A Message to the Miserable — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 10 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, October 31, 2021 · *Scorched Earth*

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Yeah. If you have your Bible, you can open them to the book of Revelation. We are in the book of Revelation as a church, and if you're new to Broadview, we typically just pick a book of the Bible and work our way through it line by line, word by word, chapter by chapter, verse by verse. And we started this journey in Easter of last year, no, this year. And we have now arrived at a section in the book of Revelation that I'm entitling Scorched Earth. Scorched-earth strategy, if you're unfamiliar with the term, is a strategy wherein you totally destroy any asset or resource that might be useful to your enemy.

So you destroy their weaponry, you destroy their food storages, you destroy everything that they might use to mount an offensive against you. And what you see in Revelation chapters 8, 9, 10, and even a little bit in 11 is the Lord going scorched earth on his creation. He judges the earth and in his judgment he physically destroys the creation and physically torments the people who live on the earth, keeping them, as it were, from mounting a counteroffensive. He basically shows his power and strength through a display of these judgments. And the last couple of weeks have been really downers.

In fact, I'm really surprised to see as many people here today as are here, because the last couple of weeks the preaching has been what used to be called fire and brimstone kind of sermons. Now there's a handful of people that just really love that stuff. They're kind of gluttons for punishment. I don't quite understand it. Most people, it gets a little bit wearisome. And even the title of the series, Scorched Earth, and the titles of the messages have been things like A Terrible, Horrible, Very Bad, No Good Day. You know, who wants to hear a sermon like that?

Or last week was Hordes and Armies of Demons, Oh My, kind of like lions and tigers and bears, oh my. And even today's message, the title is A Message to the Miserable. And you're

like, who wants to hear messages like that? Like, give me an encouraging word. Help me get an uplifting word. And thankfully, the passage that we have in front of us today is a more encouraging word. It's not to say that those other messages aren't needed, and they are. They're warnings about the dangers of rebellion against God, the judgment of God that is settled on sin.

You can't escape it. It doesn't matter how special you think you are there are certain laws of the universe and God will judge sin one day, one way or another, one day or another. But he also has a message to his people in the midst of that judgment or when your world feels like it's falling apart and is unraveling at the seams and you feel like God has checked out or is indifferent or does not care. We need to hear certain truths in those moments in our life and today's chapter in Revelation chapter 10 is that message.

It is a message to people who are miserable because their world is falling apart and I'm excited to see what the Lord will share with you if you have a heart to receive it. Since some of you are just maybe showing up for the first time today, or since many of you have been with us this whole journey, I want to give a kind of a bird's eye view of where we're at and the main structure of the book. It's easy in the book of Revelation to miss the forest for the trees because there's so many rabbit trails and so many little details that you kind of get lost in.

But you need to remember that Revelation is a book that is held together by certain structures and pillars and we need to situate ourselves. Revelation chapter 1 is this kind of introduction where John gets this exalted vision of Jesus Christ. He sees him in his powerful splendor and glory with white hair and flaming eyes and just this majestic picture of Jesus risen from the dead. It was not little Jesus meek and mild walking the earth. It was a picture of the resurrected Christ. From there he goes to another section in chapters 2 and 3 where Jesus is walking in the midst of these lampstands which represent his church, the universal church, but he writes seven letters to seven individual local churches with the basic theme that as my people, I'm calling you to overcome.

Yes, this world is hard. Yes, this world is broken. And in the church, there are challenges and messy people, but endure, overcome, and if you'll overcome, there is a reward. And from there, John is caught up to heaven to catch this picture of heavenly worship. Chapter 4, you have this picture of God on his throne, surrounded in majesty and glory. He has these angelic hosts that are singing praises to the one seated on the throne. There are these four living creatures that night and day, 24-7 say, worthy is the one seated on the throne because he created everything that there is.

