

**Trending vs. Truth  
Silencing Scripture  
Selected Scriptures**

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*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher  
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas*

Well, this summer we are taking a break from our verse-by-verse study of God's word. We just finished seven years in Romans, and, Lord willing, this fall we'll start 1 John. But we're taking a break right now, this summer, to consider some of the trending issues. I want to address issues like gender, sexuality, the critical race theory and social justice movement, the cancel culture, Christian nationalism. Those are the topics that I've laid out for the rest of our summer together, but I decided not to start with those specific issues. Instead, we're looking at the root causes of our culture's moral confusion, the flawed foundation on which our culture's flawed views are built.

Now last week we learned that the ultimate cause, the foundational sin that has created our culture's many problems is its abandonment of God. That's where it starts. Romans 1 so powerfully lays out that story. As a people, we are abandoning the true and living God. Today we come to a second related cause: our culture's concerted effort to silence Scripture's voice on everything to which it speaks. The second primary cause of the moral confusion in our culture is its rejection of God's Word as the ultimate authority for human thinking and behavior. Now, immediately, you can see how these two causes, the abandonment of God and the rejection of His Word, are interrelated. I mean, you understand this even on a personal level. If you were to decide—And I hope you would never decide this.—but if you were to decide that you wanted nothing to do with someone in your life, then you don't want to hear from them anymore. You unfriend them. You stop following them. You throw away their letters unread. Why? Because once you have rejected the person, you don't care what they think or say about anything. That's how our culture, having abandoned God, now responds to His words to us. So I want us this morning to consider our culture's relentless efforts to silence the Scripture, which is really the second root cause that leads to all of the twisted moral views that are out there in our world.

Now as we look at this second root cause, there are several important insights I want us to consider together. And I'm going to follow an outline very similar to what we did last week (In fact, it'll be identical to what we did last week.) that lays out what I want us to consider about this rejection of God's Word, this silencing of Scripture that permeates our culture. First of all, let's consider the cultural expressions. How is this trending? How does our culture's growing rejection of God's Word express itself? How is it demonstrated in the lives of the people around us? I'm going to give you a little list. I'm not going to develop these, because I want to spend our time elsewhere. But I just want you to think about these common expressions that this rejection of God's Word takes.

First of all, there is outright rejection. Just rejection. There are those in our culture who have concluded that Scripture is an outdated, human document with no legitimate authority, and therefore it is worthless or (in some cases they would even say) harmful. You can find these quotes online, as people reject the Bible and talk about its complete unhelpfulness. Contrast that with what God says about His Word. Isaiah 40:8, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever." If you want to reject the Scripture, you first have to say, I have a greater moral character and I am more in tune with the truth than Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Because what He said about the Scripture was exactly the opposite. For example, in Matthew 5:18, He said, "Truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law [meaning the Old Testament] until all is accomplished." Countless times during His ministry He quoted from what we call the Old Testament and said this is God's Word to us. He taught it with authority, and then, of course, He preauthenticated the New Testament by picking those men who would write it on His behalf. And so Jesus says the Bible is the Word of God. For you to conclude or for anyone to conclude that it's not, you first have to say, I have a more profound moral character, I am more in tune with reality, I am more in authority than Jesus Christ. And there's, sadly, some who do that and reject the Scripture outright.

A second cultural expression of this is contextualization. It's treating the meaning of Scripture as relative, relative to the individual and his circumstances or relative to the sort of corporate context in which that person lives; and in some cases, some would say it's even unknowable (postmoderns). And therefore, regardless of which of those tacks you take, it becomes uncertain. "We just don't know. We certainly don't know anything that's true in all places and in all times. It's relative." That's contextualization. Compare that to Psalm 119:89: "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven." It's always God's Word. It always means the same thing and always will in every place in every time.

A third cultural expression is marginalization. There are many in our culture who take this approach with Scripture. They still give some lip service to the Scripture, but they demote the Scripture solely to matters of personal faith and therefore reject it as a legitimate resource in public debate. In other words, there are a whole lot of people who say, "Listen, the Bible's fine. Yes, it's a helpful book. You do everything you want with the Bible in your own home and worship. You do everything you want with a Bible in your church, but keep the Bible out of discussions about anything on the public stage." They marginalize the Bible, push it into the corner. This is nothing more than an attack and a rejection of the Scripture itself. Compare their response to Psalm 19:7-10, where David says the Scripture is comprehensively helpful in every possible area of life, and it is more valuable than gold. Constantly, the Old Testament prophets confront the nation of Israel with the fact that the real problems in the nation were this very thing: they had turned from and marginalized God's Word.

