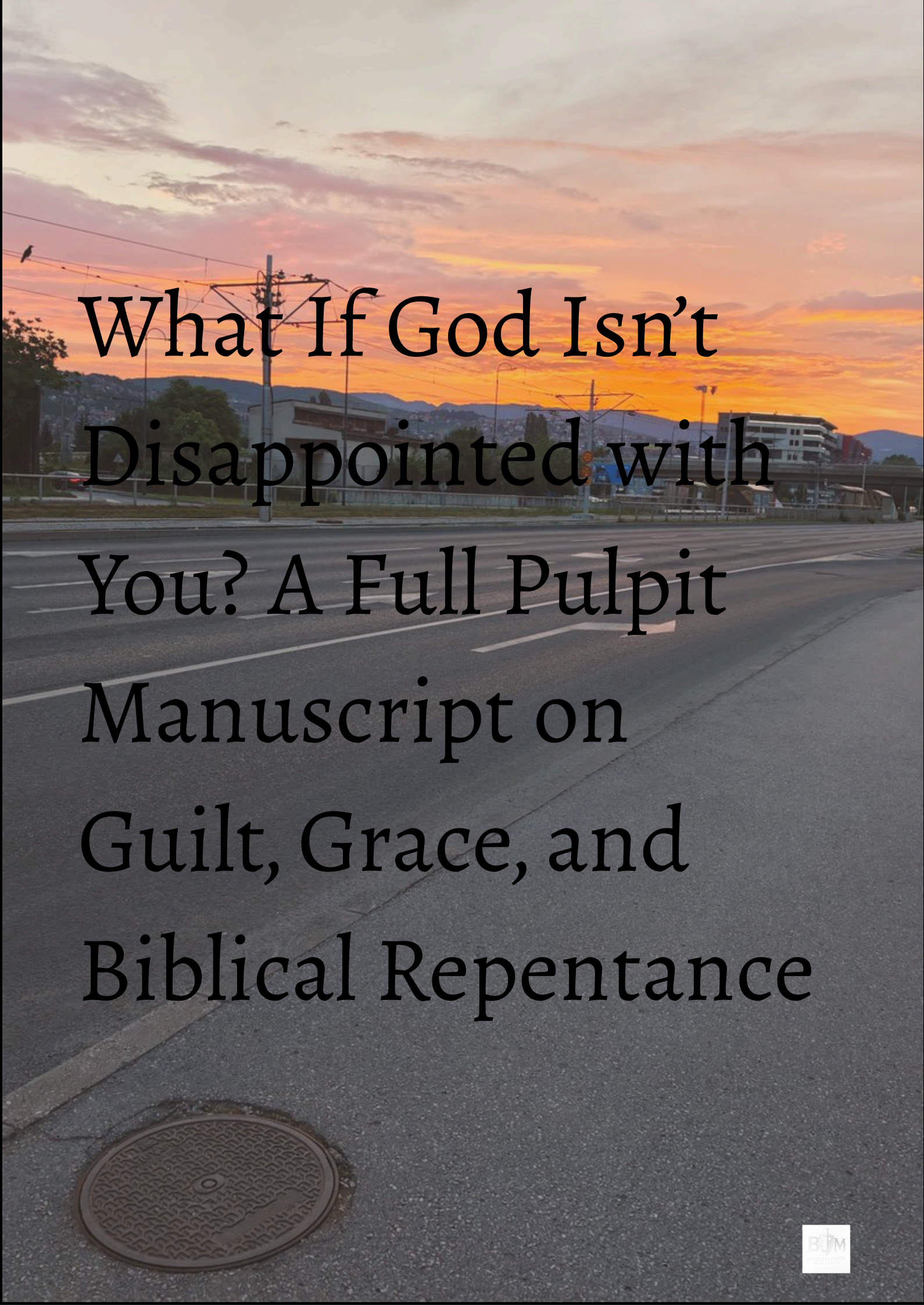


The background image shows a wide, empty asphalt road stretching into the distance. In the foreground, a circular manhole cover is visible on the left side of the road. The sky is filled with soft, orange and pink clouds, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the background, there are buildings, power lines, and a distant mountain range.

