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Transcribed Message

Message: From Pharisee to Follower

July 20, 2025

Hebrews 4:12

Well, if I was to call you a Pharisee this morning, what would that be saying about you? I've asked a few of you, and I asked people on the street, my barber, my doctor, different folks the last couple weeks in preparing for this, what would that say about you? And you know, even for those who don't read the Bible, they pretty much had the regular common answers that you might expect, as you can see on the next slide. Oh, you'd think I was hypocritical. You'd think I was judgmental. You'd think I was legalistic. You'd think I was proud, and maybe some people said you'd even be mean if you were a Pharisee.

But what if I preface that with the next slide where I just tell you some good things about the Pharisees. They studied the Bible regularly. They obeyed the law sincerely. They opposed idolatry fiercely. They pursued all kinds of spiritual disciplines, and they honored the Jewish traditions. If I said all that about a Pharisee and I'd say, if I call you a Pharisee, does that make it a little better what I say? No, I don't think so, because if you recall, Jesus just didn't have a whole lot of good words for them, did he? He didn't pick any of them as one of his twelve, that's for sure, and none of them were willing to go public during his early times, at least of his earthly ministry, to say they were his followers. And Jesus was pretty harsh with him, wasn't he?

Well, I don't know if, I may be the only one in this room, but when I go through the Gospel of John with Carlon on Sunday mornings or look at a series about Jesus' life like *The Chosen*, I find a gnawing thing in my heart going on. It's like if I was living in the day of Jesus, would I be more attracted to being a Pharisee or being a follower of Jesus? And in my own life, that's maybe not an easy question. God has done a change in my heart, and so I'm glad for that, because humanly speaking, on my own, I would probably want to be a Pharisee. And Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day. That's kind of what I am. I'm a religious leader at some level.

The Pharisees were very precise about their faith. You knew exactly what to expect, whereas the disciples that followed Jesus half the time, they seemed kind of confused and lost and befuddled, didn't they? The Pharisees had the known and the familiar about what the faith walk is like. And for the disciples, the followers of Jesus, for a while there, it was the unknown and the unfamiliar. Jesus would speak in mysteries. He would speak in metaphors. He would speak in parables. And the Pharisees? Shoot, their faith was measurable. It was almost, at least for some people, they thought maybe even attainable.

But really, when you boil it down to what's about the Pharisees, they were about knowing stuff and doing things. And that's what religion is about, isn't it? They thought, yeah, if we just know the right things and do the right things, that's the best we can do, and God will be very pleased with that. Well, if we're not careful, we might think our church motto fits into that: know God, love others, and love the gospel. It sounds like knowing stuff and doing things, right? But no, it's way more than that. And Jesus worked towards the heart of that, where he confronted them, the Pharisees, the religious leaders, but he also confronts us when we're tempted to think that way.

I want to start off with what I think were four assumptions that the Pharisees had about their view of God that they would have never said, no, we don't believe that. But yet their life and their words betrayed them. They really did see it that way. If you're going to follow along with me in that confusing chart inside your bulletin, here we go. The upper left, God is not. First thing I would say that they assumed is God is not enough. God is just simply not enough.

Here's how Jesus described them. He said in Luke 18, Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt. And then he went on to use this parable of the Pharisee that's praying in the temple. God, I thank you that I'm not like other men, extortioners, unjust, or even like this publican. I fast twice a week. I pray, give tithes of all that I possess. And the publicans over there said, Lord, just be merciful to me, a sinner. And Jesus said, that's the man who went home justified rather than the other. The Pharisees looked down instead of up. In other words, they looked down. They looked down at themselves, they looked down at other people with contempt. But I'd suggest to you that they didn't look up a whole lot. Because in their way of carrying out all

these oral traditions that were way beyond the law, God was not enough. God was not enough, and so they trusted in themselves to be righteous.

