

Embracing Gospel Realism: The Christian Life As Inevitably Hard But Invariably Good

Introduction

The Text

- A. It's been a couple weeks since I've been in the pulpit, so let me very briefly remind you where we are in the book of Acts now.
1. You remember perhaps: presently, Paul is in Jerusalem and he's really going through it.
 2. The Jews there are not pleased with what he's doing with Jesus and the gospel.
 3. It appears to them like he's completely trashing their Jewish heritage, tradition, people, place, etc.
 4. And they want him dead for it.
 5. So there's this tug-of-war taking place between the Jewish crowds and the Roman authorities here as, for their part, they're trying to make some sense of all the uprising and they're attempting to reestablish some sense of order in the city.
 6. Meanwhile, Paul is just being pulled back and forth like a rag doll of sorts. His life seems quite clearly to be in a state of jeopardy.
- B. And we spent all of last time on that glorious little slant of light that breaks in at us from [v. 11](#) of [Acts 23](#).
1. And for this morning's reading, I wanted to start with that same verse and then carry on down from there to the end of the chapter ([v. 35](#)) . . .

¹¹ The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome."

¹² When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³ There were more than forty who made this conspiracy. ¹⁴ They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now therefore you, along with the council, give notice to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case more exactly. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

¹⁶ Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷ Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to tell him." ¹⁸ So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, "Paul the prisoner called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to say to you." ¹⁹ The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?" ²⁰ And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him. ²¹ But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty of their men are lying in ambush for him, who have bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him. And now they are ready, waiting for your consent." ²² So

the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, "Tell no one that you have informed me of these things."

²³ Then he called two of the centurions and said, "Get ready two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night. ²⁴ Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor." ²⁵ And he wrote a letter to this effect: ²⁶ "Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings. ²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. ²⁸ And desiring to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council. ²⁹ I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. ³⁰ And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him."

³¹ So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³² And on the next day they returned to the barracks, letting the horsemen go on with him. ³³ When they had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. ³⁴ On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from. And when he learned that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, "I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive." And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's praetorium. (Acts 23:11-35)

The Metamodern Mood

A. Perhaps you've caught wind of it. Many scholars and social commentators have been making note in recent days of a palpable shift that's been taking place in the quality and structure of contemporary thought.

1. A different worldview is emerging.

From Modernism to Postmodernism

A. Many of us may be familiar with the broad-sweeping transition our culture once made from modernism to postmodernism.

1. It entailed, among other things, a move from the more naively optimistic to a deep-seated pessimism.

B. With modernism, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there was this hope and even expectation of a good future that we were building together.

1. Given the advancements we were making in science and technology, guided as they were by the seemingly limitless potential of human reason and all this, we felt as if we were on a collision-course for the stars.
2. We were given to grand narratives and meaning and progress. It seemed inevitable.

C. But, after the reckoning of the two world wars, things started to give way to the subversive attitude that we see particularly in the 60s and what followed.

1. The optimism and idealism gave way to a sort of existential dread and nihilism.
2. There was a sense that none of the institutions and structures could be trusted, that not even truth could be relied upon, that all was to be questioned, suspected, deconstructed.

- a. The ironic and the skeptical, felt more real, more honest.
- b. Where before we were naively optimistic, then we became what we thought was more realistically pessimistic.

From Postmodernism to Metamodernism

- A. But this postmodern mood has now shown itself to also be naive, or at least insufficient, in its own right.
 - 1. People have grown weary of suspecting everything, discarding everything. They are tired of living in the ruins of postmodernity.
 - 2. A new generation is rising up that is hungry for stability, for something they can lean on, for hope for the future.
 - a. They are tired of deconstructing and want something solid again.
 - b. They're tired of living without a narrative, without a tradition, without some structure to organize life and meaning and give them some sense of transcendence and hope.
- B. This is now what scholars are referring to as metamodernism.
 - 1. It's something distinct from modernity and postmodernity, something beyond, above, and yet strangely situated between them both.
- C. One writer puts it like this: "Metamodernism considers that our era is characterized by an oscillation between aspects of both modernism and postmodernism. We see this manifest as a kind of informed naivety, a pragmatic idealism, a moderate fanaticism, oscillating between sincerity and irony, deconstruction and construction, apathy and affect, attempting to attain some sort of transcendent position, as if such a thing were within our grasp. The metamodern generation understands that we can be both ironic and sincere in the same moment; that one does not necessarily diminish the other."
 - 1. So, again, there's this oscillation, a pendulum-swing, that's taking place between both sides of those poles.
 - a. People are now still given to question and doubt and deconstruct,
 - b. but they are also desperate to hope and unapologetically sentimental and on a quest for transcendent reality and meaning.
 - 2. Metamodernism, then, is characterized by this strange and almost impossible mix of the two phases that have come before it.
 - a. It doesn't make complete sense, they can't hold it all together, but they know neither side—modernity nor postmodernity—had it all right, so they are trying to bring them together, whether they understand just how it holds or not.

