

Our Problem Lived Out: Babel

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Date: 01 February 2015

Preacher: Tobin Miller

- [0 : 0 0] How you guys doing? Well, that's terrible. It's like three people. How you guys doing? Yeah, it was a great day to be here with you guys.
- So my name is Tobin. I'm one of the teachers here, pastors. And I have a problem. It's this massive problem. Struggle with this darkness inside of me.
- Sometimes I don't see the darkness. Sometimes I just go on and think I'm doing okay. The darkness is hidden. But I know it's there because it's looking for little opportunities to jump out and to grab me and to change me.
- I've said over and over again that one of my biggest struggles is being a dad. I mean, I feel like I'm very teachable as a parent. I mean, I feel like I'm trying to figure out what does it mean to be a dad and a husband and all these things.
- And reading books and asking questions. And I realize as often as a dad that the darkness comes out. I really blew it last night.
- [1 : 0 6] So we had got this little thing that we wanted to do as a couple. And we started doing it maybe last Christmas as a family. And we'd watch movies on Saturday nights.
- And we'd watch them and then we would discuss them. And almost all the movies are hallmark movies. And they're talking about, you know, usually someone gets a divorce or their spouse dies. And then someone comes in to the back door.
- And there's these four kids that are out of control. And then they find this perfect relationship. And within an hour and a half everything's fixed and it's perfect. And we watch it. And then we discuss it with our kids afterwards. But one of the things I realized really quickly is that, and I think it's the curse of technology, all of our components don't fit, right?
- You buy something new and then you have to upgrade the other thing. And it's, you women know what I'm talking about. Like when you do accessories or you buy a new dress, you can't just use the old shoes. You've got to buy new shoes and new hats and all these things.
- Clarissa's back there shaking her head. Everybody, I'm catching here. And so I realized that we can't get sound. So I'm trying to communicate between my Mac and this Samsung TV.
- [2 : 0 8] And it's just worthless. I might as well just buy a computer that Samsung has copied from Mac and allow them to use and connect. Because then you'll at least have two quasi-Samsung, you know, things working together.
- And so I've tried everything. I've tried cords and cables. And we just sit really close to the computer and we're listening to the speakers of the computer trying to figure out what's going on. And so finally I said, okay, I got it down.
- And so I did all this research and found out a way to do a Bluetooth speaker to our computer. And we'll have it behind us and we can listen to it. And I'm like, this is going to be great.

The kids are going to be excellent. And their kids are going to be like, praise dad. I'm going to build this monument to me as a dad, right? I'm making a name for myself as a dad. And it's going to be amazing because once we can finally hear music without sitting two inches from the computer, everybody's like, hallelujah.

You are so great. You are great. And so we get to this place where last night was that night. So I get everything set up and get this, you know, I did all this research and got this, and it wasn't a cheap Bluetooth thing, but it was, you know, it's okay.

[3 : 11] And this would get the job done. It will work. And charge it up. And we got down there and we sat down. And, okay, so here's the moment of truth. Praise the Lord. Praise dad. And I turned on the computer and we turned on the speaker.

And Christina's looking at me and we're syncing them. And they sync. And as the sound starts in the computer and on the screen, the speaker right beside us goes, and Kiki looks at me and goes, who farted?

For the Chinese. And he said, someone run from Pima, you know, and so, and I'm like, what? This is the great moment. This is the moment where everything's going to be good and I'm going to get praise.

I'll make my name great. I'm going to build this monument. And so I said, there must be something wrong. And I reset it and I set it up again and we're going to play it again and turn on the computer and put the speaker right beside it and turn it on and, I mean, it makes this incredibly, I don't know if I could say pass gas or fart in the church, but I did.

And so it is, and all my kids are laughing, right? They just think it's the greatest thing. Hey, can we go buy some more of these things? Because I want to give them to my friends. Because what a great machine. It makes farting noises when you turn it on.

[4 : 22] And I'm just sitting there like, okay, my idol is falling down and my name is becoming, instead of the dad who fixes the sound, I'm the dad who farts or makes a fart machine, right?

