

Suppressing The Truth in Unrighteousness

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's sovereignty and power, highlighting how the Philistines suppressed the truth despite clear evidence of God's involvement. It challenges listeners to not dismiss God's hand in their lives and to respond to conviction by surrendering to Christ. The sermon also touches on the consequences of refusing to repent and the need for genuine faith in Jesus for salvation.

Scripture: Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6, Psalms 24:3, Acts 16:31, James 1:22

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "The Call to Repentance"

Description

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Transcript

Without kids, you need the entertainment of running behind the curtains. Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 1. We're going to read a few verses here, and then we'll go to 1 Samuel chapter 5 and 6. Romans chapter 1, verses 18 to 23. Paul says here, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God, it's plain to them. Because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly, clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

So they who suppress the truth are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him. But they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. And then Paul goes on in verse 24 to say, God gave them up to the lust of their heart. Verse 26, for this reason God gave them up to homosexuality.

And verse 28, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind. God gave them up. Now, turn in your Bible to 1 Samuel 5. That's where we're going to be the rest of the time.

Today, I want to consider an example in the Old Testament of the power of God very easily, clearly being perceived. It's right there. It's obvious.

And yet, we're going to see the hardness of lost men as they suppress the truth. As they try to deny that God is involved. And these individuals actually, rather than go after the immortal God, you know what they go after? They go after a false god that's part man and it seems even part fish.

And you see, Paul said in Romans, people will go worship the creature. These people do that very thing. That very thing.

And here's something that's helpful that I want in your minds as we think about suppressing the truth. And I heard this from someone else and I thought it was a very helpful image. When you think about someone suppressing the truth.

Think about the time you're in the pool and you have one of those massive big pool balls. You're in the pool and you have that pool ball. And as a kid, you know what I would do? I would try to hop on top of the ball and press it completely under the water.

And it was incredibly difficult. Because the moment you even thought you got all of it under the water, and you could maybe rest for a second, you suppressed it out of view, what happens? It pops right out from under you. And it keeps coming back to the surface.

You can't get rid of it. Now God, unlike a pool ball that can be popped and deflated, God is not like that. God cannot be deflated.

You cannot get His knowledge and get it out of existence. And you can't go and swim to the other end of the pool to try to get away from the ball, so you suppress it by, I can't even see it now. Because the fact is every square inch of this world where you swim, you have the knowledge of God fully on display.

Fully there. I mean, it's like the ball is right here and this is the whole world. I can't get away from it.

But that's the idea of suppressing the truth. You're wanting to push it down to where you can no longer see it, so it does not bother your conscience. So 1 Samuel 5, we find one of these examples of the total depravity of man in rejecting God's control.

And throughout this, if you're a Christian, you should rejoice in the total control of God in your life as a Christian. The lost, they hate that reality. The Christian, they love that reality.

But let's pray and then we'll read from here. Father, Lord, I can't help but wonder if any here today are right now in their life like the child in the pool with the ball and they're trying to suppress Your knowledge out of existence. Lord, I pray that like that child, You would have Your knowledge just throw them completely overboard and come fully, directly in their sight that they would see today that You are the living God, that You are the only God, and that there is only one way to the Father and it's through Jesus Christ.

And so, Lord, I do pray as I've been prayed, I pray, Lord, You'd supernaturally save someone today from going down that Roman's path and not returning. Lord, would You show them Christ? Would You show

them Your power and Your control? In Christ's name, Amen. So in Philippians 5-1, just read the first verse, and then we're going to skip ahead to chapter 6 and go back.

It says, the Philistines captured the ark of God. So in context here, the Philistines captured the ark. The ark of God, the ark of the covenant.

This basically was a wood box and it was covered in gold. It had rings on the sides. They would insert poles through this and they would carry the ark.

It had two gold cherubim on the top. And they had wings. And it says that this is a symbol and an image of the presence of God.

It does not in any way mean that God's presence is contained in a box. But God had chosen through this symbol to show forth His power at different times or to not show forth His power. And what led the Philistines to get the ark is that God chose to not show His power when they went to war.

