

# From Prophecy to Proof

## *The Promise and Plan*

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

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For those of you that know me well, you know that I can be a little obsessive over keeping things clean and neat and organized. I'm not sure why God has made me this way, but I just get a sense of comfort and peace when everything is in its place. I feel like there's a place for everything and everything has its place, and so small things can bother me. Let me just share with you some of those, all right?

On my phone, I cannot have those little red notification dots. I think it's some kind of conspiracy. They know people like me exist, and so they put these little red dots. I cannot handle that. Sometimes when I pick up my wife's phone and I look at it and she's got the little red dots all over the place, I just can't deal with it. I just have to put it down. I can't have clutter in my house, which is difficult when you have three young children, so you can pray for my wife with that. My garage, if you've ever gone into my garage, I have labels everywhere so I know where everything is.

So every drawer has a label. One of the greatest things I ever got was a label maker. Now, my wife has not let me put them on the kitchen cabinets yet, but I would if she would let me. But I love labels, all right? I try to keep my woodworking tools clean, which doesn't make any sense, right? Because you're using them and there's sawdust everywhere, but for whatever reason, I like them to look like they're new.

And I am bothered by even the smallest scratch or imperfection on any phone screen or watch screen or iPad screen, which is why I will never buy a foldable phone unless they figure out how to make one without a visible crease in it, because that would drive me crazy. If I buy something new, I want it to look new for as long as possible, I could go on and on, but now you know how to pray for my wife, all right? She needs prayer, yes.

I guess so I didn't go entirely insane. God did make it so that I am okay with the exterior of my vehicle being dirty. I can handle that. I don't like it, but it gets dirty so fast that I don't obsess over it. Now that you all know that about me, let me share with you a story of what happened to me six years ago. It was time for my wife and I to buy a new couch. We had had the same furniture we had had since we had been married, and so we decided it's probably time to get a new couch.

My wife found one that she loved, but the problem was the couch was a white cream color, and our kids were still pretty young. The other problem was that the backs of the couches weren't sewn on. They were just loose pillows, and so they could come off, and that would actually prove to be its fatal flaw. But the issue was this couch was the most comfortable couch we had ever sat in, so we ignored all of the warning signs and decided to buy it anyway.

The company we bought it from said that they would deliver it to us for free. They even took a little money off. It was just perfect. I remember coming home from work on a Wednesday, and they had delivered the couch, and they had set it all up, and it looked beautiful, and I sat in it, and it was so comfortable. I wanted to surround it with caution tape so the kids couldn't use it. But that sounded a little extreme even to me, all right?

But we specifically told them, I remember sitting them down as soon as we got the couch, and we said, "No eating on the couch and definitely no drawing on the couch." I remember it was a Wednesday because of what happened next. It was Wednesday evening, and that was back when we were doing Wednesday evening services, and so I would come to the church early, and Carolyn, my wife, would get ready, and she would bring the kids a little later.

I showed up to church that night and started getting things around, and I received a phone call a little while after being at the church from Carolyn, and she said, "You're never going to guess what your daughter just did." Now I asked the question, "Why is it always my daughter when she does something bad or wrong?" She told me that while she had been upstairs getting ready for church, Hannah, my youngest at the time, had grabbed a pen off of the counter and proceeded to scribble all over the cushions of the couch.

We had that couch for less than three hours, and I thought to myself, "It's ruined." Fortunately, my wife is amazing, and she somehow went online and found out how to get ink pen off of a couch, and so she got it all clean. But it really didn't matter, because within a few months, it was covered with other stains, and we found out something that we didn't know that it was a cream couch, and because of the UV rays coming into the windows, it turned it pink.

Has anybody else ever had this happen? A pink hue. So, the top of the couch was pink and the bottom was cream, but we eventually got rid of the couch, not because it was pink and cream and had stains on it, but because we got sick of putting the pillows back on that our kids would take off to make forts. And so I said, "We're getting a new couch." Now here's the point of me sharing that story. Do you think that this is how God felt when Adam and Eve brought sin into His perfect creation?

It seems as we read the Genesis account that God had just finished creation and He said that everything was perfect. It was very good. It was a perfect world with perfect people, perfect relationships, and a perfect God. If you could sum it up, it was, well, perfect. And that lasted for what seemed like three hours. And then God's children grabbed a pen and they drew all over everything.

