

The World's Walk: The Downward Spiral!

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Bible Text: Ephesians 4:17-20
Preached on: Sunday, January 14, 2018

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Amen. Grab your Bibles and let's go back to Ephesians 4 and look at what the Apostle Paul writes as he continues to elaborate on the walk that God has ordained for you and I as his children to walk in compared to the walk or sometimes the word "conversation" is used to illustrate one's pattern in the world or ones walk in the world, but here we're going to focus more intently on the world's walk and I've simply entitled this "The World's Walk: The Downward Spiral." The downward spiral. Nothing stands still. Nothing stands still. As a child of God, you have the privilege to have the mind of God, a heart for God and to grow in your sanctification, Christ in you, becoming more of you, but if you're not in Christ, if you don't belong with him, then you are moving but you are moving on a downward spiral.

Now, Paul is going to give a description that explicitly speaks of the age he's in and the great degeneracy and depravity of this ancient Greek culture of the people that he's writing to, but there are really two sides to this coin of the downward spiral of those who walk with the world, those who don't know Christ. There are those who give into all the urges of the fallen depraved heart and the natural lust and the dominoes continue to fall, the heart is hardened, the conscience is dulled, and they eventually give themselves over fully to the lust of the flesh. And quite frankly, we look at our culture and we see the fruit of that everywhere, I mean, so literally. Thirty-five, 40 years ago as a young man and as a boy, I never would have fathomed in our culture there would be the open celebration and embracing of the vileness and the wickedness and the depravity that we see today. But then if Satan doesn't get you on that track, there is because of the natural conscience and the restraining power of God, many who are given over to the world who don't give over to such outward expressions of vileness and wickedness but they grow older proud of their goodness. So either way, it's a downward spiral because actually if you stand before the judgment bar of God proud of your self-righteousness, proud of what you maintained as far as outward morality, that pride will probably bring you into more severe judgment than if you had given into the immoralities of the age. So in either case, whether a person keeps themselves in some sort of outward form of decency or they give themselves full long into the fallen nature, in either way you're on a downward spiral of greater condemnation and certainly greater judgment.

Let's look at it together, Ephesians 4:17 through 20 for this evening. Paul said,

17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

Now he continues and he elaborates on all of this. Verse 18,

18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Let me just stop there for a moment. Does that not sound like our culture? Just given over to whatever, a man does whatever is right in his own eyes? But then he gives us verse 20,

20 But you did not learn Christ in this way,

You are different, though. You know, if God has regenerated your heart and you can see with the eyes of faith, then there is the germ, and I hope it's more than just a germ, of motivation for you to walk not according to the world but according to the God that you are learning to know and love.

Now, many do not see the vileness and the obvious nature of this downward spiral. Many Christians today, or maybe I should say professing Christians, do not see the reality instead of the evolution, the devolution, if you will, the decline of man when he is separated from God; his condescension down into worse and ever increasing wickedness. As a matter of fact, look over to the Gospel of Mark with me. Would you turn there? Mark 8:14 through 21 where Mark points out something and is writing of how our Lord pointed out that the darkness and the lack of understanding even among some of his followers. Mark 8, beginning in verse, I'm sorry, let's go to verse 14. Mark 8:14,

14 And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. 15 And He was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." 16 They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread. 17 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? 18 having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember, 19 when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." 20 "When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they said to Him, "Seven." 21 And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

Here's his point: you're still darkened in your understanding. You still don't understand the difference I make and the truth of what is before you. Romans 11:8 reminds us, "just as it is written, 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not,

down to this very day." We should strive to hear and receive the preaching and the teaching of the word lest we fall into this spiritual stupor, lest we fall into this dullness and become blinded to the truth.

