

When a Snake Takes the Stand

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[0 : 0 0] You're listening to a sermon recorded at Providence Community Church, Truth and Beauty in Community. If you are in the Kansas City area, please consider joining us in person next Sunday.

We meet in Lenexa, Kansas at 10 a.m. every Lord's Day. Until then, we pray that as you open your Bibles, the Lord will open your heart to receive His Word.

This week I was browsing through a collection of essays written by the great Sinclair Ferguson and landed on an essay entitled, Naming the Enemy.

At the beginning of the essay, he talks about the three-dimensional work of the cross, namely that the cross deals with our sinfulness, which is the power that sin has over us.

It also deals with our various specific sins, the various sins we commit that bring guilt upon us. And the cross also deals with Satan. And it was easy as I read that to think of Sinclair Ferguson's deep Scottish brogue as he said the following, In short, we talk about the cross affecting three things, the root, the fruit, and the brute.

[1 : 1 9] The root, the fruit, and the brute. No, that doesn't practice. That's just natural right there. The root, the fruit, and the brute. And his essay, of course, was dealing with this third thing, the brute, Satan himself.

He went on to describe that almost every name that is connected to Satan is in some way connected to his role as a deceiver. One of his titles in Scripture is the deceiver, and another title in Scripture is the accuser.

And then, of course, even the name devil, I remember finding this out in the Greek when I was learning Greek a long time ago, thinking, oh my goodness. Even the name devil has this idea of throwing something, as if throwing out an accusation, throwing out a falsehood to someone.

Mudslinging is maybe how we would think about it. And then, of course, the word Satan. Most commentators suggest that the root of the name Satan is actually the idea of someone ambushing, sneaking out from a bush and ambushing someone.

So all of these names for Satan manifest in the original story of the first sin that ever took place in the world. And I want to read that to you from Genesis 3.

[2 : 3 4] Genesis 3.1, Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. But God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

But the serpent said to the woman, You will surely not die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be open, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

There we see Satan bearing false witness about God. You will surely not die, Satan says. For God knows, assigning motive, that when you eat of it, your eyes will be open, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

I suppose you could say that the very first sin to ever have been committed on the face of the earth was committed by the devil, and it pertains to the ninth commandment, which we're looking at today, the idea of bearing false witness.

[3 : 43] The very first sin that ever happened in the world was committed by the devil, and it was the sin of false witness, slandering God. And what's the second sin to have ever been committed in the world?

Well, I suppose you might say that the second sin was the sin committed by Eve, and that was to believe the lies. Well, that's where I want to spend the majority of our time this morning. Our text is both Exodus 20.16, which says, You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, and Deuteronomy 19.15-21, which gets into the details of how to handle slander.

And of course, I could preach a message about how slander is wrong, and I suppose I will do that. But really, what I wanted to do today is to equip you to be a discerning hearer.

I want to equip you knowing that the world is full of slander, and that potentially every day of your life, lies will land on your little cute ears. And you need to learn how to discern.

I think that's the gift that we would ask the Lord for this morning, Lord, please help us to be more discerning with all that we hear, with all that is being said in the world. And for that, let's turn to this text in Deuteronomy.

[5 : 00] Deuteronomy 19 is sort of a commentary on the command, the ninth commandment, not to slander. Deuteronomy 19 is sort of how to handle this when it arises in a public, formal court setting.

So let me read verse 15 to you just to give you an idea of what's going on here. A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed.

Only on the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses shall a charge be established. So once again, this is dealing with a formal court setting, with formal charges and formal penalties.

And the idea here is is that there would be a great temptation to sabotage someone you didn't like by bringing a false accusation against that person into a court, right?

You get with a friend because the rule is two or three. You get with a friend, you find another co-conspirator and you make an accusation against so-and-so so to take them down. Maybe you want their property, maybe you want their wife, whatever.

[6 : 04] The point is is that there's a pretty easy means within this court system to take someone down. All you have to do is bring a false allegation. So what we see in verse 16 is how to process that possibility.

God is quite careful. Let me pause for a moment and say, it is better in biblical justice for a guilty man to go free than for an innocent man to be punished. Everything wired in the biblical justice system is wired in that direction.

So there may be people who have committed terrible crimes for which there were not two or three witnesses and the Bible would rather let those people go knowing that God is the great avenger than to falsely penalize someone who was not indeed guilty.