And Israel lost the ark because Hotham and Phinehas, they were involved in sexual immorality with temple women. And the Lord, He didn't give Israel victory. And these two men died.

And then Eli died. And here we find ourselves in 1 Samuel 5-1, the ark is captured. The ark is captured.

Now, the Philistines, we're going to look in a second at chapter 5. The Philistines had seven months of plagues and different things coming upon them. We see that in verse 1 of chapter 6. The ark was in the land of the Philistines seven months. And after these seven months, the Philistines got to a point where they got their priest, the priest of Dagon.

We see that in 5-5. This is why the priest of Dagon. So you look at 6, verses 2, it says, the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners.

And they basically said, what shall we do? So the Philistines, they see what's going on for seven months. And they say, let's get some counsel. Let's find out.

How should we respond to this? What should we do? And look what we have in verse 9. This is kind of the thrust. This is the end of their counsel. They say this.

They're saying to send the ark back. And they say, if the ark goes up the way to its own land, to Bathshemesh, then it is He, that's referring to God, who has done us this great harm. And these same counselors listen to what they say next.

But if not, if the ark does not go up, then we shall know it is not His hand that has struck us. It happened to us by coincidence. It happened to us by coincidence.

And the name of my sermon is, it's not a coincidence. It's God. It's God.

And the shocking thing that you're going to find out about this verse right here, about the counsel that these men gave, is that it should have been absolutely obvious at this point that this was God who did everything. The fact this is even on the table as an option should shock you as you see the hardness of men's hearts as they seek to suppress the truth. Why would they say it might all still be a coincidence? Did they not already have enough proof? It's like, well, we saw this, we saw that.

Okay, God, prove Yourself again. And you know what we're going to find out? The cart did go to Israel. And did they repent? No.

I mean, lost men are saying, Lord, prove Yourself. Show that You're the living God. And they see it again and again.

It's clearly perceived, and yet men suppress the truth. Men refuse to repent. And so what does this word coincidence mean? You see, the ESV, it puts, it happened to us by coincidence.

In the NAS, it puts the word chance. It's this idea that it all was just luck that brought this about. If you look at the definition in the Hebrew for coincidence, it means something that happened by itself without any assistance or wish of a person involved.

Meaning there was no originator. The Philistines are saying everything that happened, no one originated that. It all just happened.

Because they're trying to wrestle with did all this happen because we had the ark? Or did it not? And at this point, they're going to send the ark away, but they're still not sure if it was actually God who struck them or if it was all just chance. Just a coincidence. You know what we're going to find? Their investigation should have been closed.

There was enough evidence. The case should not be opened. But how is it with lost humanity? They just keep reopening the case.

Trying to prove God's existence. Trying to prove that God is in control. And so, we're going to look at four places, four occurrences in chapter 5 and chapter 6 where the lost should have clearly perceived this was no coincidence.

This was no chance. This was no luck. This was God's hand doing these very things.

So, the first place they should have clearly perceived this was the judgment of God is in the supernatural judgments that happened to their god Dagon. So look at chapter 5. Let's read right there. When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashtab.

Then the Philistines took the ark of God and they brought it into the house of Dagon and they set it up beside Dagon. So it sounds like, thankfully I have two water bottles up here, it sounds like they had the ark and they had Dagon. And they put them beside each other.

That's what the English reading makes it seem like it's indicating. They set them up beside each other. Verse 3, And when the people of Ashtab rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward.

So he's fallen face downward, on the ground, and then listen to what it says, before the ark of the Lord. Before the ark of the Lord. Seems to give the idea that he's like that.

Before the ark of the Lord. And what did they do? Does it say Dagon got back up and put himself back in his place? Which verse are we on? Verse 3, Oh, they took Dagon and put him back in his place. That's how it is with false gods, right? They need you to pick them up.