D. I think another way of helping you see this is to simply read you some of the lyrics from Joni Mitchell's well-known song *Both Sides Now*.

1. It was first released in the 60s but it's been recently thrust back into the cultural consciousness by that Oscar-winning film CODA.
2. And I think it poignantly portrays all of this for us . . .

Rows and flocs of angel hair / And ice cream castles in the air / And feather canyons everywhere / I've looked at clouds that way

But now they only block the sun / They rain and snow on everyone / So many things I would have done / But clouds got in my way

I've looked at clouds from both sides now / From up and down, and still somehow / It's cloud illusions I recall / I really don't know clouds at all

Moons and Junes and Ferris wheels / The dizzy dancing way you feel / As every fairy tale comes real / I've looked at love that way /

But now it's just another show / You leave 'em laughing when you go / And if you care, don't let them know / Don't give yourself away

I've looked at love from both sides now / From give and take, and still somehow / It's love's illusions I recall / I really don't know love at all

Tears and fears and feeling proud / To say "I love you" right out loud / Dreams and schemes and circus crowds / I've looked at life that way

But now old friends are acting strange / They shake their heads, they say I've changed / Well something's lost, but something's gained / In living every day

I've looked at life from both sides now / From win and lose and still somehow / It's life's illusions I recall / I really don't know life at all

3. Did you catch it? There's this shift that takes place in each verse. You move from some naive idealism about clouds and love and life to a more pessimistic sense of things.
 - a. The world at first seems like an enchanted place where anything is possible. It's all magic.
 - b. But then there's disenchantment, right?
 - i. Clouds aren't cotton balls in the sky, they're just air and water, and they block the sun, rain on our parades.
 - ii. Love isn't butterflies in your stomach and happily ever after, it's scary and it hurts and it doesn't often go like you'd want.
4. But then the chorus starts to move towards that metamodern idea.
 - a. I've seen it from both sides. And both sides are kind of true, but not fully.
 - b. You oscillate back and forth and you come out going: I don't know if I really get how all this holds together. I don't think I really know clouds or love or life at all.

The Biblical Worldview

A. Now, why do I bring this up? Why do I spend so much time on this here at the beginning of the sermon?

1. I suppose it's because: what the world can't fully make sense of in this—Christianity can, the gospel can, Jesus can.
- B. Our culture knows that both sides are in some sense true:
1. We need transcendent reality, purpose, meaning, a grand narrative, hope for the future. We were made by God for enchantment. We can't survive without it.
 2. But things are broken. This place hurts. It's not easy. Life is hard. People can't be trusted. There's good reason for disenchantment and disillusionment.
 - a. Neither side is fully right in and of itself. We want to bring them together, but we don't know how.
 - b. We want to live "as if" both sides are true, but we don't understand how, in fact, it is so.
- C. Well, the biblical worldview, the gospel, particularly as it's presented to us in this text, helps us make sense of these things, of life. It brings all this together in a way metamodernism or some other worldview never could.
1. As we make our way through this text, I want to show you how the Christian worldview resists (1) Naïve Optimism on the one hand; and resists (2) Naïve Pessimism on the other hand; and it ultimately brings both sides together and leads us to embrace what I'd call (3) Gospel Realism at the end of it all.
 - a. So let's consider each of those three one at a time . . .

(1) Resisting Naïve Optimism

Verse 11 → Verse 12

- A. So, in the first place, as Christians, as followers of Jesus, texts like the one we have before us this morning in [Acts 23](#) do not permit us to be naively optimistic about what life will be like with Jesus.
1. We are not allowed to imagine that after you come to Jesus you are going to go off leaping from mountain peak to mountain peak with no more regard for or experience of the valley.
 2. That may be how some people try to sell Christianity to you, but it's a lie and thoroughly unbiblical.
 - a. Does following Jesus make your life better? Yes.
 - b. Does following Jesus make your life harder? Also yes!
- B. Now, where am I getting this idea in our text?
1. Well, this is partly why I wanted to begin by reading that verse we looked at last time, [v. 11](#). Remember there Jesus appears to Paul in the night and lifts his spirits, right? "I'm here. I'm with you. I've got a plan."

