

# The Plan of God

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] turn to the book of Acts, Acts chapter 2. We're in basically the same passage we were in last week. I said we were probably going to hang around you a little bit, and we are hanging around you a little bit, but we're not going to read the full section that we read last week. We're just going to read from verses 14 through to 24. So Acts chapter 2, verse 14 to 24. This is the Apostle Peter's famous Pentecost sermon.

Verse 14, Luke writes, and he says, Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice, and addressed the crowd. Fellow Jews and all who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you. Listen carefully to what I say.

These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning. No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. In the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions.

Your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs in the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Fellow Israelites, listen to this.

Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold of him. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray as we study this together this morning. Our gracious God, give us wisdom. Give us insight into your word. Teach us truth from your word. Remind us of the incredible privilege we have every Lord's Day of coming together and reading and studying your word, Lord, that when we open the pages of Scripture, as much as it might be communicated through a frail human being standing up and teaching, when we truly understand Scripture, we understand the words of the Creator God who flung the stars into space. And that is an incredible privilege, Lord, and I pray that we will look deeply to see great treasures, to feast on what we see and to be changed by what we see. So help us, Lord. Show us Jesus, your Son.

[ 2 : 5 0 ] Transform us by what we see, and we ask this for Christ's sake and by the power of your Spirit. Amen. I was having a conversation with someone this morning who mentioned that out of all the kind of denominations, Presbyterians are known as like the theology nerds. And so this morning is, we're going to live up to our reputation this morning. We're going to be theology nerds this morning by tackling a tricky, difficult doctrine that comes up. I would say probably of all the questions I get asked in like small group Bible studies that I've been leading over 20 plus years, I would say this probably comes up more than any other controversial or complicated subject in the Bible. And so it's important for us to stop every now and again and to take stock of it and to look at it. And it comes up in our passage. Now let me introduce the subject this way. I'm kind of notorious in our family for getting common English expressions or idioms wrong. And my wife takes great delight in pointing these out to me that I'm getting them wrong. So for example, one classic one that I did for a long, long time was for all intensive purposes. For some of you are going like, what's wrong with that? You're exactly the same as me. It is for all intents and purposes. I probably have a whole lot of these in my sermons and some of you groan inwardly all the time as I say these different things. But I'm not great with expressions and idioms. I just make them up as I go along, mix different ones together. But somewhere in the late 18th or early 19th century, a Russian fable writer by the name of Ivan Krylov wrote a fable called The Inquisitive Man.

It's a fable about a man who visits a museum of natural history. And then kind of in conversation with another man, he recounts the precise details of all the amazing things that he saw inside this museum of natural history, even down to like the really smallest little insect in the display cases. At the end of the conversation, the man says this, and this is how the fable goes. He says, and of course, you saw the elephant. What did you think of him? I'll wager you felt as though you were looking at a mountain, to which the inquisitive man replies, elephant. Are you quite sure that we have an elephant? Quite sure, says the other man. Well, old man, don't tell anybody, but the fact is that I didn't notice the elephant. Now, as far as we can tell, that little fable is the basis for the common expression that we have today when we talk about the elephant in the room. So simply define that expression, the elephant in the room, refers to something that's obvious to all the people, but it's kind of somewhat uncomfortable. And so we just pretend like it's not there or we conveniently don't see it. Now, when we went through the Apostle Peter's sermon, the whole sermon last week in Acts chapter 2, there was a sentence in that sermon that he just kind of casually threw out mid-sermon, without any qualification, without any explanation, a sentence that we might look at and rightly regard as an elephant in the room. And it's in verse 23. So if you're in your Bible there, chapter 2 in verse 23, I want to back up a little bit. I'll read from verse 22. He says, fellow Israelites, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. You see the elephant? This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge. Who killed Jesus? The Romans? The Jewish mob? You and me, kind of like we looked at last week with our unrepentant sin. God the Father? It's a tricky verse.