They need you to put them back in their place. Okay, so that's day one. If you were the guys and you walked in and you saw that happen, and you even saw Dagon apparently looks like in a worse position of worship before the ark.

I mean, before the ark, fallen downwards. Especially in the Old Testament, you're going to think about worship. If someone comes and falls before you, that's what you're going to think about.

How did that happen? How did that happen? I mean, it's got to be a coincidence, right? There's got to be no originator to this. There's got to be no one involved. No one assisted in this taking place.

Okay, day number two. Verse 4, But when they rose early on the next morning, I'm sorry, they put him back. So we'll put the bottle back.

When they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. Okay, so you know what? And I'm not going to take the lid off of this bottle and let water out, but the point is he's back on the ground, but where is his head and his arms? Or his hands? On the threshold of the entryway into this building.

Okay, and to illustrate this, let's imagine the projector. Alright, we've got a projector right here. If I walked in yesterday and I saw the projector on the ground right there, what would I assume? I would assume a mounting screw got loose and the thing slid down and it crashed into the ground.

Right? What if I walked in and that was down, but it was under the threshold of the door? What would I assume then? Someone did something. There's no way that falls on the ground and makes itself over there. It doesn't have legs.

And it's not like these two idols were side by side, it seems like, right next to a door. The point is there's something happened here supernaturally with Dagon's head and his hands, and there he is down before the ark. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him.

And look, people want to say that Dagon, was he part man, was he part fish? Was he all man? Did he have a fish's tail? You know what? Whatever he looked like, guess what we do know? He was all made by man. Right? I mean, who cares if you paint him a different color? If you make him look different? He was made by man. He was an idol.

Okay? So verse 5 says this, this is why the priest of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon and Ashdod to this day. Meaning when they would come to the building, they would hop over the threshold. They weren't going to put their feet on there.

Because they knew whatever the reason was, there's some superstition started to follow them because of this. So this is the first reason it should clearly be perceived that God did this. Dagon doesn't just fall down.

We're talking about a piece of wood, some precious metals. He doesn't just fall down, lose his head in his hands, and that goes under the threshold, and then he's before the ark in apparent worship posture. That's not a coincidence.

Now again, how do people reason? Well, someone must have snuck in there and done that, right? Someone vandalized our precious idol. Maybe someone thought that. Anyone but the God of Israel, right?

Just trying to get that ball under the water.

Just trying to push it down. So this is the first thing. And it's amazing here, you see Dagon, can he defend himself? Can he put himself back up? Nope.

What else? Now, I thought of this. I hope this is an appropriate illustration. You think about all the murdering of babies that happen in the world through abortion right now.

The truth is that unborn child in its womb fighting against that abortionist if they move their arms or whatever, that child has a greater chance of defending itself than Dagon. Because that child has something Dagon does not have. That child has life.

That child is a real creature. Dagon is nothing. He's nothing.

He's an idol. He cannot protect himself, defend himself. He cannot pick himself up.

They should have clearly perceived this. But they didn't. Okay, number two.

The second reason they clearly should have perceived this is not a coincidence that it was God is the timing and the length of the plagues that we're going to see happen in three different cities. So look at v. 6. The hand of the Lord was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and He terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. And just something about those tumors.

The scholars say the tumors, it's some type of tumor that would happen in a person's private part area of their body. And they would say it's something far worse than what today's hemorrhoids would be. And these people are being struck with this.

That's what it means by tumors don't think cancerous necessarily. Maybe some of those tumors did contain cancer. V. 7, And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, so they're witnessing this, they said, the ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is hard against us and against Dagon our God.

So they seem to have some acknowledgement that God's doing something, yet they still want to say they have their own God. V. 8, So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? They answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath. Look, if you really believe that this ark being in a physical place is leading to these tumors and these people being afflicted, you don't go ship it to another city in your country.

You get it out of there. You see, they're really not convinced that this is all the hand of God. So they ship it over to Gath.

So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. V. 9, But after they had brought it around, so that implies something's about to start on this city because the ark is there. Not a coincidence.