A fourth cultural expression is reinterpretation: using contemporary viewpoints to interpret Scripture's meaning and therefore ignoring authorial intent. In other words, what they do is they say, "Yes, you know, the Bible's a good book, but we need to read this book through our modern eyes, through the lens of our culture." They do to the Bible what many do the U.S. Constitution. And that is say, let's forget what the original authors meant, let's give it our own meaning. They

do that with the Scripture. They reinterpret it to their own destruction. There are “biblical” scholars that take this tack. Of course, politicians do it all the time. Entertainment personalities, people online—what do they do? They don't say let's trash the Bible; instead, they cherry-pick these little quotes. They use the Bible like a quote book, but they're not even honest with the quotes. They take them out of their context. They twist them and make them say what they want it to say. This has always been Satan's tack. He had the arrogance to try this approach on our Lord at His temptation, you remember, [he] quoted the Bible to Him. Jesus corrected him in his reinterpretation of Scripture.

A fifth expression of our culture's effort to silence the Scripture can be called dereliction: discounting the value and importance of Scripture and therefore ignoring its authority and teaching. This isn't the person who says I reject the Bible outright. This is the person who just turns his or her back on it, just ignores it. By the way, I chose the word *dereliction*. I almost chose a word like *omission* or *inattention*, but those words imply some degree of innocence or can't. This is not innocent. Webster defines dereliction as deliberate or conscious neglect. That's what the culture has done with Scripture. It's not an accidental omission. It's deliberate and conscious neglect. It is an intentional abandonment. This is how people who don't want to have anything to do with God always respond to His words. In Psalm 50:17, God says to the wicked people in the nation of Israel, “You hate discipline,” therefore “you cast My words behind” your back.

A sixth and final cultural expression is substitution: trusting in other sources of authority for guidance on moral issues and therefore replacing divine revelation with human reason. You see, when you reject the Scripture as the authority, you always replace it with another authority. Every single person, every one of you, every person in our world has an authority for the decisions they make. If you reject the Bible as that authority, you're going to replace the Bible with something else. Let me just point out for you, very quickly, the three most common

replacement or substitute authorities behind our culture's moral views. How do they get there? They get there in one of three ways, one of three authorities.

First of all, a consensus of human experts. Literally, they search for those who are the experts, and they let those people determine morality. You see this all the time. You read news articles, you go online, and what do people do? They're quoting authorities. They're quoting experts. Now think about the ludicrousness of that. To define morality, they rely on fallen, depraved human beings who have been carefully indoctrinated for long periods of time by other fallen, depraved human beings, and that becomes the source of authority.

Another replacement source of authority is the collective mindset of the age. This has become the new authority on the moral and ethical issues of our times. It's democracy on steroids. Can you imagine the chutzpah to say, we get to vote not only on our representatives but on what's true and right? And yet that's the very thing that's happening in our culture. Let's take a survey. How many Americans think this is okay? And my response is to that, who cares? Since when is morality a democratic decision? But that's where our culture is. The collective mindset of the age.

A third replacement or substitute authority is their own mind. This is how most people make their moral decisions. O, they collect information. You know, they listen to their own experts, those that they like. They read their own websites, the ones they're drawn to. They go to the social media favorites they have. And they take all of that in, and they then make up their own mind. They become their own moral authority. It's like morality in a buffet line. You just kind of go through and say I'll have some of that, and I'll have some of that, and I'll have a little of this. When you do that, what's the real authority? It's not even those people you're borrowing from, it's your own mind. You become the authority. "I know what morality is, and I define it."

Now look at that list: rejection, contextualization, marginalization, reinterpretation, dereliction (that is, deliberate neglect) and substitution. Folks, those are the most common expressions of our culture's rejection of God's Word. And make no mistake, those are rejections of God's Word.

Let's consider a second insight, then, about our culture's efforts to silence the Scripture, and that is the spiritual foundations. What is the source of this? Where does this antipathy toward the Scripture come from? Why would people who seem to have reasonable minds come to the Word of God, that you and I have seen to be the light on everything—why would they come here and want to turn from it and reject it? That's a question you ought to ask and the Scripture answers. There are several explanations the Scripture gives for our culture's efforts to silence the Scripture. You need to understand this.

