

Today we're going to start in Psalm 115. Just to give you a heads up, it's thick, but I don't know what to do with it except let it be thick. So I don't know that you'll leave here chipper, but I also don't know that you pay me for that. We're going to look at just a couple of coffee cup verses this morning. So let's look at the first verse. I just want you to see it and feel it, and I want you to pay attention to your mind and pay attention to your heart when we read these verses. Because I think something's going to churn up that will help us in our conversations as we progress. Psalm 115:3 says, "Our God is in the heavens; He does all that he pleases." It can literally be translated, "Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He wants." He does whatever He wants. If He wants to do it, He can do it. If He wants to stop it, He can stop it. If He wants to intervene, He can intervene. If He chooses not to intervene, He doesn't intervene. This is what we see in Psalm 115:3.

Now, let's turn to one that I don't think has ever been put on a coffee cup. Let's go to Daniel 4. We're just going to read verse 35. Here's what it says: "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing." So are you here? Am I here? Are our kids here? Are there other family members that we know that live on Earth? That should be a universal "Yes," by the way. Nobody's like, "I've got a buddy on Mars!" You don't, alright. Recovery for you. "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing," and then he goes further. "And he does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, 'What have you done?'" That's not a wildly popular text. Has anybody ever heard that one preached? Has anybody ever heard anybody walk through that one? Does anybody own a t-shirt with that on it?

Let me go New Testament now on you. Look at Romans 9, everyone's favorite chapter in the New Testament. Verse 16, "So then [salvation] it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy." Did you hear what he just said? It does not depend on your effort, your exertion, your will, your desire, but rather the grace and mercy of God.

Now, I could go on and on and on here – we could do this all day – but I think you get the gist. These are hard verses, aren't they? They grate against us. Don't we find ourselves automatically drawn to maybe John 3:16 or some verse about the abounding love of God? Don't we automatically feel pulled away from these verses into Psalm 23? Don't we immediately feel this pull away from this terrifying God? We want Him domesticated. We want to be able to ring our bell and control Him when we want to, and these verses fly in the face of that. Now, let me be straight. Man has always been rebellious. I will never here point back to a golden era. There wasn't one, and anyone who preaches and teaches as if there was, anyone who is trying to take us back to something, is a historical fool. There was no "Golden Age." There will be one, but there hasn't been one. We've always been rebellious. Think about this. There are two chapters in the Bible where man is without fault, and in the entire rest of the Scriptures, he is an absolute train wreck, she is an absolute off-the-rails blasphemous train wreck.

Now, the reason you and I struggle with these verses in particular is because we are the great-grandchildren of the Enlightenment. So let me try to explain that to you as best that I can. The Enlightenment was a movement that became very popular in the 18th century. They believed that the human mind and reason, could overcome ignorance, superstition, and the tyranny of their day and build a better world. I always want to come back to "How has that worked for us?" But their principal targets were religion. So when it started in France, this railing against religion was embodied in the Catholic Church in France. But they also sought to deconstruct and destroy a hereditary aristocracy that said these people held power and these people were better than anyone else because they were born in this line. And so the

Enlightenment sought to use reason to overcome and to destroy those two things: the power and authority of the church and the authority of the hereditary aristocracy.

Let me give you some names that were real strong proponents. One of them is Voltaire. I'm sure you read Voltaire often. Voltaire was the voice in France. Let me give you two more names that you will know. Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson were very much students of the Enlightenment and spent a lot of time in France. France was a great ally as the colonies were becoming the United States. Why? Because France and England had been at war since they were there. And for the record, I just don't know that France ever won any of those. I love the French, but they've lost wars to themselves. I mean, how do you do that? Anyway, the Enlightenment brings into the forefront of society for the first time in human history the idea of natural law of inherent freedom and of self-determination. Now, if you think about America's roots, tell me that we are not steeped in these ideas and these ideas are not deeply ingrained into our ethos, into our culture, into our ideas. So Enlightenment thinking, for the first time in human history, you have a steep rise in three things: the idea of self, the idea of individualism and the idea of freedom for that self and for that individual.