What If God Isn't Disappointed with You? A Full Pulpit Manuscript on Guilt, Grace, and Biblical Repentance

New Hope Baptist Church • Sunday, July 26, 2026

Good morning, New Hope. I want to begin with a question that may sound almost dangerous to some of us: What if God is not disappointed with you? I did not ask whether God approves of every choice we make. Scripture is clear that sin is real, destructive, and offensive to a holy God. I did not ask whether our actions have consequences. They do. I am asking something deeper: what if the picture you carry of God - arms folded, face turned away, waiting for you to fail again - is not the face of the Father revealed to us in Jesus Christ?

Many believers live as though disappointment is God's permanent posture. We imagine that heaven keeps a running record of every missed prayer, every impatient word, every broken promise, every private struggle. We know the language of grace, but our souls still live under an unpaid bill. We say Jesus paid it all, and then we spend our lives trying to make another payment.

Guilt is heavy. Shame is heavier. Guilt says, 'I did something wrong.' Shame says, 'I am something wrong.' When guilt is not carried to the cross, it becomes a chain. We start thinking that if we feel bad enough, long enough, then perhaps we will finally become better. But feeling terrible is not the same as becoming holy. Self-hatred is not repentance. Condemnation is not conviction.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 7:10 that godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, without regret, but the sorrow of the world produces death. There are two kinds of sorrow. One turns us toward God. The other traps us inside ourselves. One says, 'Father, I have sinned; lead me home.' The other says, 'I am beyond hope; keep your distance.' Today the Holy Spirit wants to help us tell the difference.

Tell somebody near you: God is calling you home, not calling you hopeless.