This is a passage kind of about all of that. And verse 16 says, if a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the Lord, both the priests and the judges who are in office in those days.

the judges shall inquire diligently. Sorry. That's the aim for this sermon. I want to just help you become a good judge, a discerning priest, someone who is able to separate the worthy from the worthless, the clean from the impure, the true from the false.

[7 : 29] And one of the things that I want you to see in this Deuteronomy passage is that there is a high stake to this whole process of discernment. Look back at verse 16. If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days.

The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother.

So you shall purge the evil from your midst. How many of you have read To Kill a Mockingbird enough to remember it? I know most of you have read it.

How many of you have seen the movie? Okay, just heads up, To Kill a Mockingbird is a Halloween movie. So if you're looking for a seasonal movie to watch, it's actually, I think it's the perfect Halloween movie.

Because it's just full of the darkness of the human heart, right? Like, it's just full, but it's set, the setting, the imagery, the cinematography. So if you're looking for something to do, I would just commend that movie to you.

[8 : 45] For those of you that don't know about the movie or the book, essentially centers around this young girl named Scout. If you've ever met a little kid named Scout, it probably got named after that book.

And her dad is Atticus Finch, who is this noble southern gentleman of an attorney. A black man in town gets accused of sexually assaulting a woman named Mayella Yule.

And of course, there is an immediate sort of intention to lynch this man before he faces justice. So one of the first things we see Atticus do is stand up for justice in general, refusing the lynching that is set to occur before a trial can take place.

And then we see him in the process of the trial itself acting as if he had read Deuteronomy 19. And we find out through the course of the story that Mayella Yule was lying.

She was accusing this black man of sexually assaulting her when indeed she was the sexual aggressor and we were essentially reliving a kind of Potiphar's wife type story. So if we were going to enact Deuteronomy 19 and to kill a mockingbird, Yule would probably hang.

[9 : 57] That's the idea of the text here. That if someone brings a false accusation against someone else, then the penalty for that false accusation should be the same penalty for the crime they had alleged.

So if I say this person had killed someone and I did that simply to take them out of the scene so that I could have their land or whatever, if I were found to have lied, I would be executed for I had attempted to take the life of this man through my false witness.

So the stakes of discernment are massive. The stakes of discernment are massive because what I want to show you today is that even though we might go from a formal court to the court of public opinion, these same basic rules apply.

And I want you to also see what God has in mind, why God thinks it's important to treat slander this way. Look at verse 20. And the rest, as a consequence of imposing this standard on the false witness, and the rest shall hear and fear and shall never again commit any such evil among you.

Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. The aim of handling slander is not simply to discern between truth and error.

[11 : 21] We've not handled slander properly if all we've done is discern between truth and error. The biblical standard for handling slander is beyond merely discernment and gets into sentencing, gets into consequences.

There has to be a penalty for lying. And that penalty has to be seen by everyone so that this sort of behavior is discouraged.

There's just some really strong words in this text. You shall not pity. This is malicious, it says in verse 16. This is evil, it says in verse 19. It's evil, again, in verse 20.

You shall not pity. The command is to be totally merciless with the false witness. The idea is simply this. If a snake has dared to take the stand, you must crush it.

That's the standard the Bible has for slander. By the way, we are so broken as a society right now. I can imagine a pastor who is like about to be in trouble for something preaching a sermon like this the day before some terrible news comes out.

[12 : 33] I think that's happened. So I just want you to let you know tomorrow's going to be a normal day. You're not going to hear anything. This is the text. We're in Exodus 20:19. 16, sorry.

So let's move then. That's the formal court rules, but I want to move to show you that isn't it a shame that we have to say things like that, disclaim things?

Anyway, I want to move to show you that's the formal standard, but as we go through the word, we'll see that that formal standard also applies to the informal court of public opinion.

In Leviticus 19:16 we read, you shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor. I am the Lord.

Let's define what we mean by slander. Slander is the intentional or unintentional spreading of falsehoods that threaten damage to another person's reputation.

[13 : 29] Slander is the intentional or unintentional spreading of falsehoods that threaten damage to another person's reputation. That's sort of the biblical data compiled into one definition.

Slander can come from things like error. You can simply have the wrong facts. It doesn't have to necessarily be intentional. Slander can be embellishment. You're spicing up the story.

You're embellishing the facts. Slander can be confabulation. Have you ever heard of confabulation? This is crazy.