Now, these are not inherently bad. In fact, the Bible would speak greatly to all three of those things in regards to self-evidence of their truth and how they should even be worked out in society in regards to justice, mercy and peace. So although the Enlightenment does bring us some really good things, it creates a massive, massive problem that is now the air that you and I breathe that creates in us anxiety and anger about texts like this that say God does whatever He wants. Because when we hear that, we go, "Oh no, I've got rights! I've got rights. He can't do anything He wants! He can't do whatever He pleases! No, that's not fair. That's not just, that's not right!" All of that is rooted in Enlightenment thinking that is deeply ingrained in the American ethos.

Now, the problem of the Enlightenment is for the first time in history on a massive scale, man's eyes turned away from the divine and onto himself, and he was not created or built to live like that. When self rules, there will be no such thing as authority and all that will be left is to rebel against any and all authority.

Mankind has been governed for thousands of years by authority and tradition, and the Enlightenment exalts the self beyond that. So all we've seen since then is an outright rebellion against any authoritative system built. There is a time to rebel against authority and we're going to talk about that in this series, but let me just show you how it's the air we breathe. Let's talk music. You have the Beatles' song Revolution. I'm trying to use songs that I think most of us will know regardless of background or culture. There's John Lennon's Imagine. It's a very pretty song, but the whole song's about what if there's no religion, what if there's no government, what if there's no hell, what if there's no heaven, what if there's nothing but peace. That's very 60's and 70's. For some of you who are a little bit older, maybe in your 30's, think about John Mellencamp's Authority Song. "I fight authority and authority always wins." And then he goes on to say, "Well I've been doing it since I was a young kid, I always come out grinning. But I fight authority, and authority always wins."

Now I could go on and on here, we could do Kiss, we could do Green Day, there are several hip-hop songs I found, but most of them had the F-word in the title and so I just let that one alone. To be honest with you, I don't listen to country enough to know it's there. The air we breathe is, "No one tells me what to do. I do what I want to do. No one is the boss of me." Where I grew up it came out like this, "You're not my daddy. You're not my daddy." That was said to teachers, principals and coaches. "You're not my daddy." I had great coaches who would tend to go, "You're right, I'm not, but you can get off the field, you can turn in your pads and take your butt home." So that's music.

Now let's go movies. Cool Hand Luke or Fight Club. I mean, that whole story is about rebellion against any and all authority, that by submitting to authority, by listening to our company's laws, by living life by cultural norms you're somehow mundane and a sellout and so what you have to do is you have to rebel against those things. What about

Chocolat? In this movie, Johnny Depp plays some sort of pirate gypsy. I know, it's crazy, it's so out of character for him, but listen to the movie if you haven't seen it. The story is set in 1959, and this woman named Vianne moves into this small French village and she opens up a confectionery shop right across the street from the church. The church was the center of the town at that time, which means, in regards to how the town socialized, it was built around the church. And really, during Christendom or the last thousand years until recently, this is how society worked in the West. The church was the hub of culture and society. And there's all sorts of reason that's unraveled, some of them very good reasons but I don't have time for that. So in this movie, Lent begins and she begins to use her chocolates to try to seduce the men and women of the town individually out of their commitment to God and the church and Lent. She begins to go, "Oh, this guy likes dark chocolate. He comes by at this time. Let me make this so he smells it so he'll come in and he'll forsake Lent." And she does this over and over again and begins to woo with her overt sensuality and her chocolates, hence the name of the movie. She begins to pull people out of their commitments to community, pull people out of their commitments to the church in that community. And then when the mayor confronts her over, "Why do you feel the need to destroy what is established and has brought joy into the lives of people for centuries?" She just hooks up with Johnny Depp and decides to throw a chocolate party on Easter Sunday. I mean, isn't that just outright rebellion? So this is how we see it in movies. Again, I could go on and on and on.