First of all, the first spiritual foundation, the first source of this is unbelievers have an inherited predisposition against the truth. This couldn't be clearer than in the words of our Lord in John 8:44. You can turn there if you like. John 8:44, as He's talking to those who have not believed, He says this to them, "You are of your father the devil." Now stop there just a moment. That is an amazing statement by our Lord. He is saying, every single human being who has not believed in the true God, has not believed in Christ and come to know the true God, is still connected to the devil. You are of your father the devil. Every human being is born with, ultimately, the devil as his or her father. "And you want to do the desires of your father." In other words, you want to do what your father does. You want to carry out what's important to him. "He was a murderer from the beginning." That's why there's so much hatred and murder on this planet, because it's filled with people who are his children. And they have anger in their hearts, and some of them carry that anger out in murder. And notice the next phrase. This is so important. "[The devil] does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks [notice this] from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." Do you see what Jesus is saying? The father of every unbeliever is the devil, and the devil hates the truth. His children want to imitate him. They have his nature, and so they, too, hate the truth. There is

an inherent predisposition against the truth in every unbeliever. Understand this. People are not seeking. They weren't born seeking God. They weren't born seeking the truth. No, there is an inherent predisposition against the truth.

Secondly, the reason unbelievers don't turn to the Scripture and reject it is because unbelievers have a darkened mind about the truth. Turn to Ephesians chapter 4. We looked at this passage last week for a different reason. Ephesians 4:17, Paul says, "This I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you [stop walking like pagans.]" Don't walk like you used to walk before you came to Christ. And he first describes them as walking or living in the "futility of their mind." That's those worthless worldviews we talked about last week. Where do those worthless worldviews come from? Why would people that seem to be rational create those worthless worldviews and reject the truth of Scripture? Look at the next phrase: "Being darkened in their understanding." That's where it comes from. Being darkened in their understanding. The word "understanding" here, the Greek word, includes the mind itself, it includes the product of the mind (the thoughts), and it even includes the process of thinking in the mind. So it's all-encompassing.

So the mind, the thoughts that come out of the mind and even the process of thinking that leads to those thoughts, Paul says, they're all "darkened." Now that word can be a little misleading, because you might be tempted to think about that little switch in your dining room or your bedroom where there's a dimmer switch where you can dim the lights. You know, let's just dim it a little, down a couple of notches. Their understanding, it's a little dimmer than mine. That's not this word. If I could take you to Revelation (I'm not going to take the time to do that.) and show you how this word is used in other places, this word doesn't mean slightly dimmed. It means totally blacked out. It means the light is completely gone. So Paul is saying the unbelieving person's mind, their thoughts and even their process of thinking, is pitch black. There's no light.

You say wow, that seems a little overmuch for the people I know that are unbelievers. Well, let me just give you the other adjectives that Paul uses for unbelievers' minds. This was your mind before you came to Christ. If you're here this morning and you're not in Christ, this is what God says about your mind. Here it is: debased, hardened, blinded, futile, hostile, deluded, deceived, sensuous, depraved, corrupted and defiled. That's what the New Testament says about unbeliever's minds and their thinking and the thoughts that come out of that thinking process. This is why unbelievers in our culture don't see the light in the Scripture, and why they seek to silence it.

There's a third explanation, and that is unbelievers have been blinded by satanic deception in regards to the truth. Look at Ephesians 2, just a couple pages back. Ephesians 2. You remember, Paul here is describing the regeneration, the new life that we have gotten in Christ. He starts that in verse 4, but in the first three verses of this chapter, he describes what we were before Christ; he describes what every unbeliever is still. Notice how he describes it. Verse 1, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins, [and in those trespasses and sins] you formally walked." But notice, you walked, that is your lifestyle, your patterns of living were—notice this expression—"according to the course of this world." Literally, "according to the age of this cosmos." The word for "course" is the Greek word *aion*. It refers to the spirit of the age, the worldview of our time. You see, every age, every period of time, every generation is dominated by certain ideas. Certainly ours is. And the New Testament says Satan controls the *aion*. He controls the mindset of the age, the worldview that dominates the age. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, he's called the god of this *aion*, this age. The devil and his demons establish and control the worldview or zeitgeist of every generation throughout history. They control this generation's worldview and zeitgeist. How do they do it? They do it through the world system they've created and through the influence of individual unbelievers who are children of Satan, who are controlled by his values and his desires. So understand this: all unbelievers, every unbeliever is controlled, is enslaved to the mindset of the age, and they are therefore blind to the truth. That's what was true of you. That's what's true of every unbeliever.



