

# Sharing and Withholding

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 12 March 2017

Preacher: Cory Brock

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, Ananias and Sapphira is not the passage you want to preach when you've been sick all week. But here we are. We're in the book of Acts and we've come to this passage.

And it's difficult and it's troubling and it's incredibly honest. You know, if you're Luke and you're writing a biography of sorts of the first century church and you're trying to get this message out to as many people as you can across the Mediterranean, you don't put this passage in.

Just like if you're writing a gospel and you want people to really believe that Jesus Christ walked out of the grave, what you don't do is you don't, in the first century in a patriarchal society, record that women were the first ones to see Jesus, because it doesn't travel well in that culture.

You see, this passage is here because it's so honest. It's so remarkably honest that means it's history. You see, if this isn't history, you don't put this here, because it doesn't make sense when you're trying to propagate the gospel across the Mediterranean, because it doesn't preach well. It doesn't travel well. It's so honest it's history.

You see, the Bible isn't fake news like we sometimes hear today. It's not fake news. The whole Old Testament is like this as well. The stories of David, they don't travel well.

[ 1 : 32 ] It's so honest it's history. And it's honesty unveils a contrast. When we come to this very honest passage in chapter 5, what it unveils is a contrast that's been developing.

And that's between the early portions of Acts 1-4 and then what we have from here out. In Acts 1-4, and it's repeated at the end of chapter 4 where we read, there's an idyllic picture of the early church. Things are very good. People are happy. There's a lot of joy. They are under great grace, immense divine favor. The Holy Spirit has made Himself very physically, spiritually present. They know He's there.

There's been miracles. There's immense sharing. Nobody has any needs. And then in chapter 5 verse 1, there's that little particle, but there's an immense contrast from the idyllic picture of what's happening in the early portions with the church in Acts to where we are in Acts 5 verse 1.

And for a modern here like you and I, this judgment that happens to Ann and Isis and Sapphira, the judgment of death for sin here is difficult and it's easily misunderstood.

[ 2 : 48 ] So we're going to look at three things to try to unpack it for a few minutes. First, we're going to talk about this. We're going to look at the sin of deceit. Secondly, the judgment of God and finally, depending on time, principles for our protection.

Okay, so first, the sin of deceit. In order to understand exactly what the sin of Ann and Isis and Sapphira is here, which is often missed, you have to read chapter 5 and with chapter 4.

So a lot of times people will treat the story of Ann and Isis and Sapphira in some isolation, but there are no chapter breaks in the Bible. These are late. So there's no chapter break between chapter 4 and 5. That's just to help us divide the Bible up.

But in reality, this is one unit, one single passage. And the main idea at the end of chapter 4 is the same main idea that we saw at the end of chapter 2. And that's that the early church took care of the poor.

The early church took care of everybody that was in need. And these are specifically referring to physical needs, is what they're talking about. And how did they do it? Well, the text tells us it uses the two little words, common property. Common property. Now, the common property of the early church is not a denial of private property, not at all. It's actually an affirmation of its immense amount of uses.

[ 4 : 10 ] So the situation basically is something like this. The upper class in the church who would have owned private property, who owned land, they are cutting back. They're selling it.

They're either selling it and giving the money, they're laying the money at the apostles' feet in a type of benevolence fund, or they're sharing it. So they're opening up that private property for anybody that needs, has immense needs in the church to come and live there with them. So anybody who had land is either selling it or sharing it in a really radically generous way. It's a serious cutback.

Now, the people of God in the Bible have always taken care of the poor. And this is true in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, how did the people of God take care of the poor?

Well, God told Israel in the Torah in the first five books, when you harvest your field, you do not harvest all the way to the edges. You leave the edges unharvested so that those people that are on subsistence type living can come in and glean the edge of the field and make money and food for themselves.

Now, in the Old Testament, the way it worked was that God pronounced a statute and said, take care of the poor, and this is exactly how you're going to do it.

[ 5 : 33 ] And that's just one of the many, many laws in Exodus and Leviticus that he prescribed for taking care of the poor. There are tons of them. But he told them, this is a statute, a law. This is how you take care of the poor.

You see, in the Old Testament, the way law works is it moves from the outside in. It comes from the mouth of God in the form of a statute, and then it's expected to move into the heart of the Israelite and actually become something that they truly want to do. You see, the law moves from outside in. Now, in the New Testament, you have the same exact picture and immense caring for the poor. Nobody in this early church has any needs. But why? How?

