then no one has the right to contradict me. There is no authority by which my thought, my approach to life can be declared to be wrong because I am the master of my own destiny, I'm even the master of what is true. You can see how it appeals to the pride of man to say, "I not only live my own life, I am the one who determines what is true."

Now how does that intellectual path, how does that apply to transgenderism? How does it make transgenderism, I would say, inevitable as a consequence? Now before I answer my own question there, I should say this: I am not suggesting that every person with gender identity issues, and we'll explain terms in the future, I'm not suggesting that every person with gender identity issues has thought through his condition philosophically and has consciously walked through the realms of human thought and adopted that as his own. It doesn't work that way. It would be foolish to talk that way. But beloved, here's what you need to see that I think is not emphasized enough in some of the discussions that take place about this. Transgenderism as an ideology, as a phenomenon, it exists in a philosophical context that makes it possible. How is it possible for someone to say, "My body does not determine the kind of person that I am"? Understand that what makes that possible is a mindset that says, "My subjective opinions determine truth about everything so that my subjective opinions even determine what is true about me and true about my body, and if I disagree with the outward aspects of my humanity, what I believe inside triumphs over what is apparent to everyone else," because without objective truth, you get to define your own reality and that means that you can even define your gender without reference to biology, so that the nature of transgender medicine, as we'll probably look at in a couple of weeks or so, the nature of transgender medicine is such that the body is made to conform to what the mind thinks rather than having the mind conform to the objective external reality of the body. That is the difference and so we go to great great lengths to modify a body to make it conform to what is present in a person's mind. The mind, the heart, the opinions, the feelings override everything else so that in that mindset, you enjoy complete and absolute autonomy. You can just be true to yourself and no one has the right to question how you feel or what you believe. Postmodernism has made that inevitable. It is the premise of it, that there is no objective truth and therefore you can determine it for yourself. So if I am inclined toward transgender sensibilities, I can say, I can say, "I feel like a woman and I want to live as a woman. Not only that, I am a woman." And because of this mindset and philosophy in which we live, you have no right to object to say that that is not true, and the growing reality about this is that if you say that I am wrong, you should be punished for that opinion because you do not have the right to transgress on my view of reality, and the more liberal states are already enacting laws to enforce speech codes to enforce this under the pain of

governmental penalty for those who do not comply. This is very serious and it's the world in which we live.

Now for our purposes here this evening, coming back within a Christian mindset and a Christian worldview, here's what you need to see and understand just very clearly and straightforward, is that reality and identity are no longer tied to revelation and even to reason, and the necessary outcome of that is the acceptance of transgenderism. In the way that this is working out in every area of society is just astonishing, and we'll talk about this more but one thing that I do just want to say and point out is that it is to the point where public school policies are such that if a child says anything to a school official, this is not universal yet but these are the kinds of codes that are being promoted and in some places accepted, a child that goes to a counselor and says, "I believe that I'm transgender," they are affirmed in that in such a way under a guise of privacy the parents aren't even notified that this is taking place, so that parents are increasingly being robbed of any voice in this matter with their own children, and where this is going is that parents are going to lose the right to and in many places already are, losing the right to object to a child's proclamation of his gender even down to the youngest of ages, five, six, seven and sometimes even less than that. This is utter insanity, beloved, and we need to have an awareness of what is happening so that we can help each other and protect our families and have some kind of idea about how to respond to this world in which we live.

A writer named Jonathan Grant expresses it this way. Before I read the quote, let me just say so that in this mindset as shown by the quote from Jenner, "I'm so happy after such a long struggle to be living my true self." The true self, what he/she feels inside. The whole affirmation of that is that finally this person is being real, they are being authentic, they are showing us who they really are and that is being applauded as a great virtue. Jonathan Grant expresses it this way and I quote, "Modern authenticity encourages us to create our own beliefs and morality. The only rule is they must resonate with who we feel we really are. The worst thing that we can do is to conform to some moral code that is imposed on us from outside by society, our parents, the church, or whoever else. It is deemed to be self-evident that any such imposition would undermine our unique identity. The authentic self believes that personal meaning must be found within ourselves or must resonate with our one-of-a-kind personality." He is being descriptive, not an advocate there. The idea being that the best thing, the most honest thing, the highest thing that you can do is to let out whatever is inside of you. Everyone should understand that you have a unique identity and you are allowed to assert that whatever the case may be.

