

Unstoppable

An Awe-Inspired People

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AN AWE-INSPIRED PEOPLE **Isaiah 66**

If you've got your Bible and I hope you do let me invite you to open with me to the book of Isaiah, chapter 66. We're doing this series for the next 6 weeks called "Unstoppable"; what happens when the church dares to take God at His Word. Last week we looked at the Christ-directed mission of the church, that which makes this whole thing unstoppable.

I want you to see the next ingredient, so to speak, the next characteristic of the church that is unstoppable. I believe that it is an awe-inspired people. What does it mean to be a people in awe of the God they serve? I want you to look with me in Isaiah 66, the last chapter of this book. This is God and He's speaking to the people of Israel, which were His people at this time. I want you to hear what he said to them as we come to the close of this book. Isaiah 66:1 says,

This is what the Lord says: 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?' declares the Lord. 'This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word. But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man, and whoever offers a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood, and whoever burns memorial incense, like one who worships an idol. They have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in their abominations; so I also will choose harsh treatment for them and will bring upon them what they dread. For when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, no one listened. They did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me' (Is. 66:1-4).

God, we pray that during our time in your Word today, Lord that you would show us what it means to be esteemed in your sight. God that you would show us what it means to be humble and contrite in spirit and what it means to be a church that trembles at your Word. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Some of you may think, well this is an interesting passage he has chosen for today. A lot of pig's blood, breaking dogs' necks, kind of weird when you come to this passage of Scripture. Well I want you to see two main elements in this passage that we just read.

The people mastered religion.

First of all, I want you to see what these people had mastered. They had mastered religion. They had gotten really good at religion. At worship there was a whole Old Testament sacrificial system that was set up for the people of God to worship Him. They would bring offerings, sacrifices before Him. And the people had gotten really good at it. They could bring their offerings day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year.

They would go through the rituals. They would do the things they needed to do. They had mastered religion. They had mastered worship.

The people missed reverence and respect for God's Word.

But I want you to see what they had missed. While they had mastered religion, they had missed reverence and respect for God's Word.

God said, the one I esteem is not the one who brings all of the offerings; it is *"he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word"* (Is. 66:2). You come down to the end of verse 4, and He says, *"When I called, no one answered, when I spoke, no one listened"* (Is. 66:4).

This is the question I want us to think about, "Is it possible to master religion and to master worship and somewhere along the way lose out on what it means to have a reverence and a respect for God's Word?" I think it is entirely possible. To get good at doing the outward things that we do whether it is singing songs, coming to church, doing the things we do that are outward forms of religion and worship and somewhere along the way completely miss out on what it means to have a reverence and respect for God's Word.

God's Word Is the Foundation for Our Worship

I want to remind you that God's Word is the foundation for our worship. Our worship revolves around His Word. In fact I want to take you on a little bit of a journey through a few psalms and I want you to see something really interesting.

Turn with me back to Psalms chapter 56. I want to show you a couple of passages. I want to encourage you to underline these verses in your Bible. I want you to see how often times God in Scripture equates Himself with His Word. When it comes to worship in particular, Scripture sometimes makes little distinction between God and His Word. Let me show you some examples. Psalm 56:4, look at what the Bible says—it says, *"In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?"*

Did you catch what that verse said? It said we praise God's what? His Word. Not just we praise God—we praise, we worship God's Word. Same thing down in verse 10, *"In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"* (Ps. 56:10-11). Two more times, three times in this psalm He says just in case we didn't catch it the first time, we praise the Word of God, not just God, but His Word. Pretty interesting.

Turn with me over to Psalm 119. This is a chapter that has some rich stuff on what it means to learn from the Word of God, to meditate on the Word of God, to read it, to digest it. Psalm 119; look with me at verse 48. I want you to see what the Bible says about God's Word in worship. Psalm 119:48, "I lift up my hands," now listen to this, *"to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees."* You got the picture. The psalmist is saying, "I'm going to lift up my hands not just to God but to His commands, to His law, to His Word."

Look later in that same chapter, Psalm 119:97. This is one of my favorite verses. *"Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long"* (Ps. 119:97). You catch the tone there – "I love your law, God."

