

Love Casting Out Fear
Pastor Ty Blackburn
John 14:28-29
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Amen, what a beautiful message for us in song. Thank you, Laura and Matt. Young people, you are now dismissed for your classes. May the Lord bless you. May you grow in the knowledge of the one whose name is Emmanuel this morning. God is in us, God is for us, God is with us. Emmanuel, what a beautiful, beautiful message.

Turn with me in your Bibles please to John 14. We'll be looking at the last few verses of this chapter. We're looking at Verses 28 and 29. The title of the message is 'Love Casting Out Fear', and we're going to see that, as Jesus talks with His disciples, He encourages them by telling them that if they love, they wouldn't be afraid, they would be rejoicing. So we see the power of love in this passage, love's ability to cast out fear.

As we do, we're going to look at Verses 28 and 29 this morning, and we're going to deal with a passage, a part of Verse 28 that has been misunderstood, misapplied, and mis-taught to the spiritual harm of multitudes through the centuries because we have the Lord Jesus in Verse 28 say, "For the Father is greater than I." We're going to see that we have to understand that statement of Christ like we have to understand all other statements of Christ and statements of Scripture—in context. Truth out of context is a pretext, truth out of context is dangerous, deadly. All heresies are basically truths out of context, truths out of balance. We're going to see that when we look at that passage, that statement of Jesus in context it gives us a greater window into the glory of our Savior, the glory of the Godhead.

But we're going to see, as the main thrust of the message, that we overcome fear, we overcome despair, we can overcome depression, anxiety, a powerful weapon against them, against all of those things. When you are afraid, when your life is pressing in on you and you feel afraid of what is coming next, when you are depressed, when you are anxious, that one of the most powerful things that you can do is get outside of yourself and love, and that that, we're going to see, is one of the ways that we find joy in the midst of sorrow. One of the ways that we find joy, and hope in very dark times. Jesus exhorts His disciples to do that, to put on love, to put off fear by putting on love. To put off depression by putting on love.

Now we've seen in the passage, the whole of Chapter 14, is about overcoming troubles. We've seen that a key phrase we looked at last time, two weeks ago, "Do not let your heart be troubled," is repeated at the beginning of the chapter, and at the end, Verse 1, Verse 27. "Do not let your heart be troubled," brackets the whole chapter and Jesus is teaching us in this chapter how we overcome troubling circumstances, how we don't let our troubles trouble us to the point that we become filled with hopelessness and despair. We've seen that there are basically two things—believe and love. When you really look at the chapter, He keeps coming back to those themes, and we're going to see today He comes back to love.

When your circumstances are overwhelming you, as is often the case in this world, isn't it? How quickly our sunlit days are replaced by the storms of life. Often we find ourselves even on the best days, wondering what tomorrow might bring. How much longer will this last? Because in this world we will have tribulation, but putting on love is one of the ways that we can find joy and hope in the midst of sorrow. I want to pray for our reading of the Scripture, and I do want to also pray for a dear brother in Christ in our church, Ray Pitts. Many of you, if you received the emails, if you're on the email list, and you can get on the email list simply by requesting that on the website, but you would have heard about Ray being admitted to hospice on Friday, and it is a matter of any time he will be departing this world. We are thankful for his profession of faith in Christ, his expression of his repentance, and his trust in Jesus, but we know his family's hearts are heavy. Kim Pitts, one of our Deacons, really last night you could tell was just worn out emotionally and just spiritually, asked me to pray that he would be able to finish well, and continue to help support his mom, and his family. So we are going to pray for them, as we also pray for God to bless His word this morning. Let's pray.

Father, we come to You this morning, and we thank You that You are the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. We thank You that You comfort us in all our tribulations, so that we'll be able to comfort others with the comfort which we've received from God. We pray that You, oh Lord, might show Your mercy, and extend Your comfort to our brother Ray Pitts. We pray that He might feel Your presence, Your peace even as he is not able to express himself consciously to us. We know that, Lord, as the outer man is decaying, the inner man is being renewed, and the things that are temporal are becoming less visible. The things that are eternal are becoming more visible. So we rejoice in that. We pray that You will continue to minister to him, minister to his wife, Jean, minister to Kim, and to the other children, and in-laws, and grandchildren. May Your grace be evident and may Your glory be seen. Father, we ask as we come to Your word, that You would send forth Your light, and Your truth, and You would lift us up to be people who

love You with more intensity, and more joy. And we pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Let's read the passage. We'll begin reading at Verse 25 and read all the way through Verse 31, but our focus is going to be Verses 28 and 29. Jesus says in Verse 25, John 14:

John 14:25-31 ~ "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. 28 You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. 30 I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; 31 but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

Now, here we have the Lord Jesus transitioning them now, they are leaving the upper room here at the end of this chapter. They are going to be making their way to Gethsemane. We're going to see that probably as they are walking along, may well see a vine, and then He talks about, "I am the vine." He continues to instruct the disciples as He walks with them. Chapters 15 and 16 are the ongoing instruction, but He feels a sense of urgency because the moment is pressing in upon Him. It is as if He, in His omniscience, can hear the footsteps of Judas reaching the Pharisees, and the Pharisees preparing the guard to come out and meet him. He knows the moment is drawing near and so He impels them, "We need to go. We have an appointment to keep."