And so my kids are laughing and they love it and they just think it's the greatest thing. And inside, I'm just, I'm dying. I mean, I'm furious. Like, okay, I did all this research.

I got all this stuff. I spent all this money. I mean, I want to go back today and I take that speaker to those guys and just say, I cannot tell you how disappointed I am right now. But I'm just, and I'm dying and I'm walking away and I'm so angry.

Because I had all these great expectations, all these things and all these praises. And dad, you really came through for us. And basically what I felt like was this loser written on me.

And I had to get up the next day, today, and preach a sermon. And I have all this anger and frustration because I wanted to be made great and make my name great and my kids love me and I felt like a failure, a struggle, the darkness, the shadow, the shadow that's in there and it comes out when I least expect it.

[5 : 36] When I want to be made great, it comes out and makes me about that tall. You ever felt the shadow?

You ever felt the struggle? You ever done something so perfect and so righteous and you're expecting this amazing response and all of a sudden it's just... Why did I share that story?

Yeah, I don't know. We'll get back to it later on. So, we are, if you are here, we are looking at this thing called God's story and our story.

And we're looking at the Bible as one story because sometimes we realize that we come to the Bible and we look at it as a whole bunch of different small stories. And when we get these small stories and don't see this big story, we get lost.

But the Bible is actually this huge story and at the center of this story, there's just one hero. And I think we get confused sometimes because we think that the Bible is about us, but the Bible is really about God and he's the one who is the hero.

[6 : 49] And as we look at him in this story, we realize a lot about us. Now, if you're new to Watermark, I'm going to say it out here right now, that we believe that the Bible is God's inspired word to us.

We believe that it's the instruction manual for life. It's better than Oprah. It's better than Dr. Phil. If you come to us and you're having struggles, one of the first things we'll probably say as a staff is not how you're feeling or how you're doing, but we might say, have you looked into God's word?

And what does God's word say to you? It's timeless. It's wisdom. Again, it's wiser than Bloomberg and Kramer and Morningstar if you want to order your life and be successful.

So we've been looking through this story of God's story and our story, and we're still in the book of Genesis because those first 11 chapters of Genesis are just massive. They are the foundation for everything we're going to do from here on out as God's people as we read these next series here.

And remember that Genesis is written by Moses. So Moses had just taken the people out of Egypt. They had been in bondage in Egypt for 400 years. They had been building towers and monuments with brick and stone, I mean with stone and just great stuff.

[8 : 01] And they're heading out of Egypt, and they're heading to this promised land. It's not Texas. That is one of the promised lands. But it's, you're supposed to laugh, guys, come on. But it's Canaan, and Moses is writing them.

He's writing these stories of God, and God is the hero, to remind them as they go into this new land, and they go on this new journey of God's faithfulness and of our struggles. The first five books of the Bible, if you're Jewish, we call them the Torah.

It's the law and the prophets and the histories. If you're here at Watermark, we just call them the Pentateuch. We call them the Pentateuch, meaning five, right? And Tuch, meaning toque.

It doesn't really mean toque. It means scrolls. And so we're looking at these five scrolls, and we're basically saying that all of these things are just one book. And two weeks ago, we looked at Genesis 1 and 2. And in Genesis 1 and 2, we looked at the creation story, and we saw that God has existed from eternity, that he's within a trinity.

He's Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And they have been communing and fellowshiping together from eternity past, and they get together, and they create. They create everything that's here, everything that you see now, the potential for it, it's been created by God.

[9 : 13] And after each creative act, God said it was good. And he looked at it, and he said, it's good. And we learned that God established his rule, his authority. He gave us his word. He created a place.

He created a garden. We call it Eden. And finally, he makes people. He made us in his image. You and I are unique. We would say that each one of us has God's DNA and fingerprint on us.

We would say that each one of us has God's watermark on us. And we see in the passage that God created us for community. We also see that you and I are meant to live within relationships, that single and by ourselves, without relationships, is not God's plan for us.