It kind of like the Puritans in the day when it was illegal for believers to have Bibles in Britain. They would come to take the Bibles away from them that they had just gotten. For the first time they had been exposed to the Word. They would come to take it away and they would stand up and say, "Take our houses, take our lands, take our churches, take our children, but don't take our Bibles." Is that your order of priority? Do you love the Bible? The Word, the living God, communication of the Almighty? Do you love it more than you love your children? More than you love security?

I want you to look later at Psalm 119:120, "*My flesh trembles and fears you and I stand in awe,*" not of you but "*of your laws.*"

Scripture is equating God with His Word. Let me show you one more time. Psalm 138. Look with me at verse 2. This I think really sums up the heart of what we are getting at here – God's Word the foundation of our worship. Verse 2 says, "*I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your*" (Ps. 138:2) what? Your Word. God has exalted above all things not just His name but His Word. He is equating the two together. God's Word exalted above all things. God's Word is the foundation for our worship.

You know what is interesting – when you look throughout the history of the church, whether it is in Scripture or in the years that followed after that up until today, and you see times; there have been times in history where God has moved in revival and awakening among His people; where His Spirit has rested on His people and done unusual things that were unexplainable, unfathomable. During those times the uniting factor whether in Scripture or in the history of the church, the uniting factor in the history of revivals and awakenings has always been a renewed sense of awe for God's Word; that when God's people begin to realize again how precious this Word is, that His Spirit rests on them in a powerful way. They begin to see Him move in ways that before that they never could have imagined.

Let me show you an example. Turn back a few more pages to the left to the book of Nehemiah chapter 8. You've got to see this picture in Scripture. Let me give you a little context for the passage of Scripture we are about to read.

Nehemiah 1-7 is the story of God's people rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem. It was a big task. The people did that, they spent long hard hours, many days they built the walls around the city of Jerusalem. But now when you get to Nehemiah 8 God begins to rebuild His people. And I want you to see where it starts. This is an incredible picture, Nehemiah 8; we're going to read from verse 5.

Just to give you a little bit of the context, all the people of God, the people of Israel had gathered together in one place. So you've got the whole community together. I want you to listen to what happened, verse 5. The Bible says,

"Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, 'Amen! Amen!' Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (Neh. 8:5-6).

Now can you imagine that with me? Just picture everybody coming together in the church. This guy named Ezra comes up, stands on a platform. All he does is open the Book. The Book was the Old Testament law at that point. All he did was open the Book; didn't tell a

funny joke; didn't tell a story to draw the crowd in. All he did was open the Book and you know what the people did? Spontaneously, nobody asked them to, no one told them to, they just all start to stand. Then they lift their hands. Imagine all across the place lifting their hands, they start shouting out, "Amen, amen." And then they bow down and they bring their faces to the ground. What an amazing picture of a people who were in awe of God's Word.

Now I want you to think about it with me. Think about it, those kinds of responses. What do we most often think of those responses with when it comes to our contemporary forms of worship today? Music, right? Somebody plays a song, hits a chord, so everybody stands up. We lift our hands. We shout out with our voices. Maybe if we're really extreme we bow down with our faces to the ground. I want to ask the question, "What would happen if the church of Jesus Christ today responded to his Word like that?" What if it didn't take the right musical worship leader or the right song or the right chord to cause us to be in awe of God? What if all it took was the Bible being opened up and we had such reverence, such respect, such awe of God's Word that we stood up, raised our hands, started shouting, "Amen, amen!" And then bowed down with our faces to the ground. What an amazing scene here. What happens when a church stands in awe of God's Word?

I remember... I think back to the time I was engaged and preparing to get married to Heather. I tell college students or single guys, I've got a piece of advice for you. If you fall in that category then you need to write this down. You need to remember this. You need to remember that during the time you're engaged and the whole wedding process, it is not about you. Ok? It is all about her. That's just the way it is. She has all kinds of parties thrown for her. You're not getting anything.

Everybody comes up to her, talking to her about how excited they are about the wedding and how much they can't wait for it. You're just kind of standing there like you're really not that important a part of this thing. Granted you sold the farm to put that ring on her finger. But you're just kind of standing there.