He sees the storm clouds gathering, and He is encouraging the disciples, trying to prepare them for this onslaught of evil because they are about to experience a torrent, an outpouring of evil that the world has never seen before or since. That in the hatred that would be manifest in the hearts of the Pharisees, as they would beat the Son of God, spit upon Him, mock Him, the evil that would be evident in the crowd as they yell, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" The evil that was evident in the Roman soldiers who also continued to beat the Son of God mercilessly. The evil that was let loose as God turns His back on the Son, the sin-bearer, and the sky becomes dark at noonday because God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. So

there we see why Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” He knows that the disciples are about to be caught up in the vortex of this storm, and He is trying to prepare them, and He’s been telling them, “You need to believe. You need to love.” And here He comes back to that same theme, and what we’re going to see is that one of the ways that we overcome, that we cast out fear, or that we overcome despair or anxiety, is that we put on love.

And I want to consider our message under two points this morning, two things we need to do when we find ourselves on the verge of despair, when we find ourselves being overwhelmed by fear, when we find ourselves in circumstances that are too great for us. What do we need to do? The first thing we need to do is to love Jesus Christ. The second thing we’re going to see is we need to look at Jesus Christ. Those are the two points, love Him, secondly, look at Him.

1) We Need to Love Jesus:

He says in Verse 28, ... *You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father,... If you loved Me...* implicit in this is they don’t love Him as they ought to love Him, if they did though they would not be despairing, they would be rejoicing. If they were loving Him, this is the word ‘*agapaō*’ or ‘*agape*’, it comes for the noun ‘*agape*’, a familiar word to many of us who have been in the church for any length of time. But if you haven’t heard this word, there are several different Greek words that could have been used for ‘*love*’ in the writing of the New Testament.

This particular word is the most common word, but it is a word that was very rare in Greek literature, extra-biblical literature. It is as if the writers of Scripture took a word that was relatively unused in the Greek culture, it did exist, it was a word, they didn’t coin a new word, it was out there, and it was a word that was sometimes used of love of the gods, but in Greek mythology, that’s not much love. Think about the gods in Greek Mythology. But they took this word and they brought it into the teaching of Scripture, and all of the teaching of the Old Testament, and the teaching of the Gospel, and the glory of what Christ has done for us, is capsulated, now poured into this word ‘*agape*’. And ‘*agape love*’, when we look at how it is defined in the New Testament, it is ‘*completely other-centered*’. This is what makes it unique among the various words for love. There is nothing of self-interest in *agape*.

Other loves are some sense of response, the word for, there are actually four words that are used of love in Greek. You have the word '*erōs*' which is a romantic love, and that is the response of people who are romantically infatuated. There is something in her that makes you love her. There is something in him that makes the woman love him. They are responding to something outside of themselves. It is something in the object that draws out the love. The same is true of even the word '*storgē*', which is a kind of belonging love, the kind of love a parent has for a child. A parent looks at a child and sees himself in the child, or sees herself in the child, and the natural bond, there is love there.

This is one of the things that Paul tells Timothy in one of the terrible signs of the last days will be, or one of the things that will be true in these last days is that the love of many will wax cold. The '*storgē*' of many will wax cold. That is the natural affection, familial affection will wax cold. So you have the '*storgē*', you have '*eros*', and you have '*philos*' love which is the love of deep companionship, friendship, but even there you love the person because of qualities that you see in them. You want to be with them. It is a deep love, but it is still rooted in something in the object.

'*Agape*' is rooted only in the subject. It is only in the lover. It is a decision to love, and it is, by definition, a decision to place the other person above yourself. So when Jesus says, "If you loved Me..." He's saying, "If you were not so self-centered..." "If you could," as Paul says, 1 Corinthians 13:5, the wonderful chapter on love, 1 Corinthians 13, one of the things about love is, "It seeks not its own. It seeks the blessing of the beloved, not the blessing of the lover." It says, "If you were able to think outside of yourselves," Jesus is saying.