And it presents a kind of tricky theological problem about the relationship between what we might call God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Was God sovereign over the crucifixion? That is, did he sovereignly rule in meticulous detail over the events of the crucifixion in such a way that everything that happened, happened according to his divine decree? Did he do that? Does that, if he did do that, does that then absolve the human participants of their kind of vile actions on the day? Are people without agency? Are we kind of cosmic pawns in a cosmic chess match? Does that make God complicit in human evil? And if that's how Peter then describes the mechanics of an event in history back then, what does it mean about today? Like, what about us today? Are we just all robots? You think you came here by your own will this morning, but are you just a robot in some sort of master plan that God is enacting? What does this mean for human freedom? What does it mean for human responsibility?

[ 8 : 20 ] And so today, using another idiom, we're going to pull off the plaster and deal with the elephant in the room in Peter's sermon. Looking at the crucifixion kind of as our case study, wrestle with this doctrine of how God's sovereignty interacts with human responsibility. Two simple points. I want to give you a quick overview, and we'll look particularly at the text of Scripture here, a quick overview of this difficult doctrine, and then I want us to look at number two, the good news of this difficult doctrine. So here's the first part, a little bit of an overview. We saw last week that Peter was, he was somewhat accusatory of his audience in the way that he talks about the death of Christ. He's like, you killed him. You killed him. He emphasizes that twice in the sermon, presumably so that they are cut to the heart. They sense that guilt. They sense their complicity in everything that went on there. But then, when you read all the way through, and you read that this was according to God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge, this horrendous crime was according to God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge. When you read that, it brings some very, very confusing questions to our minds about, well, the fairness of God. How guilt should be apportioned. And so for a second, I want you to look at the text of Scripture and see just exactly who was involved in the crucifixion of Christ.

And we're going to go back to Luke's Gospel, because Acts, you remember from our series, Acts is a continuation of Luke's Gospel. Luke is the author of both Luke and Acts. And so let's go back to the events of the crucifixion, leading up to the crucifixion in Luke's Gospel. Luke 22, these are the events immediately before the crucifixion. So you'll read, for example, these following verses, Luke 22, verse 1 to 6. It says, Now the festival of unleavened bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. And then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of

the twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus.

They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present. So the conspiracy kicks off with the religious establishment. Chief priests, teachers of the law. And then it extends to the next person who gets added to the group is an insider, Judas, one of the original twelve disciples. But there's even more actually in that text, because here we find kind of a version of the famous words of Hansi Kroner, the devil made me do it. Luke tells us Satan entered Judas and prompted him to conspire with the religious leaders. Now you go a little bit further in the story, and you go to the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and more people now get implicated to this motley crew. Verse 47, while Jesus was still speaking, a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus asked him, Judas, are you betraying the

Son of Man with a kiss? And when Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, Lord, should we strike with our swords? And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, no more of this. And he touched the man's ear, and he healed him. And then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, the elders who had come for him, am I leading a rebellion that you've come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me? But this is your hour when darkness reigns.

And then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. So, alongside Judas and the religious leaders, we now have the servants of the religious leaders, the Pharisee servants. We also have their private security force, the temple guard, that's added to that group. But that's still not the full group, because later on in verse 66, we find out that the entire council of the elders are involved as well. In fact, some of them might have been there in the garden earlier. Together, so that's a different group, together with the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They all come together now to deliberate on the fate of Christ. And then just when you think you've kind of got enough people to carry out a lynching here, well then Pilate and Herod enter the chat. So chapter 23 verse 1, then the whole assembly rose, all those other groups, and they led Jesus off to Pilate. They began accusing him, saying, we found this man subverting our nation. He opposes taxes to Caesar and claims to be a Messiah or a king. So Pilate has a back and forth with Jesus for a while. Then he sends him to Herod, because he understands that he's a Galilean under Herod's jurisdiction.