All right, just one second. So, the Bible, when it sort of gives the antidote to all of this stuff as sober-mindedness, right? Maybe you've seen that in the Bible. Every sort of antidote, an elder must be sober-minded, a judge must be sober-minded, and it's this word sober-minded, and you're thinking, that's a weird phrase, sober-minded.

You're like, what's going on there? Here's the funny thing. People used to really drink a lot of alcohol, like all the time. People were walking around with all sorts of problems associated with the high degree of alcohol intake that they had.

[14 : 44] Now, you're like, what does this have to do with confabulation? Confabulation is actually a medical diagnosis for someone that has a thiamine deficiency due to alcohol abuse, and essentially it's just one of many ways alcohol messes up your brain if you abuse it, and confabulation is essentially you don't remember things, so you've put your own facts in there and believe them as if they were real.

You invent stories. And I just find it interesting, when the Bible talks about sober-mindedness, my sense is that that would have been understood as the way a person who doesn't have a drinking problem thinks, and there would have been all of this data just from your uncle or whatever just around you, and you would have seen, like, people who have drinking problems don't think well, and one of the things they do is confabulate.

Confabulate is, I don't actually remember key details, but I'm filling in stuff that makes sense to me, and I'm believing it myself.

One of the big mistakes people make when discerning slander is they ask, is this person sincere? Is this person telling the truth as far as they see it?

Thinking that that equates to truth. People are self-deceived routinely. Another way that we see slander manifesting is assigning motives.

[16 : 06] You did X, Y, and Z because of this in your heart. And then another way of slander is a recategorization. You lump a whole bunch of behaviors into a particular category or pattern that you've decided is sin when a lot of those behaviors don't actually fit into as sin.

If you're not having a great marriage right now, I would encourage you, listen to this sermon today on slander as a sermon about slander. But if your marriage is not great, if you're having either cold war or hot war, if you'll go back and look at this list I'm giving you, this is a lot of times what's going on.

There's slander in your marriage and you're getting very sloppy in how you think about the other person. You're actually committing a lot of these errors here.

slander. And so if your marriage isn't doing great and you're like, why did that fight that probably needed to be a 30 minute discussion last six hours, it's probably slander. You're probably assigning motives.

You're probably universalizing. You always do. You always do. So on and so forth. This is a big thing in broken marriages. So slander is the intentional or unintentional spreading of falsehoods that threaten damage to another person's reputation.

[17 : 25] And it may be intentional, it may be unintentional, and it involves all of these sort of tells. Another one is simply the equation of, I feel X, therefore you must have meant for me to feel X, and I'm making my feelings the sort of translator of this entire experience.

The big idea is that the setting changes from formal court in Deuteronomy to informal court of the public opinion, but the sin does not change.

The idea is simple. Whether you're in a courtroom or a chat room, this is sin. And it's evil. And it deserves not only to be called out, but to in fact be penalized.

The Puritan Richard Baxter wrote, it is forbidden of God among the heinous, damning sins of slander. It is forbidden of God among the heinous, damning sins and made the character of a notorious person.

sin. He's talking about how this sin appears alongside so many other sins that we do readily admit are truly evil. Take, for instance, Romans 1, 28-32, where Paul says, since they did not see to fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

[18 : 44] They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. One of the things I draw your attention to is that the person who has been given up to slander has a debased mind.

Again, you cannot account for someone, it's hard to understand someone who simply isn't thinking any longer. But that's in case often with those who slander.

Just about every letter that Paul writes to every local church that he cares for has some passage about this sin. And the truth is, and this is very key, slanderers often present themselves as maellas, as victims.

But let's be clear, they are villains. Villains against the very foundation of society.

[20 : 00] No matter how helpless or broken or confused they appear to be, we need to understand that these slanderers are pulling at the very fabric of society.

They will tempt you to have pity. And I would encourage you, there is a role in God's economy for mercy, but be exceedingly wary of someone who because they feel a certain way or can't think straight would ruin another person's reputation.

That person is not a victim. That person is a villain. They're a villain because the whole world runs on trust. That's all it is.

As the writer of Peter Pan said, the whole world runs on faith and trust and pixie dust. I like that phrase. I think about it a lot. It's like, it's kind of true. It's like, it's mostly just that we trust each other and God is good.