He talks here in verse 18, that those who walk according to the world and inevitably are on a downward spiral, have an ignorance in their minds. He talks about in verse 18, "the ignorance that is in them." This is a key phrase. The verb here expresses a deep-seated indwelling character of ignorance. As we look at people in the world and those who do not know Christ, we must remind ourselves there is a deep foundation, there is a stronghold of blindness and ignorance to the things of God and to the ways of God, and while we are always commanded to speak to people and share a Gospel message with them and urge them about the things of God, at the same time that we are fervent in our efforts, we call out in prayer on God to open the eyes of their heart. There is a little song, "Open the eyes of their heart, Lord." Well, that's very true. We are dependent on the Spirit to do that. But now I want to talk about this ignorance and several factors about the ignorance that resides in the hearts of those who walk according to the world. This will be a little bit of review but we'll expand it a little further.

I. First of all, again we'll talk about the futility of the mind. He said there in verse 17 we are not to walk like Gentiles because they walk in the futility of their mind. Again, this just has the idea of the emptiness. Again, you could include both the heart and the mind here. Hodge, the theologian, says it speaks of moral and intellectual worthlessness. Boyce says that Paul points out at the beginning of his description of this downward spiral that it's people's thinking that's the problem. They are thinking wrong and that leads to a wrong life, it leads to wrong behaviors, it leads to wrong habits and on the downward spiral goes. It's a deep-seated ignorance and they have worthless hearts and minds and then their behavior follows suit. Man does not know God and he cannot think properly, therefore. Everything, therefore, is out of joint. Everything is out of place.

Dr. Vance Habner, the old Baptist preacher, we had him here years ago before he passed away, he used to say the times are out of joint. Well, they are. Things are out of place. Man doesn't know God. The world doesn't know God. Everything is out of place and disorder and sinful conduct reflects this kind of everything being out of place and our thinking being wrong.

Now, as Paul is writing this to the church at Ephesus, this is a very strong rebuke to the Greeks of this day. The Greeks were big into philosophy and in their philosophies, generally speaking, the mind was the highest part of man. They felt that through their minds and their mental acumen they could save themselves. So with the mind, they could link with God and they could keep lifting themselves higher and higher and higher. With the mind, they thought man could find salvation. So in their thinking ability, they would find salvation, not too unlike today's world where science is now the new savior. If science tells us something, oh, it's true, then. But Paul in two verses decimates their whole philosophical system where he says in verses 17 and 18, those who do not know God have minds that are worthless and understanding that is darkened. They are ignorant. They have hardened hearts. They are excluded from the life of God.

So Paul is basically saying, "You understand, as the natural man, a man God has not acted upon, a man who does not have a regenerated heart, you are starting with a faulty mechanism. You're starting with darkness, callousness, lifelessness, and nothing good is going to come out of that. So esteemed man's cognitive capacity is all you want. Exalt man's intellectual ability is all you want. You end up nowhere because it's worthless and the downward spiral will always follow this thinking that comes out of an empty, dark, godless mind."

Now, like modern man, the ancient Greeks' minds were full of stuff. They had lots of thoughts. They had a lot of writings that they did but it was worthless stuff. They were kind of like the women that Paul referred to in 2 Timothy 3:7 where he says these women are always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now, he wasn't talking about women in general but these were worldly women who always wanted to be, "What's the next new teaching? What's the next exciting new teacher? Who is Oprah having on this week?" You know, Oprah is now a preacher, you understand that. Oprah has now got her own church and, boy, how enlightened we would be if we would just listen to Oprah. Well, that's the idea here. These ladies always, "Who's got that new insight? Who's got the new twist? Who's got the new exciting understanding?" And they would run to this one and run to that one but they never found Christ. These were women who were full of themselves. They wanted to be in the know yet they could never come to the knowledge of Christ. They prided themselves on being of the intelligentsia and Paul says, "All your thinking is futile and worthless." Paul didn't pull any punches, just laid it flat out there. Futile in their minds. Decade after decade, century after century, men go on seeking the same futile goals, in the same futile ways, driven by the same futile empty minds. Now, one of the Old Testament writers said, "Vanity of vanities, striving after the wind." That's what the world's walk comes to.