They ruined creation. They ruined relationships. They caused a division between them and God. And I believe sometimes like children, we don't recognize how much we have messed up God's beautiful creation. We have learned to live with sin and the consequences because it's normal. It's what we were born into. But today I want to share with you that we shouldn't accept it as normal because God has made a better way.

God has made a plan in order to bring things back to the way they were before we messed them up. We are getting ready as a church to celebrate that plan in a few weeks, and of course, I'm talking about Easter and what took place 2,000 years ago. As we get ready for Easter, in order for us to understand why Easter should be such a celebration for us, we first need to talk about how evil sin is.

So there's going to be parts of today's message where we're going to be talking about how evil sin is, and you're going to think, "Great, Pastor, this is very encouraging." But the point is, we don't understand how awesome what God has done for us is until we understand how evil our sin is. We cannot be casual about sin. And so for the rest of our time together, I want to talk about three things.

One, how evil sin is, then I want to talk about God's plan to overcome sin and His promise of sending a Redeemer. So let me pray and then we'll jump into those three things. Heavenly Father, we come before You today and we thank You for Your goodness and for Your grace in our lives. Father, today, may we be made aware of how evil our sin truly is and what we have done to Your beautiful creation and to the relationships that You desire to have with us.

Father, I thank You that we also will see Your plan playing itself out, recognizing that You had and understood this plan from the very beginning, and so would you receive our praise and thanks today? We ask this in Jesus'

name. Amen. I've learned in my own personal life that when it comes to deep truths or things that are sometimes hard to understand, that the best way for me to grasp them is with analogies or stories.

And so let me share with you a story that comes to my mind in order for me to understand what sin actually is. And I'm going to give you a warning, this might be hard for some of you to hear, but the whole point is for us to recognize sin for what it really is. Here's the story. Imagine you get married to your spouse and you have had a dream your entire life when you were growing up, your desire was to have children.

After 15 years in your marriage of infertility and not able to have children, God decides to bless you with a beautiful baby girl. That girl is going to be spoiled. You love her with everything that you are. You sing to her every night to put her to sleep. You provide for her. You spend everything you make making sure that her life is good and that she is taken care of and protected.

You make sure that you teach her about purity, and you teach her about loving Jesus. You talk to her about marriage and having a spouse of her own one day, and you can't wait until she gets married, and she has children of her own. She turns out to be a beautiful young lady, and she means everything to you. As life goes on, she meets a handsome young man, and after a few years of dating, they get engaged. They have done everything right from your perspective.

They're pure. They have good jobs. They have a bright future ahead of them. They love others well. They are giving of everything they have. And so as you think about the wedding that you have saved up for, you have prepared the best celebration possible for this beautiful daughter of yours. And on the night before the wedding, as she is coming home from the rehearsal, there is a bad man with bad intentions waiting for her.

And for the sake of keeping my own emotions in check, let's just say he takes advantage of her and he ends up also taking her life the night before her wedding. It is pure evil. As a mom or a dad, can you imagine that situation? Can you imagine the range of emotions that you would experience when you found out that news? Emotions like anger, rage, hate, despair, working its way towards sadness.

And let's be honest, there probably is not a single person in here who would feel bad if this guy received the death penalty. It's just wrong on all levels. It's evil. It's horrible. It's sickening. And then I want you to imagine that God looks you in the eyes and He says, "You are that man." That is what you did. You are guilty. You see, Scripture is clear that you and I are responsible for bringing sin into His perfect creation.

Romans 5:12, Paul says, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through the one man, and death came through sin, in all this way, death came to all people because all have sinned." It is very clear from Scripture that we are the ones that brought death into this world. We are the ones that are to blame. We are the ones that are guilty. And God's response is not what you would expect.

I would expect God to just wipe us all out and say, "You know what? That wasn't a good plan. That wasn't a good idea. They have messed everything up." Instead of doing that, God decides that He is going to overcome sin. And so here is His plan. The plan to overcome this sin, God knew before He even created the world or us that it was going to be costly. This wasn't going to be an easy fix.