It is shocking, I document this in a subsequent message, it may shock many of you to realize that on this whole transgender gender identity thing, is that it is now no longer simply a question of are you a man or are you a woman, there is a website that advocating gender issues that you can go to and it lists out 117 at last count, different genders that a person might be. 117! That's where this goes, and if truth is up to me, I can define what's true about myself, I am free from God, I am the master of my own destiny and my own identity. That is the intellectual path that leads to it. When you reject revelation, when you reject reason, you are left with this self-perception of truth and it can be whatever you want it to be and no one can contradict it.

Now week I will respond to that biblically. That's not the purpose of tonight's message but this is the worldview that we have to confront and we have to answer and we have to respond to. What are we to make of that mindset and how do we answer it in an effective way. Now that's the intellectual path. Secondly, there is a cultural path that has led to transgenderism as well, and time forbids tracing the impact of the sexual revolution and the rise of homosexual marriage which feeds this fire. Al Mohler has traced it all compellingly in his book titled "We Cannot Be Silent," and I can only commend that to you if you're interested in tracing it. One writer summarizes it all, not Al Mohler someone else, one writer summarizes this cultural path as follows and I quote, "Transgenderism is simply one part of a much broader social and sexual revolution that has engulfed Western culture, a revolution that includes the advent of the contraceptive pill, the various waves of feminism, premarital sexual experimentation, cohabitation, no-fault divorce, abortion on demand, the lowering of film and television standards, the repeal of blasphemy and sodomy laws, and the legalization of same-sex adoption and same-sex marriage."

Now beloved, here's the point, that over the course of several decades in our American culture especially, there were these incremental steps that were taking place. One, a few years go by, another one, then another, and what I'm wanting you to see is what I said at the start, is you have all of these gradual incremental steps like you're walking down into a basement, maybe better stated, you're walking down into a dungeon, and all in the name of freedom, all in the name of constitutional rights to privacy or whatever the justification may be, but all being steps that are stepping away from or stepping against revealed biblical morality, and as these things gradually expanded and we reached the point where four years, five years ago, it seems like a lifetime ago that the United States Supreme Court legitimized and mandated the acceptance of homosexual marriage across all 50 states, what I want you to see is that this ever-expanding and the ripples of this great sexual so-called liberation lays the groundwork as well for what we're finding in the transgender world and in the transgender ideology.

Think about it this way, accepting, affirming homosexuality inevitably paves the way for what we're seeing in the transgender world because, I know some of these things are not self-evident unless, you know, you trace them out in the details, but beloved, if there is no necessary correlation between your biological sex and your sexual practice, why should there be any necessary correlation between your biological sex and your gender identity? You have separated human relationships, you have separated human behavior from any necessary connection to the biology of the man or woman involved, and once you've set that aside and said that's not important, you can do what you want with whomever want or with whatever you want, with however many you want, once that becomes accepted, then the dominoes are already falling in a way that makes transgenderism inevitable.

So on a cultural level, one by one these steps have taken place, you could say one by one the dominoes have fallen and we have arrived at a place where 50, 60 years ago they weren't thinking about this when this was all set into motion in the sexual revolution of the sixties, no one was anticipating this outcome but it clicked the first domino and everything started to fall along with it. That is the problem. Philosophical trends over the

centuries, beloved, and incremental steps of sexual license have led us to this place that you and I find today that most people call the realm of freedom. We don't believe that this is freedom at all, and what I want you to see, beloved, is this, to mix my metaphors or to change into a different metaphor talking about paths that led us here, stepping down, to mix my metaphors, a spiritual tsunami has reached our shores. Its forces lie deep in the ocean of the human heart and that's what I want you to see, that there are forces at work in the human heart that have shaped the way that men think and the way that men behave that goes far beyond people cross-dressing or asserting that they have a different identity than what their body would suggest is real. What I want you to see is that this is a symptom of something else. This is the outcome of greater things that have occurred leading up to it. Just as the tsunami hits the shore with enormous force without much prior warning, that's where we find ourselves here today.