You know, man is like a hot air balloon. To a child, a giant hot air balloon is quite a marvel. It's huge. It's brightly colored. It floats through the air. But these children are amazed to find that despite its outward and magnificent appearance on the outside, it's full of nothing but hot air. That's it and that's the way all the sophistications of mankind are when they leave out God. It looks brilliant, it looks amazing, but God knows what's on the inside is just a bunch of hot air. Futile in their minds.

II. As we talk about the downward spiral, he mentions that they are darkened in their understanding. I think this serves as an amplification and an explanation of the futile mind. The mind of the unsaved man is not only empty, it's worthless and it's dark. As we think about the analogy of darkness as used throughout Scripture, we are reminded that darkness speaks of repression and hopelessness and evil and of Satan's kingdom. Hell is dark. When Jesus died, the wrath of God came to bear on him as he hung on that cross on planet earth and the earth became dark. The Bible says the lost sit in darkness. Satan and evil power is called the power of darkness. Sinful deeds are called deeds of darkness.

Remember me telling you to this story about the boy we baptized here many many years ago? Before he was converted, he worked as a bouncer in one of the clubs here in town,

and I think the law was that at 2 o'clock the club has to close down and it was his job to help it close down. And at 2 o'clock he said, "We did go and turn on the lights and," he said, "you ought to have seen those people. I mean, a moment earlier they were in the dark just having a big time drinking and partying and dancing, we turn the lights on," he said, "they would scurry toward the door like roaches when you turned the lights on." Why? Because sin loves darkness. You see, you have to go down the downward spiral into more callousness and hardness before you start going on TV and passing bills and laws to where you affirm and celebrate darkness. That's where we are. There is still some hope if there is still some shame. Today we are shameless about evil.

Demons, the Bible says, will be thrown into outer darkness but compare that to 1 John 1:5 where it says, "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." In 1 John 2:8, it says, "the darkness is passing away," as the Lord's advent is upon us.

Now, getting back to the original exhortation of verse 17 that we talked about in the earlier message: why, why, would the child of God walk with this world and walk like this world when the minds of the people in this world are full of darkness? Again, even when they are seemingly good things and wholesome things and helpful things that come out of the mind of the world, it's still tainted with a godlessness and a human pride. You know, the worst form of evil is not all these vile and wicked things we see in the world, the worst form of evil are human good works which meant substitute for the new birth. So Satan can get you in one path or the other. Now generally speaking, in any culture, true in this ancient Greek, Roman, sometimes it's called the Greco-Roman culture of the ancient world, true in this culture was an outward obvious plunging into the downward spiral of depravity.

Well, a third aspect. Let me say this about darkness right quick first. Man in his darkened understanding does not desire God. Now listen to me, he doesn't desire God but man will often desire the benefits of God. They will gladly take God's benefits, gladly seek God's blessings, gladly go and hear an evangelist for healing or a miracle or just the amusement of a sign or a wonder. Men often seek God's stuff but when God saves you, you begin to love God not just for his blessings but for him. Now his blessings are wonderful. Amen? Nothing wrong with that, but you know as a child, a child can be just very selfish and too many of you parents help your children be selfish. They just want, want, want. "Gimme, gimme, gimme." But as a child matures, our hope is they begin to love us for us, not for the blessings we provide.

Well, a lost man never gets there with God. God to him is just an errand boy to satisfy his wandering desires. He likes God's blessings but he does not desire God. That's because his understanding is darkened. If man could desire God, which he can't but if he could, he couldn't see the path to find God which is Jesus Christ. You can't bring yourself to that path. Now, he may come up with a concocted formula, a plan, a set of works, or a set of moral values and Jesus is a part of the whole plan. Men love to take their own system of works and put Jesus in it. That's what the Judaizers of this day did. Paul would start a church, he would no longer leave town and the Jewish professing believers would come in and say, "Yes, Jesus that Paul preaches is right but you must add the works of the law

to Jesus." And Paul spent a lot of his energies, the letter to the Galatians is very thorough here, where he is condemning the notion of bringing works into the Gospel of grace.

