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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

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**TGC 2013**

**Selected Scriptures**

**Prayer:** *Father, I do want to thank you for prayer, I want to thank you for the incredible privilege and blessing that we have, I thank you for Fred's exhortation this morning, Lord, and I just pray that you would use it to pierce our hearts, that you would use it to continue to move us along in the direction that we need to be moving as a church. I thank you that we can turn to you for grace, for peace, for power, and for wisdom and that we have your Holy Spirit to guide us, to come alongside us. As I give this report of the conference, I pray that your spirit would open our eyes, our hearts, our minds, and that you would again enable us to make these words of permanent value, and we pray this in Jesus' name.*

Well, as I said, this conference this year was a little bit different than the usual conference. Normally the conferences are arranged around a particular topic. We've been to the Unadulterated gospel, we've been to the Underestimated Gospel, this conference was organized around Steve said, the Mission of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. And so we heard from eight different men who

took one book of the Bible and kind of put it under a looking glass, and I was thinking about it and actually it's not just like under a looking glass, if you have an iPad or an iPhone, you know how you touch the image and it kind of pops up and you use your fingers and you expand it vertically and horizontally, and it just -- they were taking this one book out of the Bible and expanding it vertically and horizontally, and I realized you could continue to do that infinitely and you'd still never get to the bottom of it, because the word of God is just that supernatural.

John Piper started off speaking about the certainty that we have in the power, might and deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he pointed out that the book of Luke was written for that main purpose. Luke 1:4 says: *That you may have certainty concerning the things that you have been taught.*

He was followed by a man by the name of Colin Smith who brought us to an incident that takes place in the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry when he's back in his hometown and he's with his family and his friends and he's making the claim that he is the fulfillment of God's promise in Isaiah. Jesus enters the temple and he opens up the scroll and he reads to the congregation. This is in Luke 4:18. He says this: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news for the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* Now, the year of the Lord's favor, the Jubilee year, was based on the land going back to its original owners every 50 years. God gave the nation of Israel a means of eliminating poverty forever, and he did that by having the land revert back to its original owners. Every 50th year all debts would be canceled, all accounts would be settled, and there would be a clean slate. Well, what Colin Smith pointed out and I did not realize is that the Jubilee never happened. It was always theory but never practice, and that's because the people who would have been expected to turn over the property, the people who would be returning it to the original owners were those who had been made obviously wealthy and powerful by that very land. They're the ones that held the cards and they were really not interested in giving up that power and wealth. So the Jubilee remained only a promise. It remained only a promise until Jesus opened up that scroll that day and declared that he was the real Jubilee, that he was the one that in fact the Jubilee was pointing to, and that Jesus was about to pay the debt that his countrymen had refused to even acknowledge. You see, they knew all too well that to forgive debts means to absorb that debt. To absorb that debt is to make it your own. That was too high a price for them to be willing to pay. And so here's Jesus in the synagogue, he's pointing out that he's the

one who would absorb all of these debts and allow the slate to be wiped clean by paying the sin debt that everyone of us owed. Jesus was declaring that God's grace was about to be poured out not just on his people but on all peoples, Jew and Gentile, and that's where the trouble started.

Jesus tells his hometown crowd that God's grace extends not just to Jews but to people that they considered to be idol worshipers and political enemies. In Luke 4:23, it says this: *And he said to them -- this is Jesus -- And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well."* And he said, *"Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow."* Sidon? Sidon was a land of idolatry. Sidon was the land that Jezebel came from. Jesus is telling them that Elijah was sent not to the Jews but to them in Sidon. And he goes on to say in verse 27: *"And there were many lepers in Israel at the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."* Again, Naaman, Naaman was a member of the opposition. He was a general in the

Army that oppressed Israel. And he's the one that gets the healing? So the crowd is listening to Jesus, and the result is almost instantaneous. Verse 28 says this: *When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of a hill on which the town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.* See, they were incensed, they were absolutely outraged that God's grace would be extended to someone other than their own nation.