Now next week I'm going to respond to these intellectual and cultural things from a biblical perspective. Tonight, we're just laying out the groundwork and the framework so that we can see where we need to go from here. For the remainder of our brief time here this evening, I want to answer this question: what shall the church do? What shall the church do in response to this environment in which we live? We're standing on the beach and the tsunami has hit us, what are we to do? Well, you know, we're kind of getting into the game a little bit late here, the compromises that took place over the past decades in the cultural realm, we are inheriting the whirlwind of things that other people have accepted and yielded on in the past and we are left to deal with the consequences of it. When I say we, not just us as Truth Community Church but we as the Christian world, we as Christians, we as biblical Christians, those devoted to Christ, those devoted to truth, what are we to do in response to this?

Well, I think this is so fundamental, beloved. Maybe I'm off my rocker here but I don't think so. What we must do is recognize the nature of the battle. This is about more than individuals who struggle with understanding who they are, and so often the discussion in Christian circles starts with a transgender individual and says, "We have to find a way to minister to this person." Well, I think that's a totally misguided approach even if it's well-intentioned. We need to understand how did this ever come to pass? What is it that justifies that in the mind of so many? How are we to understand this? And what I think the reality of it is, is that the church must assert truth in a fundamental clash of worldviews. This is a fight to the death. This is a colossal Titanic engagement. This is a battle of colossal proportions that far transcends the less than one percent of people in the population who identify as transgender. This is a clash of worldviews of monumental consequence. We are dealing with the very nature of how truth is asserted and how truth is understood and how truth is believed. We cannot, Christians cannot yield to the transgender ideology at all because it's premised on a subjective approach to truth. If we do that, we have surrendered Christianity because truth is objective, it is found in God's word, it is absolute. We cannot, there is no compromise to be had here. This is a fight to the death. This is a different kind of world war.

So beloved, for those that may be watching over the live stream, welcome, hearing this in subsequent media, what's our response as believers? We're calling men to repent but

we're calling men to repent of more than transgender behavior, we are calling men, the church must call men to repent of the very way that they think, of the very fundamental worldview that they have adopted until now. We are not simply suggesting that these facts ought to be interpreted a little bit differently, we are saying that their thinking is wrong, their thinking is ungodly, their thinking is corrupt and they have to repent of everything that informs their mindset and their worldview. They must repent of their autonomy and consciously submit to Jesus Christ and to his inerrant word, and to exchange their self-centered, self-justifying way of thinking and come humbly as Scripture says, to humble themselves and to come to Christ and to come to Scripture as though a little child to receive Christ and to receive his word as Lord and authority over not only their lives and their behavior but of the very way that they think. That is how fundamental the conflict is and any Christian response to transgender ideology that falls short of this is inadequate and is doomed to failure.

Now with all of those things said, let's end on a few scriptures here. Turn, if you will, to 2 Timothy 2 as we put a little bit of scriptural perspective on this as we bring it to a close for this evening. While we have talked about this in historical terms, cultural terms, what you and I have to understand is that ultimately this is a supernatural conflict that we are engaged in. This is supernatural and this is the only thing that can ultimately make any sense of how a mind can be so blinded as to believe the things that are asserted as unquestioned truth in the day and age in which we live.

Look at 2 Timothy 2:24 which informs us not only about the nature of our approach but also of what we are confronting, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will." The transgender ideology and those who embrace it are under the captivity of Satan himself and they need to be confronted with the truth, they need to be called to repentance, to turn away from all of that so that their repentance would lead them to an understanding and a knowledge of what is true. As we make those assertions, as we make those appeals, we realize that we are dealing with more than a cognitive understanding of factual matters, we are dealing with those that have been spiritually blinded by a supernatural force over which they have no control. The only answer, the only power in a realm like that is the Spirit of God taking God's word expounded to people and opening their eyes. God has to do a work here. The Holy Spirit has to help us. We cannot simply argue people out of this. There is a supernatural dimension to it that Scripture speaks to clearly.