So men if they could seek God, which they won't on their own, would never find the way to God on their own because their hearts and minds are darkened. Another thing that's true about them is they do not see the multiplying harm, the multiplying harm of their life and purpose because they are in darkness. This is why the Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You guys go around and you teach all of these works doctrines to people and you're teaching it in your own pride because you think you're the esteemed greatest rule keepers, you're the greatest law keepers, and you're great authorities on God's law, so you exercise this dominion over the people," and he said, "when you do win a convert to your viewpoint, you make him twice the child of hell that he was before." The multiplying harm of their approach to life and approach to religion if they are into that, because their minds are darkened.

Alright, now let's go to III. The futility of the mind, the darkened understanding, now the hardness of the heart. The hardness of the heart. Look at it there in verse 18, "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart." The word "hardness" here is the idea, the word would literally be used when an arthritic condition has frozen the joint in a body and it's just a hardness. It's a frozenness and the point is they are hardened and frozen in worthlessness. It's one thing to be worthless, to have a futile mind, a worthless mind, and it's another thing to be frozen there, and that's what Paul is saying. That's the way the walk of the world and the people in this world are. By the way, the only one who can free this frozenness is Dr. Jesus. He's the only one that can take the hardened frozenness of our worthless state and make anything good out of it. When Jesus is preached, God's Spirit can take God's word and it becomes a hammer that crushes the hardened frozen heart. That's why Jeremiah says in Jeremiah 23:29, "Is not My word like a hammer which shatters a rock?" And it is. To be graphic as Paul begins to lay out the portrait of the walk of the world and the downward spiral men of the world are on, it reminded me of a flushing toilet with a garbage disposal at the bottom. That's where the world is headed. That's where it's all going to end up apart from God.

Now, the hardness of the heart is not blindness. The hardness of the heart is deeper than that. The Bible says there are three elements, three factors, in this growing hardness. There is a natural hardness to the heart at conception, but men increase in hardness, I guess you could say, as time goes on. The Bible says Satan and the world are involved in the hardening of a man's heart against the things of God. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "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." I don't know how all that works but we know there is a supernatural force outside of us in opposition to the holy angels, Satan and his demons, who are acting and working feverishly that we would be blinded to the things of God. So Satan and the world are involved in this hardness of men's hearts.

Secondly, the man who refuses God and refuses the need of God's Savior is hardening his own heart. Listen to Romans 1:19 through 22, "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them." So God says every person has that natural law, that natural conscience to testify to him that there is a God he should seek and submit to. He says it has been made known to them. Then in verse 20, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made." He says, "Now, outside of man in the world of nature, God gave a testimony that there is a God that you should seek and submit to." So he says at the end of verse 20, "so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile," there is our word again, "in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Now in the darkness of this foolish heart, "Professing to be wise, they became fools." Goodness, is that not a true testimony of the so-called progressives of our age? They profess all of these ideas and these viewpoints and this new morality like they are so intelligent and they are so advanced and they are so wise, and God said professing to be wise, they just proved to be fools because of the darkness of their heart. And they are responsible for this increasing darkness in their own soul.

But the Bible also says, not only Satan and the world are involved in hardening men's hearts, not only men themselves are involved in hardening their own hearts, but thirdly, God hardens men's hearts. In Exodus 9:12, "And the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses."

Let me turn over to John right quick, John 12. Would you turn there with me? Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and go to chapter 12 and let's look at a couple of things here right quick. John 12:37, "But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him." This is John 12:37. Now verse 38, "This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 'He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I healed them.'" So here we have, I believe, the Pharisees of the day and probably many other Jews, common Jews, who increasingly pushed away the thought that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and then because of that hardening that they pushed him away, God acted on them and further hardened their hearts.