Colin Smith pointed out that grace will produce either anger or worship. It will produce either a sense of entitlement among those who receive it poorly or worship among those who receive it rightly. You see, grace means that God is not restricted but is free to give mercy to whomever he chooses to give mercy to. He is free to choose to act as he wishes, not as we want him to. So we look at this crowd and we marvel at their rage. How dare they demand what is not their right to demand in the first place? How dare they demand of God that which he is not obligated to give? But you see, that sense of entitlement is in every single one of us. We inherited that from Adam. How many times have you heard the phrase "grace accepted, yields grace expected." Now, we normally -- and I'm sure you've heard this before -- we normally get books at the conference. In fact, many of us came with our

duffel bags and suitcases lightly packed so that we could have room for our books. They didn't give us any books. I got two measly books and one of them was a paperback. Now, they never said at any time before that we were going to get books. We just assumed, because after all, they'd given us books every other time before, we just assumed we were going to get books. Did I say we didn't get any books? I suppose if we had found out that they had actually given our books to somebody else, maybe to some pagans who didn't really deserve them, maybe we would have been even more upset than we were. But no, they just -- they just didn't give us any books.

Well, next up was a speaker by the name of Crawford Loritz. He brought us up to chapter 8 to the story of three individuals who received grace from God. Those three were the demoniac of the Gerasenes, the woman with the issue of blood, and Jairus' daughter. And he pointed out that in each case, these folks had absolutely no control over their lives. They had no control over their affliction. And in each case, others had just given up on them because their circumstances were so dire. The demoniac could not even be restrained with chains. The woman with the issue of blood had exhausted every possible medical option and yet she was still ceremonially unclean and untouchable, and Jairus' daughter was clearly very sick and near death. So all three are absolutely

desperate, and they were all miraculously healed by Jesus. The lesson that he shared with us that all three share in common is that faith grows in proportion to our desperation. You see, there simply is no faith apart from struggle. We don't turn to God when things are going swimmingly, and if you truly grasp what God was trying to do through Jesus in these three lives, you'll understand why inadequacy and suffering can truly be our friends. Jesus' design in each of our lives is to speak his life into our circumstance so that we would make him the Lord of our lives. And to do that, we have to realize that like those three, without him, we are dead. The demoniac certainly knew that, so did the woman with the issue of blood and Jairus, whose daughter who Jesus healed.

The focus shifted more towards Jesus himself with D. A. Carson's message on Luke 9. His point was that everything Jesus did from this point on was with a view toward the cross. Jesus knew exactly where he was going, even if everyone around him did not. In Luke 9:18, it says this: *Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" And they answered, "John the Baptist. But others say Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen."* Then he said to them, *"But who do you say that I am?"* And Peter answered, *"The Christ of God."* Well, Dr. Carson points out

that even though Peter is indeed blessed with this supernatural insight that lets him know that Jesus is the Messiah, he still has no idea what kind of Messiah this Jesus is going to be, and he consistently gets it wrong even after Jesus' blunt description in the very next verses. In verse 21, it says this: *And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."* The scripture made no sense at all to Peter, so he just rejected it. And when he rejected that explanation, he was rejecting Jesus himself.

And Dr. Carson describes an incident that takes place where the disciples fail at casting out a demon and he spoke about Jesus' response. His response to their failure points out what a tough time Jesus was having with us, that is with human beings in general, with our faithlessness, with our fecklessness. As he said, Jesus was just plain, he was fed up with us, indicated that he longed to be able to go home. Listen to what he says in this, this is Luke 9:38, it describes the incident. It says: *And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. And I*

*begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Jesus answered, "O, faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here."*

Now, I have to confess, I've read that scripture many, many times, and every time I've read that, I thought Jesus was unusually harsh in his response to the disciples. I mean, at least -- at least they were trying. But one thing Dr. Carson pointed out that I hadn't thought of is that the single greatest thing that stopped the disciples from being able to perceive correctly who Jesus was, was their own persistent notions about their own self-importance. Listen to how the rest of the passage develops that understanding. It goes on to say this in Luke 9:42. This is the description of what happened next. It says: *While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.* Okay. So Jesus heals the boy and immediately he gets back to the issue at hand with his disciples. Listen to what he says next. This is Luke 9:43, says: *And all were astonished at the majesty of God. But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."* You see how singularly Jesus is fixed already on the cross? Now, by this point as early as Luke 9, Jesus has his eyes firmly fixed on