Well, in verse 31, it says, the Spirit comes down and they are given boldness to proclaim the gospel. But it's not just that they're given boldness to proclaim the gospel. They're given, with this gospel, an immense freedom to be radical losers, losers of things, losers of stuff.

In other words, the gospel has changed their heart and made them radically free to be crazily generous in a way that's really unusual, that doesn't make a lot of sense. You know why it doesn't make sense?

[ 6 : 48 ] Because these houses they're selling, these lands, these are not their secondary holiday homes in south of France. These are primary residences. This is the land that they used to farm. This is primary turf.

This is where they live. So it's a really radical generosity. But you see the difference. Whereas in the Old Testament, the law moves from the outside in, from statute to heart.

In the New Testament, because of the power of the Spirit at work in the gospel, the law moves from the inside out. The gospel changes the heart first and they become generous, an outpouring of generosity, right?

This is why, this is why, this is so important for understanding Ananias and Sapphira because of this. In the New Testament church, there is no statute for giving. None at all.

No statute, no law, no Torah that comes from the outside that says, this is what you must do. This is how you must care for the poor. Leave the edges of your field. Sell this much property.

[ 7 : 52 ] Give this much property. Give this much money per month. There's no statutes. That's not how it works. That's the law that comes from outside in. And the New Testament law comes from inside out. So giving and generosity is a yes, but it moves from a heart that's been changed by the gospel.

Which means that there's no requirement for anybody in this church to sell their lands. None at all. It's not a statute. It's not a rule. It's not a law.

It only happens for those who do it out of a changed character. You see? So that's the difference in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Both have deep care for the poor, but the difference is the type of, the way the motivation works.

In the New Testament, it's motivated by the gospel, by the Jesus Christ who risked everything, who went low and changes people's hearts to go low in the same way. It costs. Now, the structure of the text then, in light of that context, is two examples.

You see? The story of Ananias and Sapphira doesn't start in 5.1. It starts in 4.36. 4.36 with the story of this man named Barnabas. So what Luke is doing is he's saying, this is how the early church cared for the poor in relationship to lands.

[ 9 : 09 ] Now I'm going to give you two examples of what this looks like of two different people that participated in this. In the first one, you'll see in verse 4.36, is Barnabas.

So Barnabas, he's a Cyprian. He's not native to Jerusalem. His real name is Joseph. And he sells his land and he gives it to the apostles.

Now, he gets a nickname. And if you get a nickname in the early church, if you get a nickname in the first century, if you get a nickname in the ancient Near East, if God changes your name, this means this is something extremely significant.

It's a place of extreme honor. And so his name is changed. And what that tells us basically is this, that this guy was legit. This is who he was. I mean, the guy that sold his land and gave that money to the apostles, he did it because that's Barnabas. He's generous.

He's been changed by the gospel. He gave land because of his character. He wasn't self-seeking. He wasn't looking for particular reputation.

[10:18] And so they call this guy the son of encouragement. And if you've read the rest of the book of Acts, you'll know that Barnabas is encouraging throughout the whole of the book of Acts. This is kind of his role. So Luke is introducing us to his character that's going to perpetuate throughout the whole book.

Now, the interesting thing though is this. In the Greek text, it doesn't literally say exactly son of encouragement. It says, the little Greek word is it says the son of the perichalacist.

Now, if you remember back when we were talking about the book of John, that Jesus, when he's announcing the coming of the spirit says that the perichalacist, the perichalacist, the perichaleo, a few ways to say it, is the one that's coming. I'm sending.

In other words, Jesus says the spirit is this little Greek word, perichalatos. And that little Greek word just means to come alongside, to come alongside one.

The one who comes and stands on your and sits with you stands by you shoulder to shoulder like a friend who encourages, who comforts, who advocates, who convicts. The spirit is the perichalacist to come alongside one.

[11:30] You see what it says about Barnabas here is very specific. He is the son of the perichalacist. Not so not just son of encouragement, but in other words, son of the Holy Spirit, more specifically, he is the son of the spirit.

Verse 31, when the spirit comes down and fills the place up, it's giving you an example. This is truly the son of the perichalacist, the son of the spirit. Barnabas.