Romans 1, we don't have time to look at it but Romans 1 unfolds the declining fall of man as he begins to reject God, he begins to give himself to unnatural affections and desires, and men lust for men, and women lust for women, and then it says and God turns them over. God, in effect, hardens their hearts because they were pushing God away. Is it not a grace upon grace upon grace that you and I are drawn to God, not hardened and drifting further away from God?

So the people of this world are experiencing these effects of hardness on them. Nobody apart from Christ is not being hardened. Everyone is being hardened by Satan and the world. Everybody is being hardened by their own choice to push God away. And

everyone is being hardened by God himself. All of them are either declining on this downward spiral or they are being drawn closer to the Lord.

Now notice their callousness, IV. back in our text in Ephesians 4. Their callousness. Verse 19, "and they, having become callous," he says. Callous is to cease to feel pain. It's to be apathetic. They have digressed and gone downward until their conscience is practically dead. By choice, they continually violate the natural conscience that God gives them.

You remember in Paul's writings to the church at Corinth, he tells the people there that even if a brother – and I'm just loosely paraphrasing – he says even if a brother has a conviction about something and he's really wrong about it, he has a conviction and he has to observe certain Jewish holidays and certain full moon festivals, or he has a conviction he can't eat meat sacrificed to idols, and Paul basically says, "We know there is nothing wrong with that meat and we know that it's not necessary that you have to observe the old Jewish special days of ceremony anymore," he says, "but their conscience is weak and that's where they are." But his point is don't beat them up for that because no man needs to learn to violate his conscience, even if his conscience is uninformed, even if his conscience is not functioning on the truth. It is dangerous to learn to violate your conscience because every time you violate your conscience, it gets a little more callused and a little more callused. You want a ripe, tender, sensitive conscience, and I think one of the things Satan does in this world is he has just flooded our environment with such immoralities and promiscuity and visual images and the written word, and from an early age, children and young people can get into these things and they become callused to at an early age. You can't be walking in that, indulging in that outside of repentance and expect your heart to be tender and open to the workings of the Spirit of God. A callousness building into a man's heart.

Romans 2:15 speaks to this, "in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them." The conscience becomes increasingly callused and as the conscience becomes callused, you're in effect training yourself for evil. The Bible says in 2 Peter 2:14, "having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children." But we are supposed to be on a different trajectory. We are on a different path. Hebrews 5:14 speaks to us, "But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." They are not on a path to become more callused and indulge in evil and trained for evil, they are on a path of sanctification to become more mature and more discerning and being able to identify the good and the evil and protecting themselves and guarding themselves.

Brothers and sisters, you have to learn that you are weak and you have to learn to guard yourself from exposure to things that can take advantage of you and win the victory over you. So a person can by practice, callus the conscience and you can go so far to the point that sin doesn't bother them at all. How do you think that we have Baptists and evangelical churches today that are now just pretty much indifferent to some of the sins

that our forefathers would have split the church over in a New York second? Just kind of looking the other way. They have let it go on. They have let it go on. They have let it go on. And now the church is callused. Now, the Lord is gracious and the Lord is patient and I'm convinced the Lord will deal with anybody who humbles themselves and is a repentor, but I'm going to tell you, a callused refusal to acknowledge and deal with sin will cause God to abandon a church, and of course, that's when churches turn to all kinds of nonsense to keep the crowd because God is not drawing anybody anymore.