What are the disciples thinking? He's been telling them He is going. That is what He says in Verse 28, "I said to you, I go away. I will come to you and you guys are all torn up about it because you are thinking from your own vantage point, 'Jesus is leaving us.'" Or even more accurately, they are thinking, "Jesus is leaving me. What will I do? Jesus is leaving me. How will I make it?" And because they are focused on themselves, their despair is growing, their fear is intensifying. And He says, "If you would simply stop thinking about yourselves for a moment, you would have joy." The moment you change your focus from yourself to someone else, the moment you begin to loose the bonds of despair of the change of despair, and you are released into the opportunity of joy.

I mean, think about this even with like what the Pitts family is going through. When we live long enough, we all have the opportunity to experience the trauma of losing someone that is very dear to us. How painful it is, and that is what is going on in the loss of Ray Pitts. But you think about each family member, if they are thinking about themselves, “What am I going to do without Dad?” “What am I going to do without my husband?” “What am I going to do without my Granddad?” And those are legitimate things, it is appropriate to hurt, and to mourn, but you just can’t stay there. You can’t remain there, just focused in upon yourself, but it comes like a whirlpool, when you’re turned in upon yourself and you begin to sink lower, and lower, and lower. But if instead you think, “What about Dad?” “What is best for my husband?” “What is best for my Granddad?” “He knows the Gospel. He’s been professing his faith in Christ for years and years.” Recently re-confessing that, and opportunities we’ve had to talk together in the last several months, his trust in Jesus.

So if they are thinking correctly, and they are thinking about him, what would they want? What is best for him? Their loss is going to be what? His immediate gain. 2 Corinthians 5:8 says that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. There is no intermediate state, there is no purgatory. That is a fiction made up by foolish people who are looking at things outside of the Bible. The Bible is clear—to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. The moment you breathe your last, in Christ, you breathe out and you go to sleep, and your sleep is immediately awakening in the presence of Christ. And then, in His presence, what you have, fullness of joy. That’s what David said in Psalm 16:11, “In Your presence, oh Lord, is fullness of joy. At Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.” Psalm 116, I think it is Verse 13, says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones.”

I always wondered about that when I first read it years ago, as a young man, “Why would God say, ‘Precious in His sight is the death of His godly ones.’”? Well, the reason I had trouble with it was because I was thinking as a worldly person. Death seems like a bad thing, and it is in one sense, and yet it is not in another, because death in this wretched, sin-wracked world, for the Christian is entrance into perfection. Now for the unbeliever, it is not. For the unbeliever, their suffering is not over. It is to become worse. That is why the Gospel is so important for us to hold forth the word of life, and there we have to cast ourselves on the goodness of God, and trust Him. But for the believer, when you just think about how wonderful it must be when a person, their body is gasping for breath, they are trying to stay alive, and in our humanity we naturally draw back from death. We weren’t created to die originally, and so it is an enemy, it is something foreign to us, and we

naturally resist it, we draw back from it. But for the Christian, once God decrees it, we cross that stream, it is all swallowed up in life. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O grave, is your sting? Jesus is taking it all away.

And so when you focus on someone else's situation, and their blessing, suddenly it loosens the bond of despair, the power of fear. I mean, this is true not just in things of that magnitude, but even when you have prolonged pain. I mean, this is a principle that we can apply in a number of ways. One of the things that happens to us at times in our lives, especially as we get older, is we come to places where we have to depend on others more. Often, as death gets closer, you have to become completely dependent, and that can be really frustrating. I think it is harder for ladies than men. Well, I think in different ways it's hard for guys too. I think it is really hard for guys to be told what to do all the time. When you are a man, I'm not speaking about Ray, I haven't seen any of this with him, but I know with experience in other situations. You've got to be careful how you handle an older parent or grandparent. You need to treat them with respect and honor, even as you are trying to...

I remember we had to deal with some things with Patti's dad. He had dementia and the girls would have to tell him, "You can't go out in your pajama pants." He was ready to go out. He had his shirt on, but he had his pajama pants on. This was a man who was always such a snappy dresser. I mean, he wasn't overly, but he just always looked appropriate. But one of the challenges was trying to do it in a respectful way. "Don't you think these pants would look better than what you have on? Why don't you put these on?" Rather than, "No, Dad!" They had to learn, you want to treat them like a child because you are trying to get it done quicker. No, you need to do it carefully. But I think in general, we take being taken care of a little better than the ladies do. You know? When I'm sick, if I have just a little headache, "Ohhhhhhhh. I need you to care for me, Honey." You know, Patti can be, her arm severed, or whatever, maybe there is company over, she is finishing up, everything is fine, and is, "Hey, so glad you came over," then when they walk out the door, then she lets me know, "My arm is severed. We need to go to the hospital." It's all about taking care of somebody else.