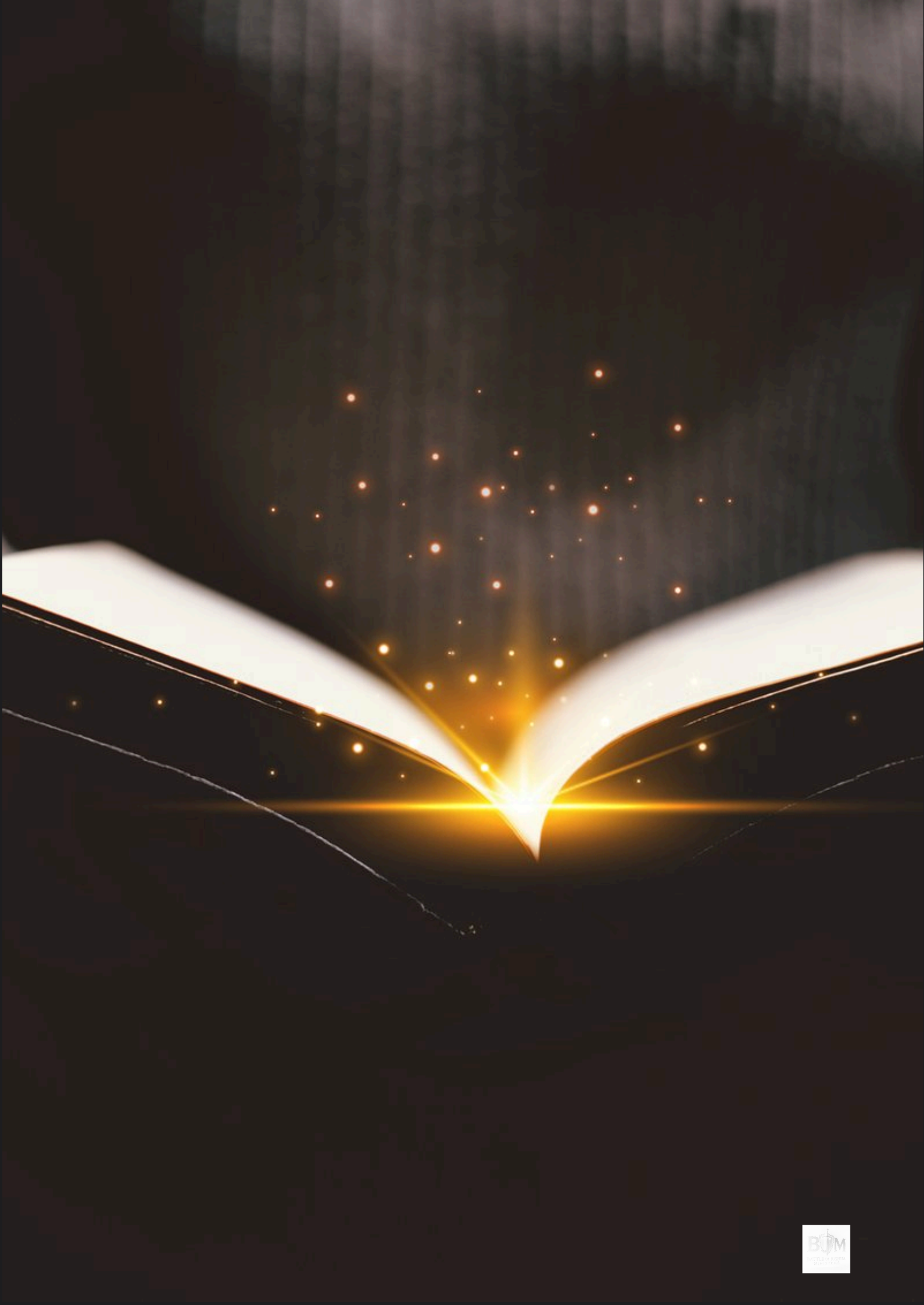
Primary Texts

- 1 Corinthians 3:6; Matthew 12:34; Proverbs 19:11; 1 Peter 3:6

Supporting texts: Romans 2:4; Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Luke 15:11-24; Psalm 51:10-12; 1 John 1:9

Big Idea

God does not transform us by crushing us with shame. He exposes what is true, draws us by His kindness, and leads us to repentance that turns toward Him in faith.



Point One: God Is the Gardener, Not the Scorekeeper

In 1 Corinthians 3:6 Paul says, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” The church at Corinth had become preoccupied with comparison: who was the better teacher, who was more spiritual, who deserved more credit. Paul answered by moving their eyes away from human performance and toward God's power. Planting matters. Watering matters. But only God can give life.

That verse also speaks to the way we judge our own growth. We inspect ourselves every day looking for a finished harvest. We planted yesterday and demand fruit this morning. We prayed once and expected the habit to disappear. We apologized and expected every consequence to vanish. When growth is slower than we hoped, we assume God must be disappointed.

But a gardener does not scream at a seed because it has not become an oak tree by Tuesday. A wise gardener knows what season it is. He turns the soil, gives water, removes what chokes life, and waits with purpose. God is not casual about your growth, but He is patient in His work. Philippians 1:6 says that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.

This does not make us passive. Paul planted. Apollos watered. We confess, pray, study, forgive, seek counsel, set boundaries, and repair what we have damaged. But we do these things as people cooperating with grace, not purchasing grace. The disciplines of faith are not punishments by which we convince God to love us. They are places where the love of God trains us.

Some of us are angry at ourselves because we are not where we thought we would be. Hear the gospel: you are responsible to be faithful with today's planting and today's watering. You are not responsible to manufacture spiritual life. The increase belongs to God.

Preaching response: I can plant. I can water. But God gives the increase.





Point Two: God Addresses the Heart Without Destroying the Person

Jesus says in Matthew 12:34, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” In context, Jesus is confronting religious leaders whose words exposed what they treasured inside. He is not offering a slogan for condemning ourselves every time we speak badly. He is teaching that behavior has roots. God loves us too much to clip bad fruit while leaving a poisoned root untouched.

Worldly guilt obsesses over appearance: “How do I look to others?” Biblical conviction asks a different question: “What is true in my heart before God?” Worldly guilt hides the evidence. Godly sorrow opens the heart.

If harsh words keep coming out, the answer is not merely, 'Try harder to sound nice.' We ask what abundance is filling the heart: fear, resentment, pride, exhaustion, envy, an old wound we keep rehearsing. The Lord does not expose the root to humiliate us. A surgeon names the wound because healing requires truth.

Notice the difference between accusation and conviction. Accusation is vague and total: “You’re a failure. You’ll never change.” The Holy Spirit is truthful and specific: “This word was sinful. This resentment is poisoning you. Come to Me.” Condemnation pushes us away from God; conviction draws us toward God.

Romans 8:1 announces, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” No condemnation does not mean no correction. A loving Father corrects His children. It means correction is not a sentence of rejection. When God puts His finger on something in us, His purpose is restoration.

Ask yourself: when I become aware of sin, do I run from God until I feel worthy, or do I run to God because Christ alone can cleanse me? The gospel teaches us to run toward the One who already knows the whole truth.