[13:26] He sends him off to Herod. Herod has a back and forth, and Herod and his soldiers mocked Jesus for a while. Then he goes back to Pilate, picking up verse 13. Pilate called together all the chief priests, the rulers, the people, and he said to them, you brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I've examined it in your presence, and I've found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. As you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will punish him and then release him. I always thought that was strange. He's done nothing, but I'm going to punish him and then release him. Then the whole crowd shouted, away with this man, release Barabbas to us. Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city and for murder. Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again, but they kept shouting, crucify him, crucify him. For the third time, he spoke to them, why? What crime is this man committed? I found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore, I will have him punished and then release him. But with loud shouts, they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. So Pilate decided to grant their demand. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and he surrendered Jesus to their will.

So Pilate folds under the pressure of the mob. Now this is a larger group of people added to the earlier groups. Presumably people stirred up by the religious leaders are all coming together now, calling for blood. And then there's the actual crucifixion itself. We're not even at the crucifixion, but verse 26 says, soldiers led Jesus away. That is presumably Roman soldiers now, different from the temple guard who had him before. And then in terms of mocking and giving endorsement to his death, we've still got the crowd following him up the hill to Calvary. Presumably people joined that crowd, and it's swell to go see the spectacle as they mock him. And even one of the criminals who is crucified next to him hurls insults against him according to verse 39. Now besides not being really

good at idioms and sayings, I'm also really not good at maths. So when I do the maths though, here's what I've got. I've got chief priests, I've got teachers of the law, I've got Judas, I've got Satan himself, I've got the chief priest servants, I've got the temple guard, I've got the council of the elders, I've got pilots,

I've got Herod and his soldiers by implication, because they don't really do anything, they just stand by and watch him. The larger mob then that gathers, the Roman soldiers, and even the wretched criminal dying next to Jesus. And I'm pretty sure that if we read the other gospels, we could find a couple of other people to add to this group. And yet in Acts 2, Peter says, and remember he was there the whole time, he watched this whole thing unfold. He says, this man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge. So what do we do with that? Clearly, clearly, clearly corrupt humans, influenced by Satan, seized Jesus, nailed him to a cross, and yet God handed him over according to his plan and his foreknowledge.

In our modern Western minds, we're scratching our heads going, those two things can't be true. For us, it's kind of black and white. Either God is doing it or the people are doing it. We don't have any space for gray here. But for the ancient Near Eastern mind, there seems to be no incongruity between the notion that God is handing Jesus over himself and that wicked people are seizing Jesus. To put it another way, in biblical thought, the idea that God can be completely sovereign over human actions and that human beings are still responsible moral agents freely acting out their own inclinations, that seeming contradiction is not a contradiction in the ancient Near Eastern mind. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are constantly presented as compatible in the ancient texts of the Bible. In fact, this is the witness throughout Scripture, Old Testament, New Testament. So you see it in the book of Exodus. The famous story there of the people being released from Israel. You see that God is said to harden Pharaoh's heart so that he refuses to let his people go. But in several places, the text also says that Pharaoh hardens his own heart. In Romans chapter 9, in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul makes a case for God's divine, sovereign control over all things, even the human will. While at the same time, he tells people to exercise their wills in obedience. And he doesn't see a contradiction between those two things. Oh, by the way, God is sovereignly in control of your will. Oh, be obedient.

[18:41] And he doesn't see a contradiction there. See, friends, a ton, and I mean more than a ton, of scholarly ink has been spilled trying to reconcile this seemingly theological contradiction. But I must be honest, and maybe I'm just a simpleton, but I think it is far, far, far simpler, far safer, and actually even more helpful to our own souls to just go with the relatively plain teaching of Scripture here.

Is God completely sovereign over human actions? Or are human beings responsible moral agents? What's the answer? I would say the answer is yes. In fact, the Presbyterian statement of faith makes this exact point. This is chapter 3 of the Westminster Confession of Faith. And you find almost identical statements in the congregational statement of faith and the Baptist statement of faith from the same era.