There's a fourth explanation for this blindness to Scripture, this desire to silence the Scripture, and it's more personal. Unbelievers are guilty of their own sinful suppression of the truth. I'm not going to spend a lot of time here, because we touched on these verses last week. But Romans 1:18 says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." That's not just a few bad people. That's all unbelievers and, specifically, here it's pagans who see creation and suppress what they learn about God from creation and just deny it and go on to worship idols. Therefore God gives them over to their sin. Verse 32 says not only do they suppress what they see in creation, they also suppress what they see in conscience, because verse 32 says, "Although they know the ordinance of God." And these, by the way, are people who don't have the Bible. These are pagans "They know the ordinance of God." Chapter 2:14-15 says that's because of the substance of the law written on every heart. "They know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but... give hearty approval to those who practice them." So do you understand? I mean, when you consider those foundational spiritual issues, it's no surprise that the people around us are opposed to the Scripture and desperately desire to silence it. Now, because they have rejected God's Word, for these reasons, their moral discernment about everything is completely dark and twisted. They don't get anything right.

That brings us to a third insight, and this is where I want to spend the rest of our time together, most of the rest of our time. The Biblical correction. What is the truth? We need to know what's wrong in our culture, but here's something that we as believers can celebrate. We can celebrate the truth because of what God has done in our hearts. We need to come back to, what does the Bible say? In light of our culture's desire to silence the Scripture, what truths do we need to believe and hold fast to? Let me summarize it this way: Scripture calls every one of us to abandon all other authorities and to embrace God's Word alone as our sole authority. That's what

Scripture calls every believer to. And this is taught throughout the Scripture, but I want to show you three amazing passages where this principle unfolds in very similar ways.

Let's start with Psalm 1. Turn back to Psalm 1. This Psalm stands as the gateway to the Psalter, and it lays out the fact that when it comes to people and to paths in life, there are only two paths that you can choose from. Let me say that again. There are only two paths in life that you can choose from. There is the way of the righteous, and there's the way of the wicked. You say, how do I know whether I'm on the way the way of the righteous or the way of the wicked? The way of the righteous, the psalmist is going to tell us, is the way of the Bible. And the way of the wicked is everything else. Let me say that again. The way of the righteous is the way of the Bible, and the way of the wicked is everything else. Now the Psalmist here lays out for us, first of all, a description of the righteous in verses 1-3, then in verses 4-5 a description of the wicked, and then there's a summary in verse 6.

I just want to look at, really, the first two verses of this Psalm where the psalmist identifies two basic commitments that always characterize the righteous. First of all, the righteous abandon every human way. Verse 1, "How blessed is the man [O to be envied is the person] who does not walk in the council of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!" Now you'll notice it speaks of walking, standing and sitting. Why? Because those are the three postures of someone who's awake. At least, hopefully, you're awake sitting there. Normally, those are the postures of people who are awake. In the whole of their waking life, whether it's walking, standing or sitting, righteous people have nothing to do with these things. By the way, the Hebrew grammar reinforces this idea. The tense of all of these Hebrew verbs speaks of those who avoid these things not once, but as a constant pattern of life. They entirely abandon these things, and they keep on abandoning them.

Notice the first thing that the righteous person abandons. Verse 1, "[He] does not walk in the council of the wicked." Now that word "counsel" has to do with how we think. It means to give

advice in the making of decisions. The righteous do not as a habit walk in the advice given to us about how to live by those who disregard God's Word and who set up their own authority. Now let's admit that all of us tend to follow in harmless ways the advice of the people around us. Take, for example, hairstyles. If I were to have you come up here on the podium and we'd cycle through hairstyles, we'd see that there're some patterns that aren't like some other time periods. Why? Because you're following the advice of the people around you. You know, in terms of clothes, I'm wearing this morning a tie that isn't twelve inches wide, unlike the ones I wore in the 70s. The lapels are a little narrower than they were in the 70s. Why? Because I'm following the advice of the people and culture around me. If you want to see this in living color, just go break out your pictures. I don't care how old you are, just look at the pictures. Either digital or if you're old enough to have printed versions, go back and look at those pictures, and look at what you wore in the past. And when you look, you'll say, "What was I thinking? Why did I wear that? Why did I have that hairstyle?" And you know what the answer will be? Because you were listening to the advice of the people around you. You know, we think we're so individualistic, but, truthfully, we're just following the advice of others. And that's OK, because the Bible doesn't dictate hairstyles. And the Bible doesn't dictate clothing except for the issue of modesty. Other than that, it gives us the freedom to make those choices. So that's fine. The problem, folks, is when we follow the advice of the wicked in things like philosophies, lifestyles, priorities, and (here's where we're really going) the moral issues of our day. The righteous abandon the advice of the wicked.