Go over to the upper right corner, God is not for me. Another thing that I think they assumed about God, and we see that clue in Matthew 23. Jesus really gets after them. It's all the woes. All the woes to you, you hypocrites. And one of them in verse 13, but woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces, for you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. God's not for you. You can't get in. You're not worthy of all that. You think you want a relationship with God? You can't. You probably can't attain that. Maybe some of us can, but the rest of you can't. No, just shut the door, forget about it. It's not happening. God is contemptuous towards you, maybe even judging. You get outside the lines and he's just going to squash you like a June bug. There's no hope.

Well, I think a third thing that the Pharisees assumed in their view of God was God is not involved, and that's on the lower right in your chart. And later in Matthew 23, with these woes, Jesus says, woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So, you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. God is not involved. He winds you up like a clock and gives you the law, and it's up to you to figure out how to do it. It's all up to you. Knowing the right stuff and doing the right things, being religious outwardly. God's not looking at the heart. He doesn't care. Well, there's plenty of places in the Old Testament that would refute that, right? But that was how they thought. That was their view of God that showed up in the way Jesus accused them. And as Jesus said, you honor me with your lips, but your hearts are far from me.

Well, in the lower left, I'd say that the fourth assumption they had about God was that he's really not all that gracious. God is not gracious, and that kind of runs from the others. If he's not for me and he's not involved, well, he's probably not very gracious either. He's holy. And Jesus said woe to them in Matthew 23. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to know, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders. But they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

You long-timers know that for a good part of my adult life in my career, I was a federal prison chaplain, and we had to accommodate different faiths in what their practices were. And Purim is a big celebration for Jewish folks where they read through the book of Esther and celebrate all that God has done. And at one point, I was at the transfer center where the inmates come and go a lot, and there was a kind of a high-profile rabbi that got in trouble when he was in there. He was from New York, and it was Purim. And so, this Jewish advocacy group calls Washington, D.C., and then Washington, D.C. calls the region in Dallas. The region in Dallas contacts my warden, and my warden contacts me and says, this guy wants to celebrate Purim, and there's somebody willing to fly from Wisconsin to help him do it. And what that entailed was he had to quote the entire book of Esther in Hebrew with the intonation, the chant-type sounds that that made without mistake. And so, he was an expert in that, and he needed to do that and do this for this rabbi. And so, yeah, we accommodated him.

Well, it so happened to be that the night of Purim was right after the Sabbath ended, and so he flew in ahead of the Sabbath. But of course, he had to not do anything during the Sabbath, being a good Pharisee who strained out a gnat and swallowed a camel. I love Jesus' phrase that way. And so, the way that worked out, then I said, okay, so as soon as sundown happens, you've got an hour and a half here, and then there's count time, 10 o'clock count. We can't go past that. So, you've got to finish it in that time. And so, they said, okay, we'll get a police escort. So, he went from the rabbi's house here in Oklahoma City with a police escort, whisked out to the prison, and we got him in as fast as we could, and he sat down with this rabbi to quote the book of Esther. And he couldn't make a mistake. So, I said, hey, we don't have time to redo this. So, you've got to make it right the first time. Okay, the pressure was on. So, he's quoting away, and you know, he's not doing it. He's not doing it perfectly.

The rabbi corrected him, and it's like, oh man, here we go. But they just kept going because they knew they couldn't stop. They couldn't. So, you know, he's straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel, in my opinion. So, I'm kind of asking him, you're quite a law keeper. What on earth are you in here for? And you know, I didn't always ask that question, but I felt kind of bold at that point. He just says, oh, I just skipped a page. Well, yeah, okay. You know what Jesus says to that? Come to me. Oh, you are weary and heavy laden. I'll give you rest. Take my yoke

upon me and learn from me, for I'm gentle and humble in heart. You'll find rest for your souls. None of this stuff. You'll find rest for your souls.