And then in chapter 5 the camera shifts, as it were; it pans over And it focuses on the scroll that is in the hand of the one seated on the throne. And the mighty angel asks the question, who's worthy to open the scroll— representing the future plan of God, the climax of redemption. Who is worthy to bring it about? And nobody in heaven, on earth, or under the

earth could be found except for the lion from the tribe of Judah, the lamb who was slain. And so the camera shifts over from the scroll on to Jesus, the lion and the lamb, who then takes the scroll from the hand of the one seated on the throne and all of heaven falls down in worship of the lamb who is worthy because he was slaughtered, because he rescued and redeemed the people, making them priests to our God.

And after that, in chapter 6, the lamb, Jesus, begins to break the seals to open the scroll. And every time Jesus breaks a seal in Revelation chapter 6, there's a corresponding event that takes place on the earth. And this is really where people diverge in their interpretation of the book. I think that Revelation talks about things that are yet future. And so I think it's talking about a judgment that visits the earth wherein a figure, a political figure that the Bible sometimes called the Antichrist, rises up and he promises peace and prosperity and that promise is not delivered on.

And instead of peace and prosperity there is war and death and poverty and famine. And instead of taking responsibility like a good politician should, he does what every other politician does, and he points the finger and he blames God's people. And there's going to be an uprising and incredible persecution of the saints. Now what's interesting, if you're taking notes: when you get to the seal judgments in Revelation chapter 6, they are broken down in a certain way. You have four plus one. You have four horsemen which are the rise of the Antichrist and instead of peace and prosperity there's hardship and difficulty.

But then it's one plus one. There's one in seal number five, which is the cry of the martyrs, crying out, how long, O Lord, until you come and rescue us? And then there's one more at the end of chapter 6 with these cosmic signs and wonders, which essentially is the Lord's way of saying, I'm coming soon. You need to remember that, that when it comes to the seven seals, it's four plus one. And then in chapter 7, you expect to see the one more, the seventh seal, but instead you get what's called a pause or an interlude.

And essentially John gets a replay of everything that he just saw on the earth, but he sees it from a different perspective. A heavenly perspective. He sees these angels that are about to pour out judgment on the earth, but another angel comes up and says, before you judge the earth with the seventh seal, before you break it and unleash God's wrath, we've got to do something. And what they do is two things. They seal 144,000 people from the twelve tribes of Israel and people debate on who that is, what that reference is, but there's a sealing of God's people.

And then John secondly sees a vast multitude that nobody could count from every tribe, tongue, and language gathered around the throne, worshiping the lamb. And I try to argue that was a picture of the church resurrected and raptured out of the Great Tribulation. Other people take a different approach, but it's essentially a pause to say to the people of God, I

know things are tough. I know it's miserable. I know that you're being persecuted and hunted down and your lives are being ended. But I am with you. I am for you.

I am going to protect you. The worst that they can do is kill you and they can't even really do that. It is a promise from God to his people. Then you get to chapter 8 and chapter 9, and that respite ends, and you get what are called the seven trumpet judgments. And just like the seals, the seven trumpet judgments are four plus one, which isn't seven, right? That's Roby math. It's six. But you get four plus one. First four judgments are in Revelation chapter 8, and it destroys the earth, the physical creation, the trees are burnt up, the green grass is gone, the fresh drinking water is made bitter, the saltwater and the fish in the sea are killed.

And you see this darkness and incredible temperature changes, and the earth is just destroyed. It is a scorched earth policy on the earth. One, two, three, four. Then in chapter 9, you get 1 plus 1. You get this demonic horde from this abyss, whatever it is and it unleashes demonic torment on the earth. And the people, not God's people, but people who do not belong to the Lord are afflicted by demons. And we're going to see a rise of evil and deception and horror unlike this world has ever seen before.

And the horror and demonic influence is going to get to such a degree that the second woe judgment falls, and that's the sixth trumpet, and it describes an army, two hundred million strong, from the east, that utterly destroys one third of the earth. Now again interpreters are mixed on what that army is, who it represents. Is it a literal physical army? Is it something else? I don't know, but whatever it is, it destroys one-third of human life on this planet. Billions of people die. It is an overwhelming flood of judgment.

