

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

October 22, 2017

Consider This

Psalm 119:16

Prayer: *Father, I just thank you for your grace, I thank you for your goodness, I thank you for the everlasting arms that every one of us can lean on. And Lord, we need those arms. This is a hostile world, hostile to the gospel, that is. And Father, we just pray this morning as we are opening up your book, looking into it and again asking for your Holy Spirit's presence, we pray that you would guide us, that you would give us the ability to hear and respond and understand more of your word so that we can respond to this world. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we have been looking at this idea of consideration. Not the kind where you're thinking about others more than yourself but the kind of consideration that the Psalmist is speaking of when he says in *Psalm 119:15: I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.* To consider God is to take the time and the effort it requires to look beneath the surface. It's to reject the simple sophistry that often passes for wisdom when it comes to the God of the Bible. One thing we know from scripture, you can use it to

make any kind of argument you want, from insisting that God is a God of love to its opposite claim that the God of the Bible is in fact a monster who needs to be rejected.

Last week we looked at Asaph the Psalmist and we looked at how he considered God's ways. At first he was overwhelmed with what seemed to be a grossly unequal distribution of God's favor. I mean as he saw it, everything was random, it was subject to chance. Good guys oftentimes got bad stuff, bad guys oftentimes got good stuff and he grew immensely agitated at seeing his faithless, wicked neighbors prospering while he and all the other ones who seemed to love God with all of their heart struggled mightily. And so we worked our way through Psalm 73, and as we did so, we saw Asaph again to grasp the fact who were living these fat and sleek lives while mocking their God were actually far more cursed than blessed. We spoke about Harvey Weinstein. And I made the point that Harvey Weinstein is probably not realizing that he was more blessed of God last week than he's ever been in his entire life. God stripped away from him all the pretenses and forced him to look exactly at who he is. My guess is he doesn't consider that a blessing at all, he considers it a curse. Well when Asaph considered God, when he considered his ways and the more he understood God's ways, the more he understood how perfectly upside down his reactions to God were. See, he thought the fat and the

sleek were being blessed by God and it upset him. And he quickly came to see that instead of being blessed by God they were actually being cursed by the devil and set up for the slaughter. And he realized his understanding of blessing and cursing was perfectly backwards. And now we say, okay, how is it that Asaph was able to do that? Well, he was only able to do that by considering his God, God and his kingdom. Only by thoroughly thinking through what his eyes saw and his ears heard with an understanding that only comes when we get into the sanctuary of God could he come up with an alternative way of seeing life as it genuinely unfolds. You see, the more Asaph considered God's ways, that is according to him the more he went into the sanctuary of God, the more Asaph understood God's ways and the more he saw himself as blessed and the mockers as cursed.

Well this morning I would like to do a case study of sorts on what not to do in considering our God. And I would like to look at Richard Dawkins. Most of you know who Richard Dawkins is. He's a well-known atheist author. He's obviously read the Old Testament and he delivers a critique of God that he finds there, and this is his critique of the God of the Old Testament. He says: "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: Jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control freak; a vindictive, blood thirsty ethnic cleanser; a

misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully." Okay. That's Richard from his book *The God Delusion* and as they say, me thinks thou does protest too much. Well, this is a bit of that, I think but I want to at least address these adjectives that Mr. Dawkins likes to throw around and suggest that he arrives at them by spectacularly failing on any level to seriously consider the God that he's criticizing. So I want to take Dawkins' critique and I want to just start looking at it word by word, statement by statement.

I want to start by addressing the question of jealousy. He says, God is jealous and proud. Well, is God jealous and proud? Well again, what does the book say? If you go to *Joshua 24:19* it says: *Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins."* *Deuteronomy 4* says: *For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.* So I guess our answer to Mr. Dawkins' first charge is yes, guilty. And furthermore God has no problem readily admitting that he is a jealous God. But right off the bat we have to engage, as I said, in this art of consideration. See, jealousy in human beings is unquestionably wrong. I mean it's being envious of something that someone else has, And you could argue that it falls under the rubric of one of