So, Jesus was different. Jesus was radical. Jesus was transformational in what it means to have a relationship with God. And you know, when you look at these four views of God, and we know they're not right. The Pharisees knew they weren't right, but they were stuck in that tradition. I'll just read to you just some spots from Romans 8. Romans 8 is the gospel. It is an overview of the gospel in so many beautiful ways. I'm going to read Romans 8:1. When we think in our view that God is really not enough, what did the Holy Spirit say to us in Romans 8:1? There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Straight up, God is enough. You don't have to do anything to have a relationship and earn favor with God. That is enough. Or we think of that second view that God maybe isn't for me. There are times where any of us wonders, don't we?

But in Romans 8, starting at verse 31, he says, what then shall we say to these things? 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 we not also with him graciously give us all things? Then that third assumption that the Pharisees, I think, lived with, that God is not involved. God's not involved in my life. He doesn't know about me personally. Well, that's a temptation. Any of us would have to think that sometimes. Romans 8 verse 11, if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

And fourthly, maybe God's not as gracious as we think he is. Well, this is Romans 8's answer at the end of that chapter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I'm sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And that's truth, isn't it? That is the truth. Can I get an amen? All right, thank you. It's lonely up here. I appreciate that.

But you know, those are truths that we rely on and that we understand, that we memorize. But Jesus approached it kind of in a different way when he wanted to confront these

assumptions about God that the Pharisees had, and that maybe you and I are tempted to have as well. And so, Jesus asked a lot of questions. Jesus' questions were transformational. Somebody counted for us. He asked 307 questions. And granted, in the synoptics, they overlap. Some of those are the same accounts. He asked all those questions to, of course, establish a relationship like with the woman at the well. But going beyond that, he asked questions in order that we could stop and examine our own hearts, examine our own selves, examine our own thoughts, or examine our own views of God, examine our own motives.

And he used them to show the logic in truth being how we can live. And for those who were willing to respond to those questions, it was an invitation. But for those who were not willing to respond positively to those questions, it was simply a condemnation. The same question, two different results. So, he asked 307 questions. He received 183 questions. By somebody's count, he only actually answered three of them. The rest of them, or a lot of them, he just answered a question with a question, didn't he? Jesus had a lot of questions.

He asked 37 why questions. Now, that one I had to count myself because I didn't find a stat anywhere. A lot of them in the Gospel of John, as we're going through now, he was asking these why questions to confront the Pharisees with their hypocrisy. But in the Synoptics – Matthew, Mark, and Luke – a lot of the same stories were there. There were a lot of the why questions to his 12 followers, his 12 disciples. And therefore, those questions were to us as well. And they were instructional because he was making a point with a question. But they were also transformational, weren't they? Because they required the disciples and they require us to look on the inside, look in the heart, look at the thoughts, look at the motives, look at the views of God that might be needed to be corrected.

Well, maybe it was a true story. I don't know, but we'll just call it a parable like Jesus did. Let's use this as a story. There was a toddler who got her hand stuck in a flower vase and was pretty distressed. And so was the mom because this was a very antique, treasured flower vase. They tried the oil. Nothing could get that kid's hand back out of the vase. And so, she decided, I'm going to call 911. So, she did. And sure enough, the fire department was gracious enough to come on over and see if they could help because she thought, oh, if I try to break it or get her, it'll end up with stitches or something and get all cut up. So, the firemen came over and one of

the firemen just leaned down to talk to the toddler and said, you know, just try to try to loosen your fingers so that they'll just slip out like this. Just look like this. She says, I can't, I can't. So, the fireman said, why not? Because I'll lose my marble. Both the fireman and the mom realized that in the flow chart of how to deal with a dilemma, maybe the why question should come a little quicker. And that's exactly how Jesus operated. He had a lot of why questions to expose hypocritical behaviors, to expose wrong views of God.