It was going to require an act of love that the world had never seen before. This plan, in order to eradicate sin, would require the voluntary suffering and death of someone who didn't deserve it, who was perfect, but yet was willing to take our place to pay the price for our sins. This plan needed a hero, someone who would redeem us in all of creation from the bondage of sin.

And fortunately for us, God knew before He created anything what was going to happen. God was not taken by surprise when Adam and Eve decided to eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge and good and evil. He was not surprised that they would fall for the temptation. He's not surprised that they would turn away from Him and not trust Him.

He's not surprised by the decisions that you and I make or have made in the past, and yet knowing all of that, He was willing to pay the price. How do we know this? 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 18 through 20, Peter says, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life that was handed down to you from your ancestors, but instead it was with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

He was chosen, when does Peter say, before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. God knew, down to the detail what was going to happen in creation. I've often had people come up to me as they are reading Scripture and they come to this realization of what we have done to God's perfect world and they ask the honest question that I have asked many times, so why did God choose to create us anyway?

I mean, don't you think that if you knew all of this that was going to happen, all of the evil that was going to exist? Wouldn't he just say, "You know what? Not worth it. Scrap that plan, let's start over." The only answer I can give to that question, why would God still create us anyway, knowing everything that we were going to do, is that it is a sign of His amazing love and grace for us. It's the only way I can answer that question, that God knew those that were going to choose Him and were going to follow Him, and that relationship that He could have with us was worth creating.

I want to look at one of the most amazing chapters in the Old Testament as we think about God's plan for our salvation and what was going to take place in what we celebrate as Easter. This chapter is in the Old Testament. It comes from Isaiah chapter 53. It is truly one of the most amazing chapters in the Old Testament. Isaiah chapter 53 is quoted over 55 times in the New Testament.

As those that were writing the New Testament were looking back at Old Testament Scripture, they saw Isaiah 53 and in that chapter they saw a revelation that God had given to Isaiah 700 years before Jesus would step on this planet. Isaiah was written 700 years before Christ.

I want you to remember that, and what I am going to do, I want to read this entire chapter for us, it's only 12 verses, and knowing what you know about the crucifixion and about Jesus and what He did, I want you to have that in the back of your mind as I read this, remembering that Isaiah wrote this 700 years before Jesus came. Look at all of the similarities.

Here we go, Isaiah 53, starting in verse 1, "Who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before Him like a tender chote and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him.

He was despised and rejected by mankind, truly a man of suffering and familiar with pain, like one from whom people hide their faces. He was despised, and we held Him in low esteem. Surely, He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds, we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. For He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth.

By oppression and judgment, He was taken away. Yet, who of His generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living. For the transgression of my people, He was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and to cause Him to suffer.

And though the Lord makes His life an offering for sin, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in His hand. After He has suffered, He will see the light of life and be satisfied. By His knowledge, My righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities.

Therefore, I will give Him a portion among the great, and He will divide the spoils with the strong because He poured out His life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors, for He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors. Just some things I want to point out. I don't have time to obviously point out all of these things, but as you read Isaiah 53, is it not amazing that he uses language like He will be pierced for our transgressions?

This is 700 years before Christ, this is before crucifixion had even been invented yet, and yet we read that He would be pierced. Isaiah says that He will be like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, that He will remain silent. And what do we read about Jesus when He stands before Pilate? What? He doesn't say a word. He doesn't say a word. The fact that the sins of the world would be cast upon Him, which is exactly what Jesus did on the cross.

Our sins were on Him so that we could receive God's grace and His mercy. This truly is a beautiful plan of salvation that God had in mind from the beginning of time. We do have a missionary, this is going to be online, so I will say things cautiously. We have a missionary, I'll just say that's in the Middle East, and he gets to minister and to love on those that often would find themselves in the Jewish faith.

And those of you that aren't familiar with those that are of the Jewish faith, they would believe in all of the Old Testament, and they worship and understand the same God that we understand, but they don't believe that Jesus was the Messiah. They are still waiting for the Messiah to come. In this missionary, as I talk with him and how he witnesses to these individuals that yes, Jesus is the Messiah, this is the number one section of Scripture that he goes to.