the ten commandments: Thou shalt not covet. To be jealous, according to one dictionary definition, is to be "feeling or showing envy of someone or their achievements and advantages." Well, God certainly can't be accused of that definition of jealousy if in fact he claims in the very same book to be the author of everyone's achievements and advantages. And this is a claim that he makes. He says this in *James 1:17*, he says: *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.* See, in point of fact, according to the very same book that Mr. Dawkins is referencing, the Bible, God not only owns me, but he owns you and everything else in all of creation. Now if you're a naturalist evolutionist, you believe that everything just spontaneously arose by random chance in a vast amount of time. And given that set of circumstances, well then nobody owes anything to anybody. And certainly nobody inherently and creatively owns anything. I mean we simply acquire what we have by hook or by crook. But in the same book God states the exact opposite. He says in *Psalms 24*: *The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.* Now somebody might say well, you can't use the Bible to prove your positions about God. But in this case I can because I am directly answering Mr. Dawkins who's basing his critique of God on what he reads in the very same book, the Bible. So God is a jealous God. But there is, however,

another dictionary definition of the word "jealousy" that fits God far better. It's "fiercely protective or vigilant of one's rights or possessions." Now on that count I would say God certainly is guilty as charged but that God's jealousy is altogether different from ours. I mean, Dawkins refers to God as jealous and proud. God is jealous but it's due to the fact that he claims primary ownership over that which he is jealous of. And yes, he fits that definition quite well: fiercely protective or vigilant of one's rights or possessions. Again, this goes back to considering God, thinking beneath the surface. And my question about God's jealousy would be is this a good thing or a bad thing? I mean after all, we've come to expect that our government would be "fiercely protective and vigilant" about areas that involve our own personal health and safety. We've organized part of our government to take that role very seriously when it comes to our physical health, I mean, we have the EPA which is fiercely protective of the air that we breathe, we have an FDA that is at least on paper fiercely protective of the food that we eat and the drugs that we take, and certainly for the most part we view that kind of jealousy as a good thing. God claims that he is fiercely protective, i.e. jealous, of our spiritual health. And somehow that's verboten. I mean he makes that claim based on his ownership of all things including you and me.

Now I've never owned a brand new car, I always buy used cars but usually there's an owner's manual in the glove or in some part in the car and usually the owner's manual has expectations that the manufacturer has of what my responsibility is for maintaining the product that I just bought. You could argue that the manufacturer's protective of the product he's made and that he's determined that the owners of this product not do something to ruin it. You know, usually there's a warning, there's a warning about things that you can and can't do if you purchase something significant like a computer or a car, says if you do these things, you will avoid your warranty. Well, that's the manufacturer jealously guarding what he's manufactured, and he's warning us that if you don't do what is best for this machine or product, then they won't honor fixing it if it breaks. Well, you know, God has the very same manufacturer's claim on the creatures that he has created, namely us. And as the Creator Manufacturer, he has far greater rights to demand that we treat him and his creation with utmost respect. Well, given that, Mr. Dawkins says this same God is "a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak." I find it remarkable that even though, according to the book, God owns us as creatures, or that he certainly appears to give us the freedom to eat, drink, smoke, and abuse our bodies until they eventually break down and even then he certainly frequently allows those bodies to bounce back when they're eventually taken care of.

Mr. Dawkins next goes on to suggest a far more serious charge, one that seems to have a far better grounding in what we read in the old testament. His charge is this: That the God of the Bible is "a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser." Now I'm reading the same book that he is, and I know he's drawing some pretty sweeping conclusion about God's judgment on people and there's no question, there are some things that we read in the Old Testament that will give you and me pause, not the least of which is this passage in *1 Samuel 15*, which says: *Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."* Well that's arguably the worse case that Mr. Dawkins can argue from. And here is where considering God becomes so incredibly important. You know, we do that by entering into God's sanctuary just like Asaph did but in our case, the sanctuary is the word of God and there you're going to find there's far more in that passage than simply meets the eye. Yes, God did wipe out the Amalekites but it was not simply a case of ethnic cleansing. You see, the Amalekites were not simply a garden variety enemy. They were an existential threat to the nation of Israel. They were profoundly wicked on a level that we have not encountered in decades. Pastor Jeff Thomas in an article about the

Amalekites says this: "The Amorites --" and we'll get to that in a minute -- "The Amorites who dominated that land practiced such abominations as the slaughter of virgins and first born children in sacrifice to appease their gods. They were a people who callously tortured and destroyed with long lingering deaths both men and women whom they considered their enemies. They were a nation whose morals and scruples were paper thin. They lived like that for centuries and we have proof of that from archaeology. They were a blot on human history. They were a stench in the nostrils of God, and yet we are told that he (God) did nothing about this for a long time."