The hand of the Lord was against the city, causing a very great panic, and He afflicted the men of the city, both young, you hear that, children? God judged even the young, and old, so that tumors broke out on them. You know, just because your parents suppress the truth, you shouldn't. You can't use that as an excuse.

You're going to be held responsible. These young people, however old they were, they faced the judgment of God. Whether young, old, small, big, we're all going to be judged by God.

It's appointed for man once to die. And then the judgment. Okay, so that happened in v. 10.

So here is the second city was Gath. And then v. 10, So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron, some of them are realizing, this isn't a coincidence.

This isn't happening by accident. They cried out. They've brought around us the ark of God of Israel to kill us and our people.

They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and they said, send away the ark of the God of Israel. Let it return to its own place that it might not kill us and our people. For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city.

The hand of God was very heavy there. Verse 12 says, the men who did not die, what does that mean? A lot of them died? The men who didn't die were struck with tumors. And the cry of the city went up to heaven.

So if you didn't die and you were alive, guess what? You were struck with tumors. I mean, this is not a judgment where it's happening to a few people and it's something hidden that not everyone can see. Everyone in the nation it seems is experiencing this judgment of God.

It's not like they'd come to the temple of Dagon and one would say, oh, I didn't know that was going on. I couldn't relate to what was going on. They all felt the heavy hand of God.

And some of them here obviously seem to be convinced to get rid of this ark because of what's happening. And yet later on, what do we find? The priests are still willing to say after these two things, well, maybe it's all a coincidence. Right? You kind of waver back and forth.

I think God's real. God's doing this. Well, you know what? Maybe it was just all by chance.

Maybe I shouldn't believe that there is a God. So, third reason. Third occurrence by which they clearly should have perceived this as no coincidence.

Look at chapter 6. This is a shocking, sad statement. Verse 6. This is their leaders giving them counsel. And the leaders say, why should you harden your hearts? And then they appeal to the Egyptians.

This is the same leaders who go on to say it might all be still a coincidence. Right? Look what they say. Why harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? So they know about the Egyptians and Pharaoh? After He had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away and they departed? And then they basically give counsel to send the ark away, and then they give that statement about maybe it's all a coincidence.

This is the point. Were these Philistines ignorant of who the God of Israel was? No. They had the knowledge of God.

Not just the knowledge of God. They knew about an account that was a parallel of their own. Right? Pharaoh is keeping the Israelites.

What happens? Plagues. That's exactly what's happened to them. They're keeping the ark.

What's happening? Plagues. So these leaders, they knew history. They were not ignorant of who God is and what He had done in the past, and yet still, they want to say in v. 9, but it's not, then we shall know that it's not His hand that struck us.

Everything that happened before this, it was just a coincidence. It was just chance. God didn't originate any of that.

It's crazy. That that would even be an option on their multiple choice sheet of who brought about these plagues, who caused everything. It makes you think about Hebrews 10.

Right? Those who go on willfully sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth. That's a practical application today. If you're in here and you hear all this truth and you hear about Christ and you hear about His death on the cross and He's the only way, He's the only hope, and then you decide, you know about the Egyptians and Pharaoh, and you decide, you know what? God doesn't exist.

It's all a coincidence. I'm just going to go live for sin and self. That's scary.

Because you've been exposed to the truth. Okay, here's the fourth, the last reason that they should have clearly perceived God's eternal power and that this was not a coincidence. This was not a coincidence.

And we find that in the fact that the cows went home. The cows went home. So look at v. 10.

So this is the counsel of the priest and the diviners about what to do. Right? Send the ark back. And it says here in v. 10, the men did so, and they took two milk cows.

And they're doing this to test God. They're basically saying to the Lord, prove Yourself. Prove Yourself.

They took two milk cows, yoked them to the cart, shut up their calves at home, meaning they took the babies away from the mother, so to speak. And they put the ark of the Lord on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors. So their spiritual counselors had this idea, let's make an image of the tumors and the mice, because there's also a plague of mice and they basically said make it into gold and let's send it back as an offering.