But when you get older, you have to humble yourself, and sometimes you have to do things you don't want to do. You have enjoyed, as a godly Christian, serving others. Maybe your gift is service, and you loved serving others, and now you have to be served, and it's hard to take that. It is humbling, but how do you get over the despair of that? "Will I never be able to serve anyone again?" Perhaps not, in this world. Not the way that you have. But if you'll take your focus off of yourself, and

what you are not able to do, and put it on the other people, and you can start with something simple like, “Lord, I thank You that You are sovereign over this. You put me in this position. You know how much I want not be the recipient of this service. I’d like to be doing for this person what they are doing for me, but I pray that You’d bless them. And Lord, I can even see right now that You are helping this person that is serving me. You are blessing them by letting them serve me, and laying up for themselves treasures in Heaven. Thank You, Lord, for letting them.” You see, I’m putting my focus on them, and I’m suddenly now more joyful. Isn’t it great that you are blessing them like that? Even if they are struggling a little bit. Maybe they are begrudging it a little bit. “Well, Lord, You’re working on them. I wish they’d get a little quicker because they are being a little bit rough with me right here.” But you can put your focus outside of yourself, on others, and it loosens the bonds of despair, and fear, and frustration.

But most of all, what he is saying is, “Put your focus not just outside of yourself on others, yes, but put your focus on Christ, and loving Him, and loving God.” When you do that, when you are able to say, like they should be thinking, the disciples should be thinking, “Jesus has given so much to us. He is our Savior, He is our Lord. What would bring Him the most joy? What would bring my Savior the most joy? That is what I want.” And what Jesus is saying, “What would bring Me the most joy at this moment in history,” what He is saying is what would bring Him the most joy at this moment in history is to be back in the presence of the Father. “And if you were thinking from My perspective, you would be filled with joy that I’m about to have the thing that I have longed for. Through all the incarnations, since the moment I left the glory of Heaven, I have longed to be back there.”

So we need to ask, in this situation, “I’m feeling overwhelmed. I’m afraid. I’m on the verge of despair. I look at my life, I’m depressed at my prospect. But wait a minute, what is going on with You, and what will give You pleasure? What can I do to love You? What can I do to serve You? What can I do to make You, Lord, pleased and happy?” When you take your focus, and you put it there, then suddenly you begin to understand, wait a minute, you are doing great things.

I mean, I’ve thought about how would you bear up under, how do people bear up under martyrdom? There have been seasons in history where scores, and hundreds even of people at a time were martyred for their faith in Christ? How do you do that? I mean, if you look at yourself when you are afraid, if I look at myself I say, “Wait a minute. I know I don’t have the resources.” If I’m honest, I know I don’t have the ability to bear up, I know I can’t take pain. We’re in bad shape, but that is where we are going, and if that is what our resources are. The more that you look

at yourself, the more you realize how inadequate you are, the more afraid you get, the more you realize even more how inadequate you are, the more afraid you get, and then you circle down into despair. But if you can stop and put your focus on God, “Wait a minute. What do I know? The Lord is sovereign. I didn’t get here by accident. These circumstances, things aren’t out of control.”

Jesus was telling the disciples, they’re not out of control, even when they went through that incredible storm of the crucifixion. Things were not out of control, in fact He’s making this real clear. He is telling them in the last couple of verses, “Listen, Satan is coming for Me, but he doesn’t have anything on Me.” We’re going to go with this a little bit more next time. “He doesn’t have anything on Me. He doesn’t really have authority over Me, but the reason that I’m going to the cross is because the world can know that I love the Father. I’m freely giving My life. This is not out of control, even though you think it is, it’s not. No one takes My life from Me, I lay it down,” like He said in John 10, “and I have authority to take it up again.” So, when we look outside of ourselves, and we see, “You are sovereign. You brought me to this moment, and even if I have to continue suffering,” maybe it is prolonged pain, “You’re working through this. You’re helping me, and You’re glorifying Your name. People around me are seeing the difference that You make even though I feel like I’m clinging by a thread. I’m holding on with my fingernails and yet I keep on, one day after another. I’m still holding on because You are doing it and Your Name is being glorified.”