Now, we'll get back to that question of God doing nothing in due time but for now I want to paint a picture of what these people were actually like. In fact, we didn't really have a good point of reference for these people in contemporary thinking until the arrival of ISIS. I mean ISIS has carved out a reputation for themselves as being unusually brutal and cruel in the way they treated the people that they conquered, whether it's drowning people in cages, setting them on fire or beheading them on videos. They want you to know that there is no extent, no bottom to their depravity when it comes to war. Well so it was with the Amalekites. They, too, developed a reputation for brutality and cruelty far beyond anything their neighbors could think of.

According to 1 Samuel, they had a penchant for killing children. And just like ISIS targets in particular the "worshippers of the cross," so the Amalekites targeted the Jews. And again just like ISIS does, these people also had many different names. Some folks say "ISIS," some folks say "ISIL," some folks say "DAESH," they all represent the same thing. And so is the case with the Amorites, the Amalekites and the Canaanites, they were all of the same ilk, they were all the mountain people. It was the Amalekites who were the very first nation to attack Israel though. And Israel was still fleeing Egypt and it asked for safe passage saying they were not going to touch any of the resources of the country they were passing through. This is what they said in *Numbers 20:17*. They said: *Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.* Well, the Amalekites wouldn't have it, and they attacked them viciously and they attacked them on their rear flank where the women and the children were. And so God responded in *Exodus 17:14*, it says: *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." For he said, "Because the LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.* There's a

reason why God said that about the Amalekites.

You know, time and again you've heard me point out the fact that there's a war going on and there's a war going on right here and right now between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. I've mentioned this many, many times, it's a war that started way up in heaven and it ended up with Satan being cast down to earth. *Revelation 12:7* says it. Says: *Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world -- he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.* There's a war going on and it has not stopped since it started in the Garden of Eden, and God had chosen Israel as the nation that is going to reveal himself through to put an end to that war not because there is anything special about the nation of Israel because simply because God chooses whom he chooses. But you know it makes perfect sense to understand that the enemy would choose a particular nation himself and that he would use that nation to attack God's choice, and that appears to be what happened with the Amalekites. Even though Israel never attacked them, they repeatedly attacked Israel.

As John McAllister points out in his article entitled "*The Amalekite Genocide*" listen to this, it says: "In Numbers 14:45, they attack Israel again while they are still in the desert. In Judges 3:13, they join in with the Moabites in attacking Israel. In Judges 6:3, they invade Israel 'whenever the Israelites planted their crops', and together with the Midianites 'devour the produce of the land and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey'. Later in Judges 6 and 7 they invade again and are fought off by Gideon. The Amalekites show that generation after generation, they are at war with Israel and with God." God had chosen Israel as the nation he would reveal himself through; the Amalekites had chosen to target that nation for annihilation. It was a fatal mistake. Again God says: *Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."* I understand this statement is shocking in its brutality, but I understand that God's judgment on the Amalekites was not some random swat that God decided to take at them. It was a judgment that took generations to unfold. In fact God said this to Abram about how the Jews would suffer at the hand of God's enemies at the very beginning of the conflicts. He said this in *Genesis 15*. He said: *Then he said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendents will be strangers in a land that is*

not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." Now once again we need to pause here and we need to do some work, we need to consider our God because what God is saying here is nothing less than astounding. God tells Moses that the judgment of the Amorites is not yet complete. And when God said that, there were in fact hundreds of years remaining before that judgment would actually take place. As Jeff Thomas puts it, "They were a stench in the nostrils of God, and yet we are told he did nothing about this for a long time." Well, this is one of those situations that God is in that falls into the category of "heads I win, tails you lose" when it comes to Mr. Dawkins. I mean, if God waits to give the Amorites time to repent, he's accused of doing nothing. If God reacts and he responds to their evil, he's guilty of lashing out. Well the fact is if you read the book, that is the Bible, if you consider God, you understand the statement that he makes in *Romans 2* where he says this, he says: *Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on*

the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works. You see, it's so easy to take God's lack of response as an indication that God's either not there or he's not caring or he's not willing to respond to an obvious evil. But God on the other hand is telling us that he has only two responses to evil. We have only two responses to evil. Repentance, which is turning away from evil and turning toward Christ, or judgment. And he goes on to say that that judgment will include every idle word we have ever spoken. I mean even Christ refers to the idea of storing up wrath in an oblique reference he makes as he's castigating the Pharisees. This is Matthew 23:29. Jesus says: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt." See, Jesus appears to be referring to a judgment that slowly fills up with accumulated guilt with a judgment that misses nothing. And again, Romans 2:5 says: Because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. You see, much as our culture utterly rejects the idea of judgment and of stored up