And you would expect in Revelation chapter 10 to get the seventh trumpet and everything come to an end, but instead you get a pause, just like chapter 7. And the pause is meant to do the same thing that the pause in chapter 7 did, and that was to communicate to God's people, even though it's bad, even though judgment has fallen, even though you feel like God has checked out, does not care, and is about to end everything, he has not. He is for you. He is with you. He is going to protect you.

And he has a message for you in your misery. And that's what Revelation chapter 10 is about. It is a message from a powerful messenger to the miserable. And he tells the miserable four, I think, four powerful messages that we need to be reminded of today while we're walking through pain and suffering in our life. So that's an overview. Now let's get into the text. If you're taking notes, Revelation chapter 10 is a reminder that God is faithful. Even in the fire of suffering, God is faithful to his promise, and you can always trust his word.

I find it interesting that on the day we celebrate the Protestant Reformation, which released the Bible so that it could be read by the common people, we find ourselves in a text that reminds us of the trustworthiness and the primacy of the Word of God in our suffering. So

put yourself in the shoes of those people in Revelation chapter 10. The world is broken and messed up. Sin and depravity have reached its absolute maximum heights. The world is disintegrating under demonic deception and torment. Political forces and global conflict have killed billions and billions of people.

Sin and brokenness and death have reached proportions never before imagined in human history, and in the midst of that darkness John sees this vision. Chapter 10, verse 1 says, I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. Notice how this angel is described. He's wrapped in a cloud with a rainbow over his head. His face was like the sun. His legs were like pillars of fire, and he held a little scroll opened in his hand. He put his right foot on the sea, he put his left foot on the land, and he called out with a loud voice like a roaring lion.

And when he cried out, the seven thunders raised their voices. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write down what they said, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, seal up what the seven thunders said, and do not write it down. And then the angel that I had seen standing on the sea in the land, that angel raised his right hand to heaven, and he swore by the one who lives forever and ever, the one who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it.

The sea and what is in it. There will no longer be a delay— this is his oath: there will no longer be a delay— but in the days when the seventh angel will blow his trumpet, then the mystery of God will be completed, as he announced to his servants the prophets. Then the voice that I heard from heaven spoke to me again. And he said, go and take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who's standing on the sea in the land. So I went to the angel, I asked him to give me the little scroll, and then he said to me take it and eat it.

It will be bitter in your stomach, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth. So then I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and I ate it. It was as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I ate it, my stomach became bitter. And they said to me, You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings. How's that for apocalyptic literature? What in the world is going on? Who is this angel? Why are they eating paper? What are they, two years old? That's what Blaze is doing all the time, he's eating paper sweet in his mouth like honey, bitter in his stomach, you better believe it.

Like, what's going on? This again, we got to remember the book of Revelation, apocalyptic literature. John is seeing things in a vision. He's seeing things that maybe he doesn't even have human language to communicate about. And so he's using pictures and images and metaphors to talk about what he sees. The first question, and the one that gets debated a lot, is who is this angel? Some people think that it's a reference to an angel of the Lord, like you see in chapter 5 a mighty angel, in chapter 18 you see a mighty angel.

Some think it's just an angel, like Gabriel or some top-dog angel. Others would say, no, this is not an angel of the Lord. This is the angel of the Lord. This is a reference to the preincarnate Jesus Christ. Like in the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord was a pre-incarnate vision of Christ. Now we see the angel of the Lord resurrected. Jesus Christ risen from the dead, and that's who this angel is referring to. And the people who say that would say that it is Jesus because he has a rainbow around his head, which in chapter 4[1] he had the rainbow around the throne.