V. A total surrender. A total surrender to unbridled lust. A total surrender. Look at verse 19, "having become callous," here it is, "have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." What a graphic amplification, a multiplication, an amplification of evil Paul brings before us here. Now again in this old ancient Greco-Roman culture, they saw this stuff. Their city was full of it so the light bulbs had to be going off in the minds of the Ephesian Christians as Paul described where men end up in this downward spiral if God isn't true in their hearts and lives. These people give themselves over to shameful conduct. In fact, they no longer have shame about it. They throw all restraint to the wind. They have given themselves over to sensuality and that's the great lie of Satan and the great lie of this age, is that you are naturally good and so whatever you desire to be and whatever you feel like is right, then that's good for you and the rest of the citizens are just supposed to affirm you and applaud you. The concept of being restrained and being disciplined, I'd like to teach that when we are raising children or grandchildren, God gave them their sexual natures and God gave them these desires so one of the first things we should do when a child begins to become aware of these is to celebrate it with them. It's a gift of God. Celebrate it. It's a good thing. But as we celebrate it with them and say that's a good gift and God gave you that gift, but it must be guarded. We don't want to put you in situations where Satan and the world can take advantage of you and lead you into promiscuity and immorality. You need to be guarded and it needs to be governed. It needs to be governed. There is a sense in which all fallen beings given enough environmental temptations could fall into all kinds of immorality and even perversions, and we've got to guard our children and our grandchildren from being associated with things that could get them into tempting areas, even unnatural things. Don't think you're strong. Don't think your family is immune. Amen? Understand that we are all weak and we all need help. We don't want to find ourselves and we don't want to find our families on this downward spiral to wickedness that Paul so graphically points out and teaches to us here in this text.

They give themselves over, like Romans 1:24 where it says, "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them." Now in Ephesus proper as these people in this day, they had what they called the Temple of Artemis and the Temple of Artemis was this, actually it was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and it was just a center of wickedness. Its rituals were the extensions of man's vilest and most perverted sins. Sexual orgies, homosexuality, and many perversions were common. Artemis was considered a female idol and she was very grotesque. One writer said she looked something like a cross between a cow and a woman. Her temple was served by thousands of prostitutes and eunuchs. They had singers and dancers and priests and you worshiped there by having relations with temple

prostitutes. And these idols and these little shrines were all over Ephesus so these people saw a graphic illustration of Paul's teaching here. It was before them every day. The ancient city of Ephesus lived out this giving themselves over to impurity with greediness. With greediness. It's just an ugly, vile picture that the apostle points out here.

The ancient city of Ephesus had spiraled down to low levels of corruption and destruction and I am concerned that the United States of America is fast on the same track. What is the real problem here? What is the root problem? The true problem? Verse 18 says they were excluded from the life of God, and that's the only hope. You can't educate this problem out. I get so tired of all these people who say, "Well, if we want a better culture, we want more caring and loving equality and justice, then we've got to have better education." Listen to me: education without regeneration is an abomination. Hitler was highly educated. Education without regeneration is always going to end up being an abomination. You can't have true wisdom with no God. You just find more pseudo-intellectual ways to express your wickedness, more ingenious ways to indulge in immorality and ungodliness. The point is the root problem here where these people were alienated from God. This is the Bible element. No God, literally it means the life that God bestows, they did not have the life that God bestows. If you're a child of God, do you know what? You have the life God bestows. You have the capacity to grow upward in sanctification. All the lost of this world have no capacity to do anything but degenerate in this downward spiral of corruption and degradation. A regenerate child of God has new life, though, a life that brought the wisdom of God for his empty and futile and worthless mind. A life that came into him and brought the light of God for his darkened mind. A life that came in and brought sensitivity and alertness to his heart, his hardened heart. It changed everything.

Is there hope in this world? Let me say something to you: I don't care who he is or who she is, I don't care how far gone they are, I don't care how deep their depravity, I don't care how far down they've gone in wickedness and rebellion against God, because salvation is of grace, there is hope for everyone. There is always always always hope.