But don't miss the main point in verse 1. Those three nouns (wicked, sinners and scoffers), those aren't, like, just the three worst versions of sinners. No, those three nouns together include every unbeliever, without exception, every unregenerate person. All unregenerate people are included in those words. The point is the righteous person completely abandons every path of those who live in rebellion against God. In other words, the righteous person abandons every human way. He abandons living like they live. That's standing in the path of sinners. He abandons belonging

where they belong. That's sitting in the seat of scoffers. And he abandons thinking like they think. That's the advice or counsel of the wicked. The righteous abandon every human way.

And then notice the other commitment that righteous people make in verse 2: the righteous embrace only God's way. Verse 2, but, instead of all of that, the righteous person's "delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." The psalmist here reduces his entire positive description of the righteous person to his or her response to the Bible. Derek Kidner writes, "The Psalm is content to develop this one theme, implying that whatever really shapes a man's thinking, shapes his life." And the righteous person, his thinking is shaped by the Scripture. Notice, he delights in it. The word means to take pleasure in something, to experience emotional joy or delight. The righteous person finds his pleasure, his happiness, his delight in the Bible. It's like Job in Job 23:12: "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." Here's just a little test for you. Seriously, if you had to choose between having time in the Scripture and having lunch, which would you choose? He delights in it, and he "meditates" on it. The word means to reflect, to think, to have an internal discussion about the Scripture. It's deliberately choosing to think deeply about the Scripture. The righteous love the Bible, and they think about it all the time. Why? So that they can understand it, and so that they can do it. They delight in it, and they meditate on the Bible rather than spending all their time reading and listening to the council of the wicked. Let me just ask you just an honest question. To whom do you listen more? The advice of all of those people out there who don't know God, or to God in His Word? That's the point.

Let's turn to a second example. Turn over to Proverbs 3. Proverbs 3:5-6, two of the most familiar verses in the Bible. I want to just briefly unpack them for you. Proverbs 3:5-6:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
And do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge Him,

And He will make your paths straight.

Solomon here challenges us to make two commitments, and they're very similar to what we saw in Psalm 1. You can just see this thread recurring. First of all, he challenges us to accept God's Word as our final authority. Verse 5, he says, "Trust in the Lord." The Hebrew word translated "trust" here means to lean with your whole body on something in order to rest on it. It's leaning, putting your full weight on something so that it's supporting you. That's this word. It means here to lean completely on Yahweh. For your full support, you rely on Him.

Now notice the contrast in the second half of the verse: "And do not lean on your own understanding." The Hebrew word for "lean" here also has the same idea, the idea of supporting oneself on something. So the words trust and lean are different Hebrew words, but they're essentially synonymous. They're identical, almost entirely. The contrast between the first half of the verse and the second half of the verse is what we lean or rely on. Solomon says, lean on the Lord, and don't lean on your own understanding. Put your weight on the Lord, and don't put your weight on your own understanding. The Hebrew word for "understanding" means your own insight, your own discernment. So we must rest our complete confidence on Yahweh, and never lean for support on our own insight, our own ability to discern. Now think about what that implies. If none of us is to lean on our understanding, then we're not to lean on any human understanding. Right? If not a single one of us is, then you're not to lean on yours, and you're not to lean on mine, and vice versa. Don't rely or lean, he's saying, on your own mind.

Boy, so many people rely or lean on their own insight, their own mind. Proverbs 28:26 says, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." If you're your own authority, if you're always relying on your own insight, your own discernment, then you have a fool for a counselor. Don't lean or rely on the collective mindset of the age. Romans 12:2: don't be conformed to the mindset of the age in which we live. We'll look at that again in just a moment. Don't lean or rely on the experts of our times. I love Jeremiah 8:9. Talking about the experts of ancient Israel, the wise men, listen

to this: “The wise men are put to shame, they are dismayed and caught.” Now listen to this description of the experts: “Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what kind of wisdom do they have?” You see, if an expert has rejected the fear of the Lord, what kind of wisdom do they have?