I'm going to bring four of Jesus's why questions that he asked the disciples and that He asks people who want to be his followers, including us, that challenge the assumptions about God that we easily live with. The first one, why are you so anxious? Why are you anxious? And I take that question from Matthew chapter six during the Sermon on the Mount. Early on in his ministry, he wants to help expose the heart of the matter. And he starts Matthew six, verse 25. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Yeah, what you will put on is not life more than food and the body more than clothing. Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to a span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, what should we eat or what should we drink or what should we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things. And your heavenly Father knows that you need them all but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Isn't that an amen? You know, Jesus asked eight questions right in that little spot. Eight questions that are saying, why are you anxious? And he has an answer with the truth, how to think, how to understand that God is enough. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.

I grew up in a farm community in central Kansas. Most of them were Mennonites, and they were Sabbath keepers, in this case, Sunday. You did not see a tractor out in the field on Sunday, no matter what. You didn't see a combine in the field cutting the wheat on Sunday, even if the storm and the hailstorms were coming. Nobody did that on Sunday, except for the Catholic guy across the street, across the road. So that's what I thought of Catholics.

I went to Bible college where Carlon's dad, Dr. Tschetter, taught me some theology, and I came back after one year. I knew some stuff. I was going to set my dad straight. It's like, why aren't you out there working when the storm's coming on a Sunday? The Sabbath commandment number four is never reiterated in the New Testament in a positive way. So there. Well, okay, well, my dad wasn't having any of that. And so my cousin Dallas called on a Sunday. He wanted, he was asking, hey, can Lowell come help me out? I got some extra farming. I'd love for him to help me with tomorrow. And so, I hung up and asked my dad, and he says, you call him back tomorrow. We don't talk about business on Sunday. You've got to have some hair on your teeth. Well, that was an analogy I'd never heard before. Never tried to use. It just doesn't quite add up.

But you know what? I grew to appreciate and to honor the way those farmers did that. They trusted. You can't be a farmer and atheist. I'm convinced of that. You have to trust because it's all about the weather, isn't it? It's all about the weather and God providing. And they say, you know, if God wants my wheat to be hailed out, then God will provide. And that's okay. We're just going to trust. We're just going to trust him. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. My God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Be anxious for nothing but everything by prayer. So many places that God helps us understand. Don't be anxious, but trust. And that's not a turn it on a light switch. That's a constant growing for us, isn't it? To realize that God is enough. I can rest. I can trust in that.

Last Sunday, we looked in John 6 at Jesus walking on the water in that storm on the Sea of Galilee. This is a Rembrandt painting titled *The Sea of Galilee*. This was his only seascape, apparently, and it was stolen when it was on display in Boston about 35 years ago and never been seen since. But I promise I don't have that picture. But in the next picture, I pointed out

two people in the picture. The one in the red, that's Rembrandt. He stuck himself in the picture. If you're able to get closer and count, there's 12 disciples, there's Jesus, and then there's this 14th guy. And it looks a lot like Rembrandt. He just decides to stick himself in there. You got the storm on the one side of the picture. You got the calm and the darkness and Jesus. This is the one that depicts that first storm story where Jesus is asleep in the boat during the storm, and they have to go wake him up because he doesn't have a care in the world. He's as calm as can be. He's the only one that's calm on the whole boat.

But here's the next close-up, if it shows a little bit. There's Rembrandt. And you can't probably see it on there because it blends in with his hat, but he's actually got his hand on his head. He's like, Oh, what have I gotten myself into? His dilemma is he painted this out and maybe took a whole year to do the whole thing. He's thinking about this story again and again and again, and putting himself into that story. What have I gotten myself into? I shouldn't be in a storm. I also have to decide, am I going to fight the storm like some of the disciples that are up front in the boat trying to, you know, Peter, James, John, the guys that were fishermen knew how to do that stuff. Or am I going to be on Jesus's side where we're just hanging out with Jesus saying it's all going to work out. It's going to be okay. Which one am I going to decide to do? And we kind of asked that question last Sunday, didn't we? The other, the green arrow, that's somebody puking over the side. And, you know, I'm just thinking, well, that's Matthew. He probably never rode in a boat before, but we're just hoping it's Judas, don't we? We're just hoping that's Judas. He's getting a payback early. That's what I'm hoping.