The whole world runs on trust. Trust is the base layer of every human relationship and without trust, nothing gets built or maintained. So we move in when we allow slanderers to dominate public discourse.

[21 : 10] We move from places where we could have success to places where all we have is suspicion. Where we could be making progress, we have paranoia instead. This really is something that is hurting just human flourishing in general.

Someone is either intentionally or unintentionally eroding trust in someone that should be trusted. They are a real and present danger to human good.

Again, my aim here is to stir up your zeal to be discerners. To be discerners who are not thrown off the trail by whatever the world says you should care about.

I have four suggestions from God's word about how to be a discerning listener. The first thing is this. Be cherishing of your neighbor's reputation.

Love your neighbor's reputation. reputation. There's this line in Othello, Shakespeare, where he, I wrote it down, he essentially says, take my riches and at the very least you'll be richer.

[22 : 21] Something good will happen. He's like, take my reputation? I'm bankrupt and you have nothing. Proverbs 22 1 says, a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.

So slander is in essence the defrauding of a brother and sister's most priceless commodity, their reputation. So when you hear someone, whether intentionally or unintentionally, damaging someone else's reputation, understand the stakes of this moment.

That person's most precious commodity is their good name. and that good name is being threatened. Number two, show no partiality.

Show no partiality. You need to check your own quiet biases. Leviticus 19 1 says, you shall not do injustice in court.

You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. Let's camp out on this verse for a moment. What is it saying?

[23 : 35] It's saying that you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great. The truth is that there are kind of two kinds of people in the world. Those who are attempted to defer to power and those who are tempted to distrust it.

Right? So there's kind of people who would naturally gravitate toward being favorable to the pitiful looking or the poor or the person with little power and distrustful of the person with power, person with position, and then there would be the other kind of person who would be tempted to give a lot more credence to the person with power, with talent, with influence, and not really care a lot what the little person thinks.

Everybody probably has a side of that hill that they lean toward. And so the righteous law of God says that when you go into an act of discernment here at court, you need to make sure that you're not showing partiality either to the poor or to the great.

What you'll find sometimes is that when slander hits your ears, this little bias begins working in favor of the lie.

If you already have great suspicion and fear of hypocritical leaders, of leaders who have secrets, and so on and so forth, and you hear someone say, so-and-so did this, and so-and-so did that, your natural bias against power will give that lie wheels.

[25 : 17] Likewise, if you hear someone say, perhaps of someone of a different race, so-and-so did that, or so-and-so did that, and if you have some sort of quiet little confirmation bias, you stop being discerning.

In my opinion, the world is, at this current stage, has a great, great bias against people in power, especially people in moral positions of authority, and some of that is, to be clear, earned.

you just need to be careful when you hear these things, understand, you may already have sort of a subconscious narrative at work that's sort of going to take that that you hear and decide whether you think it's more or less believable.

So number one, love people's reputations. It's precious. Number two, check your own biases. Number three, expect biblical order. Friends, we simply don't get a pass from doing the Bible, the Bible way, because we're upset, because we're afraid, because we're a woman, because we're a minority.

We don't get a pass. The word of God stands for all people, for all times, and it is the standard of life and faith that we use to evaluate everyone and everything. People don't get a pass from biblical procedures, simply because X, Y, and Z.

[26 : 50] The Bible is our light and our wisdom, and we use it as the light unto our dark path. So if someone is skipping out of biblical order, we understand, number one, God is not the author of chaos, but of order, and number two, let all things be done decently and in order.

These are both from 1 Corinthians 14. And Matthew 18 gives us a clear guidance for how to handle this. And so if someone walks through this process of slander and they haven't done this properly in order, they don't get a pass.

The word of God stands. Matthew 18, 15. If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

But if he does not listen to you, take one or two others along with you that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. Here's our echo of Deuteronomy 19. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, Friends, we use that verse to encourage us in our prayer meetings.

[28 : 15] The verse is actually Jesus endorsing our judicial actions as a church against sin. The next thing you can do is just look for the elements we described earlier.

Are there errors, embellishments, confabulations, assigning motives, recategorization, universalizing, feelings as facts, and so on and so forth? And how do you respond if you see someone slandering?

What should be done to the slanderer? Again, back to Deuteronomy 19. If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then parties to the dispute shall appear before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days.

The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

How does that work in an environment where there is no obvious penalty for the accusation? Say someone brings a false accusation against another brother in the church.