Solomon says, instead of leaning for support on human reason, including your own, we must lean on God's understanding. To trust in Yahweh is to rely on His discernment, on His understanding and, of course, (as many people understand this text) that includes leaning on Him in the providence of the details of your life. You trust what He's doing in your life. But especially here the implication is rely on His revelation, trust in the Lord in that sense and not your own understanding. Proverbs 22:19 says, “So that your trust may be in the Lord, I have taught you [these words] today.” Trusting in the Lord and trusting in His words are simply two expressions for the same reality.

Verse 5 says, “Trust in [Yahweh] with all your heart.” It needs to be wholehearted, exclusive. We can't lean on our own understanding in any area. We must trust God's Word on everything. How are you going to decide what's ethically right? How are you going to determine what you should think about the moral questions of our times? Things like abortion, homosexuality, gender, the nature of marriage, racial issues. Solomon pleads with us to accept God's Word as our final authority in all things.

But he also urges us to make a second commitment, and that is to obey God's Word as our practical authority. Verse 6, “In all your ways acknowledge Him.” Literally, the Hebrew says, “In all your ways know Him.” What does that mean? It means that you are to acknowledge His presence, His right to rule, His right to speak into your life. In every detail of our lives, in all of our predictable patterns of behavior we are to acknowledge God's right to rule, His lordship, His right to tell you what to think. It's not enough to say that we trust divine revelation over human reason. I suspect if I ask that question, every hand here, most every hand would go up. That's

not enough. We must acknowledge His right to rule, His lordship, His right to tell us what to think about everything.

Solomon ends with this amazing promise: “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight.” If you'll make God's Word your final authority and the practical authority in the details of your life, God's going to cause you to walk on a morally and spiritually straight path. In other words—let me summarize it this way: God will ensure that you live a life that is godly and wise, that pleases him, if you will walk that life in accordance with His Word. You see, folks, it comes down to this. You're going to have to decide. You already have decided (And I hope if you made the wrong decision, you'll decide again today.) what's going to be your final authority, and there are only two choices. There's door number one and door number two. You don't get door number three. OK? There are only two choices. You will either put your confidence, your authority will either be your own understanding and that of other flawed human beings, or it will be God's perfect wisdom revealed in His Word. That's it.

Quickly, one other passage. Romans chapter 12. I'm not going to spend a lot of time here, because we just walked through this a couple of years ago. Romans 12, Paul gets to the application of the gospel He's taught. He says in light of the Gospel I've explained to you, let me tell you how you ought to live. “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God.” And he says you need to offer your body as a sacrifice. “Present your [body as] a living... holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.”

And then in verse 2, you need to offer the sacrifice of your mind. Not just your body, verse 1, but your mind. “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” The sacrifice we owe God in response to His salvation is not only our bodies but our minds. You say, well, how do I sacrifice my mind to God? Well, first of all, we must reject the thinking of our age. Verse 2, “Do not be conformed to this world.” Paul uses that same word

*aion*, that word for the mindset of the age, the zeitgeist. He says don't allow yourself to be pushed into the mold of how your age thinks. Your age thinks about everything. It has a view on everything. And it's out there, and it's screaming at you constantly. And Paul says if you're going to sacrifice your mind to Jesus Christ, in light of the gospel you've enjoyed, then don't let the mindset of your age shape you and your thinking. Don't allow your thinking to be conformed to the spirit of the age, the prevailing thoughts, philosophies and opinions of your time

And we must embrace the will of God. Verse 2 goes on to say, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The Greek word for “transformed” is the word from which we get our word *metamorphosis*. God's plan is for you to experience a radical change in your thinking. The present tense here means this transformation doesn't happen in a moment, but it's an ongoing process: be being transformed. It's also passive. It means that you don't change yourself. You don't transform yourself, but you need to cooperate with the One who does, the Holy Spirit. This radical, gradual transformation happens because of what occurs in our minds. Verse 2 says, “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” What means does the Spirit use to accomplish this? The Word of God. John 17:17, Jesus says, “Sanctify them [by means of] the truth; Your word is truth.” So allow the Spirit to transform you by renewing your mind with the Word of God. That's what he's commanding. Embrace the will of God.