God means for us to be in community and in relations with others. Last week, we looked at Genesis 3, and we saw this breaking of this relationship with God. We call it the fall in the Bible.

It's in Eden, and God brings the couple, Adam and Eve, into the garden, and he gives them everything, but he commands them not to eat out of one tree. He says, just don't eat out of this certain tree. He gives them a choice.

[10:19] He gives them a choice. Are we going to trust him? Are we going to trust that he's good? Are we going to trust that he has our best at heart? Are we going to trust that he's going to take care of us? I mean, he gave them everything, and he also gives them freedom of choice.

And he's asking them, he's asking us, do we want to be in community with him? Do we want to be his people, or do we not want to be? And we saw that the couple disobeyed God. They doubted God's goodness.

Eve struggled with this question that you and I, if we're honest, we struggle with probably more than one time a day. And the question is, can I really trust God to look out for me? Is God really good?

Will he really do good for me? Or do I need to do good for myself? And when Eve struggled with this question internally and by herself, not talking to anybody, not even talking to God about this, she said no.

And she sought to find her identity apart from God. She ate the fruit. And we see that man quickly followed them. And the passage says that our sin, our parents, our first parents, they sinned, and when they sinned in creation, in this perfection, that everything was twisted.

[11:30] Everything became broken. Everything became shadowy. Our view of God was broken. Our relationship with God was broken. And if our relationship with our Creator is broken, then if we see God and we don't see Him right, then we're not going to see ourselves right.

How we see ourselves is broken. Because we measure everything by God. That's the way we are made to be. And if we can't see ourselves properly, we don't understand ourselves, then we don't see other people around us, and we don't deal with other people like God meant for us to be because we're twisted and we're broken and we have these shadows.

And if we don't see God and we don't see ourselves and we don't see others, then we surely don't see creation the way God meant for it to be. And all of these things, as we look around in God's Word, they're tainted and they're changed and it's broken.

And instead of getting this massive blessing that our first parents thought they were going to get, they actually got this curse. And we saw last week that God, He pursued them, and they tried to hide, but He kept coming after them.

He kept trying to bring grace, and there was punishment for disobedience. And He pronounces punishment, but right afterwards, He covers them. He covers them with these animal skins.

[12:36] It's the first blood sacrifice in the history of the history. He kills these animals, and blood is shed, and the skin is put on them so that their guilt and their nakedness could be covered so that God, in fellowship with God, can be restored.

And we see for the first time last week that this announcement of the first gospel, it begins in Genesis. It's the first good news. And what we hear in this idea of ultimate grace is that God is going to, through this woman, bring up a Savior, a man who will be born to save us from the curse that we receive from our first parents.

And then what we see in the passage from last week is they were sent out of Eden. They were sent out of God's place. They were sent out of God's blessing. They were removed from the land that God specifically made for them, for us.

And from that point on, we see there's a symbolism in God's word that whenever we go east, whenever we go east, it's a symbol of that we're leaving God. We're leaving blessings. We're leaving His grace.

We're trying to pursue blessings on our own. We're saying that He's not good. We need to do it. We want to make a name for ourselves. We want to build a tower to our fatherhood. And what we see for the next eight chapters is that mankind just kind of spirals.

[13 : 58] And if we could draw it on this board, we'd be going down and down and down. And we're going farther east from God and farther east. And God is pursuing us. And we're trying to fix ourselves. We're trying to get rid of the curse. We're trying to find blessing.

We're trying to get our own identity. We're trying to say this is who I am. And we try to do it in things. And what the passage says, that the world gets worse and worse and worse and sin and shame and guilt and depravity and envy and self-centeredness and wickedness abound.

And the world is not good. Adam and Eve go off. And in chapter four, we see they have these two sons. The first one's name is Cain. And his name actually means successful and productive.

The second son's name is Abel. And his name means weak, vapor, nobody. I mean, you can already guess who's the favorite son, right? And we're told that both of these boys have fellowship with God.