The other story, and this is the corollary from what we saw last Sunday, but this is the one where Peter steps out into the water when he sees that Jesus is walking on it. And I'm going to look at Matthew 14 for that one and read part of that. So, we remember how Jesus sent the disciples off, and it was getting dark, and so here they are going across the Sea of Galilee in the dark. The storm comes up, and Jesus is walking on the water. And then, I'm going to start at verse 26 of Matthew 14. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and said, it is a ghost. And they cried out in fear, but immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid. And Peter answered him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. He said, come. So, Peter got out of the boat,

walked on the water, and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me. Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, oh you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased, and those in the boat worshipped him, saying, truly you are the Son of God.

Why do you doubt? Is God for me? O you of little faith, why do you doubt? And immediately Jesus reaches out with his hand and pulls Peter back up out of his dilemma. Well, if you recall from last week, and this one added to it, there were four miracles that happened in that event. One, Jesus walked on the water. Secondly, Peter walked on the water. Thirdly, the storm calmed instantly. And fourthly, the one in John six, we saw suddenly, just immediately the boat was back on the shore. The lesson was over. The storm was gone, but the result was in that verse.

At the end of that Matthew 14 account, those who were in the boat worshiped him saying, truly, you are the son of God. That was the first time they said that. The light came on. Truly, you are the son of God. Why do you doubt? Well, so it was in that same chapter in the John account where, you know, all the crowds are leaving because Jesus suddenly starts to say hard things. And we'll hear about that in a few weeks through Carlon's teaching through that. But Jesus said to the disciples, are you guys going to leave me also? And Peter says, where else would we go? You're the one that has the words of eternal life. And we have believed and come to know that you are the holy one of God.

When you have the right view of God, that he is for you, you're not only willing to trust, you're willing to follow. Even in the middle of doubts, in the middle of doubts. The people in Kerrville, Texas, what are they supposed to do with that? Many aren't so sure God's given them a fair shake. After all, it's his fault that the weather happened the way it did. When you or I or anybody gets the word from the doctor that you have cancer and there's no hope. Yeah, we doubt. Is God for me? Many other examples.

This is from Joni Erickson. A lot of you old timers are fans of Joni like I am. She was paralyzed as a quadriplegic in a diving accident at age 19. And 50 years after that of living in a wheelchair and having all these difficulties and yet being such a testimony for many of us.

At age 69, she now experienced cancer. Listen to her attitude, what she wrote about that.

When I received the unexpected news of cancer from my oncological surgeon, I relaxed and smiled knowing that my sovereign God loves me dearly and holds me tightly in his hands. What good is it if we only trust the Lord when we understand his ways? That only guarantees a life filled with doubts. And she goes on and shares, I'm inspired by the many valiant people with disabilities and their families whom we serve every day at Joni and Friends. And they are people who constantly persevere through personal crises. They do not doubt God's glorious purposes for their lives. Why should I?

And her last reflection on this news of cancer, please pray that God will be glorified through all of this, that he will be trusted, extolled, and exalted. That this new challenge becomes a platform for showcasing his grace as well as the giving of the gospel. And then she added, and of course, that my surgeon shows great skill in surgery. After all, we want him to get it all. God is enough. God is for me. Why should I doubt?

Well, the third one, the assumption sometimes, I know I struggle with it sometimes. Well, God doesn't. No, God's not involved in this one. I've got to row this one on my own. In Mark 8, verse 14, starts another account. Now they had forgotten, and I think I have Matthew on there on the slide, but I've decided to change it up and do Mark's account. Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they only had one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them saying, watch out, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes, you do not see. And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember when I broke the five loaves of the five thousand? How many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? They said, twelve. And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? And they said to him, seven. And he said to them, do you not understand?