2. Look back at it: “The following night the Lord stood by him and said, ‘Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.’”
 - a. What a word that would be! What an encouragement after the miserable last couple of days.
 - b. The Lord is standing by him. And he’s going to carry him along to Rome so he can keep up his ministry and witness there as well.
- C. You and I would receive that word and here’s what we’d be inclined to think: Surely this means things are going to go better for us now.
1. The Jews were at our necks yesterday.
 2. Ah, but tomorrow the sun is going to come out, the birds are going to be singing. It’s only up from here. Jesus is standing by me. I have his promise.
 - a. We would think it means life is about to get a little easier for Paul.
- D. But then look at the very next verse. The promise of v. 11 is followed by the peril of v. 12. It’s terribly jarring: “¹² When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³ There were more than forty who made this conspiracy” (vv. 12-13).
1. This is not exactly the chain of events you would expect, right?
 - a. First Paul gets the word that Jesus is with him and he’s got a great plan for his life.
 - b. Then he gets the word that all these Jewish guys have made a pact to take his life.
 2. You go to bed encouraged . . . and you wake up devastated.
 - a. At least you could, if you had this naïve optimism about the Christian life and what it means to follow Jesus.
 - b. You thought that all was supposed to be easy and then, when it’s hard, you don’t know how to process it, how to interpret it.
 - i. Is something wrong with me? Is God against me? He said he was with me. It feels like he’s left me.
 3. Listen, that’s why stories like this are in the Bible—to pop that bubble of naïve optimism and move you a step towards gospel realism. It’s going to be hard sometimes.
- E. Don’t you ever fall into this? You make decisions to follow Jesus and you think, if you’re on the right track, it should get easier for you, not worse, right?

Nicaragua STM

- A. Can I just tell you how things went for my family as we made a decision to go on that mission trip to Nicaragua and serve the poor and the forgotten children there with Arms of Love.

A few days before it was time to go, it felt like everything that could go wrong, went wrong . . .

1. My wife and I were going for a walk around our block and somehow her sandal caught the edge of the uneven pavement and she ate it hard, went down with her face to the cement. She was all bruised and bloody. It was ridiculous. It all felt like it was in slow motion. We couldn't even believe it was happening.
 2. Then, because of that, she had to go see the doc to have her eye looked at, because there was all this swelling and a cut and things that didn't look so good. Thankfully, the report came back okay about her eye. They had dilated her pupils to look at things. But then this freak reaction happened. That evening she put back on her contacts and her eyes started just burning. And we're like, what do we do now? Finally, we decided we needed to take her in, and it was too late for urgent care, so we had to go into the ER, at like 11:00 at night. Come to find out, the medication they gave to dilate her eyes, when she put on the contacts, somehow it trapped that in there and ended up burning her corneas. Now we find out she can't wear her contacts for a week or two, she doesn't have glasses, and we're supposed to leave the country in a few days. And who knows if her eyes will even trend better or worse at this point.
 3. Meanwhile, while all this stuff is happening, my car breaks down. The alternator fails and I have no choice but to take it right into the shop or I won't be able to start it up again.
 4. Alongside this I get a text from my landlord. He just forwarded me something one of my neighbors sent him complaining about the sound of our chickens. Something needs to be done about it. It's summertime, they're making noise earlier. But, again, we're about to leave. How are we going to keep them quiet while we're gone?
 5. Then Levi gets sick. Then Bella gets sick. Then Chloe gets sick. We're going on a redeye flight to a foreign county, level 3 travel advisory (of 4), it's a dangerous place, and all my kids are unwell.
 6. Then when we're there, half of my family gets this stomach thing from the food. You don't need any more of those details.
 7. A day after that and I get this crazy rash. It starts small and then it's spreading. My stomach, my arms, my face. It lasted the whole trip.
 8. When I got home, it was so bad, I woke up and literally could barely open my eyes, my eyelids were so swollen. I looked like Rocky Balboa after he got pummeled by the Russian or whatever. I looked like Quasimodo. I almost didn't even make it to church last Sunday because of it. I had to get special medication just to knock it out.
 9. Oh and some of us got lice. Because the kids there in Nicaragua were living in such hard circumstances, lice were the least of their worries. If you're going to love on them, if you're going to get close to them, you're going to get it too. We're good now, but that was fun.
 - a. So you make a decision to follow Jesus in something, you think it's just going to go smooth and then you get rocked with hardship. Has that ever happened to you?
- B. And listen, I'll just tell you: what we experienced is nothing compared to what the staff of that ministry have experienced trying to love and serve those kids.
1. We were talking with some of them, just a couple years back, they had this amazing property, acres of land that they were using to house these kids and rehabilitate them and

lead them to Jesus and all this. It was a wonderful place for the kids to have a chance to heal from the wreckage that was all around them.