God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatever comes to pass. Yet, he ordered all things in such a way that he is not the author of sin, nor does he force his creatures to act against their wills, neither is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

That's the kind of classic Protestant view of how divine sovereignty and human responsibility work together. That's what's happening at the crucifixion. Is God deliberately handing Jesus over to be crucified for the sins of fallen humanity?

Yes, he most certainly is. Are morally reprehensible people colluding together to murder an innocent man? Yes, they most certainly are.

[20:29] Now, you might at this point come back at me and say, okay, it's all good and well that ancient people could hold these two seemingly contradictory things together in their minds.

That's not good enough for me. I need to know how it works. Otherwise, it just feels, it sounds like a bit of a cop-out, like you're appealing to some sort of mysterious way in which God is completely sovereign, and at the same time, human beings are responsible moral agents.

God deliberately handing over his son and holding us responsible still feels weird. It feels like, it makes me uncomfortable. It's interesting to me, though, and if you've been around for a long time, you've probably heard me say this before, but it's interesting to me that we seem to have this major problem with seeming contradictions when it comes to divine sovereignty, but not so much when it

comes to something like the Trinity.

So think about it this way, for example. Since at least the 4th century onwards, the global Christian church, Protestant, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, have all accepted the basic doctrine of the Trinity. That there is one God who exists simultaneously in three persons. Now, friends, that is seemingly contradictory, right? God is one, but he's three.

[ 21 : 54 ] But the three are one. Now, I have Bible study groups where we talk about this, and we have interesting discussions and reflections and questions from people around the doctrine of Trinity.

We talk about why all the little illustrations for the Trinity all actually break down, so please don't use all those silly illustrations about eggs and water and stuff like that. It doesn't really capture the basic doctrine. But we have interesting discussions, we all scratch our heads, and then we chalk it up to the mystery of God, but no one really gets offended by it.

Yet when it comes to divine sovereignty over human actions, we get all sorts of bent out of shape, and we start wondering, is God really fair?

Do you know why we do that? I think. Do you know why the mystery of the Trinity doesn't produce nearly as much offense in us as the mystery of divine sovereignty does?

It's because I think the doctrine of the Trinity doesn't seem to directly, at least not in our modern conceptions, directly challenge the notion that we're kings of our own lives.

[ 23 : 01 ] But the doctrine of divine sovereignty does poke the bear there. The doctrine of divine sovereignty really, really deals at a big blow to the notion that we are all the center of our own private universes.

Takes you off the throne of your own life in a big way. And it puts God very firmly at the center, and our hearts, I think, instinctively rebel against that fact.

We've been doing that ever since Adam and Eve ate the fruit in defiance of God's kingship over them in the garden. I suspect that we use the seemingly contradictory nature of this doctrine as an excuse to deny it.

And we make it sound like the argument against God is actually an intellectual argument, when in actual fact it's a moral argument. We don't, deep down, want to be king of our lives.

We don't want to have to hand over the judge's seat to him. We want to retain the right to call him out on the fairness of his judgments.

[ 24 : 12 ] To run the final rule over them. See, I think the Bible is actually incredibly clear that God is sovereign over human action, while at the same time you and I are still morally responsible people who cannot turn around and blame God for our moral failure.

Now let me tell you why this is not just an abstract doctrine, but why this is something that is good news. Good news, good news, not just for your heads to comprehend, but good news for your soul. So here's the second point, good news. It's good news because it means this. More than anything, it means this. It means that evil people can't thwart God's good plans.

Think about it this way. Where do we see the pinnacle of human wickedness? Where do we see the high point of human wickedness? Is it like in famous characters in history, like a Hitler?

Or a Stalin? Or in a mass murderer? Or in a serial rapist or child abuser? Where do we see evil at its peak? What about the cross?

[ 25 : 26 ] All the kind of different sectors of society coming together to brutally mock and murder an innocent man who has spent the last three years of his life bringing nothing but hope and healing.