And the way we do weddings in our culture epitomizes this. I'm guessing most of you if not all of you have been to a wedding before. You know the way it works. I remember the place where we got married. I was standing over in the back in the side over here. When it came my appointed time, my queue, I start walking in with the best man, the preacher. Everybody is sitting out there making small talk. They look up and say, "Oh there's Dave." Then they go back to talking to each other. No big deal, Dave is in the room.

So I come and I stand there in my place; the front. Some other people come in and take their places. Then when everybody is set, everything gets real quiet. Everybody stops talking. Then the dude on the trumpet hits a note, organist bangs down the organ, doors that in the back that were closed swing open, and out steps the bride. What does everyone do? Oh they stand up; they get tears in their eyes, chills down their backs and think she's so beautiful!! I'm thinking, I came in 5 minutes ago; what about me huh?

And it is truly an amazing scene to see this one person step into a room and a whole room stand and turn in awe. I've got to ask the question today to this church, what would happen if we responded to God's Word like that. What if it awed us? I want to do something, today, a little bit different. It is something that for a number of reasons, I hesitate to do. It is something I remember a while ago, was at a conference... I was listening to a musical worship leader actually who did something similar to what I want to do.

It challenged me and transformed me in a way I had never been challenged and transformed before when it comes to having an awe for God's Word. And so I want to do this with you. If you have your Bibles turn over to Romans 1:1. I want us to see the Word and respond to the Word because the Word is good. And it deserves our reverence and respect and our awe. If you have your Bibles, Romans 1, we will start there in verse 1. The Bible says...

[Pastor David proceeds to spend the next 22 minutes reciting Romans 1-8 from memory.]

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God — the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome.

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were

darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God 'will give to each person according to what he has done.' To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.

All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) This will take

place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: 'God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.'

Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.

What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: 'So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge.'

But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? Someone might argue, 'If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?' Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—'Let us do evil that good may result'? Their condemnation is deserved.

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written:

'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.' 'Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.' 'The poison of vipers is on their

lips.' 'Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.' 'Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.' 'There is no fear of God before their eyes.'

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished — he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'

Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.'

Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness

that comes by faith. For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.' The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of

God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey —whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Do not covet.' But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at

work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were

saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word is good. I hesitate to do that for a number of different reasons. I know my motives will be questioned. I just believe though that the Word is that important in the church today. And I know that some of you are thinking, well that is great – but I can't do that. I can't memorize Scripture. And I know that many of us have different abilities to memorize. That is a given. Before you walk out of here saying, "I just can't memorize Scripture like that." Let me remind you Psalm 19:10 says that, "God's Word is more precious than gold, than much pure gold" and I know in this room if I were to offer \$1,000 to every single one of you for every verse you could memorize today, you could learn to memorize Scripture real quick. Why? Because you would be able to receive something. The Word is more precious than gold. Is it more precious to The Church at Brook Hills than money? Is it more precious?

Please, please, before you even begin to think that it is any big deal to memorize a few chapters of Scripture, I want to tell you about an article I read recently in *Newsweek* magazine. This article talks about Muslim students in Afghanistan who go to schools in Afghanistan at the age of 5 or 6 years old. And there they begin a process whereby by the age of 13 or 14 they have memorized the entire Koran, the Muslim holy book.

Not only do they memorize it, these students come to these schools and they speak different languages, the Urdu or the Pashto language; they come to these schools and they memorize the Koran in Arabic because that is the original language it was written in.

I want you to imagine with me for a second what it would take for a church to say we're going to start memorizing the New Testament. And not just memorize the New Testament; we're going to memorize it in Greek. So you do a process for a number of years, you memorize the New Testament in Greek. Then when you have finished that then the task really begins and you say, now we've got the Old Testament in Hebrew. And you say, "Well David that is preposterous. Obviously we would never do that. We wouldn't even do that in English."

Well I think we need to ask the question if those people are that committed to learning the words of a false god, then what does that say about you and I that have the words of the one and only true God?

God, pour out your Spirit on this church, on the people here; that we might have a renewed fear and reverence and awe for your Word; even in this moment whether it is kneeling with our faces to the ground repenting of sin; celebrating in the comfort of His Word. God raise up a church even now that stands in awe of His Word that responds to His Word.

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