Let's move to business. Enron, anyone? They hid billions of dollars in debt. I don't know how you do it. My wife sees if I spend twenty bucks at Target. I don't know how you hide billions of dollars from your board of directors and then pressure Andersen to pretend it's not happening. It's baffling. I could do savings and loan debacles. In 2002, telecommunications giant WorldCom committed the largest accounting fraud in US history with an \$11 billion scheme. I could do HealthSouth Corp, but I won't. I'll do this one just to get the ladies involved though. What about Martha Stewart? Now some of you are like, "Don't you dare." Listen, if I'll bag on Oprah, I'm not afraid of Martha either. Both of them could probably have me killed and then have the investigation erased, but I'm just giving facts that you can look up online. ImClone Systems founder Sam Waksal calls and tips Martha Stewart off that their drug that's supposed to fight cancer is not going to be cleared by the FDA. So upon receiving that call, she sells about a quarter of a million dollars worth of shares. The next day, the stock plummets 18% and she gets out clean. She to this day says she's innocent, but took a plea bargain and spent a couple months making crafts in jail.

Now, let me move to politics. I just want to show you how pervasive this is the air we breathe. Democrat Rod Blagojevich, is the former governor of Illinois. Now, I would comment about his hair right now except mine's growing in funny, so I'm just going to leave that one alone. He was the governor of Illinois from 2003 until January of 2009 when he was impeached for selling Barack Obama's open Senate seat. He was literally taking bids on a Senate seat and so he gets busted. Good news is he wrote a book and it looks like there will be a reality show about him, so you've got that to waste your life with. Mark Sanford, the governor of South Carolina, used taxpayer money to fly to South America to be with his mistress. So he's taking money from the state to fly firstclass, to setup hotel rooms, to rent houses in Argentina so he can sleep with a woman who's not his wife. And listen, on this list I could go on and on. One of my favorites just recently was William Jefferson who's a Congressman in Louisiana. They found ninety G's in his freezer. I don't know what ninety grand looks like but I'm guessing that's a big freezer. We do a cash system so I know what we pull out every month and I know it looks like we're a lot wealthier than we are (of course those are all fives and tens). But in the end, ninety grand in the freezer is crazy.

How does all this happen? Well, I'll tell you how it happens. There is no such thing as authority. Individual self rules. "What I want" rules. "What I think" is fair is right. There is this deep sense of entitlement that says, "I don't have to obey the rules! Does Illinois know how much I've served them? How much I've given up for them? What I've done to serve this great nation, to serve this great nation over the years? I deserve this. I have a right to this!" This all has its roots in the Enlightenment combined with the wickedness and sinfulness of the human heart.

And the church has not gotten out of this unscathed. I could go on and on and on about the failures of the church. They are just as abundant as they are in politics, as they are in business, as they are in movies and as they are in music. In the same way that I literally could have listed forty or fifty songs, forty or fifty movies, forty or fifty business dealings, forty or fifty politicians, I could list forty or fifty men of God, women of God who have abused their position for financial gain, for sexual gain, for a whole slew of other things and who have, because of their Enlightenment thinking, sold out the gospel of Jesus Christ and have sold out the nature and character of God as we see it in the Scriptures because it's not popular and it's scary and it goes against the air we breathe. And so from priests abusing kids to megachurch pastors doing meth and having homosexual sex with a masseuse, the church has not escaped this. What I'm trying to show you is this thinking and this idea are pandemic in the Western world.

So now I just want to show you who the God of the Bible is, and then I want to show you something crazy about our response to that God. And then I want to give you just a smidgeon of good news at the end. We're going to be doing this for nine weeks in different nuances of this idea of what is authority and what is not authority, how you walk under it, how you walk in it, when you confront it and when you do not. So with man's eyes glued to himself, he is without anchor, he is without ballast. He cannot live and walk as he was created to live and walk. He is a lost soul, uppermost in his own affection, which has only led him to frustration and anger.