Let's try to appease the God of Israel with these. V. 12, and the cows went straight in the direction of Bethshemesh along one highway, lowing as they went. They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them.

So they're like following along as far as the border of Bethshemesh. Now the people of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it.

And the cart came into the field. And then eventually the leaders of the Philistines, they returned. They went back.

Now, is that a difficult thing to get these two cows to go a journey that is maybe about 8 miles? Did they have a driver? Never. No. Had these cows ever had a yoke on them before? I guess that was not in that v. 10.

Where does it say that? It says somewhere right here that the cows had not borne a yoke. V. 7? Yeah, now then take and prepare a new cart to milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home away from them and take the ark of the Lord and place it on its cart. So they're going an 8-mile journey maybe.

They have no driver. The cows have never borne a yoke. And their babies are at home.

And it says in v. 12, as they were going along the highway, they were lowing as they went. And from what I've read on that, the idea is the cow, it has all this milk. It's wanting to feed its own.

It's wanting to feed its children. And it's just mooing and lowing and in a way saying, empty me. And yet, what's that cow doing? Is it going and turning around and going home? No, for 8 miles, these cows went, who had never had a cart, they went without a driver, led by who? By God.

It wasn't a coincidence that they made it there. It was God. And the leaders, they watched this.

I mean, they have another very clear, obvious thing that this is God. They've even said it themselves, right? If this happens, we'll now know it's not a coincidence. I mean, there wasn't really enough evidence earlier on, was there? I mean, the whole Dagon thing falling on the ground, we know a kid snuck in the building and he did that.

And the plagues going from three different cities. You know, that can't be like Israel. I shouldn't have really paralleled that to Israel and Egypt.

That just had to be accident. I mean, it was all by chance. Just right there trying to push that ball down.

It doesn't exist. God's not real. Trying to suppress it.

Trying to suppress it. So did they repent? I mean, we hear it from people, right? If this happens, I'll follow God. I mean, I've heard that from so many people.

Lord, if You do this, I'll really surrender and I'll follow You. I mean, they're making a bet in a way or a vow to the Lord. If You do this, we'll do this.

We'll hear these leaders said, you know, if it doesn't go up, we realize this is all chance. But if it does go up, we know it wasn't by chance. It was God.

But even there, there's no evidence that these people ever repented. Look at 5.5. This is why the priest of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. So when this is written, guess what was still going on? Back then.

There was still a temple of Dagon. There were still people going in there worshiping Dagon, who was clearly defeated, but men wanted to prop Him back up again, suppress the truth, and keep going to Him. And you know what happened years later from that city of Gath? A man named Goliath went out from Gath to war against the Israelites.

And what was his attitude about the Israelites? He mocked them. He made fun of them. And you know what? Goliath found that on that day when that rock hit him.

He found out it wasn't a coincidence. That was the living God controls the smallest pebble in the world. And He can guide it exactly where He wills.

I mean, this is the same God who created the universe with the Word of His power. I mean, it's very easy to get a piece of wood that men make and carve and get that to tumble down. Very easy.

This is the living God. Yeah, the Philistine leaders went back home. They didn't come up to the Israelites and say we want to follow your God.

We want to worship the true and living God. I mean, all along, they even called Israel's gods. Plural.

I mean, they didn't even really view Israel correctly. And even earlier in chapter 4, they misunderstood about what happened in the wilderness, and they say it was the Egyptians in the wilderness who faced plagues. I mean, their idea of history was distorted to some extent.

You can have the clearest evidence, even a man raised from the dead, and you can just suppress it. Not follow it. And does this happen today? Yeah, it does.

I mean, you think about the demoniac. I mean, here Christ comes. This man is crazy living in a graveyard.

He's cutting himself. They've tried to chain him up. No psychiatric hospital could help this individual get in his right mind.

And the Lord Jesus Christ comes on the scene and He casts out the demons. They go into a bunch of pigs. The pigs go run off the mountain.