And one day, they bring this offering to God. And God, we're told, notices Abel's offering because it's in faith. Abel's a shepherd.

[15 : 09] And he brings the first fruit of his flock. We're going to come back to this later on, but the first fruit is this idea that it's the best. It's the very first. It'd be like when you get a paycheck, whatever you're giving, whoever you give to your parents or your church or whatever that looks like, you give the first fruit, it means you're giving the biggest chunk, the very first thing to whoever you're giving it to.

With this idea that no matter what happens, even if things get hard, Abel knew that God was going to take care of him because he was worshiping the Lord. We're seeing that Abel gave these fat portions.

It's this idea of the best. Now, today, we don't like to talk about fat, but in that day, fat was really important because people were starving to death. And the fatty parts were the best parts.

And so we see that Abel gave the first fruits and he gave the best, and this pleased the Lord because he was trusting God to take care of him, even if a need should happen. And the passage says that Cain came and he just kind of gave some leftovers.

Cain's a farmer and he brings this fruit. And it's kind of like he would look at the end of the month and whatever was left, he just gave it to God or his parents or whoever he's giving these things to. It's almost like this attitude of, I don't really need it anyway, so I might as well give it to God because I can do without it because I have enough saved up.

[16 : 27] And Cain gets angry because his brother finds favor in God's eyes and Cain is jealous of his brother's spiritual relationship with God. And the passage tells us that God steps in and he warns Cain.

He begs with him. He pleads him. He says, hey, this thing called sin, it's at your door. It's wanting to consume you. It's sitting there. And in this passage, it's the first time this idea of sin, the word is actually used in all the Bible.

That this sin is crouching. It's like this lion. It's trying to hide. It doesn't want to look important. It wants you to come over and play with it and touch it and hang out with it because you don't think it's going to hurt you like we do all the time.

And God is warning him in his grace, don't get near it. Don't be quiet because if you go by it, it's going to jump on you and it's going to consume you. But Cain doesn't listen to God. And Cain allows the anger and frustration to come up and we're told that he takes his brother into this field and he kills him.

And we see this passage in the story of mankind is out of control and it's kind of rolling around and in the midst of this world we see these two principles continually colliding with each other. And the first principle is that God, that sin is always present in our lives.

[17 : 40] That there's always this darkness that we're going to struggle with this. I know we don't like to talk about sin in here. I've had people come to me and say, I don't want to talk about sin. I just want to, okay, I'm a sinner, that's great, but let's move on and I don't want to deal with sin.

But the Bible deals with sin a lot. And so we see in this story of mankind that sin is always present in our life and we're always going to struggle with pride and jealousy and fear and anger and lust and envy.

And God says, be careful because it wants to consume you. It wants to destroy you. And like in the garden with our parents, as parents, we're always going to have this struggle with doubting God's goodness. We're going to wonder, is God really for me?

And because of that, you and I, we're going to want to build our identity apart from God. Because who knows what God's going to do, but I know what I'm going to do. And so we go on this journey of building our identity apart from God.

We try to prove ourselves. We try to make a name for ourselves. We try to make our names great. So here's a question. I'm going to stop the story here.

[18 : 42] Where are you in this story? What are you trying to grab onto today to prove yourself? What is there in your life that you're depending upon for your identity?

What is there that if it was taken away from you that your world would fall apart? What do you try to do to make yourself great apart from God? For some of us, it's being the best.

For some of us, it's being the first. For some of us, it's being the wisest. For some of us, it's being the richest. For some of us, it's just having whatever we need because we want that. For some of us, it's relationships. But the question for us today is what are we basing our identity on?

Because it's this struggle that's going on around us and it's been going on throughout Scripture and we're going to see it played out over and over again in God's word and in our lives as we continue to go to that. The second thing we see is that God, even though sin and we're struggling with it, God is always there.

But God is pursuing His people that He's showing Himself to us. He's helping us see the shadows in our life. He's pointing to our heart like He did with Cain and with Adam and Eve and with everybody since then.