They would say he is wrapped in clouds, and it says in Revelation 1:7 that Jesus comes on the clouds. His face is shining like the sun. He has legs like pillars of fire, which is how it describes Jesus in Revelation chapter 1, verses 14 and 15. He has the scroll in his hand, and who is worthy to open the scroll other than Jesus Christ? no one in heaven, on earth, or under the earth. So it has to be Jesus for that reason. And then his voice roars like a lion, which is how the Bible talks about the voice of God in Psalm 29 and other passages.

So this is deity. This is not an angel. This is the angel of the Lord. Others would say, no, it cannot be Jesus. It is a reference to an angel because the angel in chapter 5 and the angel in chapter 18 is not Jesus, and this one is described in the same way as that angel. The other reason it can't be Jesus is because it uses a little Greek word where it says another, allos, or—I don't actually remember the Greek word. But the word that's used means another of a same kind.

So it can't be Jesus because Jesus is not the same kind of angel as all the other angels. You know, that's a heresy. That's not Christian doctrine. So it can't be Jesus for that reason. And they would say it can't be Jesus because he swears an oath to God. Why would Jesus, who is God, swear an oath to God? And it can't be Jesus because even though Jesus is described as an angel in the Old Testament, John never describes him as an angel in the book of Revelation. He's always referred to in very specific honorary titles.

And it can't be Jesus because even though, yes, he has similarities to the description of Jesus in Revelation chapter 1, there are angels in the Old Testament that are described in the same way, like in Daniel chapter 12, Daniel chapter 11. You have an angel that has rainbows and lights and fire and all that stuff. And so it doesn't have to be Jesus. So who is it? Let's take a survey. How many of you say I think it's Jesus? Nobody wants to go out on that limb. How many of you would say it's an angel, a mighty angel?

Okay. It's about mixed. Listen, I went into the rabbit hole on this deal. I spent way too many hours, way too many, trying to study this, figure this out. Is it Jesus? Is it an angel? And I came out with an incredible level of uncertainty. I don't know who it is. I don't know what it is. I tend to think it's a strong angel, a mighty angel. But it preaches better if it's Jesus. So I want to preach it as if it's Jesus, but I don't have enough confidence that it's Jesus.

So I think it's probably just a mighty angel. The point is the focus of the text is not the identity of the messenger, as interesting as that debate is. The point of this text is the message of the messenger. The message of the messenger is given to God's people in the midst of their misery, and that's what John is trying to amplify. This angel, whatever, whoever he is, whether it's Jesus or a mighty angel. If it's just a mighty angel, imagine how powerful and glorious Jesus is if this is his angel.

But the focus is not on the angel, it's on the message. So what is the message? What's the message we need to hear in our misery? Message number one: God's word is sure. God's word is sure. You can build your life on his promise. You notice the first thing that comes out of John's mouth when he sees this angel is this rainbow. He's coming on clouds. He has a rainbow over his head. That is a direct reference. I don't think it's a reference to Revelation 5. I think it's a reference to Genesis chapter 9, a reference to the rainbow that God gave to the earth as a symbol of his covenant and promise that I will never flood the earth again.

In Genesis chapter 9, the Lord says to Noah and to the earth, I've placed my bow or my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I put the clouds in the air and the rainbow over the clouds I will remember my covenant between me and you and all the living creatures. Water will never again become a flood to destroy every creature. The bow will be in the clouds. I will look at it and remember the permanent covenant between God and all the living creatures on the earth.

It's a reminder that God's word is sure. You can rely on it because God always keeps his promise. I know in your suffering it feels as though God is not steady, he's not sure, he's not a solid foundation on which you can rest. But don't trust your feelings, trust his word, because God has always and always will keep his promises. This broken world will one day—the promise that's in view particularly in Revelation chapter 10 is a promise about a new heavens and a new earth. The angel with his right foot on the land and his left foot on the sea, or vice versa, I can't remember.