And what do the people do? They clearly see God is sovereign and God is in control. Do the people all bow down and worship the Lord Jesus Christ? Do they say what must we do to be saved? The people say to Jesus in Mark 5, get out of here. They don't want Him there.

They clearly perceive God is at work. Maybe even seven months under conviction, the hand of God upon you, and you have all the evidence. The evidence is not the issue.

You don't need more evidence. You don't need God to prove Himself more. You've got to repent and surrender your sin to Christ and trust Him.

You know, the worshipers of Dagon are no different than the atheists. Atheists, they don't just come in the form of there's no God. They come in the form of I have a God, it's just not the God of the Bible.

And they suppress the truth of the God of the Bible. Many, many people get convicted, but not converted. You don't want to be that person.

You don't want to be a person who has conviction upon conviction and your conscience is activated, but rather than be converted, you suppress it, you suppress it, you suppress it. So consider this. Does the Bible teach there's such a thing as a coincidence? And let's use that definition from the Hebrew.

A coincidence meaning something happening that God was not involved in. Have any of you found something that didn't have its ultimate source and root in God's involvement? Have any of you guys found something like that? I mean, tell me about it. Where was that one inch on planet Earth that God's sovereign power was not in control of? Did you find it? Is it in Antarctica? Whichever way Antarctica is,

where is it? You're not going to find it.

The Lord has numbered the stars. He's named the stars. He knows everything.

He created everything. Isaiah 45.7 I form light and I create darkness. I make well-being and I create calamity.

I am the Lord who does all of these things. Amos 3.6 Does disaster come to a city unless the Lord has done it? And that disaster, it came to Ashdod, it came to Gath, and it came to Ekron because God brought it down. And here they're a priest.

You don't want to walk in the council of the ungodly. The Dagon priests are saying, well, maybe it's a coincidence. Maybe it's all chance.

Let's just hold out. Maybe somehow God's going to be disproven and we can keep our Dagon. And then God proves Himself and they still keep Dagon.

It's like, oh no! That's how blind people are. That's why you need to be born again. You need a supernatural birth where God takes out your heart and gives you a new one.

Your list is were these saints coincidences? You being created. Yes or no? No. The Red Sea splitting in half and Israel walking through.

The wind blew at the right time? No. Joseph sold by his brothers. Coincidence? No.

God was in control of that and God had purposes to be fulfilled years later. Remember when Jericho was destroyed? A curse was pronounced on a man who would rebuild it and 500 years later, Hiel decided to be that man and rebuild that. And you know what happened 500 years later? The exact curse that was pronounced of His firstborn dying, it happened to the Word 500 years later.

God did that. Was that a coincidence? No. Was the earth opening up and consuming the sons of Korah a coincidence? No.

Was it a coincidence that Naaman after dipping three times in the river had his leprosy vanish? Was that a coincidence or was it God? It was God. After Elijah had jars of water dumped on his sacrifice on the surface of the altar a third time, then he called upon the Lord and fire fell from heaven and consumed the offering. Was that chance? No.

Was Ahab's death by a random arrow and then the chariot going to the pool of Samaria and the dogs licking the blood and the prostitutes washing in that pond, was that a coincidence? No. It had been prophesied and it was fulfilled exactly as the Lord had determined it. Was Peter catching a fish with money inside of it to pay his taxes a coincidence? Did Peter get that fish and there the money was and say, oh, what a coincidence? What were the chances? God.

God did it. God's in control. He didn't look at that and say this is an accident.

This is the Lord. And Ananias and Sapphira being exposed with their lying and dying on the spot when they were being interviewed by the leadership, was that a coincidence? No, your sin being exposed is not a coincidence. It's not an accident.

It's the mercy of God because God's severity is meant to lead you to repent. And God has His way of exposing sin and it's a blessing to have all your sin drug out in the light, be fully exposed for who you are, all your secret sins to be seen in the sight of God and even people in your life because then you're able to get to the point where you're able to realize this is God's kindness here. Because it's really easy to have all this hidden sin and you suppress the truth because you know if you stop suppressing it, you've got to expose yourself and pride says I don't want to be exposed for who I really am.