wrath, it doesn't change the facts that God is laying out here. And he's telling us there are only two people in the universe who are capable of dealing with your sin. One of them is God himself, the Lord Jesus Christ who came to this earth, lived a perfect life and then died on a cross in order to pay the price of your sin. The only other one who is capable of paying that price is yourself, and that takes forever. God is insisting that there's going to come a time when all bills, moral and otherwise, will become present and due. You will either have stored up wrath for your entire life for that day or you will have discharged that wrath on the only other person willing to take it and that's God himself. With regard to the Amorites or the Amalekites or the Canaanites, God used them as an object lesson to demonstrate what happens when day by day, week by week, month by month, that stored up wrath builds up until it finally reaches its bursting point, and that's precisely what's happening when God calls for the destruction of the Amalekites. And when it actually takes place, it may have the appearance of being swift, it may have the appearance of being brutal, but it is actually taking centuries of profound wickedness by these people before they have finally filled up the wrath of God's judgment.

And furthermore as we consider even further what took place here, we find out that God is careful not to take the good by the bad.

We find out that there were two different groups that co-mingled at this time. The Amalekites commingled with the Kenites. And they represented two very different approaches to Israel. You see, when Israel first left Egypt, the Amalekites tried to destroy them, the Kenites actually tried to help. And just prior to exercising his judgment on the Amalekites, God sends this message to them in *1 Samuel 15*. He says: *Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart; go down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. God separates the good guys from the bad guys and then he utterly destroys the bad guys. And there's no denying the brutality of what these words are. Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel. Now go attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and women, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."*

So now we have to do a lot of hard work in considering here. We have to really think. We have to consider the possibility is it inconceivable to imagine a people group so depraved that even their children are worthy of death? Well, consider the legacy that ISIS has left now that they're in full retreat. This is an article that came from *CBS News*. It says this: Children were uniquely

victimized by ISIS, first as bystanders caught in a brutal war, but more shockingly, as soldiers who were recruited, indoctrinated with a deadly ideology, then trained to kill and fight on the battlefield. As they are freed from ISIS, traumatized and untreated, they're now melting back into society -- still heavily influenced by their experience. Sherri Talabany is one of the loudest voices calling for help. Talabany is president and founder of SEED, an NGO helping victims of ISIS. She fears that many recent arrivals desperately need help, or risk posing a danger not only to themselves and their families, but to the country and the world. She observes, "The boys that were in DAESH training camp were taught nothing but violence against their own families. Hatred and violence. They've been involved in murder, they've been involved in torture." Sherri says, "The terrible things about the experience is, nobody knows what is going to happen next." Thousands of teens, even kids as young as six years old that were caught in the battlefield, are held in jails across Iraq -- suspected of being ISIS fighters. Many former child soldiers have slipped back into their homes undetected. Perhaps the most insidious of all ISIS war tactics was implanting a dangerous mentality into ISIS cubs, to help endure their ideology lives on for generations -- effectively planting time bombs throughout the region and the world." Is it not conceivable that God would exercise a judgment that only he is allowed to exercise on a people

group so thoroughly depraved that after five centuries of repeated warning that their time has finally run out and that the cup of God's judgment for them is now. I mean it's certainly not pleasant and it certainly offends our 21st century sensibilities but when I consider who God is and what his rights are, it puts things in an entirely different light.

And finally Mr. Dawkins has a few choice adjectives to offer up about this God. According to Dawkins he is: A misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully. Okay. Let's take a look at this list. Okay. The first three adjectives in this statement suggests that God hates women, gays, and blacks. In the interests of time the only answer that I can give now is to compare the treatment of women, gays, and blacks in every other country that is not based on Judeo-Christian values to those countries who have historically embraced the gospel. They're vastly different. And also to insist that God makes his position on racism and misogyny crystally clear in *Galatians 3:26*, he says: *For in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* And furthermore if homophobia is stating

that homosexuality is sinful, then God again, he's guilty as charged. In *1 Corinthians 6* he says: *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. But God doesn't stop there. He goes on in verse 11 to say: And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. And what God is saying is that all sin and any sin can be washed away by Christ, not by pretending that we can rewrite scripture.*