He raises his hand to God and he makes an oath. And what is his oath about? The oath is about the new creation. The return of Christ. He says, there will be no longer a delay. Verse 7, but in the days when the seventh angel will blow his trumpet, then the mystery of God will be completed, as he announced to his servants the prophets. So it's a promise that the brokenness of this world, the misery that you're going through, is a temporary brokenness, a temporary misery, and there is coming a day.

In fact, a day that is coming soon. There will be no longer a delay. When that seventh angel blows his trumpet, everything broken will be made whole, everything lost will be redeemed. This broken world will be restored. That's the emphasis of the message to the miserable. What it means for us today is that God's promises are sure. You can build your life upon his promise. And if he will keep his promises then, when Jesus comes again, and if he has kept

his promises in the past as it relates to flooding the earth and other promises of God, then that means you can trust his promises today.

That means there is no sin in your life that cannot be forgiven. There is no shame that cannot be erased. There is no loveless marriage that cannot find love again. There is no prodigal son or daughter that cannot eventually find their way back home. There are certain promises of God. And not everything in God's word is a promise, but the promises of God that are in his word are reliable and sure, and you should build your life upon his promises. Take it to the bank, live as if they are true.

God's word is sure. The second thing, God's word is strong. He uses this language of a big angel. He's got one foot on the land, one foot on the sea. He has a voice like a lion. When he speaks, it creates a response from the voice of heaven which sounds like seven thunders. All of that language is communicating the absolute strength, majesty, and power of the Word of God. I don't know if you've ever heard a lion. Has anybody ever heard a lion? I remember when we went to Tanzania and we had done what we had done and we were in this wildlife resort which was so nice because it had a toilet you could sit on instead of hovering over like this— the squatty potties.

And it was like paradise. I don't know why I told you that, but it's just something I remember. But anyway, I'm in my little bed with a mosquito net wrapped around me and hoping I don't get malaria, and I hear this lion roaring outside my window. And I don't know how far away it was. Had to be a pretty good distance away, but it was the most chilling sound I think I'd ever heard. It felt so real, so loud. It was real. It was not a radio lion. It was a real lion.

Communicates power, strength, majesty, might. The seven thunders, have you ever, like, heard real thunder over your house? I'm not talking about, like, a West Texas thunderstorm, watch it with your honey, Oh, isn't that pretty and nice? The thunder's not too loud. The lightning's far away. I'm talking, like, AC/DC, "Thunderstruck," like, boom, shaking your house, dogs barking, babies crying, you're like, you have to take a Xanax because you got so much anxiety. It is like that kind of thunderous voice. That's the response from God when this messenger roars out like a lion.

It's talking about the strength of the word. Now again the promise is I'm going to renew the creation, I'm going to restore the creation, but it's a reminder that in our life God's word has power, it has strength. And we are the people who live as if God's word is strong, is sufficient, is powerful for what we need in life. How different would your life be if you actually believed that the word of God was true and that the word of God was powerful? That like Martin Luther said, I don't have to defend the word of God.

The word of God is like a lion. All I got to do is let it out of its cage. When's the last time you heard someone preach— have you ever heard a sermon that just kind of fell flat? Like the content was good, the structure was there, everything was right, but it just, you know, it was flat. Hopefully not too many from me. But we've all heard those kind of sermons. It's as if he didn't believe the word was powerful. The messenger reminds John of that: the word of God is strong.

So build your life on his promise. Live your life as if God's word is true, as if it is sufficient to meet your every need. How different would your life be if you actually believed God would keep his word? Thirdly, sometimes God's words are sealed. Look at verse four. When the seven thunders[2] spoke, I was about to write. But I heard a voice from heaven saying, seal up what the seven thunders said, and do not write it down, which is so crazy because everything John's supposed to do up to this point is see things, hear things, write things.

And in chapter 1 it gives a promise to those who read these words or who preach these words, there's a blessing coming in your life. So John, I'm going to help you see things and hear things, write them down. But when it gets to these words, whatever those words were from the seven thunders, which is the voice of God— God spoke something that we weren't allowed to see it or hear it or know about it until the proper time. You say, well, what were those things? I have no idea. But it's a reminder that there are times in your life where certain words from the Lord are going to be sealed.