[20 : 00] He's showing us our need for Him. God comes to Cain and again, He passes judgment on him. But He also brings grace.

And if you go back and read it this week, I encourage you to because I'm just flying through these things just to give us a little taste of it. But it says that God gives him a sign. You know, I used to think and I grew up thinking it meant a mark that there was some kind of scar on him that separated him and made him not because Cain, Cain wasn't even worried about his brother he killed.

Cain was more worried about people killing him when they found out. And God just took him where he was at and we're told here that God gives him this sign, this sign that will protect him from people around him.

It's a sign of mercy and sign of grace. The word is the exact same word that God uses for the rainbow and the flood. It's the exact same word that God uses for this idea of circumcision.

He gives him some kind of sign of his grace and mercy that separates him from all people and they realize that God's fingers are upon him and God is protecting him. So we have this struggle with sin and fighting and we have this idea of God coming in and he's pursuing us and he's bringing grace and he's talking to us.

[21 : 15] He's talking to us through his word, through nature, through our friends, through his spirit and in our heart and the question is what are we going to do with that? Are we going to take that? And what we see in the last couple chapters before chapter 11 is things just get worse.

I mean things start to spiral down and down and down and in Genesis 6-11 God basically says that the whole earth is corrupt. He says there's not a person in the earth at that time that has a thought towards him.

There's no one who wants to know God. They're all wanting to know themselves and to build up their selves and build up their reputation and build up their idols and the corruption is so bad that God says okay it has to come to an end and so he sends this massive flood to destroy the corruption but before he does it he saves one man, Noah.

And so he brings Noah into this ark and into this covenant relationship and it doesn't say that Noah was holy, that he was perfect, that he was good, he was even seeking God. All it says is for some reason God had mercy on him.

Pure grace was poured out and he starts over and so Noah goes in and everything's wiped out and Noah comes out and as you see in the very first part of your passage again God gives Noah the same command that he gave Adam and Eve and that command is for them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

[22 : 32] But when you read the story of Noah and we're going to come back to it later on you see this idea that the brokenness and the shadows are still there and things aren't better, they get worse and within a very short time mankind starts to fall apart again.

We start walking east from God, we start walking away from God's blessing, we start walking away from God's favor, we're trying to build our own name, our own reputation, we're trying to build a tower and a city for ourselves and corruption is everywhere and in the midst of God's story God continues to pursue, God continues to pursue, God continues to pursue and he comes in and he pursues us even when we mock him, even when we laugh at him, even when we don't want him, God's mercy and his grace and his love pursues his people.

Does that make sense? Does that make sense? You're all very quiet. So we come to the passage today and I'm just going to look through it and I want us again to see two things or these two threads and the first thread is found in verses one through four and what we're going to see is that mankind continually spirals and gets corrupt and falls farther away from God and we're moving east away from God, we're moving into sin, we're moving into self-righteousness, we're moving into ourselves and the second thing we're going to see is that God continues to pursue us, verse five through nine.

We fall away, we run away, God pursues, God extends grace and that's one of the threads throughout all the Bible and if we miss this, we miss God's incredible act and remember that the idea that he wanted us to do was to go out and to multiply and fill the earth and make a kingdom for his name and make a city for his name and make a tower for his name but what you see is the people start to trust themselves again.

Verse one says, now the whole earth has the same language, the same words. In Hebrew, the words actually mean they have the same lip, they have the same speech, they have one vocabulary. I've done a lot of research on this and what all the scholars say is that everybody spoke perfect Texan, everybody.

[24 : 29] So the whole earth was amazing, we spoke perfect Texas dialect and we understood each other and when we said eraser was an eraser and a garbage can was a garbage can and not a trash can and Nutella was Nutella and everybody, everything, it was just a perfect world.

It was harmony everywhere. Diet Coke meant diet Coke to everybody. It didn't mean Coke light or Coke zero. But what we see in this passage verses one through four is that in our pride, in our arrogance, we just continue to travel east from God and we travel east from God and the people of God, the people of God, all that are left after the flood, so remember there's eight and now we don't know how long it's been, maybe several hundred years, but they come and they settle in this valley of Shinar, it's basically called the valley of the world and they come there and their desire is not to obey God's command.