It's from their Bibles, Isaiah 53, and he will begin to explain to them, "Look at all of this," and now look at what the New Testament says about Jesus, and many, if not all, that He has that conversation with that's willing to have that conversation, comes to the same conclusion that many of you and I have come to, that certainly Jesus is the Messiah, that He is the Messiah. This promise was given to us way before the time came.

The Scriptures say in Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." You know, the Scriptures say that it's possible that somebody would die for a good or a righteous man, but very rarely will somebody die for somebody they don't like, right? Somebody that is evil.

And here in Romans, Paul is saying, "Listen, do you realize that when God came up with this plan of salvation, when Jesus was going to live His life on the cross and sacrifice Himself, He didn't do it when we were adoring Him and we were praising Him and we were lifting Him up. Though Jesus decided to give His life and take our place on that cross while we were still spitting in His face. It's not because we earned it. It's not because we deserved it.

Jesus didn't die on that cross because we went to church enough. We read the Bible enough. We prayed enough. We gave enough money. He died on that cross because of His love for us. It is not because of what we do that we have salvation through Jesus Christ. It's because of what He has done. God promised a Redeemer, and He delivered on that promise. This Redeemer, Jesus made salvation possible to everyone who would put their faith and their trust in Him.

As we approach Easter, my prayer for us as a church is that we would take time to process how amazing that gift truly is. And in order for us to understand how awesome and amazing that gift of salvation is, we do have to take a moment to recognize how evil our sin is. You recognize how great the gift is when you recognize how great the evil is.

And so my prayer for us is that we would see God's amazing plan of redemption in light of our own sin, that God has been faithful to His promise no matter what we do, and that there is zero chance that the enemy can thwart God's plan. As you think about Easter Sunday coming up, it's a time when many of us are comfortable inviting friends and family and neighbors and coworkers to church because even still in our culture today, many people will go to church on Easter and Christmas.

And so it's an opportunity for them to come. And here's my prayer. As you invite them to church or as you have these types of spiritual conversations, I ask that you and I would be reminded that we are sinners saved by grace. One of the other analogies that I love is the idea that we are simply one beggar sharing with another beggar where to find bread.

I think all too often when we interact with those that have not yet received Jesus as their Savior, they've not received His forgiveness, that it is easy for us to come off as holier than thou, to believe that we're better than everybody else. We have all of the answers. And so here's my prayer for us. As we engage in these types of spiritual conversations, as we talk with our neighbors, our friends, our family, maybe even as we invite them to come to church with us on Easter Sunday, that we would approach them with a heart of gratitude for what God has done for us.

That we would simply share with them our story of how God has saved us and that we long for them to have a similar experience. And I know I say this every Easter, but the reason that I believe and I have put my faith and trust in Jesus is because if He can predict His death and resurrection and pull it off, I'm going to listen to what that guy says, right? I'm going to listen to what He says.

He truly has the words of life. I'm going to put my faith and trust in Him. And you and I should not be surprised that God raised Jesus from the dead, because when we read in Genesis, God simply took clay and dust of the earth and He put it together, and it's His breath that gave us life. We should not be surprised that then He also could give us new life after death. And it's the resurrection that is the foundation of our faith.

When we celebrate the resurrection on Easter, we are saying, "If God could raise Jesus from the dead, then I believe that same power is available to me. And so I don't live my story with death as being the end. I believe now that I am living eternally, and that I have the hope that one day I will leave this broken creation, and God will once and for all defeat sin and death in the grave.

There will be no more pain, no more suffering, no more hurt, no more tears, and that we will be with Him how it was supposed to be in the garden. I encourage you this week to take some time to thank God for His grace and His mercy in your lives. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come before You. We thank You for Your forgiveness.

Every single person in here has a friend, a family member, a coworker, a neighbor, somebody that they love and care deeply about who does not yet know you. Father, it is our prayer that you would do a work in their heart, that you would open their spiritual eyes to see you for who you are, that they would receive Your grace and Your mercy and Your forgiveness, Father, that they would repent of their sins and put their trust and their hope and their faith in You.

It is a journey, and we're all at a different point in that journey. Thank you for loving us. Thank you for not giving up on us. Thank you for your plan of salvation. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.