I believe it's over in 2 Corinthians 4 where a similar statement is made, 2 Corinthians 4 where it says in verse 3, "even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Do you want to know how vile Satan is, how vile, how utterly unspeakably corrupt rebellion against God is? We're getting a picture of it living out in the world around us and there is a supernatural blindness on this that we must not lose sight of, that

this is a supernatural conflict that is taking place. So as I'm teaching this series, I'm just happy to acknowledge my utter dependence on the Holy Spirit to give any success to anything that I say because this is beyond my power to persuade anyone of. This is supernatural and we must have help from God, and if there is to be a reversal of this history of human rebellion in the realm of philosophical thought, we need nothing less than a sweeping revival of the Holy Spirit to make it happen and he has the power and the capability to do that.

Now so it's a supernatural conflict. Go back to 2 Timothy 2. 2 Timothy 2 and I would say this, in addition to the fact that it's a supernatural conflict, brothers and sisters, this is a difficult conflict. This is not easy and it was never intended to be. Paul wrote to Timothy in the first century and said to him in chapter 2, verse 3, he said, "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." In chapter 3, verse 1 he says, "realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come." And in verse 13 of chapter 3 he says, "evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." We have to be realistic that this isn't going to be easy, that this is a fight in the trenches, in one sense, engaged from a pulpit, in another sense, engaged in individual to individual conversations, man to man, woman to woman conversations that you'll have in the future going forward. Hand to hand combat, in other words, being the mark of a soldier and doing so from a position that the world views not only as silly and outdated but is dangerous, to be silenced. That's what we are up against. It will be difficult. There will be times like this where we're teaching on these things and it's not comfortable teaching even for you to hear. Part of the difficulty is for a congregation to embrace hearing some of these things for the sake of a broader cause than what our personal lives might require.

Now with that said and what the ultimate reality of all of this is, is this, is that God has already given to us everything that we need to be faithful in the battle. We lack for nothing as Christians to respond to this world environment in which we live. Look at 2 Timothy 3:16. Actually, we'll go to verse 14. In light of the difficulty, in light of the supernatural nature of the conflict, shouldn't we just go home? Shouldn't we just hide? Shouldn't we just wait to die or wait for the Lord to come? No. No. No. No. No. No. That is not what we should. We should not run and hide, we should run to the battle. Paul told Timothy, verse 14 after just having said that evil men are going to go from bad to worse he said, here's what you're to do, "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Even as we are confronting the worldview, we are simultaneously offering people eternal life if they would repent of their sin and put their faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. We are not their enemies in this, we are their best friends because we are offering them deliverance from the snare of the devil and deliverance into the kingdom of Christ where there is forgiveness of sin and eternal life and real truth, and Scripture is sufficient to lead people to that knowledge of Christ.

Verse 16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate,

equipped for every good work." Do you realize that in the Scriptures as we study Scripture together, as we know Scripture together, as we proclaim and honor Scripture and obey Scripture together, we are equipped for the good work that is before us in our day and age? God's word has prepared us. God's word equips us. God's word has sufficient answers for everything that we are seeing here today. We lack for nothing.

So what do we do? Chapter 4, verse 1, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word: be ready in season and out of season," when it's popular and when it's not, when people want to hear and when they don't. You be ready. "You reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

So what do we do? What do you do? What do I do? We preach the word. We endure hardship. We fulfill the ministry that the Lord has given to us. Providentially he appointed our lives for this very time. We are given a challenge, a battle, an opportunity not given to the Reformers in the sixteenth century, not required of Charles Spurgeon in the nineteenth century. This is our day and this is our responsibility to preach the word, to endure hardship, to fulfill our ministry, and in the coming days, Lord willing, Lord helping us, we will try to answer that noble biblical call on behalf of our Christ.

Let's pray together.

Father, Scripture comes to us, Christ comes to us as light shining in the darkness and, Father, we say these things, we preach these things not from an attitude of spiritual superiority, we're all sinners saved by grace, we're all in need of redeeming love and we thank You that for so many of us here tonight, You have redeemed us through faith in Christ. We honor You. We pray for those who don't know You yet in Christ and pray that Your Spirit would lead them to a saving knowledge of Him. Give us understanding, give us courage as we consider these things in the days to come. Father, may somehow You use this humble place and these humble words to accomplish purposes far beyond anything that we could have asked or thought because we've prayed to You in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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