[29 : 21] They're not going to lose their job or anything like that. How is the false accusation penalized? Here's I think the biblical wisdom. what was going to happen if that accusation was found to be true was this brother or sister would lose a serious amount of reputation.

So what should be done to the slanderer is they should just lose their reputation. They should just not be trusted. That's the penalty they were seeking to invoke on the other person and that's what should land on them.

You're a liar. It's going to take a long time for me to think otherwise. Church discipline could be appropriate but severing the relationship might also be appropriate.

Titus 3.10 says as for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice have nothing more to do with him knowing that such a person is warped and sinful he is self-condemned.

As for a person who stirs up division after warning him once or twice have nothing more to do with him knowing that such a person is warped and sinful he is self-condemned.

[30 : 38] Most of all what I would tell you to do for someone that you have found to be a slanderer is pray for them and pray for them pray for them and pray for them.

Friends like maybe there'll be a penalty that is imposed by the church or by humans on this person who is lying but make no mistake about it these people are not on God's side and the God of the universe is against them.

You often wonder when you see Jesus say father forgive them they know not what they do or Stephen forgive them they know not what they do. What are they saying there because they kind of know and I think of it this way they don't realize that they've just turned the creator and sustainer of the universe against them.

And when you find someone who is in the act of slandering and won't repent of it you need to understand that essentially whether they're a believer or not their spiritual life is done until this gets dealt with.

Jesus talks about the disciples going out into the Palestine and looking for the man of peace and says that if you find a man of peace let your peace rest there but if you don't find a man of peace don't let your peace rest there.

[31 : 52] A person who has knowingly chosen repeatedly after being requested not to the person who's chosen to slander a brother or sister is essentially devoid of the peace of God.

They are not at peace with God. God is not at peace with them to be more explicit. As we read this morning in our call to worship who can sojourn in his tent who can dwell on the holy hill of the Lord.

He who does not slander with his tongue. Psalm 101 5. Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure.

What should you do if you find someone who's slandering I would warn them I would encourage them to repent but more than anything pray for them. They found themselves on the wrong side of the law and the law keeper never misses his man.

I fought the law and the law won will be sung by many forever in hell. That was the main objective.

[33 : 05] How do you handle slander when it hits your ears? I want to hone in on one particular slice of that and it's how do you handle when you're being slandered? How do you handle it when you're being slandered?

See the more you grow in Christ likeness the more you'll be persecuted and the vast majority of persecution that happens in the world is verbal something Jesus himself predicted in Matthew 5 11.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. So what we want at Providence is for each person to become more and more like Jesus knowing full well that's going to be glorious for you in so many ways.

One of the things that will happen as you become more and more like Jesus is you will be more and more persecuted. An Anglican bishop once said you know wherever the apostle Paul went there were either revivals or riots and everywhere I go they serve tea.

We want you to grow in Christ likeness knowing full well that that will be much good but also some pain. Some slander. Perhaps even in your own home.

[34 : 23] Jesus warned about being the kind of person who everybody loves. He says in Luke 6 26 woe to you when all men speak well of you for so did their fathers to the false prophets. prophets. So if you become more like the prophets you will be more persecuted and most persecution is coming in the form of slander and other verbal attacks. How do you handle it?

I think most of the time people tell you the first thing you should ask is what they're saying true. Friends I've learned that God does not use the accuser of the brethren to edify and teach.

If the only person telling you you have a problem and it's that area is some fork tongue devil of an accuser I'd probably just move on.

Do you really think that God's going to just send one person to you? Not your friends. Not the people who love you. Not the people who are concerned about you and also follow the Bible rules for discourse.

[35 : 34] You really think God's main instructor for you on some area of your life is some liar. Some person who doesn't obey the basics of Christianity 101.

Unlikely. So yeah, if someone makes some accusation, I guess you could ask, is this true? How would you know? I would really probably just go to someone who actually knows what Matthew 18 says. Go to a reasonable person and ask them and they'll be able to help you.

The great danger is that in giving the accuser any ground at all, we're really playing with fire. I was reading through this particular psychological magazine that was talking about various forms of verbal abuse.

And it said there that the consequences of someone who is constantly being slandered could be stuff like depression and anxiety, self-destruction, and here's one, the broken mirror syndrome, which is a deformed picture about oneself, internalization of abusers, negative emotions, so on and so forth.