his upcoming battle with sin and death, and the cross is beginning to loom large. And so he's trying to get his disciples to turn from their own selfish ambition to even consider the vision that he sees, that he knows, and it's not going well at all. Verse 45 says this: *But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying. An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.* Dr. Carson pointed out the surest way to miss Jesus the way the disciples missed Jesus is to have the same self-seeking attitudes that they had. *An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.* Now that's amazing. They couldn't see what Jesus was doing in their lives because they were too preoccupied with what they thought Jesus ought to be doing both for them and for their understanding of the kingdom. May I suggest to us all that their problem is not unique to them. It is unique to all of us. You see, Jesus said if you really, really want to live life in the supernatural eternal sense that Jesus is offering us life, you really have to learn first how to die. The disciples were blinded by what and who they wanted Jesus to be. And we too suffer with the exact same affliction when we come to the cross with this lengthy set of expectations for how we think Jesus' hold on our life should go. When we lose sight of Jesus, we lose sight of his mission and how we are part of that mission. And so instead of trusting him with our lives, we get

frustrated because he doesn't appear to be organizing it the way we think he should.

So what is his mission? Well, speaker Kevin DeYoung arguing from Luke 15 said it was simple. "Jesus came to seek and save the lost." Luke 15 gets us into the heart of God with regard to the lost, and it is framed by a series of stories. There's a lost sheep, there's a lost coin, and a lost prodigal son. And in each case the shepherd, the housewife, and the prodigal's father is consumed with seeking and finding that which was lost. Kevin DeYoung divided the people that Jesus ministered to into two camps, as he put it. He said there were the sinners coming and the Pharisees grumbling. Jesus hung out with sinners and tax collectors. And again, this is a place where context matters a great deal, because we hear those phrases and that doesn't mean that much to us. He went on to explain to us exactly how awful tax collectors were, and they were truly awful people. So that we might get a sense of how scandalous it was that Jesus would actually sit down at a table with them, he pictured a similar type of scandal in our day by asking us how we would feel if we saw Jesus smiling and laughing and just chatting it up with a group of men and women as they're leaving a Planned Parenthood clinic. He says picture Jesus saying to these people, "Okay, folks, next week, lunch at my place." And he's saying it to abortionists and their

supporters. They are our widow of Zarephath, they are our Naaman, the Syrian. See, I know that grabs me a lot more than the notion of tax collectors and sinners, and we say, "Surely Jesus would not hang out with abortionists." And I say, "Really? Why wouldn't he?" I mean, Mark 2:17 says: *And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."* And again, I would say ask Abby Johnson. Abby Johnson is a former executive with Planned Parenthood who Jesus sought out and saved. Read her book *Unplanned*. I read the book. The title is *The True Story of a Former Planned Parenthood Leader's Eye-Opening Journey Across the Life Line*. You see, Jesus was a person, was slandered by the charge "friend of sinners and tax collectors." And we were challenged with the question have you and I ever been challenged like that? Have we ever been charged with that crime? He made this point, he said, there is no one who has ever been more inclusive of sinners than Jesus and yet at the same time there was no one more intolerant of sin than Jesus. After all, it was your sin and my sin that put Jesus on the cross. And yet Jesus said in Luke 15: *"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying*

to them, *'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'*" Kevin asked this question, he says, what else is there in all of creation that causes a public ticker tape parade in heaven every time it happens? And he says this in verse 7, this is what Jesus said, *"Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."*

The story of the prodigal son is the story of such joy in heaven. And he pointed out to us that the heart of his father, heart of the father as he's pleading with the elder son, and we know that elder son is enraged, he's enraged that the prodigal has returned to this great celebratory feast. And he pointed out to us how in verse 28 how the elder brother, this perennial insider, becomes the ultimate outsider as he shouts his "nevers" before God. This is what he said in Luke 15:29, he said: *"But he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I've served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!'"* God's responds to him with his "always," Luke 15:31: *"And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found."* And

the amazing thing is that is where the story ends. The story is purposely left open-ended. We never learn whether or not the elder son responded to the love that was waiting for him there from the father, the love that always was. Kevin pointed out that the love that God has is not just for sinners, it's for Pharisees as well, and he pointed out that they are the one group that virtually everyone feels free to act like a Pharisee towards. But God has love even for Pharisees. You see, the story is open-ended because Jesus is purposely leaving the door open. He's leaving it open for the Pharisees. For those ones who were there to trap him, those that were there to trip him up, those who were there to find ways to bring him to the cross, and yet Jesus still leaves the door open for them to come in and experience the Father's love as well.