Prolonged suffering, prolonged pain, how do you bear up under that? That’s really what the story of Job is about. We finished that up on Wednesday night. Do you remember the story of Job? He’s a wonderful, Godly man. The Scripture commends him at the very beginning. Job was a man who feared God, turned away from evil, was blameless, and there was no one like him. And then God Himself, talking to Satan, Satan comes into the presence of God, and God’s talking to him, and God brings Job up, remember? God says to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job?” and God says to Satan, “There’s no one like him, blameless, fearing God and turning away from evil.” Now, what He’s saying is Job is a Godly man. He’s been redeemed. He’s been saved. He’s growing in grace. Look at him. There’s nobody like him. God lures Satan into it. Lure is not the right word, but God in His all-righteousness, in His action, points out Job so that Satan will do exactly what God wills for him to do, which is want to destroy Job. And Satan says of Job, “You have a hedge around him, and he loves You because of all the stuff he has. But if you let me take away everything he has, he will curse You to Your face!”

God says, “Okay, you can touch everything he has, but don’t touch him. So He moves the hedge back. There was a hedge of protection around Job. He moves the hedge back, and remember what happens? Job loses everything—all of his possessions, all of his children. In a matter of moments, he finds out that everything he has is gone. What was Satan saying? “If You’ll take everything away, he will curse You to your face,” is what he said to God. That’s the issue in Job. Is God worthy to be worshiped?

Now, Job doesn’t know what’s going on behind the scenes. He’s just experiencing the turmoil and terror of his life, but behind the scenes, this question is being posed. Is God worthy of worship or not? Is God worthy to be worshiped just for who He is? Satan maintains that He’s not. So Job passes the first test, remember? And then in Job Chapter 2, Satan appears before the Lord again, and God again brings up Job. I remember reading it one time early when I was really studying it years ago, and thinking, “I wish He wouldn’t bring him up again. This isn’t going to be good for Job,” but the Lord knew what He was doing.

He said, “Have you considered My servant Job? There’s no one like him. He’s blameless, fearing God, turning away from evil, and he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him,” He says to Satan, and Satan says, “Skin for skin. If you let me touch his flesh, he will curse You to Your face.” God says, “You can touch him, only do not take his life.” So Job gets the terrible malady. He has boils from the top of his head to the bottoms of his feet. He’s sitting out on a garbage dump in such agony, scratching himself with a potsherd scraping away at the oozing boils that he has all over him. He is in utter abject misery.

His wife comes out to him. Remember what she’s gone through too. “We lost everything, and now look at you,” and she says, “Why do you still maintain your integrity? Please, curse God and die. And Job says, “Shall we except good from the hand of the Lord, and not also evil?” The Scripture says, “Thus, Job did not sin with his lips.” What he says is exactly right. But then from Chapter 3 to Chapter 37, Job struggles. He did great the first two chapters, but then he struggles. His friends come and they’re asking the question, “Why? Why has this happened?” Job’s like, “Hey, I haven’t done anything. There’s no hidden sin in my life. There’s no secret sin that you don’t know about.” They’re like, “Yes, there is. There must be.” He’s like, “No, there isn’t.” They dialogue about this chapter after chapter. He now not only endures the suffering he’s gone through, but he endures the false accusations of his so-called friends, and he starts to struggle in a big way. And then God finally comes down and tells him, but when God comes on the scene, He never tells Job why.

Job wants the answer to the question, “Why?” and God never answers it. Job doesn’t know what happened in Chapters 1 and 2, and as far as we know, he never knew until he got to Heaven. But we the readers know. We know, and we’re blessed to know, and God used Job to make His glory known. We know that the reason it happened was so that we might know that there was a man who had everything, God took it away from him, and the man kept worshipping God, and kept clinging to God, not perfectly, but he kept clinging to God by God’s grace, until finally he saw God’s glory in a greater way. At the end of the book, remember when God comes down and basically sets Job right, and shows him how great He is, and how little Job is? And Job says, “All the things I’ve said about You, I retract, I repent in sackcloth and ashes,” and he says, “Before I had heard about You with my ear, but now I’ve seen You with my eyes.” I’m convinced that Job, when we get to Heaven, if you’re going to Heaven and you get to Heaven, you can ask Job, “Job, would you change anything?” and he would say, “Never. I got to see the glory of God. It was painful. It was hard.” But what the Lord does is He hollows us out. He hollows out, and He weeds out all the wickedness in us, and He hollows out a place, and then He fills it. In His time, He fills it with His glory.

Well, He would help us no matter what circumstance we’re in. He’s sovereign, He’s over it, and Job at the end of his life could know that God has done something great. But we can know no matter what we go through that the Lord is being exalted. The Lord is being glorified, because we know He’s faithful. He does not change. He’s never let something happen that was random. “Oops.” That’s a word never spoken in Heaven. Everything that happens has a purpose, and when we put our focus on that, “God, You are being exalted. You are being glorified. Even when all the world is rejecting You, even if they persecute us, even if they malign us, if they hate us, if they put us to death, even if that’s the case, You’re going to be glorified. If I put my hope in You, then even in this moment as weak as I am, as weak as we are, You’re going to have to give us the strength, and You’ve planned to give us the strength, and You’re going to, and You’re going to show Your glory.”