Okay, well, there's eight questions right in this account, again, that Jesus asks. And actually, literally, it's, do you have no heart is the way the Greek order of words goes. It's like,

you disciples, do you have no heart at all? Do you not understand? And in fact, the word for hardened has some extra prepositions on it to make it really, really, really hard. So, I just put so hard. So, so hard. But Matthew has an interesting postscript in that account where he says, then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Then they understood a disciple can be defined as a learner, as a student. And these 12 and other followers were willing to do that.

When Jesus asked that question, do you have a hard heart? Do you not understand? They were willing not to just let that bounce off their heads. They were willing to let it sink into their hearts. And it did. I would suggest to you that when we understand that God is involved in our lives on a continual, ongoing basis that makes for a growing disciple. That would be an attribute of one who is a follower, not a Pharisee, that you are growing.

What does that look like? You're honest about your own life and your own shortcomings. You're leaning on other people to help you through that and pray for you, and looking into the word to find guidance. You're teachable. The Holy Spirit is in your life, and he's doing a work, and you know that it's ongoing. And Bill Gothard, way back in the early days, if you guys remember from the 70s, he had a button that we would wear, and it was P-B-P-G-I-N-F-W-M-Y. And it stood for, please be patient, God is not finished with me yet. Remember that one? P-B-P-G-I-N-F-W-M-Y. Remember that one.

Both in Matthew 16 and in the Mark 8 account, right close after this account, don't you guys understand you've got a hard heart? It's Peter who spoke for the disciples. You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus said, blessed are you. You're getting it. You're growing. You're understanding.

Well, the fourth question, the why question that we're looking at, challenges the assumption sometimes that God really isn't all that gracious. And I'm looking at Matthew verse, chapter 26, starting at verse 6. Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask, a very expensive ointment. This, by the other gospel accounts, was Mary the sister of Lazarus, who was, you remember, resuscitated by Jesus. She came up with an alabaster flask, a very expensive ointment. She poured it on his head, and as he reclined at the table. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant,

saying, why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor. But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.

Mary saw it. Mary understood what was going on. Jesus had foretold it. The disciples didn't get it, but Mary did. She saw this is what Jesus is going to do, and Jesus has to do. She saw it. And so, she anointed him, knowing that there would be a burial coming. She saw God's grace. I would suggest to you, when you and I understand and comprehend and grow in understanding of how high and deep is God's grace for us, it's transforming, isn't it? First John 3 says, we know, beloved, by this, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But whoever has the world's goods and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but indeed in truth.

That's who we are. That's the mark of a disciple. John 13:35. This will all men know that you're my disciples because you have love for one another. In John 15, that abide chapter, love one another as I have loved you. That's the mark of a disciple. So a disciple is a follower, unlike a Pharisee, who is trusting because God is enough. Who is following because we know that God is for us, not against us. Who is growing because we know that God's involved in our life each day. And who is loving because we see how gracious God is.

Well, here's the picture of that distressed baby. By the time we keep seeing her show up, we better give her a name. How about Marah? In Hebrew, that means bitter. That was the bitter water that the disciples or the Israelites came on in the wilderness. And it was also Naomi's word when she went back to Israel and she had lost her husband and her sons, and it was because of the famine. She says, my name is Naomi. But now it's Marah because I'm bitter that God has abandoned me.

Well, why ask why? Jesus asked those questions to the disciples and to us to expose our wrong view of God, to internalize the truth that we need to understand in our own lives.

Proverbs 20 goes like this. The plans of a man's heart are like deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out. And Jesus was that kind of a man. Jesus knew how to draw the plans of a man's heart out. And he did it by asking questions.

But there's a 38th question that Jesus asked why. And because it's not in the gospels, it's in the book of Acts when we have the account of Saul persecuting believers as a devout Pharisee and being confronted with Jesus. And the first thing that Jesus did was ask him why. Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? That's in Acts 9. And he reiterates the account and shares his testimony in Acts 22 and again in 26. Each time it's verbatim, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Jesus' words to Paul, which his name became. And he understood that was the question that he needed to answer. He was blinded. He got his sight back after three days. He was commissioned. He accepted that commission to be a missionary to the Gentiles.