Preaching response: Lord, search my heart, but do not let shame name me.





Point Three: Grace Slows Anger and Opens the Door to Repentance

Proverbs 19:11 says, “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.” This is wisdom about human relationships, but it also helps us examine the harsh courtroom we build inside ourselves. Many of us are quick to anger with ourselves. One failure becomes a lifetime verdict. We speak to ourselves in ways we would never speak to someone we love.

To overlook a transgression does not mean pretending evil is harmless. Scripture never calls us to cover abuse, avoid accountability, or deny justice. It means wisdom is not driven by immediate outrage or personal offense. Grace creates room to respond redemptively. If that is wisdom among people, how much more can we trust the perfect wisdom of God?

Romans 2:4 asks whether we despise the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads us to repentance. We often assume fear will change us: if I scare myself enough, shame myself enough, punish myself enough, I will stop. Fear can control behavior for a moment. It cannot create a new heart. The kindness of God does not excuse sin; it gives us the safety to tell the truth about sin.

Think of the prodigal son in Luke 15. He rehearses a speech about being unworthy. He expects to negotiate for a servant's place. But while he is still far off, the father sees him, has compassion, runs, embraces, and kisses him. The son confesses. The father restores. The robe does not cancel repentance; the robe shows what repentance returns to - relationship.

The younger son had sinned in the far country. The older son carried resentment in the father's field. Both misunderstood the father. One thought he could not come home. The other thought he had to earn what love had already provided. Grace speaks to both: come into the house.

If God has been patient with you, His patience is not permission to stay the same. It is an open door. Do not use grace to delay repentance. Use grace as courage to repent today.

Preaching response: His goodness is leading me home.





Point Four: Biblical Repentance Turns Toward God, Not Against Yourself

What, then, is true biblical repentance? The New Testament word carries the idea of a changed mind that produces a changed direction. Repentance is more than emotion, though it may include tears. It is more than regret, though regret may awaken us. It is agreeing with God about sin, turning from it, and entrusting ourselves to His mercy and rule.

Worldly guilt is self-centered even when it sounds humble. It asks, “How can I punish myself enough to feel okay?” Godly sorrow is God-centered: “How can I return to the Father and walk in His ways?” Worldly guilt wants relief from consequences. Godly repentance wants restored fellowship and a renewed life.

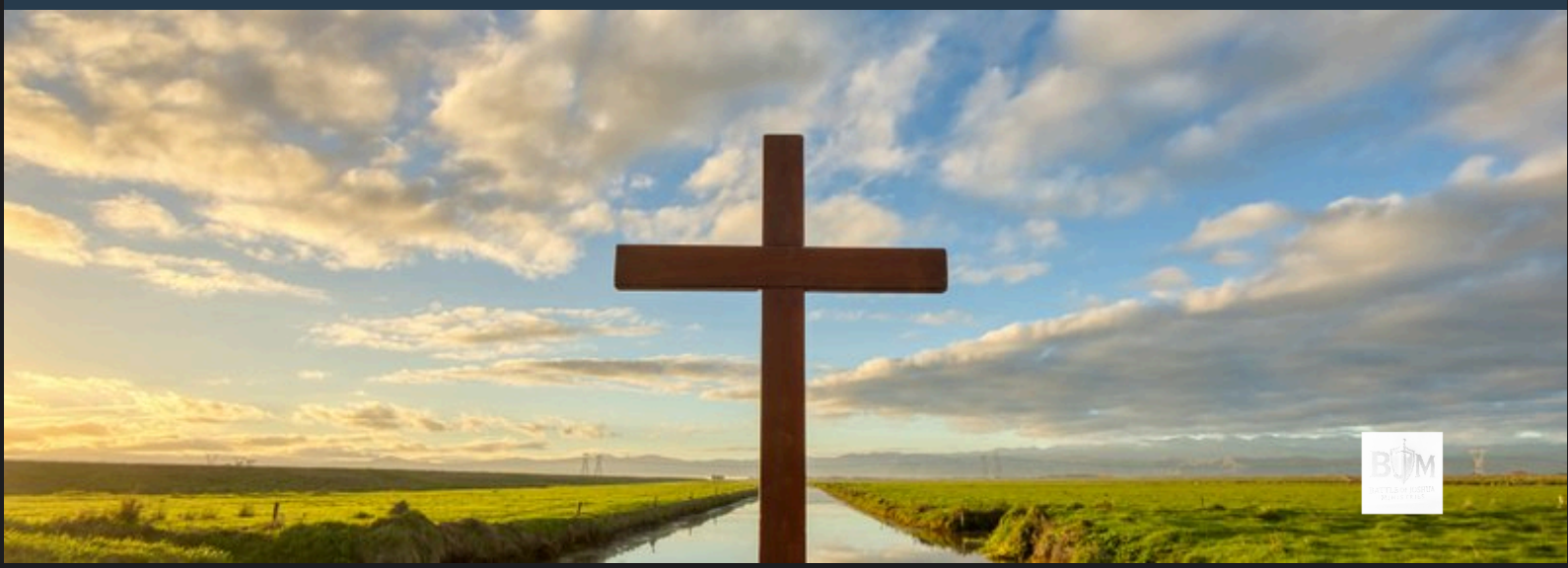
Repentance has practical fruit. We name the sin without excuses. We receive Christ's forgiveness instead of trying to pay for it. We repair what can be repaired. We accept appropriate consequences. We turn toward new obedience, often with help from mature believers. And when we stumble, we return again rather than abandoning the road.