The word *martyr*, actually, is an interesting word, the etymology. The martyr is a person who dies for their faith. The word grew up in the New Testament times. The martyr is a witness. It’s someone who bears testimony. The martyrs bore testimony with their blood, that God is worthy to be worshiped, that it’s more wonderful to worship Jesus Christ than it is to have my life. If you’re asking me to deny Jesus Christ, worshiping Him is more precious than life, and they testified with their blood. And I’m sure God, by His grace, gave them the focus at those moments when they were about to go through it, “Lord, Your Name is going to be

lifted up,” and in the midst of these overwhelming circumstances, joy came flooding in. You read this so many times the martyrs’ testimony of them going to the fire or going to the arena, and their hearts are flooded with joy because they have been counted worthy to testify to the glory and the worthiness of Jesus Christ.

We don’t have the ability. None of us does. Peter’s the one who thought he did, remember? A few verses back, he said, “Lord, they may all leave You, but I won’t leave You.” Peter in his weakness, just a couple hours later he was denying the Lord. But by the Spirit, he didn’t have the Spirit then. But now we have the Holy Spirit, and though we feel as weak as he, and we would be, we have the Spirit, and He’s faithful. But if we place our focus on loving Christ, then despair, and fear, and depression, they are loosened. We not only need to love Jesus Christ, but we need to look at Jesus Christ.

2) We Need to Look at Jesus Christ:

He says: *...because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.* The words of Jesus focus their attention on the glory of His Person: *...for the Father is greater than I.* Now, I mentioned earlier this verse has been misunderstood. Heretics, the Arians of the 4th Century, taught that this verse and other verses that they would kind of cherry-pick from the Bible, showed that Jesus was not equal to God. Jehovah’s Witnesses take a verse like this and believe that it shows that Jesus is somehow a lesser god. He’s not Jehovah in their view. But the problem is that they don’t interpret in context. If we only had this verse, you might be led to think that. If this was the only verse we had about the Person of Jesus, He says, “The Father is greater than I.” If that’s all you had, you would be tempted to think that this means that Jesus’ being is less than the Father. But that is not what this book teaches. That’s not what the Bible teaches. It means something other than His being is less than the Father, because we have context. Interpreting in context is essential. The analogy of faith is something that the Reformers talked about. Scripture interprets Scripture. When you come to a verse that is perplexing or difficult, how do you interpret it? How do you understand what it means? You let other Scripture interpret that Scripture. You read it in context of the whole. You read it in context.

Satan loves to take Scripture out of context. Remember how he tempted Jesus? He took Him to the top of the temple, and he said, “Cast yourself down,” and he quoted perfectly Psalm 91:11-12. “For it is written,” he said, “that He will give His angels charge concerning You, and they will bear You up in their hands, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.” That’s an excellent quote by Satan, but Jesus

brought a balancing truth from Deuteronomy 6:16, “You have taken Scripture out of context, Satan.” He said, “It is also written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” So the Heretics take Scripture out of context and they blaspheme the truth of God.

Now, you can illustrate the importance of not taking truth out of context in kind of a simple way. I mean, if you were accused of a crime, if somebody said that you were at the store the other day, and somebody said you stole some money or something like that, and they came up to you and they said, “I believe you stole the money,” and you said, “Are you saying that I stole the money? That’s crazy.” Now, if some person had a cell phone and they were videotaping us, which happens now, right? People are just videotaping all the time. They edit your tape, and then the tape sent out across the cyber world is you saying, “I stole the money.” You said it. You said, “I stole the money.” You’re guilty, right? “No, wait a minute. You took me out of context. I said, ‘Are you saying that I stole the money? That’s crazy.’” Well, that’s pretty ridiculous, right? Although it seems like that might pass for journalism these days, when the truth doesn’t matter anymore, apparently, but that’s ridiculous. We all know you take things in context.

Well, so with the Scripture. You take it in context. And if you take this in context, first of all, “The Father is greater than I,” what does this mean? Does it mean that Jesus is less than God? Well, let’s just look at the next verse.

John 14:29 ~ Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe.

The very next verse testifies to the omniscience of Jesus, which also echoes something He said in John 13:19, where He was telling them about, “Judas is going to betray Me.” He said:

John 13:19 ~ From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am (He).