Was this a coincidence? Jesus rising from the dead on the third day? Oh, no, that wasn't. And yet, what did people do back then? Tell people His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep. And it says that saying spread among the Jews to this day.

There were people out back then who believed that it was just a setup. And the same thing probably with the Philistines. When they talked to their kids about Dagon falling down, some of the parents probably said, yeah, someone snuck into the building and did that.

Rather than telling them the truth. Because if you tell your kids the truth, Christ did rise from the dead. It wasn't His disciples who stole His body.

And 500 people actually saw Him after He was resurrected. Now your kids have got to deal with the truth. So God is the Originator.

None of those things above were a coincidence. And you could add 500 things from the Bible to that list. More than 500.

Is it a coincidence that Christ will forgive you today? Did it all just happen by chance? It was the eternal plan of the eternal God who has all the eternal power in the world to perfectly fulfill His plan. And He has done that in the sending of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And He made a way that you, the sinner, can be forgiven today.

Rather than suppressing the truth, rather than hardening your heart, you're able to let that go and see the full knowledge of God and be fully exposed and stop trying to hide in the darkness. And you can cry out to the Lord, Lord, I cannot save myself. I need You to pardon me.

I need You to have mercy upon me. And you know what? Some of you, your Dagon is your works. And you've got your self-righteousness.

You're trusting. You're a good person. You go to church.

You do all of these things. You know what happens? You put your works next to the Lord Jesus Christ and you know what's going to happen? It's going to fall down. It's not going to stand.

Christ is the only One by which we can stand before God the Father. It says in Psalm 24, who will ascend the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. You know who did that? It goes on later in the psalm to say, open the gates for the King of Glory to come in.

That's alluding to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the One who has clean hands and a pure heart, who never sinned. And Jesus Christ is the One who entered into heaven and was received, the resurrected Christ.

And you can be received just like Him through His righteousness, His works, and not your own. You know, one of the things you take away from this passage, how many Israelites were involved with getting the ark back to Israel? How many? None. This might sound hyper-calvinistic and I don't mean it in that way, but guys, God doesn't need us.

God can easily get the ark out of the enemy's land and no Israelites were involved. Now, does God choose to use us? Yes. But the Lord, in one way, He does not need us.

He is so powerful. He delights to use us. Praise the Lord for that and we want to be faithful to the calling that He gives us.

Think of this, how does one destroy the false gods and lies that are in this world? You just bring them in close proximity to the truth. You take that dagon and you stand it up next to the Lord Jesus Christ, next to your Bible, and you know what will eventually happen? That idol will fall flat on its face. It cannot stand against the truth.

It's not going to make it. Think of this. Some of you lost people are lengthening your miseries by refusing to part with sin.

You're kind of like the Philistines. Maybe it's been seven months of the convicting hand of God convicting you. But you're still in the back of your mind thinking maybe it's a coincidence.

And you're even thinking, well, I don't even want the Lord Jesus. I just want the suffering gone. Let's get the ark out so we can get back to normal.

Right? Let's just get the conviction out so we can go back to normal and we don't have to worry about realizing there's a God in Israel. I mean, if the plagues are gone, we can easily forget about them. You don't want to be like that.

This made me think about when I was lost and in high school, I remember pursuing different sin on the Internet. Right as I was about to do that, the Internet went out. And I remember sitting there at my computer and I thought that was not a coincidence.

I knew that was God trying to get a hold of me and show me don't go after your sin. It's going to lead to death. But I frantically tried to do everything I could to get that Internet back up so I could suppress the truth hard in my heart.

You do not want to do that. If God is putting His hand heavy upon you, you want to respond. You don't want to push that away.

You don't want to suppress the truth. You don't want to send the ark out of there. You want to be wherever that truth is and you want to worship that truth.