Dr. Steven Um next tackled the unjust steward in Luke 16. As you probably know, this is a text that has perplexed people for years because it seems to have Jesus commemorating bad behavior. You probably all remember the story, the master's about to fire a steward for poor management -- actually it's more like theft and embezzlement than poor management. The steward goes out and he rewrites a number of his bills that some of his customers have in order to curry favor with them after he gets fired. And the part that people struggle with is this from Luke 16:8. It says: *The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the*

sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. You know, folks have a real hard time imagining Jesus commending anything that was dishonest. But the point is Jesus was not commending the dishonesty; he was commending the shrewdness. You can do the one without the other, you know. Have you ever watched a movie where the bad guy is captured by the good guy and a dialogue ensues between them? You know, my wife sometimes watches a show that does this all the time, it's called CSI. Are you familiar with that show? I'm pretty much banned from being in the room when that show is on because I have this irresistible urge to make uncharitable statements about the star. You see, he's not only the greatest detective in the entire world, he's the coolest guy that has ever walked the planet, with the sunglasses and -- I don't know if you've ever seen it, but he just drives me nuts. But he's very big on dialogue with the bad guys that he captures, and one of the things I've seen him do on a number of occasions after he's made a spectacular arrest that nobody in the entire universe could ever make, he leans in very close to the captured bad guy who's looking very forlorn and he says something like "You were good, you were very, very good." Then the bad guy gets taken away. Well, maybe the bad guy was a great extortionist, maybe he was a heck of a counterfeiter. The point is, he was very good at what he did. And what the detective is doing in that show is selectively saying that there's some

things that some bad guys do well. That's exactly what Jesus was saying. The unjust steward was just a bad guy who did something well, nothing more and nothing less. It was his shrewdness that Jesus was commending. And the steward who was wicked was very good at planning for his financial future, and Jesus just turns that into wisdom for spiritual futures. In verse 9, he says: *"And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings."* Dr. Um went on to point out that the unjust steward ultimately failed because he placed his trust in the very thing that had caused him to fail in the first place. Instead of breaking the pattern of sin and moving in a different direction, he goes back to the very problem that he started with for the solution. You know, if being a thief is what got you in trouble in the first place, then finding a shrewd means of thievery is hardly going to be the solution.

Dr. Um spoke of a time when his six-year-old daughter was competing in a whole school athletic competition, and everybody at the school was involved in some type of athletic contest and the reward for winning was this trophy sticker that you got to place on your jacket, and he describes spending the entire morning standing on the sideline watching his daughter go through the entire day failing to gain a single sticker while all the other kids got

stickers all over their jackets. So the contest ends, and he drives his daughter home in silence, and she gets to the house, she goes right upstairs to her room and starts crying. So he decides to go up to comfort her and after he goes up there to comfort her, she tells him the reason why she knew she had failed and it was because he had bought her crummy sneakers. And so he said he felt terrible because he was a grad student at that time with no money and yes, he did in fact buy her crummy sneakers, but that wasn't her problem. See, her problem was the same as the steward's. She, like everyone else, was looking for a value in someplace other than Christ. She, too, was looking for the solution to her problem in the very same place where the problem had started. She was looking for value in what she could accomplish. And without that sticker, she felt she had no value. Dr. Um went on to tell his daughter that that's the problem that most people suffer from when they look to other things to get value from other than God. I mean, some look for value in reputation and status, some look for it in power, some look for it in the security that they think money can give them, it really is no different in the long run than trophy stickers. What he tried to tell her was that Jesus alone was able to love her without any stickers whatsoever because he had already made her of infinite value by dying for her on the cross. So the question that Dr. Um is getting at is the same one that Jesus was after with the story of the unjust steward, and that is where do

you bank your hopes?