2. And the government, because they can just do what they want over there, said, we like your land, we want your land, you have 48 hours to leave. And that was it.
 - a. These people are giving their lives for the orphan, for the poor, for the broken, for the cause of Jesus, and that's what they get?!
 - b. So what do you do?
 - i. Stop and complain? I thought you were supposed to be with us, that this was supposed to be easy?
 - ii. No. They keep rolling. Of course, it's going to be hard. But Jesus is worth it all.
- C. You don't have a naïve optimism about everything just being a Disney movie or a Thomas Kinkade painting or something. Everything in life isn't going to have this quaint glow to it.
 1. Satan is for real. People are evil. The flesh is a force. This place is fallen and broken.
 2. Following Jesus is going to be a gut punch sometimes.
- D. This is why, by the way, when Joey and I had a chance to lead a staff retreat with the folks there in Nicaragua, we decided to do it on suffering.
 1. We wanted to give them a theology of suffering, something that could settle in like ballast in their boat when the seas start foaming, because they have and they will.
 2. You've got to have this in place or you'll lose your nerve in the storm.
- E. So this text won't let us fall off on the side of naïve optimism.
 1. But neither will let it let us fall off on the side of naïve pessimism . . .

(2) Resisting Naïve Pessimism

“Kill Me Now!”

- A. The temptation, after experiencing some of the hardship of following Jesus, is to just now expect it's going to stink—and you start to get a bit jaded.
 1. Life isn't a Kinkade painting, it's more like a Stephen King novel.
 2. No longer are you singing about the magic of the clouds, you're complaining about how they're blocking the sun.
 - a. I think we've all been there in our Christian walk sometimes, right?
- B. Even some of the big names in redemptive history would struggle with this:

1. So when Moses is just weary of dealing with Israel in the wilderness, do you remember how he complains to God: “¹¹ Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? ¹² Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth, that you should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing child,’ to the land that you swore to give their fathers? . . . ¹⁴ I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. ¹⁵ If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness” (Num. 11:11-12, 14-15).
 2. The prophet Jeremiah basically said the same thing: “⁷ O LORD, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. . . . ¹⁴ Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! ¹⁵ Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, ‘A son is born to you,’ making him very glad. ¹⁶ Let that man be like the cities that the LORD overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon, ¹⁷ because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great. ¹⁸ Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?” (Jer. 20:7, 14-18).
- C. I love how honest and real the Bible is. Haven’t you ever felt something like that? Maybe not quite as dramatic, but something like that?
- a. A lot of the stuff you thought he’d do, stuff you’d hoped for, doesn’t happen. And you get jaded.
 - b. And that pessimism just settles into the soul.

Just As Naive

- A. But, again, this pessimism—while in one sense it’s a necessary corrective of naïve optimism—from a biblical perspective, it’s just as naïve. It too doesn’t account for the whole story.
1. As far as our text in [Acts 23](#) goes, we are not allowed to see things as only bad here. Not even close.
 2. Instead, we get this view of a sovereign God who can take what these Jewish conspirators mean for evil against Paul and turn it for his good. It’s incredible!
 - a. It’s not naively optimistic. Things are really hard. People really do want to kill him.
 - b. But neither is it naively pessimistic. Jesus really is with Paul and moving him along, fulfilling his good purpose and plan in his life.
 - i. At the same time!

- B. Let me just make a couple observations on this . . .

Observation #1: Their Curse Circles Back

- A. First, notice how Jesus uses the vitriol of Paul’s enemies to undo his enemies. He flips their attack of him back on themselves.

1. As we saw, these 40+ Jews make a pact to kill him, right? Saying, we won't eat or drink until the deed is done. The actual word in the Greek is [anathematizō](#) [cf. [anathema](#) = accursed]. They're invoking a curse on themselves saying essentially: "May God kill us if we don't kill him."
2. And the crazy thing is: that may very well be what happened, at least if they took their vow seriously. They said: "We won't eat or drink until we kill him." Well they didn't kill him. God kept Paul safe. So did they ever eat or drink again?
 - a. My guess is they probably abandoned their oath, but nevertheless it's a picture of how God flips the curses of our enemies back on themselves.

B. It's how God always works things for his people . . .

1. As David puts it in [Ps. 7:14-16](#): " ¹⁴ Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies. ¹⁵ He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made. ¹⁶ His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends."
2. Or I think of what Isaiah famously says in [Isa. 54:17 \[NASB\]](#): "No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn."
 - a. They aim to hurt you but will only hurt themselves.
 - b. They aim to condemn you but will only condemn themselves.