I think that's right. I think when you give the accuser of the brethren an object, an opportunity to teach you, he's not going to teach you good stuff. So once you identify someone as a slanderer, I think the appropriate thing is to just move on.

[36 : 56] And do your best to cling to the truth that God presents. There's one example from history I think of all the time when it comes to slander, and that's John Calvin.

Upon his death, another professor in the college that Calvin founded, Theodore Bezos, said, having been a spectator of his conduct for 16 years, I can now declare that in him all men may see a most beautiful example of the Christian character, an example which is easy to slander as it is difficult to imitate.

John Calvin was a frequent, and still is, a frequent target of slander. And listen to what he wrote. Godly men, even when they do well, must be exposed to evil reports.

By these strategies, Satan attacks our faith and unjustly slanders us among men. The temptation to be terrified by such reports is highly dangerous.

For we want our integrity to be well known. When we are well disposed, we take it ill if other men put a different interpretation on our conduct. Satan tries by slander to overturn all that we have done out of a good conscience.

[38 : 17] For he accuses us of something that we are not at all guilty of. or he loads us with unfounded slanders or contrives what never came into our minds.

And so really, as we close, we're at the beginning. We must never forget the brute. The very first sin ever to have been committed on the face of the earth.

The one who was a liar from the beginning still finds his mouthpieces to this day. That is why we should be zealous against this great sin.

We should hate what is evil and love what is good. Got to be careful not only in the public courtroom and the courtroom of public opinion, but in the courtroom of our own hearts.

Slanderers find a way, even when you are sure they are wrong, to convince you that something in you must be broken. Well, for communion today, I just want to dwell on the last line of Paul's communion text in 1 Corinthians 11.

[39 : 25] The whole text is simply, for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, also, he took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it. In remembrance of me.

Here's the line I want us to focus on for communion today. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. In my 20s, I used to travel a lot around the world.

And I was a Boy Scout growing up, so this, you'll imagine my genuine shock. This is how naive I was. When I realized that in most of the world, littering is not considered wrong.

this freaked me out when I began to travel around the world and realized that in most places, tossing garbage everywhere is not seen as a bad thing.

[40 : 27] And there was so much visual noise in these cities. You know what I mean by that? Like, it's just everywhere, cluttered everywhere.

And it's, it's, it's, it's, it's, it, it, I'd say it hurts your eyes, I think it hurts your brain. Because you're, you're living in this environment where, like, all the truth, beauty, and goodness is, there's just layers of filth on all of it.

You know? And then you come back to certainly some parts of America where I've lived, and you go back to the place where litter is considered wrong.

And you see creation, like, a much sweeter vision of creation. And there's, like, a peace that comes when you don't see, like, six-pack rings everywhere and stuff.

You know, there's this, this, there's just this quietness, almost, this visual quietness in an environment that's not full of trash. And it's, like, just this one thing people have decided to change and look at, like, how much different I feel when I'm in this place versus that place just based on this one thing.

[41 : 39] Friends, I'm an optimistic guy. The truth is, is that I think that the trash of deception, the trash of falsehood is going to be a part of our lives in this world forever.

And I want to point you to this beautiful truth embedded at the end of this communion passage. We celebrate this table, which is our key to the place where lies are no more.

If Christ has died for you, you've been born again, you're going to be in a place with no more trash. No more lies, no more falsehoods, none of them inside, none of them outside.

God, what a day of peace and clarity when everywhere you look, no matter how deeply you look, all you'll see is truth, beauty, and goodness.

Because that's all there is. That's what I want you to think about when you participate in this table today. We live in a world that is littered full of lies, but because Christ has laid down his life for our salvation, this short life, when it is over, we will be in the place that is solid all the way through of truth, beauty, and goodness.

[43 : 04] The place where God himself dwells. The place we didn't deserve to be. We've told a few lies ourselves. The place we receive as a gift from the God who knew us before all of eternity and sent his son to lay down his life for us.

And this cup and this bread represent the sacrifice that made it possible. We're all going to be in a spot. If you're a follower of Christ, we're all going to look at each other one day and be like, we were totally off about how great this was.

But it will be clean, clean, morally clean. There will be a peace and a goodness to it that we can't even fathom. So I'm going to pray, and then after I pray, you come and partake of this table.

You thank God for the citizenship he's purchased for you. skill skill skill skill Thank you.

Thank you.

[45 : 19] Thank you.