First Peter 3:6 points to Sarah's example and says women are her daughters if they do good and do not give way to fear. In its household context, this passage should never be used to demand silence in the face of danger or abuse. Its faithful emphasis is courageous trust in God. Repentance is not a fearful performance designed to keep everybody pleased. It is courageous obedience before God.

Some people stay trapped in guilt because guilt feels like control. If I keep punishing myself, I can pretend I am paying the debt. But the cross says the debt was paid by Someone else. Humility is not insisting that your self-punishment is more powerful than Christ's sacrifice. Humility receives what Jesus has done and walks in the freedom He purchased.

First John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Faithful means God keeps His promise. Just means forgiveness rests on Christ's finished work. Cleanse means He does not merely cancel a record; He begins washing the life.

Preaching response: I will turn toward God, not turn against myself.





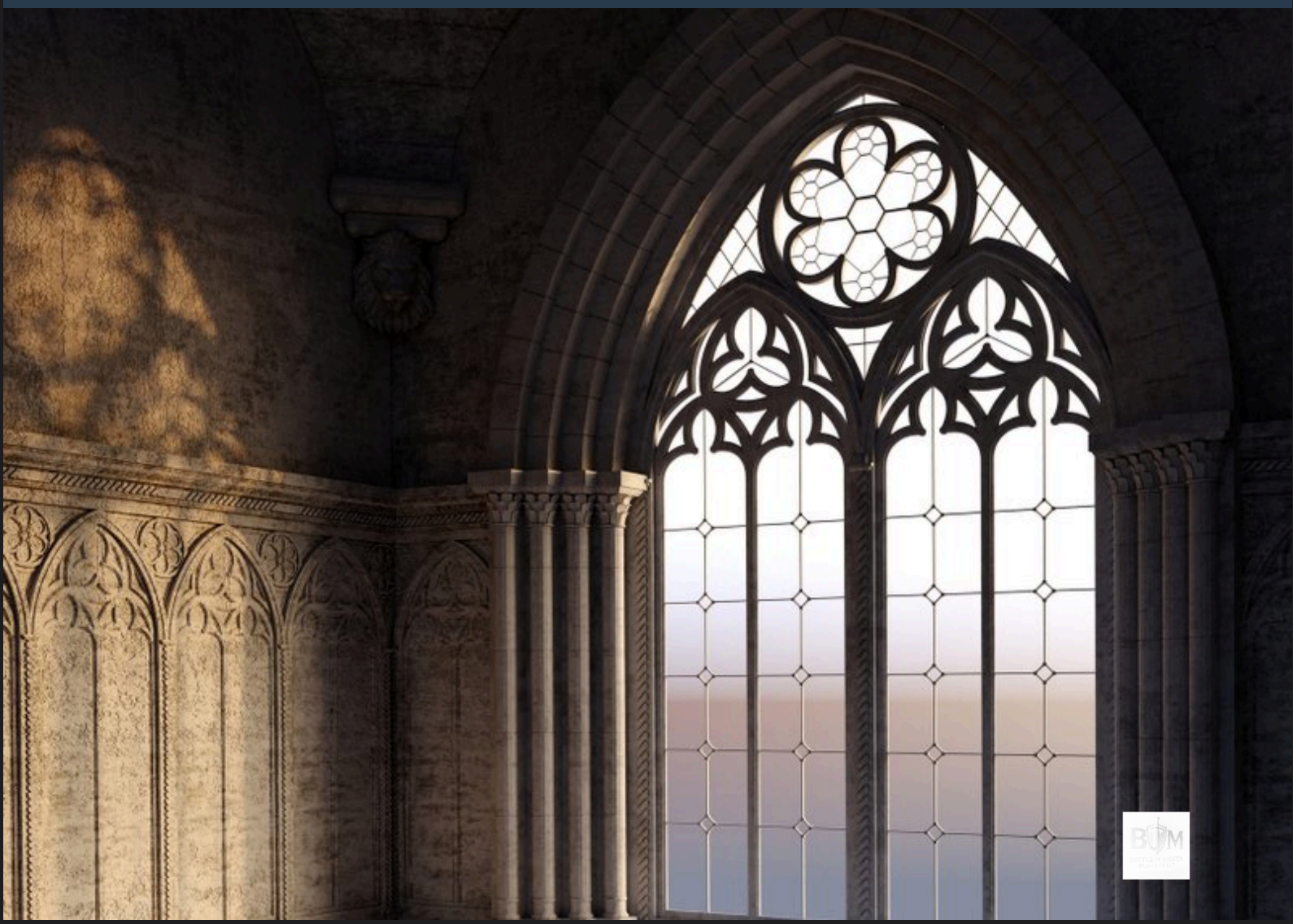
How to Tell the Difference

Worldly guilt says, 'Hide.' Biblical repentance says, 'Come into the light.' Worldly guilt says, 'You are your worst moment.' The gospel says, 'You are named by Christ's best moment — His cross and resurrection.' Worldly guilt circles endlessly around the self. Repentance turns the face toward God and then turns the feet toward obedience.

Worldly guilt produces paralysis: I cannot pray, serve, worship, or receive love until I feel clean. Repentance receives cleansing and begins the next faithful step. Worldly guilt demands that we suffer enough to deserve peace. Repentance rests in Christ and accepts the discipline of becoming new.

Here is a simple test. After sorrow has done its work, are you closer to God or farther away? Are you more truthful or more hidden? More willing to make amends or more preoccupied with protecting your image? More hopeful about obedience or more convinced that change is impossible? Godly sorrow produces movement toward salvation without the regret of a life chained to shame.