C. So it is in [Acts 23](#). And so it will be for any of the children of God. For you and for me.

1. No weapon formed against you will prosper. Not a weapon, whether of man or of devil.
2. If God is for you, nothing can ultimately be against you ([Rom. 8:31](#)).

Observation #2: Their Fury Pushes Forward

- A. But then, second, notice: All this anger against Paul, their desire to kill him—what does it end up doing? It ends up pushing him further along in the plan of God for him. It gets him closer to Rome, which is where he wanted to go in the first place!
 1. You remember, back in [v. 11](#), Jesus says: "Don't worry, I'm with you. And I've got important stuff for you to do in Rome."
 2. Well, ironically, surprisingly, this persecution here is how Paul gets one step closer to that.
 - a. This is why he's moved from Jerusalem on to Caesarea—the seat of the Roman government in the region of Judea, one of the administrative centers of the Roman empire.
- B. But, if you noticed, it's almost like God gives us a little wink in this story, to show us just how sovereign and good he is, even when things seem hard.

1. Because Paul doesn't just barely get to Caesarea by the skin of his teeth.
 2. No. He's rolling in style! He's got a full-on entourage around him. It's a ridiculous provision and protection. Did you see it?
 - a. There were 40 or so Jews who were coming for his life.
 - b. But God, then, looking to flaunt his lavish grace, puts it on the heart of the Tribune to go above and behind in providing for Paul.
- C. Did you see that there in [vv. 23-24](#)? “²³ Then he called two of the centurions and said, ‘Get ready two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night.’²⁴ Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor.” Isn't that something?
1. As one commentator writes: “If the garrison in Jerusalem . . . was a normal Roman cohort, two hundred soldiers would have been about half the force available. The total company of infantry, cavalry and light-armed troops was twelve times larger than the band of forty terrorists!” (PNTC).
 - a. It just accents the extravagant provision of God for his people even in the midst of their trials.
 - i. These guys, trying to stop God's plan for Paul's life, ultimately help him fulfill it.
 - ii. Even the enemies of God are made his servants in the end!
- D. I can tell you, personally, you might have thought all the trial and inconveniences we experienced trying to make our way to Nicaragua would have been enough to take the wind out of our sails, maybe discourage us from ever returning.
1. But I'll tell you, where we were weak, God's grace was sufficient still.
 2. And my family—every one of us, kids included—when we had made our way through and back home, do you want to know what we all asked? How long until we get to go back?!
 - a. It was all worth it. It wasn't even a question. To meet those folks. To care for those folks. To see God at work in the hardest of places. There's nothing like it.
 - i. So whether all that hardship was the work of the enemy or something else, I don't know.
 - ii. But what I do know is it didn't discourage us. It didn't knock us off into pessimism. If anything, ironically, we came out with more reason to hope.
- E. So I just want you to pause and consider the possibility that one of the ways God may move you further along in the fulfillment of his promise to you and plan for you is not in spite of hard circumstances but in and through them.
1. What if the thing you are dreading right now, the thing that has you up at night worried and upset, the thing you are begging God to take from you, is actually part of what he's using to bring good to you in the end?

- a. It may be hard, but this text is reminding us: Don't lose hope, don't spiral into pessimism. God's still up to good!

(3) Embracing Gospel Realism

A. So we're not given to a naïve optimism on the one hand nor a naïve pessimism on the other. Instead we find ourselves embracing what I've called a gospel realism.

- 1. And I say it's "gospel" realism because it's really a perspective on life that's grounded in and held together by what Jesus accomplishes for us there on the cross.

B. The cross won't let us be naively optimistic. Jesus gets painfully honest with us there.

- 1. The gospel is a rebuke before it's ever an encouragement. It says we are so sinful that if we ever to get back to right with God Jesus would have to die for us.

- a. Let's not pretend we're awesome in and of ourselves. Let's not pretend we can usher in some utopia with a little more of our smarts and technology.
- b. It's not going to happen. We are sinners.

C. But neither will the cross let us be naively pessimistic. There's so much hope for us there.

- 1. Yes, it's true: we are so bad Jesus had to die for us.
- 2. But it's equally true we are so loved Jesus chose to die for us.

- a. He wanted to go through with it—to save you, to make a way for you to get right with God, to give you a future and a hope.
- b. And he's overcome Satan, sin, and death . . . for you!

D. The gospel, gospel realism, brings all this together in a way modernism, postmodernism, and even now metamodernism never could and never will. You see reality, life as it really is, filtered through the cross of your Savior.

- 1. I suppose this would be my closing plea: not just that you'd embrace "gospel realism" as an idea, but that you'd embrace the one who is at the very center of this worldview, this gospel . . . Jesus!