So let's talk God now. The Bible tells us in Genesis 1 and 2 that in the beginning was God. So hear me. There's just God. That's it. He's always been. No one gives birth to Him. No one creates Him. He is no one's idea. In the beginning is God. Before there is anything, there is God. He is triune in nature: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. And this triune God, this three-in-one, is absolutely content, absolutely happy in Himself. Creation was not about God needing to, in some weird way, be completed. It is not about God going, "You know what? With just Me in my threefold state, I've just kind of been bored. I mean, I've been here trillions and billions and gazillions of years, and it's just been Me. So you know what? Let's create a rebellion against Us that we'll eventually have to destroy." So there's nothing but God.

And then out of that silence, God speaks. He just speaks. We find out later that He speaks through His Son, God the Son. And at His speaking, everything explodes and to this day is continuing to head out in every direction. So there is no such thing as the expanse of the universe. God says, "Let there be," and now there is. There is no such thing as oxygen, and now there is. There is no such thing as nitrogen, and now there is. There is no such as planets and stars, and now there is. There is no such thing as mountains on those planets, and now there is. There is no such thing as water, and now there is. There is no such thing as cells, and now there is. There is no such things as molecules, and now there is. I could go on and on here. He simply spoke it, and it happened. Like you and I are here now because He spoke it into being. Now think about that power.

So He's not going, "It's day six! I've got to get these mountains done!" That's not how He works. He's not short of resources. He doesn't have to gather resources. He doesn't have to go, "You know, I'd really like to put some water here but in the end I'm a little bit out of the hydrogen needed to combine with the oxygen to get Us water." Did I do that right, science people? H₂O? I believe so. And so in the end, that's not how God works. God doesn't go, "Ah, you know, We're going to have to rebuild Our. . . Gabriel, get on the hydrogen. Crank that stuff out. Spirit, what are you doing? You just watching? Help Gabriel out." It's not what's happening. He just says it, "Let there be," and there is. This is the God of the Bible. This is the God.

It's why, as we walk through the Old Testament, He constantly wants to point back to the fact that other nations that worship other gods and that they tend to carve those gods out of something. So God's defense for Himself often in the Old Testament is, "Isn't that made of wood? Didn't I make wood? Isn't that made of gold? Didn't I make gold?" In fact,

Paul's big argument against all the temples in Athens was this, "Our God is not served by human hands, as though He needed anything." God doesn't need our help. He is not lacking. He speaks and it is, and He can make more of whatever He wants anytime that He wants. He is outside of time, beyond our comprehension, and what we know is that He spoke and all that we know is.

Job 26 says, "All that is are but the fringes of His power." So let that one sink in. So all that we know of the universe, as expansive as it is and as wide as it is it had guys like Einstein and guys like Hawking even to this day baffled at its immensity, and Job goes, "Fringes. That was pinky." You still have no clue of His immense size because even creation is but the fringes of His power. And so this is the God of the Bible.

Now, I want to keep rolling forward. So because God is the Creator of all things, God is terrifyingly sovereign. He's sovereign over all. Why? Because He created all! It's His. So Kierkegaard said there's nothing in creation that God does not rightly stand over and claim, "Mine! It's mine." So in our Scriptures, everything obeys Him. The stars obey Him. The wind obeys Him. Everything does what He tells it to do. There is not a particle of dust that does not have to obey Him. He is terrifyingly sovereign because He is the Creator.

So let's walk through some of the implications of this. You were born when you were born, where you were born, how you were born because God said so. This is made clear over and over and over again in Scriptures. So there are no surprises to God. There are no accidents when it comes to our kids. So God has never looked down and was like, "What in the world is Chandler doing down there? Who did that? I said he wasn't due... He was going to be an 80's kid. I didn't want him down there in the early 70's. Let's get him back up here and start over." That's not how God operates. He is sovereign over all. Acts 17 and Psalm 139 tells us that you were born on the day and at the hour that He determined, and you were uniquely wired, uniquely gifted and uniquely placed by the God of the universe. He has been intimately involved with you. I'll say this as just another step forward. You are here today in this room, in the room in Dallas, in the room in Denton, listening to this on podcast, you are hearing this today because God in His divine decree has willed you into this place. And I'm not a Determinalist. He has wooed you and willed you into this place so that you would be drawn to Him or hardened towards Him, but you would be without excuse when you stand before Him.