Their desire is not to follow God, their desire is not to go west, their desire is to go east and they want to settle and they want to try to build a name, they want to try to build a city, they want to try to build a tower for themselves, they want to set themselves apart, they want to set themselves apart, the text says, so that the whole world looks at them and goes, wow.

The name of the place is called Babel, it actually means the gate of the gods and so they're there and they want to build this big town, city, tower, so that the whole world looks at them and says, God.

So a question for you, if everybody is actually there with them at this time, who are they actually building the tower in the town to say, look at what we've done?

[26 : 07] Who are they actually building it for? I mean, all of creation and all the people are there and they're saying we want to make a name great for ourselves but they're all there so who are they trying to impress?

God. Because all the people are there, they don't have anybody to impress because all the people are there and so what they're actually trying to do is what we've been trying to do all of our lives, we've been trying to show off, we're trying to impress God, we're trying to do things that God looks at us and goes, wow, Tobin, he's really good, he fixed the Wi-Fi and got all those things set up and everything's perfect, let's build a statue for him and all along in this passage we see that sin, our shadow side is going to drive us to build our own identity, sin, the thing that our parents unleashed in the garden is going to help us and encourage us to make a name for ourselves, to make a great name for ourselves always apart from God.

We had four more sermons I would come back and talk about this tower in this city because the implications for it are massive socially, economically, and religiously. There's this guy, his name is Nimrod, he's one of the sons of the sons of Noah and his name actually means Nimrod, it actually means we shall rebel.

Now I've never dedicated a little kid named Nimrod which probably is a good idea, right? But this guy's name, it says it all, his name is we're going to rebel, we're going to build these things and what we see is that they want to build this tower and it's going to be incredibly significant, it's going to be a place of worship, it's going to be a place where people go to make a name for themselves, it's going to be a place where people go to make their own kingdom, kind of like IFC, you know, one, two, and three in Hong Kong.

It's kind of like that, right? That's where people go to make a name for themselves and make their names great and so this is this tower and the goal behind it and all along the feeling is is that they want to do it without God.

[28 : 05] They want to do it separated from God and so they start to build and they're building everything because they want to build their significance because they lost it. They want to feel secure because they've lost their security in the garden.

They want to do all these things to say, look at what we've done, we're okay, Tobin, you are really good, you have your act together, man, you're just great. Man, struggling with the darkness, sin, pursuing us, coming into our lives, saying, hey, I'm not that bad, come here, play with me, but when we grab it, it just rips our arm off.

Then in verse five, it's kind of like the hinge of this whole passage. It's this passage where God comes in in his grace. It's where God comes into the story. The language is very colorful.

It's very, if you were Hebrew, you would laugh as you heard about what they're trying to build and how they're trying to build it. This idea is that the people are down there saying, look at my great achievement. Look at everything I've done.

Come here, God, check this out. It says God comes down and God comes down and he's looking and he can't find it. All of a sudden, he gets down on his hands and knees and he looks down and he can barely see it. It says, that's what our greatest achievements look like to the creator of the universe.

[29 : 20] I mean, when you compare the greatest achievements we've ever done to a star or to a galaxy or to a human, they look like nothing.

And in verse 6, the language is not a language of fear but it's a language of deep concern and deep mercy and grace and God looks at them as he looks at the Father and he says, if I allow them to keep going, if I allow them to keep the same language, they're just going to get in trouble.

The sin is going to multiply and it's going to become great and it's going to become close to an extinction event like it did in the flood and I love them too much. I don't want to see these things happen and so it says in God and his mercy and his grace, he comes down and he confuses everything.

He confuses the language. He confuses the meaning of language. People are no longer speaking perfect Texan but now they're speaking Aussie. Canadian, South African and British English and even Canadian.