The goal is not to stop feeling appropriate sorrow. The goal is to let sorrow take you somewhere holy. Tears can be a doorway, but they are not the destination. The destination is reconciliation, renewal, and faithful love.





Conclusion and Invitation

So, what if God is not disappointed with you in the way you have imagined? What if He is grieved by what harms you and others, yet still committed to the work He began? What if His correction is evidence that you belong to Him? What if the face turned toward you is the face of the Father who ran down the road?

You do not have to deny your sin to believe in grace. Grace tells more truth about sin than shame ever will, because grace looks directly at the cross. There we see that sin is serious enough for Christ to die, and love is strong enough for Christ to die for us.

Perhaps you need to repent today. Name what God has named. Stop defending it. Stop hiding it. Turn toward Him. Perhaps you have already confessed, but you keep reopening a case God has closed. Receive the promise: no condemnation in Christ Jesus. Perhaps you have never trusted Christ. Today the Father is calling you home through the Son.

As we prepare for invitation, do not ask, 'Have I felt bad long enough?' Ask, 'Am I willing to come home?' The altar is open. Prayer is available. Jesus receives sinners, restores the broken, and gives increase to every seed surrendered to Him.

Pray with me: Father, I have carried what You asked me to confess. I have called shame humility and self-punishment repentance. Search me and show me what is true. Give me godly sorrow that turns toward You. Help me receive the mercy purchased by Jesus Christ. Create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me, and teach me to walk in courageous obedience. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pulpit Quick Reference

- Plant and water; God gives the increase.
- Conviction is specific and restorative; condemnation is vague and rejecting.
- God's kindness does not excuse sin; it leads us to repentance.
- Repentance turns toward God and produces obedient fruit.
- Invitation question: Am I willing to come home?