Here one thought for Christians. A lot of this is primarily aimed at those who don't know the Lord, right? But one thought for the Christian. Sometimes as Christians, we lengthen our miseries by refusing to part with sin.

This whole idea of the heavy hand of God being upon them, where else do you find that? Psalm 32. When David was in his sin of adultery, after it had happened, he says, God's hand was heavy upon him and his strength was being dried up as the heat of the summer until he acknowledged his sin. Now, Christians, we

trust that our suffering is not a coincidence.

Where we struggle at times is trying to discern if the suffering is just for our testing, or is this the Father disciplining us? And I don't have a lot to say on that today, but I know if you're a Christian, there's times you get in a place and you realize God is sovereign. This is no coincidence. Now you're trying to interpret why is the Lord doing what He is doing? Why is this going on? And you don't want to right away assume like Job's counselors did that all of this is happening because Job had sin in his life.

But at the same time, you don't want to suppress the truth. What if God really is trying to deal with you for an idol? I mean, I've had multiple brothers in this church who got too into working out and they ended up hurting their body and they couldn't keep going to the gym. And these brothers will tell me, they say, well, why did this happen? And I'm not going to try to be their conscience and tell them, but you know what? Three of those brothers, their conclusion in the end was it was God trying to deal with an idol in their life.

Now I'm not saying if that's you that that's what the Lord's trying to do, but we've got to realize this isn't a coincidence. God's doing this. What is He trying to teach me? Ask the Lord to reveal it to you.

And you know what's even sad here? When Israel got the ark back, look what happened in v. 19 of chapter 6. Some of the men looked inside of the ark. It says upon, but the idea is they looked inside. You're not supposed to do that.

Seventy of them were struck by the Lord. And they said in v. 20, who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God, and to whom shall He go up away from us? Who's able to stand? Christian, you can stand before the holy God if your standing is in Jesus Christ. And do you know what happens? Israel repents.

And they mourn, and they're all together not prepared for battle. And you know what happens? The Philistines hear that Israel has a large gathering and they assume Israel's going to war. Israel wasn't going to go to war.

And the Philistines did a surprise attack. Was it a coincidence that the Lord sounded a loud thunder and defeated the Philistines? No, it wasn't. It was God's sovereign protection of His people.

And that's what we experience as the Christian. Praise be to God. He loves us.

He protects us. So if you're not a Christian here today, and you're in a season of conviction, my question to you is how is it going to end? How's it going to end? Because you cannot assume that for 20 years and 30 years, God's just going to keep convicting you and you're going to be able to make a decision 30 years down the road. The Lord convicts.

But will you respond? Will you surrender to Christ? Will you trust Christ? Will you believe in Him alone? Or will you suppress the truth? Don't be like the Philistines. It was so clear to them. And yet, they still had the two statements, well, if this happens, it's God.

But, if it doesn't go, it's a coincidence. We can just dismiss all of it. Let's pray.

Father, Lord, I realize so much more could be said about Your sovereignty and about divine providence. Lord, we thank You that You're the living God. We thank You that people can be born again by the living, abiding Word of God.

We thank You that people can receive with meekness the implanted Word which is able to save their souls. We thank You that faith comes by hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ. Father, we thank You for sending Your Son.

We thank You for Your eternal, predetermined plan that even is the only reason we're here, seated here today, is because You sought us out and You bought us. You hunted us down. Lord, I pray that if any here, Lord, not if any, Lord, I pray for those here who don't know You, that Your almighty love would arrest them.

Lord, that You'd fling them off of the knowledge of God that they're trying to suppress and that it would overwhelm them and they would say, what must I do to be saved? Lord, that they would believe on You. Lord, we delight for You to receive glory. So many people are worshiping dagons and false gods and all this nonsense and foolishness in the world.

Lord, will You not ransom another sinner here today and bring them into the marvelous light and expose them to Your truth? Lord, we are totally cast upon You to do that very thing. Lord, we cannot save. We cannot.

We can't change hearts. But Lord, You're able to do that.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/RDIEyT7xOus.mp4>

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