Dawkins' final comments are a lot harder to figure. He says: The God of the Bible is infanticidal, genocidal and filicidal. Genocidal refers to killing whole people groups like the Amalekites. We've been looking at that at length. The other two, infanticidal and filicidal, make no sense at all. They refer to killing infants, they refer to parents killing their children. And they make no sense at all because Mr. Dawkins is well known as being ardently pro-choice. That's the only community that I'm aware of that actively seeks to legalize the ability of parents to kill their children, that wants to legalize the taking of infant life up to the point of birth. Mr. Dawkins, you're not going to

find any support for that in the Bible. Let me just take the last six adjectives in order. He says pestilential. That means causing disease and again, God certainly has sent pestilence and plague, I mean, he sent ten plagues to Egypt but they were never sent capriciously or malevolently, they always, always had a point, and the point was to force Egypt to release the Jews. He goes on to say megalomaniacal. Well, that means having this massive sick ego, and sadomasochistic which means deriving sexual pleasure out of inflicting or receiving pain. Again, here's where it doesn't make any sense. None of these human adjectives make any sense when they're applied to God, because God the Father didn't become human. I mean It was God the Son who became human and Dawkins has respect for Jesus. He doesn't feel at all that way about Jesus.

And finally Dawkins refers to the God of the Bible as a -- quote -- "capriciously malevolent bully." This is a God who takes advantage of his strength in a particularly evil way that's so over the top that it really has no rhyme or reason. I think we can look at this and we can get, it's pretty clear that Mr. Dawkins is an angry person and that he's got lots and lots of issues with the God of the Bible. But I want to suggest to you a reason why, and it goes back to this battle that started in heaven and is continuing to this very day. You see, the god of this world, that is the devil himself, is locked in a conflict and we're right in the middle of

it. The kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness have been at war since the Garden of Eden and most of the people who are at the center of this war don't have a clue. They have no idea. I've said it many times, you are either a child of God or you are a child of God's wrath, and those who are children of God's wrath have a gut level hatred for the things of God that they don't even realize. Jesus himself acknowledged that when he spoke to the disciples after they first started experiencing push back for sharing the good news. He told them in *John 15*: *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."*

Now the natural hatred the world has for the gospel sometimes takes some very strange twists and turns. For one, it has recently turned Mr. Dawkins into a supporter of Christianity, albeit a reluctant supporter but a supporter nonetheless. Let me explain how that turnaround happened. Dawkins' critique of Christianity has been out there for years and nobody ever said a word about it but then Mr. Dawkins did the unthinkable. He began to criticize Islam as well. And as word of his critique of Islam got out, he began to be dis-invited from all the various functions that he was the darling of for his hate speech. *Lifesite News* stated this:

"Dawkins was scheduled to discuss his newest book, when the radio station received complaints that Dawkins had insulted Islam, staff emailed the following letter to ticket buyers: 'We regret to inform you that KPFA has canceled our event with Richard Dawkins. We had booked this event based entirely on his excellent new book on science, when we didn't know he had offended and hurt -- in his tweets and other comments on Islam -- so many people. KPFA does not endorse hurtful speech. While KPFA emphatically supports serious free speech, we do not support abusive speech. We apologize for not having had broader knowledge of Dawkins' views much earlier. We also apologize to all those inconvenienced by this cancellation.' Guess who was blown away by that statement? Richard Dawkins. And listen to what he said. He said: "I am known as a frequent critic of Christianity and have never been deplatformed for that. Why do you give Islam a free pass? Why is it fine to criticize Christianity but not Islam?" And Thomas Williams writing in *Breitbart* said this: "In the face of growing Islamic terror, Dawkins has begrudgingly admitted that Christianity may actually be society's best defense against aberrant forms of religion that threaten the world. 'There are no Christians, as far as I know, blowing up buildings,' Dawkins said in a text that is making its way around social media. 'I am not aware of any Christian suicide bombers. I am not aware of any major Christian denomination that believes the penalty for apostasy is death.'

Despite his animosity toward Christianity, Dawkins has acknowledged that the teachings of Jesus Christ do not lead to a world of terror, whereas followers of radical Islam perpetrate the very atrocities that he laments. Faced with this realization, Dawkins has wondered aloud whether Christianity might indeed offer an antidote to protect western civilization against jihad. 'I have mixed feelings about the decline of Christianity, insofar as Christianity might be a bulwark against something worse,' he said."