Great example of what it means to have all of you changed by the gospel, the whole of who you are, and it be outworked in a public, generous display of giving for the poor at deep cost to yourself. Example 2, example number 2, not the son of the perichalacist, instead the liar to the perichalacist. You see, so where it says Barnabas is the son of the perichalacist, the son of the spirit, and 5-2 it says Ananias lied to the perichalate, the spirit.

[12:33] You see the juxtaposition that it's drawing in example 1 and example 2. You can't read chapter 5 without chapter 4. It's two examples. Now, the question is that when you'd answer in this point is what is Ananias and Sapphira's sin exactly?

What is it exactly that they've done, that they've committed? And as much as, you know, I'm a leader in the church, and as much as probably any leader in the church, especially the deacons would love to get up today and say, here's the moral of the story, give or die.

That's not it. It's not what the passage is about. Yeah, we want more money, of course. No, that's not what this passage is about. This passage is actually not about money. It's not about giving. That's not really what it's about.

Money is simply the context of what happens, but not the subject matter of the sin. It's only a context. And the way you can think about Ananias and Sapphira's sin is both object.

You can think about it objectively and subjectively. It has two sides to it. Objectively, the sin is very clear. It's in verse 2. This little verb, they kept back for themselves.

[13:49] It's a very peculiar little verb. It only appears one other time in the whole Bible, and we'll talk about that in a minute. But basically what it means, the other way to translate, the objective sin, what they have committed outwardly, is they've embezzled money. This is a case of embezzlement.

They've misappropriated funds that were promised to the benevolence fund. They've misappropriated funds. And the way that they've done that, remember, there's no statute to give. There's no requirement that they give anything at all. There's none. There's no statute coming from outside that says, you have to sell your land. You have to give this much. They could have even sold their land and only given a portion of the proceeds. They could have done that.

The problem is, is that they pledged the whole of it. You see, they didn't have to do that. The problem is, is that they made a public promise. And so when they made that public promise and agreed to mutually deceive by lying and saying, actually, we didn't sell it for that much. We sold it for this much. So they could keep some of that money back. That's embezzlement. They misappropriated funds that were committed to the benevolent fund of the church. The Bible has multiple names for this sin. Okay. We've titled this the sin of deceit.

[15:09] It's also in some places called the sin of cunning or the sin of treachery. It's embezzlement and it can take all sorts of forms. Now, but that's objectively, that's, but that's not the root of the sin.

There's a subjective aspect to this sin and subjectively, the sin is this, that they want what Barnabas got. They, they have a deep desire to be honored among the people. They want to be nicknamed because being nicknamed matters.

In other words, they want to place at the table of the elite generous people, the unbelievably humble, the ones that went low. They want to be known for being one of those, but they don't want to count the cost for it.

You see, in other words, what they desire to be known as doesn't match up to who they actually are. Another word you could use for this is fundamentally hypocrisy.

They want to be publicly known. They want to have a very particular reputation, but secretly in their own household, they're wriggling their hands because they know that this isn't truly who they are, but they're going to get away with it anyway.

[16:23] So the fundamental sin here is an immense grievous deceit, a type of hypocrisy that comes from a deep desire to have a very particular type of reputation.

Now, what the text calls this sin even more particularly is that Peter says you've lied to the spirit. The devil has provoked you to lie to the spirit. Now, what does it mean to lie to the spirit?

This is not blasphemy of the spirit. Those are two different discussions. Blasphemy of the spirit is something to talk about another day.

This is lying to the spirit, and it's a different Greek word. Literally, the word is not actually the verb directly to lie, but the word to falsify. So it's very peculiar. It literally says that Peter tells Ananias, you have falsified the spirit.

Now, what in the world does that mean? To falsify the spirit. The early church fathers, theologians throughout all of history, have always read the Bible and basically described sin in a very particular way.

[17:36] And the way that most theologians in history have described sin is, Augustine puts it in a very academic way, but he says he calls it the privation of the good.

Now, what does that mean? Well, basically all he means by that is what sin fundamentally is is it's not a thing. It's not a substance. It's not something material that you can touch or taste or see.

Sin is a power, a force. And what Augustine meant when he said sin is the privation of the good, is that basically sin is the power that goes into things that are created to be good.

Whole, ordered, one, unified, exactly what they're supposed to be, and it pushes the good out. It privates the good. It literally takes the good out of the thing. It rips things in half, in other words, is the way they understood it.