His omniscience is right there in the next verse. But even more than that, the context of the whole book, what has John been saying throughout the book? It’s true there are two strands of teaching in John’s Gospel and the New Testament teaching about the Person of Jesus. There are two strands of teaching. One clear principle that is taught in the Gospel of John and the New Testament is the glory of the Son as being truly God, and there is another emphasis, and that is the subordination of the Son, but it’s not a subordination of being, is a subordination of

function. You have in the Gospel of John, clear affirmations that Jesus is fully God. He is equal in power and glory to the Father, absolutely, completely equal in power and glory, and so is the Holy Spirit. But you do have verses like this that show that there is a functional subordination. It's a functional subordination versus a subordination of being or ontological subordination. There is not ontological subordination. There is no subordination of being. There's absolute equality of being, but within that equality of being, there is a functional subordination. The Son obeys the Father, and apparently that's something that goes back into eternity past.

It's analogous to, and in fact, this same analogy is made in 1 Corinthians 11:3. I've used this actually in some of my wedding ceremonies in explaining submission of the wife to the husband. 1 Corinthians 11:3 says this, that the man or the husband is the head of the wife, Christ is the head of the man, the man is the head of the wife, and God is the head of Christ. But let's look at these two things. The husband is the head of the wife. God is the head of Christ. As I'm teaching this, this doesn't teach that men are inherently of more value than women. It doesn't teach that. Now, if you just had that verse, you might be tempted to think so, and some guys might be tempted to think so anyway, or they act like that. But we also have Galatians 3:28, which says:

Galatians 3:28 ~ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

You see, that's the metaphysical equality, but there is a functional subordination, that in the home, the man is the head of the wife. He has a role of authority over his wife, but he is not greater in being than his wife. In fact, in a lot of homes, it's really clear that's not the case, right? And maybe in all of our homes, that's really not the case. In the same way, God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Spirit, have an economy of relationship where there is this subordination, but it's clearly in the context of metaphysical equality. And the way you know it is you keep reading your Bible. The way you know it is don't read Scripture out of context. When you read Scripture out of context, you twist it and you distort it to your own destruction. I heard someone saying, and I can't remember who it was, but recently they were saying they were talking to a Jehovah's Witness, that they're modern day Arians. When they come bringing that Watch Tower material, they are articulating that Jesus is not God. They believe that. They believe He's a god, but He's not the God. They twist the Scriptures to their own destruction.

One of our leaders here was talking to a Jehovah's Witness, and he said, "When I read John's Gospel, I know that Jesus is God," and this Jehovah's Witness said, "Well, when I read John's Gospel, I know Jesus is not God." Now, how can he say that? It's because he's reading with blinders on. He's looking at the subordination passage, but he's missing the forest for the trees. Because let's just look at this. Let me show you the glory of the Son of God as God in John 1. It starts in John 1:1.

John 1:1 ~ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jesus is God.

John 1:18 ~ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

He's talking about the only begotten God is Jesus. He is God. Turn over to John 5:16. This is when they had the Sabbath controversy. Jesus healed the guy on the Sabbath, and His argument is, "Listen, the Father works on the Sabbath and I work on the Sabbath. You guys can't, but we are God, and we work on the Sabbath." That's what He says. Look at John 5:16.

John 5:16 ~ For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

Look what the Jews understood:

John 5:18 ~ For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Now, how do you read John's Gospel and miss that? In John 10:30...

John 10:30 ~ I and the Father are one." 31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

They didn't miss that. In John 12:41, John refers to the fact that the people weren't listening to Jesus, and it fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet said, when he said, "Who's believed our report," in Isaiah's prophecy, and he said, "Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory" Speaking of Jesus, John is saying in John 12:41,

that remember Isaiah saw the Lord in the temple? I saw the Lord, Yahweh, high and lifted up. I saw Yahweh in the temple, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. It was filling with smoke, the ground shook, and the seraphim were calling out one to another, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.” John says in John 12:41, “When Isaiah saw the Lord, he saw Jesus.” And then you have the I am sayings. Twenty times He uses this phrase, “I am.” In Exodus 3:14, what is God’s Name? Moses says at the burning bush, “When they ask me, when you send me to Egypt and the people ask me, ‘What is the God’s Name that has sent you? What is your Name?’ what shall I say to them? Who sent me?” God says, “I am that I am. Therefore, you shall say I am has sent you.”

You find this in Isaiah again. He picks up the I am sayings. I’ll just give you some references to look at. Isaiah 41:4, Isaiah 43:10, Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 46:4, Isaiah 48:12. What you have in each of those verses is Isaiah putting on the lips of Yahweh, I am, I am, I am, I am. I am the first and I am the last. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it was, “Ego eimi.” Ego means I, and eimi means I am. “I Myself am.” “Ego eimi.”