They're speaking all these things and all these different meanings, right? It's just crazy and you can't get anything done because everybody's arguing about what you call something. It's called Nutella.

[30 : 31] It's called nougat. But my Aussie friends argue with me all the time and so these people, this place of unity becomes this place of disunity and in this craziness, sometimes God uses crazy things in our life to prevent us from sin.

Did you ever know that? Sometimes God allows us to lose our jobs. Sometimes God allows us to get a broken relationship. Sometimes God allows hard things to happen in our life because he loves us so much and he knows where we're heading and he doesn't want us to see ourselves destroy ourselves.

And so sometimes God uses craziness to bring us back to him to take us away from our self-sufficiency and this place of unity becomes a place of disunity and the people just give up and they scatter over all the earth just like God wanted to in the very first time.

It was God's plan from the very beginning but we just didn't listen. And so he has to take us to all these things in the midst of all these things we continue to realize that we're spiraling and we're spiraling and we're spiraling and the gates of God are no longer the gates of God.

They're a place of confusion. From now on throughout all scripture whenever you read the words Babel or Babylon it's always seen as this place of opposition to God.

[31 : 49] It's always seen as a place where people try to become their own gods. It's always seen as a place of pride. It's always seen as a place of godlessness. It's always seen as a place of God's judgment.

judgment. The gates of God become the gates of confusion and God wins. So we see this struggle that we have with the darkness.

We see God's grace coming in and changing us and making us his children. It's a great story isn't it? I think it's an amazing story.

We're going to take it up more next week but I want to give you some thoughts that I've been thinking through even last night when I was hoping that I would get this large identity ego boost from my family and my kids.

Here's some questions I want us to think about this week. which direction are you traveling in today? Are you traveling east?

[33 : 04] Are you traveling away from God? Are you traveling in such a way to build up your own name and your reputation? Are you ignoring God's plans for your life?

is there this sin that you've been playing with for such a long time and you've reached down to grab onto and it's just got a death grip on you? It's pulling you farther and farther away from God.

Are we traveling west? Are we traveling towards God's mercy and His grace and realizing that He's always there?

He's always cheering for us. He's always pursuing us. God never rests because we messed up. And He loves us so much He just continues to pursue and continue to pursue and continue to pursue.

Second question I've been dealing with. Do you see the sin in your life? I mean the passage says that sin is always present in our lives.

[34 : 12] That we're always going to have this desire to provide for ourselves to make our name great to build ourselves up without God's help. It's one of those two constants in that battle. Do you see the sin and brokenness in your life?

Maybe a better question I ask myself sometimes is how am I trying to make a name for myself today? Am I trying to make my name because I want to make God great?

Or am I going to try to make my name because I want to make Tobin great? How are we building towers? The passage says that we all have these insecurities.

We all have this fallenness. We all have this brokenness. We're all struggling with this broken relationship with God and we're trying to compensate with those things. What kind of towers are you building today to deal with your insecurity and your sin and your separation from God?

do you have somebody in your life who loves you enough to point those things out to you?

[35 : 30] Do you have somebody when you're building these towers and this name and you're doing all these great things and you're doing it for yourself do you have somebody within your community of friends or your family who loves you so much and they don't want to see you go down that path and they share those things with you?

Do you have somebody like that? Maybe another question will be asked how do you respond when they tell you? I mean even if there's only 10% truth in what they say what are you going to do with that 10%?

Are you going to ignore it? Finally and this is the thing that I am challenged by constantly do you see God's mercy and grace in your life these days?

Maybe I should ask first do you see God's mercy and grace in the stories and the passages I shared? The next question will be do you see God's mercy and grace in your life?

Do you see his hand and his faithfulness that he's always pursuing you even when you are traveling far east of him? Do you see these things? I mean the Bible is full of stories of men who try to attempt to escape the sin and the consequences and the curse they're all trying to do it on their own and the Bible says that the only way that you and I can escape this curse the only way that we can escape the curse and the brokenness is if God in his righteousness and through his grace takes that curse on himself do you realize that?