He was a champion of God's grace, wasn't he? A champion of it. Fifty-four times in Paul's writings through the Holy Spirit's inspiration in the New Testament, he uses the word grace. He loved that word. He was a champion of it. Three of those times that he used that word, I'll just give you as examples from Ephesians 2. For by grace you're saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it's a gift of God. From 2 Corinthians, when he struggled about that thorn in the flesh that God would not take away, my grace is sufficient for you. 1 Corinthians 15, but by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace towards me was not in vain. And just about every greeting in one of his letters and the closing in his letters included the word grace. Grace and peace to you. Peace being the Shalom tradition as a Jewish man, but he always added grace to that, didn't he? Because he was amazed. He was amazed by grace.

Well, so the next slide shows you the whole chart. If you got lost in all our back and forth, there it is. And so, the middle circle, if you fill that in, it says, it may be too small. No, you can read it. Okay. Amazed by grace. That was what Paul was. And I would suggest what we should all be. Amazed by grace. And if you don't fill in any other blanks, do that one because that's enough. That is enough.

In fact, I've got a little Rembrandt on that next slide because I threw in some arrows there. When you're amazed by grace, it affects all those things, doesn't it? You're amazed by grace and so you trust. You're amazed by grace and so you follow. You're amazed by grace and

so you grow. You're amazed by grace and so you're loving. How can you be increasingly amazed by grace? After all, I've been a believer since age nine and sometimes amazing grace, we lose the amazing part, don't we?

Oh, there's so many stories, your own and others included, that will amaze you at God's grace in their lives. We've got Covenant stories on the app that you can turn to and see several amazing stories of at least faces and maybe people's names that you know here. You can sing the kind of songs we do on Sunday morning that celebrate how amazing God's grace is. As you're in the Word, you can find those verses about grace like we just saw and memorize one. You can start your prayers with being amazed at the grace of God before you ever get to your wish list.

So today, are you anxious? I suggest being amazed by grace and you will seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Are you doubting? I will suggest that if you're amazed by grace, you will worship because God is for you, not against you. If you're amazed by grace, you can't have a hard heart that's bored with the Word or with prayer or with fellowship with other believers. It'll soften your heart. Are you amazed by grace and thinking you can't think that, well, God is unfair and that's the end of the story. No, you look for how gracious God really is in your life.

Let's skip ahead to the picture of Mara again, our toddler, and picture yourself holding that marble and say, I really believe my religiosity and my works, God's going to be impressed with it and that's enough when I get to heaven's gates to make it in. You've got to let go of that. You've just got to. It means dropping your pride. It means believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. There is no other way.

But the next picture again is back to Rembrandt getting stuck in the storm. And okay, so Rembrandt's in the boat. Let's just say you're a believer. You're in the boat. You've got some decisions to make. They're really daily decisions. Am I going to fight the storm on my own or am I going to rest in what Jesus has provided? Is God enough? Is God for me? Is God really gracious? That's a resounding yes, when you and I are amazed by grace.

The message paraphrase of Matthew 11 that I quoted for you already, he says it this way, are you tired? The challenge from Jesus. Are you worn out? Are you burned out on

religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how to do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. Oh, doesn't that sound good? Rest for your souls. It's right up there with an ice cream social tonight, isn't it?

Let's pray together. Lord God, we thank you that you are enough. And how else can we say it? Your grace is enough. I pray for each one here, whether it's to come to you in faith and be amazed by your grace for the first time or to be amazed by your grace for the thousand and first time, that we would be amazed because your grace is enough. Thank you in the name of Jesus for your word. I thank you for these people. I thank you for your Spirit that's been our teacher and will seal what needed to be heard in each of our hearts. We thank you in Jesus's name. Amen.