Okay? This is the man who told his followers to turn the other cheek. This is the man who encouraged his disciples to love their enemies. This is the man who claimed to be the son of God sent, John 3.16, by the love of God for the redemption of this world.

And what do they do? They nail him to a cross. To a piece of wood. They nail the sinless divine son of God to a piece of wood. That's evil. That's peak evil.

That's the Everest of evil. But what might be even more horrifying than that is the participants. It's not a mass murderer or a serial abuser who carries out this atrocity.

It's not just political tyrants like a Pilate or a Herod or really wicked backstabbers like a Judas. It's ordinary people. People who went home that evening, sat down with their children and ate dinner together and then got up the next morning and continued their moderately respectful lives in the community.

[ 26 : 50 ] It's morally religious people. The chief priests. The teachers of the law. It's people who were entrusted with the protection of human life.

The temple guard. The Roman soldiers. This is the full display of human wickedness on view for us. And it is shocking how ordinary and diverse these people are.

And when you see that. When you look at that and you actually see what's going on. I think we've seen the crucifixion story so many times we've forgotten about these details.

But when you see just who's there. And then in some ways it could have just as easily have been you if the circumstances were right. Standing there spitting on the Lord of life.

Well that can lead you to despair. Despair as you think about our world. Despair as you think about yourself even.

[ 27 : 50 ] What hope do we have then? If we did that to the Lord of life what hope do we possibly have? Are we doomed to just kind of endlessly be victims of the evil of others? And even participants in evil itself when the opportunity arises.

Most of you guys know about my love for post-apocalyptic zombie movies. Because they're just full of really good sermon illustrations.

And if you didn't know now you do know. I think that what I like most about zombie movies. Is just how authentic and true to life they actually are. So the one thing that they all have in common.

The one assumption that underlines every zombie movie or TV series. Is the conviction that us human beings. Left to ourselves. Are all going to eat each other in the end.

You see deep down. If we're honest. And really honest. And we really really look at our world. Really look at how we treat each other.

[ 28 : 55 ] Really look at the things that we do to each other. And really look at our own hearts. And see the things that we think and feel. The selfishness. The pride. The anger.

If we really really really open our eyes. It is very hard to be optimistic about the human race. It is hard to see some sort of coming triumph of good over evil.

It really looks like the wicked are going to win in the end. Just like they won. When the embodiment of goodness and truth stood amongst them.

And they spat on him and they killed him. But friends. This difficult yet biblical doctrine of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Says to you and me this morning.

It says this. It says the wicked will not win. The wicked will not win. When you open up your social media. And you read about a 10 year old who was gunned down.

[ 29 : 51 ] In gang violence on the Cape Flats. This difficult doctrine says to you and me. The wicked will not win. When you turn on a politics show on your television set.

And you see two of the most powerful and influential politicians in the world. Trashing each other's humanity. This difficult doctrine says to us. The wicked will not win. When you turn on Cape Talk. And you hear about a CEO embezzling millions. From impoverished elderly folk. This difficult doctrine says. The wicked will not win.

See friends. This is where kind of alternative views. Of trying to reconcile. God's sovereignty and human responsibility break down. If you remove the biblical tension between those two things.

You actually destroy hope. If you say. I don't like the idea of God's sovereignty. Superintending of the lives and actions of humans. I think we all have this kind of unqualified free will. And God is.

[ 30 : 50 ] He's just there watching. He knows what's going to happen. But he allows us to exercise our own free will. And live out the consequences. If you think that that is all that is happening. All that's going on.

Then I want to say that I think your God. Is a heartless callous and indifferent God. In fact he might be the biggest moral monster of them all. Because if you say that that is all that is happening.

Then what you are functionally saying. Is that God. God is the one who stands by and watches the toddler drown. In a puddle of water. He has the power to intervene.

But he refuses to intervene. Because he doesn't want to violate that toddler's free will. I don't know about you. But if I'm on the path to destruction.