There are a couple more things I want to point out as that one is not very popular. He sees everything, knows everything and is everywhere. There is nothing that goes on that He is not aware of. So knowing that, we go, "Well, wait a minute. There are bad things that go on! There are bad things that happen!" So I want to keep pushing you back to your Bible. Go read what happens, particularly in the Old and New Testament when there are dark things that occur. You'll see it a lot more often in the Old Testament, but it's definitely fleshed out in the New Testament. Go read Genesis 15. Go read some of those texts where God will use another nation to punish and discipline Israel or use Israel to destroy another nation, not because Israel was righteous but because that nation was wicked.

He governs. He rules. He works. We see this playing out. Think through the Old Testament with me now. We see God take Abram and make a great line of people with him. We see God sustain Joseph. We see God call to Moses. We see Him part the Red Sea. The sea obeys Him. We see plagues sent down on Egypt; which means the locusts obey Him. The sun obeys Him. The cattle die when He tells him to die. The water turns to blood when He tells it to turn to blood. I mean, think about the implications. Joshua, in routing nations out of the Promised Land, puts an army to flight and the sun's about to go down. He goes, "Man, if the sun goes down we're going to have to hunt them down individually." He asks God to keep it light and God stops the rotation of the Earth or makes, as Joshua says, the sun stand still until they're done killing the enemies of God. That is creation obeying God.

It's not just in the Old Testament that we see this happening. You fast forward to Jesus' ministry and watch Him work. Do diseases obey Him? Yeah. Does death obey Him? Yeah. Do the demons obey Him? Yes. Do they argue with Him? Never. That never occurs. Read your New Testament. There's never a "come out from him," and a demon goes, "Not today. Not right now." If anything they're like, "Okay, have You come to kill us? I mean, is this over already? I thought we have a couple more millennia here. Are we done? Is now the time? Please don't! Just send us into the pigs." "Okay, go into the pigs, but it's coming. You know it's coming." So the demons obey Him. He stands up and rebukes a storm. Who does that?! He stands up and He rebukes a storm and immediately it stops. He tells a little dead girl to get up and she does. He tells a man that's been dead for a couple days in the tomb to come out and he hops out. He dies Himself and is resurrected. Everything obeys Him. This is the God of the Bible. We can see Him curse a tree and it shrivels up. We can watch Him multiply food. He took that little kid's lunch and just blew it up.

Now, let's walk through it. God is the Creator. Since He is the Creator, He is infinitely sovereign over His creation, and that is terrifying to an enlightened mind that would say, "I have rights and I have rules, and you cannot do anything that infringes upon my inherent self-value."

And then, because God is sovereign over all, that leads me into why He created things. He created everything that is for His glory. The purpose behind all of this creating and governing and leading is that God might display His infinite perfections to creation and that He might be obeyed, enjoyed, and worshiped. And just so you can comprehend worship, worship is not just singing, although you can worship in singing. Worship is just a deep affection that captivates our minds and our hearts.

So we're in kind of the South. I was in North Carolina a couple days this week. That's the South. We're just kind of Texas. So we're in the Southern part of the United States but I don't know that we're a part of the Deep South, hence the reason you can just now start getting sweet tea around here. Now, in all of that, we have the same affection for football that most of the South does. So some of us get nervous the night before the game. "Hey, you're not playing, bro. You need to breathe out." So we get emotionally affected at a loss. The Cowboys will blow it and you'd just be like, "I'm not going to church!" Or the game will be on during church and it's like, "Uh, you know what? I'll just listen to the podcast. I'll get it on tape." First of all, there's no such thing as tape anymore. And second of all, this is you worshiping. You putting that little flag on your car, you putting that little OU/UT/TU/TTU/Gig 'Em on the license plate, that whole deal is you worshiping something. That's dumb. Is it fun to watch? Absolutely. Should you play it if you've got skill? Please do. It shouldn't consume you. It's a game. It's what we do. If you're younger maybe it's video games. You're like, "Oh, Halo 4 is coming out!" Whatever that is that you make much of, that's worship. And so God is the Creator of all things, is terrifyingly sovereign, and has sovereignly governed His own creation so that we might obey Him, enjoy Him, and worship Him.