What's the result? Verse 2 says, “So that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” The idea of that expression is when the Spirit renews our minds with the Word of God, we discover by experience the value of God's will found in God's Word. We're like David in Psalm 19 going (sic) it's better than all the gold I could accumulate in this life. Folks, that's the biblical correction to how our world approaches the Scripture.

There's a fourth and final insight I just want you to consider briefly with me. And that's the practical ramifications. Why does it matter? Why am I talking to believers about this? I mean, after all, as believers we're never going to seek to silence the Scripture—not if you're a true



Christian. The problem is it can happen subtly and unintentionally. How? Because you are listening too much and you are putting too much confidence in authorities other than the Scripture. So let me just remind you, here are the ramifications.

Number one. Remember, unbelievers are not a reliable source of authority for a single moral issue. Their viewpoints, as we saw, cannot be trusted. They have an inherited predisposition against the truth. They have a darkened mind. They are satanically deceived. They suppress the truth themselves in order to accommodate their own sin. Don't you dare go out on the internet or go to your favorite source, whatever it is, and listen to the worldviews of unbelievers. They can't be trusted. They're God's enemies. Their minds are skewed and darkened, not just slightly dimmed, but pitch black.

If you're here this morning and you're not a follower of Jesus Christ, if you have not been born again, which, in biblical terms, means radically changed by God's Spirit, made a new creation in Christ (This isn't me talking to you now; this is what you've just seen from the Bible.), your moral discernment is just as tragically flawed. God says you're not an independent thinker. Instead, like all of us were by nature, you are blinded by your sin and by Satan. You are in lockstep with the world system that Satan created. You are enslaved to the zeitgeist of your times, the mindset of our age. Your mind is darkened. You are unable to arrive at the truth about anything. You can't even understand God's Word on your own. So what do you do? Your only hope is to turn in repentance to Jesus Christ. Listen to His statement about Himself. John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way." Jesus said I'm the only way to God. He said, "I am... the truth." Jesus is the only truth and source of truth about everything. And he said, "I am... the life." He is the only source of eternal life. Your only hope is to turn from your sin, acknowledge that sin, seek His forgiveness and follow Him. And I plead with you to do that today.

A second ramification we must remember is that believers must never start with any source of authority other than Scripture. Not the leading intellectuals of our age, not the trending

perspectives online, not even the people around you. Certainly not your own thinking and your own conclusions. Listen, if you start anywhere but the Word of God, you'll get it wrong. Can I just plead with you today? When it comes to every moral issue of any kind, anything outside of things like the color socks you wear today, don't start with your own mind. Don't start with a consensus of the online culture. Don't start with some human expert or experts. Set all of those aside, intentionally, and start with the Scripture. What does that look like? It means when one of these issues comes up, you don't start spinning in your own mind, saying, "What do I think about that, how should I think about that, what's going to be my position?" You don't go online and look at your favorite sources and parrot their ideas in thinking. You come to the Lord. If you're a Christian you come to the Lord. And you come like the children's catechism, and you say,

Lord, I am ignorant and in need of a teacher. I'm coming to Your Word. Help me to understand Your thinking. The Scripture says in this Book, You have the mind of Christ. Lord, give me the mind of Christ about this issue. Don't let me be consumed with my own opinions or the opinions of the age in which I live. Bring me back to Your truthful perspective about this issue.

You see, what I'm calling you to do today, it seems so simple, and yet it is so profoundly foundational to our Christian life and experience. You need, today, to determine that God's Word will be your final authority on everything and it will be your practical authority in how you live out the details of your life. That's how the righteous live. Let's pray together.

Father, forgive us. Forgive us for having your Eternal Word and for looking to every other authority, including ourselves, for how we will think and the perspectives we will hold on the issues of our times. Lord, forgive us and help us to commit, from this day forward, to always come to You in a spirit of humility on every one of these issues, and not give lip service to Your Word but be diligent students. Don't let us be like the culture that reinterprets the Scripture to suit our views. But Lord, help us to come honestly with integrity to Your Word, starting with

You rather than with ourselves or with other flawed human beings. Lord, may we be those  
You've saved by grace, and having saved us by grace, we bow to Your lordship in everything,  
including how we think. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.