Have you ever had a situation in your life where you've got a big decision in front of you? You've got some important thing that has to be done and you are searching the Scriptures, you are praying to God, just give me an answer. Give me a solid yes, a solid no, a solid okay, a solid do not. And you look and you look and you look and you pray and you pray and you pray and you come up empty. Has anybody ever had that happen to them before? It's like he doesn't give you certainty on what it is that you need to know.

And there are certain times in your life where that's just going to be the case. Certain words of God are going to be sealed. The Bible says the secret things belong to the Lord, but the things that have been revealed are for us and for our children. What do you do when God's word is sealed? What do you do when you have unanswered questions? What do you do when there's something you're desperately needing to know, but God in heaven is going, I'm not going to tell you. In those situations in life, I think just like John, you choose to trust God even with your unanswered questions.

There's a thought experiment I sometimes do in my own life because I'm kind of a skeptical person. I still struggle with doubt and things like that. And I've had this thought experiment with other people who struggle with doubt, and the thought experiment goes: imagine if Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, showed up in your living room. I mean literally showed up. You know, the scars, everything. He's real. It's for real: I rose from the dead, I'm coming

back again. He looks you in the eye and he says, I'm not giving you an answer to your question, but I want you to trust me.

If you saw Jesus risen from the dead in your living room saying those things to you, would you still trust him even though he didn't give you an answer? And my answer is almost always, well of course. Of course I'll trust you. And I'll wait, and I'll get my answer later. But if you really rose from the dead, if you really are the Son of God, if you really are coming again to make things right, then this question, as burning as it is in my mind, I'll leave it unanswered and trust you.

And there are seasons, there are things in your life where that's just the case. You're going to have to carry your questions with you. It's called faith seeking understanding. It means putting doubt on your doubt, choosing to not walk in unbelief, but to walk in faith, but to walk in faith that has unanswered questions. And there are certain questions that can only be answered from a place of faith seeking understanding. You'll never ever get your answer from a place of intellectual doubt or unbelief. God chooses to restrain, he chooses to conceal things for his reasons.

We're not in a position to know those reasons, or even if we did know them, we probably wouldn't understand them because we're not in a position to understand them in that way. He's God. We are not. Trust him with your unanswered questions. As I like to say, rest in what you do know instead of worrying about what you can't know. Rest in what you do know instead of worrying about what you can't know. What you do know is more important than what you don't. This is the same thing that happens to Daniel in Daniel chapter 8.

The Lord gives him a vision of a prophecy of things that are yet to come, and he tells him— Daniel chapter 8, verse 26: The vision of the evenings and mornings is true, but seal up the vision, because it refers to many days in the future. Chapter 12, verse 4: Daniel, keep these words secret. Seal up the book until the time of the end. Many will roam about, knowledge will increase. Certain words of God are sealed. Jesus said, don't worry about your life. Don't worry about what you're going to eat, what you're going to drink, what you're going to wear.

Your father knows what you need. He cares for the grass of the field, he cares for the birds of the air. He's going to care for you. Rest in that. Rest in what you do know instead of worrying about what you can't. Then lastly, the fourth message we need to hear in our misery is that God's word is sweet. God's word is sweet. So embrace it and proclaim it, no matter what the cost. It is such an interesting, such an interesting picture. John hears this voice again from heaven in verse 8.

The voice tells John to go take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel, the angel standing on the sea and in the land. So he goes to the angel, he says, give me the little scroll. So the angel says, here, take it and eat it. It's going to be bitter in your stomach, but it'll be as

sweet as honey in your mouth. So I took the little scroll from the angel's hand. I ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I ate it, my stomach became bitter, and they said to me, You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.