One of the fundamental areas where you can see the Enlightenment really begin to rob the church of its power, its enjoyment and its worship is simply that the Bible, over the years, has ceased to be a book about God and has become more and more and more a book about us. Why? Because we're grandchildren of the Enlightenment, because it's about me and it's about what I want and I'm the individual. So this ceased to be a book about the nature and character of God, how we find out about the nature and character of God, and has instead become a book about me. "So, how can I become happy? How do I get rid of this or that or this?" We use it as some sort of spiritual and medical encyclopedia. The problem with that is that's not what this is! Now, are there truths in here that can help with all things? Yes, once the gospel has taken root, once you get the story. Without the story, you have no shot.

So let's do some teaching about the Bible. The first seventeen books of the Bible make up the Law and the History of God's chosen people Israel. That is Genesis through Esther. This will help you understand the Old Testament. This is simply the story of God calling a chosen people to Himself. It starts with Abram. He says, "Through your line I'm going to

bless all the nations on Earth. Let's get started. Have lots of babies. Let's go." And so we see it begin, and you've got the whole history of the nation of Israel wrought with absolute rebellion against this God that says, "I've come so that you might enjoy, that you might have life, that you might worship and that I might use you as an example of grace and mercy and how life should be lived." The middle five books of the Old Testament are the Wisdom literature. That's Job through Song of Solomon. They are no longer histories, narratives and the Law and the Torah, but now it becomes individual experiences in that story. The last seventeen books of the Old Testament, Isaiah through Malachi, are a group of books that you spend most of your time in sans Leviticus. They are God speaking back to and into that nation. Here are the narratives, here is the history, here is the wisdom that was wrought out of that history and here is God speaking into that history, both His approval and His disapproval of how they walk.

And it doesn't stop there. So the Old Testament is about God. We start to see this really unfold as we get into New Testament that is about Jesus. Who is Jesus? Jesus is the greater Adam. Jesus is the greater Moses. Jesus is the greater Abraham. Jesus is the greater David. Jesus is the new Adam purchasing for us in the cross a new beginning. We are a new covenant people brought forth out of the cross by Jesus Christ called the "church." And now the church working alongside the power of the Holy Spirit is redeeming and renewing and is a part of God's elective bride, to push back what's dark in the world until He renews all things at the Second Coming. The Bible is ferociously about God. If there are lessons to learn in the Scriptures, they come by seeing who we are in light of who He is. And anytime you see someone open the Bible and begin to talk about you outside of your relationship with God or the nature and character of God, they are most likely proof-texting and outside of the metanarrative, outside of the story of Scripture, which is a Creator God reconciling all things to Himself in Jesus Christ.

It's also why the Old Testament becomes really beautiful and you get really drawn into it as you begin to understand atonement, as you begin to understand what's being foreshadowed when David kills Goliath. So David killing Goliath isn't about how you can overcome the obstacles in your life. It's a ridiculous rendering of that text. How do we know it's not about that? Because of Jesus, that's how we know. Because Jesus kills the giant, the giant that can't be killed. He kills death once and for all. We know that David and Goliath is about God conquering sin and death in Christ, because Christ came and He conquered sin and death. And the Old Testament is about God's redemption of His people. And yet this is probably one of the biggest signs of Enlightenment thinking in the church.