Dr. Gary Miller next brought the issue back to the majesty of Christ as he brought us up to Luke 22, and the basic question that he asked us was are you taking Jesus for granted? He took a step back to look at the events that took place in Luke 22 and 23, and he picked up and further developed Dr. Carson's thought from Luke 9, that Jesus was absolutely single-minded in his determination to go to the cross. He took us behind the scenes as the passion of Christ was unfolding, and he pointed us to the absolute resolute calmness of Jesus as everyone around him, friend and foe alike, is basically coming apart at the seams. He describes Jesus as the only genuinely perfect superhero who has ever lived, and he is in absolute control. He is absolutely innocent, and because he trusts in God, he is strong when everyone around him is profoundly weak. As he puts it, everyone, friend and foe alike, fails through weakness. At the last supper, the disciples are fighting amongst each other over who will be the greatest because they're weak. Jesus teaches them about servanthood, and he shows them that only those who are willing to look weak are actually those who are strong. Peter and James and John in the garden fall asleep because they are weak, and Jesus in the face of the absolute terror and dread of taking on our sin and facing the wrath of his Father alone is absolutely resolute even though he is sweating blood. That's

incredible strength. The soldiers come with a great show of force because they are too weak. They're afraid of one man, one man who taught in their temple every day. Jesus points out their weakness by saying in Luke 22:52: *"Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."* Judas is so weak that he has to betray Jesus through an act of love. Luke 22:47: *While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"* You know what happened, they seized Jesus, they lead him away and Peter follows at a distance, warming himself by the fire, he denies to a servant girl that he even knows Jesus. Peter's terrified by a servant girl because he is weak. Soldiers beat Jesus and mock him because they are weak cowards. They love to take advantage of the silence and his unwillingness to respond. In Jesus there is nothing but strength. Strength, silence and determination. So they bring Jesus to Pilate who sends him to Herod who demands a magic show from Jesus because he, too, is a weak man. Luke 23:8 says: *When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. The chief*

*priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him.*

Here's the picture of Jesus' passion. All those around him are vehemently accusing him, yet he's silently above it all. He's just allowing it to unfold as the sacrifice and the sacrificer orchestrating the entire process. He is profound strength in the midst of profound weakness. Pilate questions Jesus and Jesus tells him his authority and his ability to do whatever he does comes only from God, so Pilate turns over Jesus to be crucified because he is profoundly weak. He's terrified of the crowds. The procession to the cross begins, and the only one in the entire process who shows any strength at all is the very first one who finally gets Jesus. Know who it is? As he pointed out, it's the terrorist who's being crucified next to him. Luke 23:39 says this: *One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And indeed we justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

Now, the next one to show any strength at all is another outsider.

It's the centurion who declares as Jesus dies when he says in Luke 23:47, it says: *Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!"* You see, the only people who were not the picture of weakness here were the outsiders. Dr. Miller asked the question why is it that the gospel is filled with weak people instead of theology? And his answer is this is theology. Jesus was strength, ultimate strength dying for profound weakness.

Finally, Tim Keller presented Luke 24 which is the resurrection. He began speaking about the mundane facts of the resurrection. Jesus appears to the disciples in Luke 24:36. This is what takes place: *As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I, myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."* And when he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. There's nothing at all lofty in what he's doing. This is just an eye witness account backed up by hard factual evidence, *"Touch me, and see."* In verse 41, it says: *And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and*

*he took it and ate before them.* You see, imagination doesn't chew things. Hysteria is incapable of swallowing something. Jesus was delivering unmistakable proof that he was alive. Tim Keller said the resurrection is not a symbol but a shattering historical event. It is also the only event that makes sense of the entire Bible.