[37:13] The only way that we can escape this fallenness and this craziness this curse the only way that we can escape it God's word says is not to become smarter not to become better not to become more gifted or caring or serving but the only way that we can escape the curse is if God comes and he takes the curse himself and you know this for some reason this is a mystery to me because I just cannot comprehend it but the Bible says that God does that that God loves us so much that he sends his son Jesus who comes as we've already talked 100% man and 100% God he comes to humble himself he comes to serve he comes to die on a cross and Galatians 3 says that he actually becomes a curse for us did you know that?

the only way you're going to deal with your sin and your brokenness and your shadow that's going on inside you the only way you're going to get rid of that curse is if God takes that curse and the only way that can happen is if he sends his son to die for you and when he dies on that cross he's actually cursed by God he takes our curse so that one day you and I will be free of God's judgment and we can be called his people and we can walk in relationship in fellowship with him the scripture says there's these two threads that flow through it you and I are always going to struggle with sin we're always going to struggle with our brokenness we're always going to struggle with the darkness now we don't want to hang out there too long but that's a truth and we have to ask ourselves what's going on and how are we dealing with those things but the passage says also that God is always pursuing us that he's the

God of second chances that he brings mercy he brings grace he brings forgiveness and the question is will we accept that or will we walk away because we want to do it ourselves there's more to come next week the story gets even bigger and grander as God does amazing things for us let's pray father we thank you for this day we thank you for your word how it never changes it is living and active and it moves into our lives and it penetrates our hearts and it shows us the darkness and I pray for us as a church Lord that we would deal with those things father I pray with people in here right now who they're far east from

God they've never entered into the family they're trying to build monuments to themselves they're trying to make their name great they're trying to do everything so that they can overcome this fear and this doubt in this loneliness in this brokenness in this insecurity father I pray for them here right now that you would open their eyes that they would see your son they would see that he came to remove all those things from them and they would put their trust in him would I pray for my brothers and sisters there that they would ask questions of those people who brought them they would ask questions of the staff and anybody they've seen up here they would ask about grace they would ask about the struggle of sin and I pray that we would be honest enough to share because I know that sometimes we go among other Christians and it looks like everybody's just perfect and there's no problems for some reason when I do that I feel like I'm retarded because I look at my life and I realize man I have a lot of problems so I pray for them that they would see that your son came to heal them to change them to take the curse and to forgive them

Father I pray for the rest of us your children as we're on this journey living in the city and around the towers it's really easy to get confused and to forget about mercy and to forget about grace and to forget about whose name we're really living for and before you know it we're building our own towers we're building monuments to ourselves we're building a great name we're hoarding the best portions of our time and our money and our resources and our intellect for our kingdom and we're giving you just the leftovers and all the while your son comes and he pursues us and he brings mercy and grace Father I pray for us as we look at this word your word and we ask these questions that we would allow you to change us I pray there's any of us right now who's struggling with pornography or anger or abuse or even the craziness that's happened to us that we thought that we deserve something else but it didn't happen and we just have bitterness and envy and we're your people and we know that that's not right and I pray Lord that you would touch our eyes and our hearts that we'd focus on your son Christ that we'd come back to him and all that he's done and as we look at how beautiful he is we wouldn't think twice about surrendering these things to you because they're nothing compared to what you've done and what we'll receive in the true city your kingdom in heaven and what I pray for us as a church that we wouldn't forget why we're here we wouldn't just come to feel good about ourselves and then we would leave but we'd realize that we're here to reach people who aren't yet in church and don't yet know you and you surround us with all those people every day in our homes and at work and as we go out to eat father help us not to forget that help us to focus on the grace that you brought to us and to realize that 96% of

[43 : 48] Hong Kong needs that may we be a church that puts other churches out there and plants them so that they can reach other people who are not yet in church today may we be a church that's generous may we be a church that's in love with you and as we see your gospel and your grace change us we change we become more like your son father we love you we need you desperately we thank you that you never give up on us your children we pray all these things in your holy name amen