Sin, the good, orders things. It makes things whole. It makes things right. It makes relationships right. It makes who you are as a person right. That's the good. That's righteousness. Sin comes in and it cuts apart. It divides. It slices up. In other words, you know this.

[18:44] You know this. Sin makes it to where all of your life, your head, is doing battle with your heart. Your members are not all united. Sometimes, have you ever had the experience where you desire to do something but you know it's a sin?

In that moment, your desires and your head aren't in unity with one another. You're having to fight part of who you are, your desire in order to do the good. Sin comes in and it cuts things apart. It's divisive. And that's exactly what's happening in Genesis 1-3.

In Genesis 1, God creates a perfect world, an ordered world, a whole world, a good world where everything is united. But by the time Genesis 3 comes around, sin comes in and it corrupts by dividing, by being divisive.

So what does sin do? It sets you against yourself. It sets human beings against nature. It sets human beings against their own work, against their own children, against each other, but ultimately

against God.

You see, sin comes in and it divides everything. The spirit in the New Testament does the opposite. You see, the role of the spirit that we're taught in the New Testament is that the spirit comes in and unites.

[ 19 : 58 ] The spirit takes something that sin has come in and sliced apart into pieces and the spirit makes it whole again. That's the role of the spirit in the work of salvation. So what does it mean to falsify the spirit?

It means that the spirit has come in through the power of the gospel and united something that was divided. But to falsify the spirit is to insert division into that which the spirit has now united.

To falsify the spirit, in other words, is to destroy integrity amongst a group of people that have been united by the spirit. The spirit comes in and brings disparate people from all over the planet in Acts 2 and brings them together.

And now what we see is he's saying is this, your sin is causing division. You falsified the work of the spirit, the work of the gospel by being the decisive power of sin in your own person, in your own actions.

You see, it means that it destroys integrity. Now integrity comes from a Latin word that we share with our English word, the word in mathematics, integer.

[ 21 : 09 ] You guys know this word, integer. What's an integer? An integer is a whole number. It's just a whole number. Well, integrity means the same thing as an integer. An integer is a whole number and integrity means a whole person.

It means that you're whole. In other words, that what you desire is actually what you do. That what you know to be the good, to be the true, to be the beautiful, you want it and you do it and you seek it.

It means that your members aren't set against each other. That's what it means to have integrity. It means to function as a true human. Jesus Christ was the true man that came.

He was completely, he had complete integrity, complete wholeness. And to function with integrity means to be truly human. It means to function in a total unity with all your parts.

Ananias and Sapphira are being charged with falsifying the integrity of the early community. That's what they're being charged with. Okay, that's the sin. Secondly, more briefly, the judgment, the judgment of God.

[ 22 : 19 ] Now, both Ananias and Sapphira are judged by God for this sin and you saw very clearly in the passage, there's no getting around it. That judgment is a physical death. They fall asleep or they die.

Now, there are four really important points, little details in this passage that I'll just mention briefly to help you understand how this judgment fits in with the bigger picture of the whole Bible.

And the first is this. This is the sin of a man and a woman. Okay, this is the sin of a man and a woman. And don't let that pass by you.

There has been no public display of sin thus far in the book of Acts in the church. None. The church has not, it's not been stated yet that the church has committed any sins. That doesn't mean that they're not sinners, but it's painting a very particular type of picture of the work of the gospel in this community. This is the first one and it's a sin committed by a man and a woman in unity.

Okay, that's the first thing to notice. The second thing to notice is this. Peter does not judge them or curse them. Not at all. He never pronounces a curse or a judgment. He simply calls out what they have done and God judges them.

[ 23 : 31 ] God is the one who comes and judges them. In fact, Peter offers Sapphira an opportunity to repent at the end, to come clean. Now, some scholars say that Ananias and Sapphira's death is death by shock.

Right, so whenever they were confronted, they fell down having a heart attack because they were found out and they were publicly shamed. But of course, that's a ridiculous reading. You read the text.

It's obvious this is a judgment. This is clearly a judgment. Now, there's no reason to qualify to say that this is absolute judgment. In other words, this is judgment that's placed upon their physical bodies, but there's no reason, no need, no knowledge that we can possibly have to say that this is also an ultimate judgment of their souls.