I'm like violate my free will. Take over now. And override my will now. And if you go the other way then. In this discussion.

[ 31 : 47 ] If you go the other way. Where you strip human responsibility from the equation. And you see God's sovereignty as incompatible. In any way with human free will. Well then you become a fatalist.

And all the evil that you see happening around you. Well that isn't really evil. And the people who are perpetrating it. Well they aren't really culpable. We are all literally just robots.

And so it's pointless getting upset about this broken world. Both of those are hopeless situations.

Really really hopeless situations. The alternative views turn God into a moral monster.

Or they strip us of our humanity. The only place we can find hope is in the biblical view. The view that I think is encapsulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

I want to read it one more time. So you are clear on this. God from all eternity did. By the most wise and holy counsel of his own will. Freely and unchangeably ordain whatever comes to pass.

[ 32 : 45 ] Yet he ordered all things in such a way that he is not the author of sin. Nor does he force his creatures to act against their wills. Neither is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away. But rather established.

I don't know how the mechanics of that work out. I cannot explain that to you. And even if I added four or five more degrees in theology.

I still would not be able to explain it to you. I do not know how the mechanics of that work out. But then to be honest. There's a lot about God that I can't explain. I can't explain how God could breathe the world into existence out of nothing.

I can't explain how God can exist eternally. One God in three persons. I can't explain how the eternal, uncontainable, omnipotent, omnipresent God can take on human flesh in the person of Jesus.

There's a lot of stuff I can't explain to you. But I do know this. I know that if you fudge the Bible's teaching on divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

[ 33 : 46 ] Then you end up with a world of despair. Where evil wins. Where everything is out of control. Where there is no possible ultimate justification or redemption that can come out of the wickedness that we see around ourselves.

And that we sometimes participate in as well. Friends, remember the gospel. Jesus was betrayed by a wicked man. Jesus was sentenced to death by a wicked man.

Jesus was crucified and beaten by wicked men. Jesus was then put to death ultimately by wicked men. But this was all according to God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge, Peter tells us.

So there wasn't a moment that God wasn't in control of it all. And it's through the actions of those wicked men crucifying the Lord of life.

It is through those actions that you and I then today. Two thousand years later are recipients of the life and salvation that Jesus brings in the gospel. See friends, because Jesus was crucified by wicked men under the sovereign hand of God.

[ 34 : 56 ] There is hope and there is redemption available to all of mankind. Because Jesus was crucified by wicked men under the sovereign hand of God. There is hope and redemption available for our broken city.

There is hope and redemption available for grieving family members of murdered children. There is hope and redemption available for those living in abject poverty.

There is hope and redemption available for you and me. Who look down deep into our own hearts. And who realize that the evil is not just out there.

It's in here as well. This is not abstract theology. This is concrete truth.

Upon which we have to build our lives. Because friends, I don't know how you survive in this cruel world without this. Let's pray together.

[ 35 : 57 ] Our gracious God and our heavenly Savior. There are things we read in scripture that sometimes mess with our heads.

And we don't know how to put them together. We don't know how to reconcile them. And so I have a ton of sympathy and empathy for any person who comes to a text like this and goes, I don't know what to do with this.

But I ask, Lord, that we would be given the eyes of faith to be able to see past things that we can't explain to the glory and wonder of the gospel.

And to see how these difficult, complex things build up and support and add to that gospel. That gospel that saves. That gospel that redeems.

That gospel that brings hope. That gospel that will one day bring an end to all wickedness and evil, Lord. Father, because of your love to us in Jesus, we know that you are good.

[ 37 : 09 ] And so we know that anything we entrust to your sovereign hands is being entrusted to good sovereign hands. May that be enough for us, Lord. And I pray for any person here, Lord, who maybe sits and looks at the motley crew of people that crucified your son.

And that realizes that they are one of those people. I pray that you would bring them to a place of repentance. And trusting in Christ for forgiveness and hope.

We need that all so badly, Lord, we pray. For Christ's sake. Amen.