You know, people today have all kinds of cultural arguments against the Bible. They don't like its stand on sexuality, they don't like its stand on homosexuality and gay marriage and a host of other things that our culture dislikes about the scripture. Basically people don't like the scripture because it offends them. But you know, other cultures are offended as well by the Bible but for completely different reasons. There are cultures in the mid east, for example, who find Jesus' response to the woman taken in adultery to be stunningly offensive for all the different reasons that we would think of. They are offended with Jesus. You know why? Because he didn't stone the woman. They perceive his response as being weak and unwilling to punish somebody actually caught in the act. See, our culture cherishes compassion, so for that incident, Jesus gets a pass. Their culture champions justice, so their culture is deeply offended. So don't think because we have people in our culture offended with scripture that we are unique and that we have somehow, some way to fix the offense. It

is a fool's errand to try to argue away the offense of scripture, and the issue that everyone has to deal with when it comes to the Bible is not is it offensive but is it true. If it's truly a fact that a man named Jesus of Nazareth actually rose from the dead, then that fact changes everything. The resurrection changes everything.

You know, Dr. Keller points out some of the many evidences that the resurrection was real are just based on the way it's presented in scripture. The fact that the first eye witness to the resurrection were all women, that's hugely important, because no one in their right mind would ever try to float a false resurrection story by first citing female witnesses. You see, at that time no female testimony was considered acceptable in any court because women had no status at all, and there's only one reason that you would ever cite them as your eye witnesses, and that's because they were eye witnesses. The resurrection was a fact. And the same is true of the story of the two men on the road to Emmaus. I never heard this one before but only one of them, Cleopas, is given a name. As Dr. Keller said, again, if you are making up stories with fictional characters, you got plenty of names to work with and it's no problem coming up with a name for everybody. The only reason why the account in scriptures gives only one name is because the actual eye witness gave only one name, because the resurrection was a

fact. He goes on to say consider the church itself, it was made up at first by Jews, all of who throughout all of recorded history would never, ever imagine a human being as God, and now within the space of weeks, months and years, literally thousands of Jews are now worshipping a man as God, because the resurrection was the fact that changed everything. He said, consider the apostle Paul. He was so offended by the idea of Christianity, so offended as a Jew who worshiped God alone that anyone would ever consider worshipping a human being instead of the God of the Old Testament that he literally went out looking to kill Christians. We know he was successful at it because he told us in Acts 22:20, he says: *"And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him."* We know that Paul met the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus and he spent the rest of his life worshipping God in the flesh. See, the resurrection suddenly made sense of all the prophecies of old that spoke like Isaiah had spoken about a suffering Messiah, and for Paul, suddenly the entire Bible opened up and he could see that everything in it was about Jesus. Hence, Paul, previous persecutor of those who worshiped Jesus could say in Romans 1:1: *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and*

*was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.* Dr. Keller declared that the resurrection was not only a cold, hard fact, it's also the most powerful message the world will ever hear. It is telling the world that in Christ's resurrection, the future is personal, certain, and wonderful. It's personal because Jesus died and rose again for you and me personally. It is certain because the empty tomb and all the proofs of that empty tomb make it certain that death itself has been conquered, and it's wonderful because the resurrection is proof that you will miss nothing in this life that you won't get back in the next. He said you're not just going to get your body back, you're going to get your body back perfected in every way. Revelation 21:4 says: *"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."* Every single thing you've ever longed for or wanted you will find met and completed in the eternity that Christ has purchased for us through his resurrection, and there he will receive from us his due. Revelation 19:16 says: *On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

Now, after Dr. Keller finished, there were a few more post conference workshops, there's also some wonderful breakout

discussions that Steve was telling us some of the ones that he went to, people like David Platt, Matt Chandler, John Piper, literally dozens of others. I used the phrase more than one time about going to a conference like this is like trying to take a sip from a fire hose. There's just so much coming out at once, it's really impossible to take it all in. My own personal recollection is that better still was the opportunity that we had to sit around an outdoor table at night, just sit in the warm breeze, get to know each other a little bit more, get to know our Lord and Savior a little bit better. So I would say this is my report of a wonderful, wonderful conference. And I'm still learning to live with the fact that I didn't get any books. Let's pray.

*Father, I just, I thank you for your word, I thank you for what your word points us to, I thank you for Jesus. I thank you for the Lord of lords, King of kings. I thank you that we could spend time just basking on who he is, just understanding this one volume from your book taken out, exposed, enlarged and given to us and even then, Lord, we don't understand a tenth of it, a thousandth of it, a millionth of it. We will never begin to grasp it all, but we thank you for trying, we thank you for giving us in the flesh an opportunity to draw near to you, and we praise you for your Son. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*