We can't say that in this passage. We just can't know. The third thing to point out is this. It's Satan that filled their hearts. Peter says, Satan persuaded your consciousness. It's saying that Satan is the one that tempted you and caused you to think like this, to do this. And lastly, the last little word I'll say is this little word for being kept back from verse 2, the sin, is the little Greek word, *nas physo*, and it's extremely unusual. It's only used in one other place in the whole Bible, and that's in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and that's in Joshua chapter 7.

And it's used in Joshua 7, if you remember that passage, to describe the sin of Achan, the one who kept back for himself goods from Jericho and defiled the camp of Israel and was found out and he was condemned to death for holding back.

[ 25 : 13 ] That's the only other place. So you can see Luke knows this. Luke knows exactly that this verb appears there, and he's drawing a parallel here with Joshua chapter 7 and Achan.

Here's the point. If you started to take some of those little points and gather a picture together, the picture is this. This story of Ananias and Sapphira is in the very particular genre in the Bible of fall stories.

They are unique fall stories, corruption stories that come at particular points in the Bible, and the points that they come at are any time, all the times that God pronounces and comes down in unique presence upon a particular place.

So God comes down in the Garden of Eden first, and he has a very particular unique presence in the Garden of Eden. He dwells there with Adam and Eve, and then what happens? Satan tempts the consciousness of a man and a woman to corrupt that place.

You see the pattern? It's a fall story. Ananias and Sapphira is a fall story that participates in the original fall story, the fall story of Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter 3, and it's multiplied and multiplied and multiplied throughout the Bible.

[ 26 : 30 ] God destroys the world in a flood, and then he recreates the world after the flood in a sense. There's a de-creation and a recreation. And who is the new and second Adam after the flood?

It's Jonah. Noah is the new and second Adam. It's a new opportunity, a new world. The promises of Genesis chapter 1 are repeated to Noah in Genesis.

And what happens? Noah sins with some type of sexual encounter with his own son. It's repeated. It's repeated in Exodus with Nadab and Abihu as soon as the presence of God comes into the Tabernacle, and they offer unauthorized fire. It's repeated as soon as the Israelites build their camp in the Promised Land for the first time in the story of Achan. And Achan, one man, corrupts the entire camp, contaminates it, brings sin in a unique way, and a unique way into its presence. And this is exactly what's happening here.

God's unique presence has come into a unique community in the unique church, and what we get here is the genre of a fall story. Now, what does that tell us? What does that teach us? This is what it teaches us.

That this is a unique event in the life of the church. This is a very particular, unique judgment in the history of the church.

[ 27 : 54 ] Look, this is what it tells us. The church, hopefully this isn't news to you, but the church is not the full and final kingdom of God. That's what it says. The church is not the full and final kingdom of God.

The full and final kingdom of God is a place without tears, without corruption, without sin, without deceit, without death. And the local church is not it. You know, if you read any church history or if you are a member of a church for any time, you'll know that churches are still full of sinners. And this was central to Martin Luther's realization at the time of the Reformation.

He used a little Latin phrase, *simile usus et peccator*, which means that we are at the same time justified and sinners. That's the church, just simultaneously justified and sinners. And that's exactly what the text wants us to see.

But at the same time, the church is unique. And what the text is also saying to us is that God cares deeply for it.

It's often put in more liberal circles like this. How can the progressive God of the New Testament do things like this? This looks much more like the vindictive, angry God of the Old Testament, of course, which is a fallacy.

[ 29 : 15 ] But what's happening in this judgment? And look, let me just say, this judgment makes sense, even though it's difficult for a modern hearer to read it. It makes sense. What's happening is

this. This is the Father protecting the bride of His only begotten Son.

I mean, what Father would not protect the bride of His own Son when she fell into deep treachery at the hands of an enemy? What Father would not protect the bride of His Son, pledged to be married? This is the righteous anger of a Father protecting His children.

This is the shepherd protecting His sheep. I mean, it's difficult for a modern hearer, but it makes sense. It makes sense. And if you have children, you know that anger isn't necessarily a sin. Anger and judgment aren't necessarily sins.

There's tons of righteous anger and judgment. If you have kids, you know this. You don't let your kids fall into harm's way because of their own sin. And you also don't let your children be damaged by something outside, by some enemy. You protect them.