Mr. Dawkins, can I tell you why people react to the gospel in ways vastly different than they react to any other religion? Can I again use Jesus' words here: *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."* See, there's something that needs to be pointed out in Dawkins' critique of Christianity, it is a complete failure to do what the Psalmist did. Again *Psalm 119: I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.* Dawkins looks only at the surface. And he avoids altogether any consideration of God that tries to understand the context, the history, or even the reasons why God does what he does. I mean if Mr. Dawkins had chosen to look deeper even to the issue of the slaughter of the Amalekites, I mean, if he had asked himself why it is that the present day Amalekite, that is ISIS

itself, goes primarily after those who follow Jesus, he might have gained some understanding. Make no mistake about it, ISIS targets the cross. I have this -- this letter on my notebook and it's right there in the lobby, the letter is the Arabic letter for "N" which stands for "Nazarene" because Jesus was the Nazarene and what ISIS did was they went into a town, they would talk to the town fathers, find out who the Nazarenes were, that is who the Christians were, and they would spray paint that letter on the door, and those are the ones who would be singled out for murder, rape and torture. I would not be the slightest bit surprised if latter day historians find some kind of connection between the founders of ISIS and the Amalekites because they both have nothing but hatred and enmity for God and his plan, which makes it even more astounding when you look at the role that Jesus took on when he ransomed and rescued us at the cross.

John McAllister goes on to say this, he says: "As the Bible goes on, it becomes clear that the enmity to God and his plans which was so clear in the Amalekites is found in each individual person. We have all try to resist God's plan, to reject our part in it and oppose Jesus' Lordship. And the Bible calls that sin." But then McAllister points to something that would never, never even begin to enter to Mr. Dawkins' consciousness. It has to do with who Jesus Christ is and what he accomplished on the cross. You see, as

brutal and as swift as the judgment of God on the Amalekites appeared, it actually had been building up volcano-like for centuries and it only broke out when the cup of God's wrath was completely full. Well, Mr. Dawkins doesn't understand the wrath of God and he fails to see the heart of the gospel in the wrath of God breaking out at the cross. I don't even know if he's capable of it because God says in *2 Corinthians*: *The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* Allow me to illustrate the light of the gospel that is the glory of Christ, because I think Dawkins just can't see it. And here's the point. Jesus Christ became an Amalekite on the cross. Jesus Christ became ISIS. He became the Amalekites, the Canaanites and the Amorites and every other people group who stood in opposition to God when he went to the cross to represent us in our folly and sin. *2 Corinthians 5* says: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* When God looked down from heaven at his Son hanging naked and bleeding, he didn't see the noble Jesus who had lived a spotless life offering up his perfection. Instead he saw all of our sins objectified, quantified and personified in one completely forsaken person, and for that time Jesus wasn't just Jesus. He was Amalek, he was Hitler, he was Richard Dawkins, he was you, and he was me. And he bore on that cross for my sake the

full brunt of God's wrath. As John McAllister puts it: "Jesus became the personification of all opposition to God. He was made the true Amalek as well as the true Israel. He became the one who had to be killed so that God could bless the whole world. And he did that for us, for those who reject him and oppose him, so that we can know what it means to be part of God's true people."

Now I feel, I mean I really mean this, I feel for Mr. Dawkins and I pray for him as well. You see, without God's Holy Spirit intervening, he is locked in a blindness that will not see and cannot see the glory of Christ. But Mr. Dawkins is no different than your neighbor or your friend or your relatives or your colleagues at work. None of them can see the glory of Christ without God's Holy Spirit doing a work first in their lives, but that work starts first with us. I mean we are the ones who have been given the privilege of opened eyes and opened ears and unblinded spirits. And along with that privilege we have the responsibility, the task, if you will, of sharing the good news of the God of the Bible, of giving people the benefit of our consideration of our God so that we can speak up when all they have to rely on is the Richard Dawkins of the world. I mean you and I represent the only voice God is going to use to change hearts and minds by the power of his Holy Spirit. We consider a God who left heaven itself to take up flesh and then go -- went to the cross,

taking with him every bit of our filth and evil so that we could stand before God cleansed and perfect in his sight. He became God's enemy so that we could become God's friend. And my prayer is that you and I will not be able to keep that message silent, for this is the God that we worship. Let's pray.

Father God, I pray for Richard Dawkins, I just I pray that he would have the blessing of his eyes opened, of his ears opened, of the ability to actually hear and see what he cannot hear and see at this point. But Lord, Richard Dawkins is one person. We, each of us have friends, neighbors, relatives, associates all around us who are just as lost, just as blind, just as deaf, just as unable to hear the truth of the gospel. We're the ones who get to consider you, Lord. We're the ones who get to look beneath the surface. We're the ones who have been given the task of explaining to others who think that Mr. Dawkins is just explaining truth. Give us the ability and the courage to seek to engage and to engage those as they seek the truth. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.