Could you imagine this happening to you? Like if I invited you over to my house for chicken dinner, I have the absolute very best grilled chicken that anybody has ever had. In our family, my father-in-law is the brisket master. If you've ever had Les Campbell's brisket, it's unbelievable brisket. He's better than me at cooking steaks on the grill, which I will admit, begrudgingly, but I will admit it. But I'm the very best with chicken, the very best. He will even tell you. I'm the chicken master. But let's imagine I get my chicken, my master marinade.

It's so amazing. It's tender and delicious. I cook it up on the grill. I put a plate in front of you and you cut a slice of chicken off. You put that choice morsel in your mouth. It's the most amazing thing you've ever tasted. And you have a smile on your face, I have a smile on my mouth, and I'm looking at you, and I just say, just wait. Just wait. It's going to be so bad later for you. You're going to be on the toilet for days. Your stomach is going to hurt so bad.

Tums, omeprazole, every medicine known to man is not going to be sufficient. That would be the most awkward dinner ever, right? And yet that's exactly what this angel says to John. Take it, eat it. It's going to be sweet. But it's going to make your stomach bitter. Now what's it mean? Well, a lot of people take it a lot of different ways. Here's what I think it means. It's about the word of God. It's about particularly the word about his redemption. It's about the end of days. It's about the renewal of all things.

And it's a sweet word, right? That's a good word. It's a word we need to remember in our pain and suffering that God is going to restore, He's going to heal, He's going to fix. But even though it's sweet, it's also bitter because it requires patient suffering endurance, hardship and pain. The word of God is a bittersweet word. It's sweet because God so loved the world he gave his one and only Son. You are far more loved than you could have ever dared to hope. But it's bitter because even though God loves you, outside of his love and grace, we are wretched, wicked sinners, deserving of eternal damnation.

We are far worse off than we could have ever imagined. It's sweet in that no matter what you've done, you can be completely forgiven, your shame, nailed to the cross. There's therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. It's sweet, but it's bitter because the word that speaks forgiveness is also a word that exposes the ugliness of your human heart. And it is scorned and despised by our culture and our world and is going to invite persecution, loss of finances, loss of relationships, loss of even maybe your family.

It's sweet, but it's bitter. It's sweet because it gives you power from the Holy Spirit to overcome sin and live a new life in Christ. It's bitter because even though God can and will

transform you, even on your best day, you're a far cry from what you can be, should be, and one day will be. It's sweet because it's a promise that Christ will come again, He will redeem, He will restore, He will rescue, but it's bitter because until He comes, it requires patient endurance. God's not slow to fulfill his promise, but he's patient, not willing that any would perish, but that all would come to repentance.

And because he's patient, that means you and I have to endure through lots of hardship, struggle, and pain. It's a bittersweet word. But because it's sweet, you should embrace it and proclaim it no matter what the cost. It reminds me of what Peter said to a group of Christians that he was writing to, Christians who were suffering in a significant way. He tells them to stand on the word of God. The grass is going to wither, the flower is going to fall, but the word of God will stand forever. It'll endure forever.

And because the word of God is going to stand, that means if you stand on the word, you'll be able to stand too. And we live in a culture that mocks the word, scorns the word, says the word is nonsense, backwards, antiquitated, not fitting of a culture of our intelligence and sophistication. But the word of God says a different word. The word of God is trustworthy and true. It is reliable. It is breathed out by God. It is effective for everything that we need in the Christian life. And so will you trust his word?

Will you build your life upon his promise? Will you trust him even with your unanswered questions? And will you receive it, obey it, no matter what it cost? That's the word of God to you in your misery. The question is whether or not you'll hear that word and receive it. So I want to take a few moments as Taylor leads us through a time of response.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "chapter five"; the rainbow surrounding the throne is in Revelation 4:3. Source: Revelation 4:3 (CSB). ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "the seven trumpets" (and then "the seventh thunder"); the CSB reads, "When the seven thunders spoke… Seal up what the seven thunders said." Source: Revelation 10:4 (CSB). ↩