And part of that protection always means righteous, holy anger and judgment. It's part of protecting them and teaching them and helping them to grow up. So this event is both unique in the life of the church and it tells us that God disciplines as a loving Father who wants to protect and grow up as children.

[ 30 : 48 ] Look, it tells us this. God takes sin very seriously. God takes sin seriously. And that means that salvation isn't simply deciding for Jesus one time and saying yes to the claims of Jesus, but salvation is much bigger than that.

Salvation includes holiness. It includes believing the gospel. God comes in from the outside by nothing that you've ever done and saves you. Yes, indeed. But he's saying that God takes His saints and their sins very seriously, that He wants us to be holy, that He wants us to grow.

So at the same time, this is a very unique event in the life of the church, but also teaches us principles that are in perpetuity. Now, finally, and we'll close very briefly, how do we know that God is not continually punishing people in the church in the same manner because of sin like this? How do we know? How do we know it's that unique? And the answer is because all of us are sitting here. Okay. How do we know? Because you're sitting here. That's how you... Where are the hypocrites? Where are the deceivers? And the answer is that it's all of us. Sometimes. All of us. Every single one of us has done something outside external to us to maintain our reputation, to boost up the public acknowledgement of who we are when it wasn't true of what was actually in our hearts.

[ 32 : 18 ] We've all done that. And sometimes we've done it in such a way probably that even cost some type of unity in some part of the local church body. How do we know that God's not still doing this because we're all sitting here? Look, every single instance of our own hypocrisy, of our own deceit deserves something much more even than what happens to Ananias and Sapphira in this passage.

It deserves an absolute final judgment. Luke 12, Jesus says, do not fear the one who can simply kill the body. Fear the one who can also kill the entirety of the soul.

In other words, how can people like us who embezzle, who lie, who deceive, who gossip about themselves, who put themselves forward too often in conversations, who are hypocrites, have any assurance in the face of a passage like this?

And the answer is this, that on the cross of Christ, our divisive sin, the division that we brought in the world, the division that's been caused by people like Ananias and Sapphira dating all the way back to Adam and Eve, it disintegrated the man of power.

It cut him into pieces. At the very point that we deserve to be cut into pieces for our sin, Jesus volunteered to be disintegrated. He volunteered to be disordered, to be cut into pieces for sinners like Ananias and Sapphira, for people like us. Jesus is the only human since Adam and Eve that was truly whole, that had true integrity, that was truly ordered.

[ 33 : 52 ] And this is the last thing and we'll be done. I was in the Netherlands this week and visiting with James Eglinton, who many of you will know, and he was telling me about how much he loved his time in the French Reformed Church.

Because at the Lord's Supper in their church, they would take this just massively, you know, so typical French piece of bread, the type of bread, when I say French bread that you picture, right? And they would break it before they would bless it.

And this bread was so crumbly, you know, like just, you've seen those pieces of bread. I mean, it would just shatter onto the floor at the table. And he said that every time I made him think of how much sin came in and crushed the body of Christ, this bread is, that's the perfect bread for picturing

exactly what the cross was like.

The divisiveness and disorder of sin was shattered into pieces. He went under the wrath of God and ordered that now in repentance and faith in Christ. When we receive discipline from God, it's from a loving Father who we can run to and reach up for and say, Abba, Daddy, right? Instead of the righteous wrath of the just and holy God.

That's what Jesus got. So we're being called to true integrity in this passage that God takes sincerely. Now we'll have to forego the third point as usual, but I'll just say, in order to do this, we need to have deep, honest relationships.

[ 35 : 24 ] There's no private life, no private ethic when it comes to the life of the church. And one of the best principles for protecting yourself from the sin of deceit and treachery and cunning from being a hypocrite is to be honest about hypocrisy, to confess, to others, to have deep relationships, deep friendships, to not hold back.

And that means that you have to cultivate relationships in this group that are truly there, that are deep and sincere, that look something like probably with the relationships in Acts chapter 4 where no one had anything in need looked like.

We have to close. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the honesty of Scripture. We ask that you would take a very difficult passage and work it into our hearts that we would know that you take sin seriously and that you took sin so seriously that Jesus Christ died for us.

We ask that you would take the meeting of divine justice and mercy all in one. And we ask that in the midst of passages like this that might shake our assurance. We turn to the cross and the resurrection and we confess and we be honest about who we are.

And we pray, O Lord, that you would change us because of that. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.