In John’s Gospel, Jesus twenty times says, “Ego eimi,” which is, “I am.” The Jew that’s hearing that, the Jew that’s reading his Old Testament says, “The God of Exodus 3:14, the God who’s revealing Himself in the Old Testament, particularly in Isaiah’s prophecy, we have the I am with us.” Remember all the I am sayings. “I am the bread of life, in John 6. I am the Light of the world, in John 8. I am the door, in John 10. I am the good shepherd, in John 10. I am the resurrection and the life, in John 11. I am the way and the truth and the life, in John 14. I am the true vine, in John 15. But most powerfully, in John 8:58. Remember when Jesus says to those who were disbelieving Him, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, “Abraham saw My day and rejoiced.” “Wait a minute. You’re not yet 50 years old. How could Abraham see Your day and rejoice?” He says, “I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.” They picked up stones to stone Him. They knew what He was claiming. And then one of the most amazing verses we’ll get to, Lord willing, John 18:5-6, when Judas brings the temple guard to arrest Jesus with torches and swords, they say, “We’re looking for Jesus of Nazareth, and He says, “Ego eimi,” which is, “I am,” and we supply the “He”. He says, “I am.”

In John 18:6, when they heard the words, “I am,” they took a step back and fell on their faces. He is the I am, and yes, there is a subordination that’s taught in John’s Gospel, but it’s not a subordination of being. You have to believe both. He is equal in power and glory, He is Yahweh, but there is a functional subordination. We

have to not impose our reason upon the text, but let the text speak. In John 5:19, you see this. Jesus says:

John 5:19 ~ “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing;

He doesn't do anything of Himself. He's dependent upon the Father. In His incarnation, He's dependent upon the Father.

John 5:30 ~ “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

As He hears the Father speak, He speaks, He's saying.

John 8:28 ~ So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am (He), and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

See, He's I am, and yet He is submitting to the Father. See John 12:48, John 12:50, and John 14:10. In John 14:10, He said:

John 14:10 ~ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.

When you put it together, what you see is Jesus is the eternal Son of God. In the beginning He was with God and He was God, face-to-face with God. When He came into the world, He took on human flesh and He became very man of very man. He entered into a life of absolute dependence as a man. He didn't use His own power. He didn't maintain His own status of power, and glory, and majesty. He lived in humility as a man has to live. He didn't use His power to overcome temptation. He didn't use His own power to work the miracles. No, the Holy Spirit was given to Him so that the Man Christ Jesus, though two natures are in one person, the Man Christ Jesus is doing only what the Father enables Him to do, in absolute humility. He emptied Himself, Paul says, in Philippians 2:7. He didn't empty Himself of deity. He emptied Himself of the prerogatives of deity, the use of His power. He laid it aside, His majesty and His glory, and He obeyed the Father to the end. Just like we have in this verse, He says, “When I go to the cross, you will

know that the reason I go to the cross is not because Satan has captured Me and taken Me against My will. In Verse 31, “I go to the cross...”

John 14:31 ~ ...so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me.

I go to the cross because I love My Father and I do what He’s called Me to do. And then He’s lifted up back to glory. In John 17:5, He says, “I want the glory I had with You before the world was.” The eternal Son of God becomes Man, and then lifts up man into the glory of the eternal Godhead. So when you love Jesus Christ, you take your focus off of yourself, and you put it on Him, and you keep looking at Jesus Christ, the more that you look at Jesus Christ, the more you will love Him, and the more you love Him, the less you’ll be thinking about all the problems that you have. I mean, you’re still going to have your problems, but you now know that the God of glory, like we heard sang earlier, is in you, and for you, and with you. What do you have to fear?

Let’s go to the Lord in prayer...

Our Father, we thank You for the glory of the Gospel. We thank You for the wisdom and beauty of the plan of salvation, that You would send Your Son into the world, that He would live a perfect life as a true Man, and then would offer His human life up as a sacrifice, and He would bear the weight of all the sins of everyone who would ever believe—the guilt, the condemnation, and the wrath, He bore in His body on the cross, and He paid that debt completely, sufficiently forever, for the sins of everyone who would ever believe. And because He lives, we shall live. We pray for those that are here who have not yet come to You, have not yet embraced Your love, that today they might repent and believe the Gospel, and they might be saved. We pray that Jesus Christ would be lifted up in all of our lives, that we would see that He is worthy of everything, all of our affection, all of our energy, and that He is the source of true joy and our delight. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

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