Ultimate authority is His. So in response to your, "Well, what about my rights?," you don't have any. This is what makes us so often such blasphemers. So some of you have natural talent, natural charisma and you're just naturally gifted at something. You did not rap on the uterus wall and ask for that. Some of you are just brilliant businessmen, brilliant businesswomen. Some of you are just attractive. You didn't do that. That's not yours! That was given to you by God for God. What makes you a blasphemer is, in your Enlightenment thinking, you think it was wrought by you for you. This is what puts you in opposition against God. Now, here's what is crazy. We are in active rebellion against this God. So why is this crazy? In Numbers 15, God has a guy stoned for picking up sticks on the Sabbath. He's picking up sticks, e gets busted and the elders of Israel go to God and say, "What do we do with this guy?" And God says, "Kill him. He knows the Law. He broke the Law. Kill him." "How shall we kill him?" "Stone him to death." Now, don't you feel it in you right now? Don't you feel that well up in you? "That's not fair! That's not right!"

So what's your position to question that of God? What position of authority do you have to question Him? When I was a kid, if I mouthed off to my parents, there was always a little bit they would take and then it would hit that line of, "If you say that again there will be blood." There was this moment of, "Hush. You don't understand." They never said this, but, "You're an ignorant idiot. There's no way that you can comprehend this. Just hush and do what I say." And so over and over again you're going to see these things that make everything in us go, "Arrgh." There's this guy that just tries to stop the ark of the covenant from falling, but God said don't touch the ark. He touches the ark and God kills him. Now, here

is his faulty thinking, "Oh, I don't want it to get in the dirt." Here's the thing. The dirt has never rebelled against God. The man's hand was far more unclean than the dirt was. It's a fundamental misunderstanding. "Oh, I don't want it to get dirty." Your stank, nasty hand is far more dirty than the most bacteria-infested, E. Coli-saturated ground on earth. So once again, you feel it grating against you, don't you? Why? Because you have rights. But you don't. So we are in active rebellion against this God, and it's suicide.

So here are some of the ways that we are in rebellion. For some of you it's just blatant. Some of you are just like, "Man, I don't care. I don't believe there's a God." The Bible speaks over and over again of your terror on the day that you finally stand in front of Him. For some of you, you're just simply going to help God out, like Abraham and Sarah did. You're just like, "No, I hear Him, but here's the thing. I just don't think He understands my situation. So I know that probably worked for them back then, but. . ." God's appeals to mankind, nine times out of ten, are rooted in creation not in culture. So He doesn't say, "As all the culture around you..." No, He's going, "As I designed it to be." So when it comes to sexuality, He does not make cultural arguments. He makes sovereign creation arguments! "I created it this way!" In fact, I can't right now think of an argument that He makes concerning obedience that He doesn't root in His authority in creation. And some of you are just trying to help God out, "You know, I love God, I just think He doesn't quite understand my situation, my circumstance." And some of you walk in rebellion that way.

And some of you are just ignorant. And I don't mean that derogatorily, you're just ignorant. You don't know what it means to obey Him and you don't know what it means to submit to Him, either because you are not a believer or because you are and no one has ever walked with you and encouraged you to walk in holiness, and the Bible is confusing to you and you feel a bit lost in all of it. And some of you just walk in rebellion because you're ignorant. Some of you walk in rebellion because you don't slow down enough to hear the Holy Spirit's prompting in your life. Some of you walk in rebellion because when the Lord says, "Be generous," or in my case when the Lord says, "Shut up," that I don't listen and I'm going to help Him. And so some of you live so quickly and you don't stop and breathe and tap into the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in you that you're disobedient simply because the Spirit says, "Let's do this," and you refuse.

Now, let me say this just because I caught it in my notes and I want to make sure you grasp this. What about your rights? Sure. My question just for you to ponder this week is, "What about God's rights?" My question for you to try to figure out is what are your rights predicated upon? What are they built on? What is foundational for your right? And then what are God's built on? Because God has, "I made everything, and I made everything for a purpose." And so, you were what? Born? And who did that? "Oh, my mom and dad." But all the physiology that was required for that to take place, all the biomechanical things that need to occur in that moment for that to occur, who did that? Who started that? Whose idea was that? So you don't have any rights.