And I put it out on social media this week that I don't think I've ever recommended a movie in a public setting perhaps I don't remember it, but I would recommend "The Darkest Hour," the movie about Winston Churchill because I think it shows the amazing work of divine providence through very imperfect people. Here Winston Churchill was, a brash, sarcastic, crude man. He just went out a lot like Donald Trump, except I think he's a far greater intellectual than Donald Trump, but just said stuff that infuriated people. And in World War II as he became Prime Minister, most of British Parliament disliked him or hated him, and many if not most of them were afraid of him. They thought he is a warmonger. He's going to get us all killed. We need to capitulate. We need to have a peace treaty with this Hitler. And not only that, in one part of the movie that is historically inaccurate shows Churchill going to the common people on a subway train. He never went on the subway, and he goes to the subway and he asks the people about what should we do, should we just form a peace treaty? They said absolutely not. We're not going to live under the heel of Hitler, this brutal dictator, but scholars tell us that's not the way the climate was in Britain. Most of the British were like most of the Parliament,

they didn't really like Churchill. They thought he was brash and too quick to jump to things and they were scared he was going to get them all killed. So Winston Churchill in a very literal way carried Parliament and his whole nation and came to the conclusion, "We will fight to the end because there is no negotiating with this brutal bloody dictator called Hitler." And he was right.

But what does that tell us as Christians? God can take a crooked stick and mark a straight line if he needs to, and divine providence for his people's sake and for his church's sake, somehow at times he puts someone in power that favors what's right and does what's right. And I'm just saying all that to say in the darkest hours, God can do anything, and you'd be shocked at what he uses.

It's just us here, isn't it? Anybody else here but us? I'm convinced Donald Trump is an instrument of God for good for his people. I'm not saying he's a Christian. I'm not saying he doesn't have a lot of things I wish he would change. I'm just saying when I see the things he's standing on, I don't think anybody but God could have put it in his heart, "These are the things you are to do." Just the appointments to the judiciary. Do you realize that if we had had another four or eight years of what we just came out of, there is no chance that a man like me or any Christian pastor preaching to the church could have been accused of hate crimes and all the things they might...there is no way we could have won in a court system. Just conservative judges being appointed can make a huge difference, constitutionalists. My point is, God throughout the ages has used very imperfect instruments to get his will done. And I've made it clear to you in the past, there are things about Donald Trump I do not appreciate and I do not like, but his positions and his policies have been favorable to people who believe the Bible, and for that we ought to say amen and we ought to be thankful. Maybe he'll decide not to run and the vice president will run. I think that would be a step in the right direction. But there's hope. My whole point is God gets things done when we think there is no hope and there is hope.

Look at verse 20 of our text, we are closing down here, "But you did not learn Christ in this way." In other words, Christ is right the opposite of this whole stuff. Christ fixes this whole problem. You and I are in the school of Christ. Through Christ and through grace, there is hope. One can be plucked out of this downward spiral.

That's why the preaching of the word of God is so precious and so important. You know, on Sunday when you sit under preaching, there is a jarring good to it at times. We can get a little of the dullness in us, and we can get a little of the callousness in us, and we can get a little of the darkness in us, and we can grow comfortable, and there is a part of us that would come and sit on that pew and say, "Pastor, just give us some pleasing platitudes. I'm just a little bit comfortable in my callousness and my darkness right now." And all of a sudden, boom! The word of God comes out and grabs you and shakes you a little bit and you think, "Amen, I needed that. Let's get back on the sanctification road. Let's get off the downward spiral. Amen?" The preaching of the word of God. It helps us stay on the right track.

But through the word of God and through sovereign grace based on the merits of his Son's substitutionary death, God reaches his omnipotent arm down through the muck and mire of sin, down through the hardness of sensuality and the callousness, and he can grasp the most defiled soul and lift him, justify him, sanctify him, and one day glorify him, all through the merits of his own precious Son. There is always hope.

There is always hope, but I can tell you this with all of the authority and the confidence in my soul: if man has any part in it, there is no hope. Salvation is all of God and there is always hope. There is always hope so don't you give up on that loved one. Don't you give up on that son or daughter or grandson or granddaughter. Don't you give up on that husband or wife. Don't you give up. Never never never give up. Witness to them. Pray for them and believe, believe that God would save them, pluck them out of this downward spiral, and make them an amazing trophy of God's grace. And all of God's people said? Amen.

Let's stand together in prayer, alright?