In fact, the only place in the Scriptures where we have a man who tries to put God in the dock is Job. He says to Job, "Dress for action like a man then." So Job is like, "Why? How? How dare you?" And then God literally goes, "Where were you when I. . .? Where were you when I. . .? Where were you when I. . .?" It's three chapters long of God going, "You know nothing. You are finite and tiny." Listen to how He talks about us over and over again in the Bible, "You are the dew on the grass. You are here in the morning and you are gone and you're gone by the morning." I mean, He's not even like giving you a day. You're there when you get up, and by the time you're done with your coffee, you're gone. Here today, gone. . .today. That's how God is going to talk about man. "You're small. You don't know."

And in Romans 9, Paul lets God answer for God when the question is, "How can God be just if He does this?" He lets God answer. And so if you'll go read all those passages from the Old Testament, those aren't being spoken from prophets; those are being spoken from God Himself. He's saying, "I'll have mercy on whom I have mercy. I'll have grace on whom I have grace. You don't control me and you don't have to understand." So in the same way that my parents will go, "You

need to be quiet. Be quiet." We see the Lord do that. We see Him. So go read those last three chapters of Job. Go pedal through Romans 9. Go watch what happens when we demand an explanation from God. Now, I think there is a time to go, "I don't like this. I wish there was another way." We see Jesus doing this, don't we? "Can you take this cup of Your wrath from Me? Do it, but not because I want it, because You want it."

Now, here's the good news. God is good, merciful, and gracious as you and I have rebelled against His ultimate authority. He has made a way to reconcile you to Himself and give you the rights of sonship or daughtership. He sends His own begotten Son, eternal deity Jesus the Christ, who takes off His glory and puts on human weakness and walks without sin so that He may then impute to you His righteousness. And then gets on the cross and then absorbs God's wrath towards your slanderous, blasphemous life. And the good news of the gospel and what we've come to celebrate as believers in Christ is that we have right standing before God, not because of us but because of Him.

Are we rebellious? Absolutely. Do we continue to be rebellious? Yes. 1 John would say that you are a liar if you say no. Does the wrath of God pour out on His children? No. So even when difficult things happen to us who are believers after grace takes root, it's mercy or discipline; it's not punitive. So the cancer that we've had to battle, when things like that happen, you know why I can stand in that? Because this is my God. You start giving me eight reasons why I don't have to doubt, you start talking about me being a good man, in that moment my world unravels. Because what have I done to my God that He would put this on me?! And then I begin to try to make sacrifices to make up for that so that He might, in the end, extend my life or be merciful to my children. No, that's not our God. Our God says, "You are mine. And I'll strengthen you. And I'll sustain you. And I'll walk with you, because you are My son, and I am pleased with you." It's not based on me.

And I still, with all the books I've read and all the study I've done, can't get my mind around this pleasure in me. But that's what the Bible says, that He loves me. God blew up the universe with the word of His mouth. H knows me, loves me and has extended mercy to me. So the doctrine of election and all that stuff that makes so many people so uncomfortable, it's a beautiful thing. Let it settle. He loves you. He's pursued you. He has extended grace to you. So we have this weird way of saying, "Well, what about the rights of others?" At the expense of the rights of God that have a strong basis in the creation of the universe rather than just rooted in the rebellion of human enlightenment. May God help us all, and may the gospel take deep roots in you.

Let's pray. "Father, thank You for Your authority. Thank You that on the airplane back from Raleigh yesterday, I was in Your hands. And thank You as I start chemo tomorrow night, I'll be in Your hands. And thank You through the early days of my marriage that were difficult we were in Your hands. And I thank You that my children, their lives, their health, they're in Your hands. Thank You that there will be nothing that comes into my life and my heart, the lives of these men and women, that does not pass through Your hands that You will not sustain us in, increase our joy in You and ultimately glorify Yourself in. And so grow our confidence in this and may you stem the tide of rebellion that lives in all of us. Destroy it fully, Father, and it is for Your beautiful name we pray. Amen."