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Hello. It's so good to be here with all of you from wherever you are, whether you're watching online or at one of our physical campuses or here at Northwest. Let me hear some noise and praise to the Lord Jesus right now, as loud as we can.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Alex. I am the new guy on staff. And I am with the Midtown campus team. I am so excited to say that we're going to be relaunching Midtown on January 23 of 2022. We're super excited about that.

I told myself I wasn't going to pander or promote our Midtown campus more than the other campuses, but I just can't help it. If you want to sign up to our launch team all you have to do is text the word Midtown to 87221 and you'll be part of the team.

We have an amazing staff team that we have put together. The Lord really has brought together an amazing group of people. I want to show to you this picture that I want to put in front of you. Now the people to my right and to my left in this image are amazing. They are rock stars, and I am trying to catch up to all of the work that they are doing.

We cannot wait to remove barriers so that people can know Jesus in Broad Ripple. All of us together at the church, let's just say thank you to the Lord Jesus and also to our leaders for giving us a chance to be in a multisite church—one church in many locations.

Now a little bit about me. I am from Venezuela originally. Everybody, wherever you're at, just repeat the word Venezuela with me. Say Venezuela. Some people hear Minnesota and then they look at me and they go, "Something doesn't add up."

I am also from Colombia. That's where my parents are from. And now I am an American citizen. So I am a proud mutt. But I'm also really proud to say that it is so good to be in a nation that is free. Those of you who are veterans, we salute you. We thank you for your service.

And one more thing. This is going to feel a little bit like an award show right now because I'm saying all of these thank yous, but I want to let you know that even though I've only been on staff for just over three months, you have had an influence in my life for the last two decades. Being from Venezuela, I grew up in a church that was planted by American missionaries. They are still in my life. And one of them, my pastor, was telling me a few weeks ago, "You don't even know the whole story about Traders Point in your life. You see, back when you were a teenager, we needed funds to build a camp so that our network of churches could have a place to disciple people and develop them in leadership."

And guess who was there to build that camp and to bring resources to that camp. It was Traders Point, among many churches. So I want to thank you for that as well.

Oftentimes we send resources to the mission field, and we don't know the results of that. So here is a short report that I have for you. Some of the people who were trained in that camp, they became ministers, they became missionaries. Some of them were sent to Asia, others were sent to Africa, some of them are here in the United States or other parts of the American continent. And it's all because of your efforts and your dedication.

Especially some of the people are still on staff. Rob Nance, who is part of our team, was part of that team that went to Venezuela. So I have had a lot of fun saying thank you to people on our staff and in this church for everything that you all have done.

But enough about me, let's just talk about Jesus right now. Are you with me? Okay let's go to Romans, chapter 9, verses 30 to 32. I have an amazing task, which is to dive into chapter 9 and chapter 10.

Our lead pastor and our teaching pastor have been leading us through an amazing series called Recalibrate. I think it is so timely. And I'm so grateful for their leadership and their teaching. And I want to also honor them for just teaching us over the last few weeks. It is very gutsy to teach the book of Romans in the midst of this season. So thank you to our leaders. And thank you to my mom and dad for watching.

Romans, chapter 9, verses 30 to 32 says this:

*"...Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God's standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place. But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him."*

The title of this message is:

OVERCOMING THE RATING SYSTEM

Let's pray.

Jesus, thank You for Your love and for using us and for bringing us together. Even though we're from different parts of the world, You have willed for us to be here. May You speak, not the words from my flesh or my heart, but straight from Your Holy Spirit on to all of us, convict us, challenge us, and lead us in Your holy name, Jesus, Son of God. Amen.

My wife and I dated long distance for two-and-a-half years. She was here in the US, and I was in South America. So we used a lot of phone minutes. A couple of decades ago we had to use phone cards. Those of you who are a little older, you know what a phone card is. You'll be dating yourself if you know what a phone card is.

We had to use phone cards to talk to one another. We pride ourselves on the fact that we actually bankrupted a phone company because we used a phone card so much. My father had bought me this international calling card. And I was so excited about it because I could now finally call the girl of my dreams. But all I had was 30 minutes. Every month I would call her and only talk to her 30 minutes, which was really hard.

But little by little I started to go over the 30 minutes just to see what my dad would do. And then the bill came, and it didn't charge me any overtime. So I added another 20. And later on I added on another 30. And little by little we were using this phone card for hours, oftentimes not even saying anything to one another. We would do this very corny:

"Did you hang up?"

"No, I didn't."

"Alright, I didn't hang up either."

It was so cute. And you all, one day the bill came. And this is when I learned to pray on my knees because this bill was over \$1,200, and that's several years of somebody's salary where I come from. So I just had to put this into practice. I had been learning about prayer and I thought, "Well, let me get on my knees and figure out if this thing works." And I went, "Jesus, if You exist, if You are in my life, if Your power is so great, please spare me from having this conversation with my dad, because he's going to have to pay for this, not me."

This is what happened. The next bill was not really a bill. It was a guilt trip. It was a letter that came from the phone company that started with, "Dear Customer," it was sarcastic, "Because of customers like you who have not paid their bill, we are closing our doors for good. You don't owe us anything." And I said, "Hallelujah! Glory to God. God is good and He exists now and forevermore."

The reason I mention all of this is because that's how I feel the gospel is in my life. I have made so many mistakes. I have sinned in so many ways. In other words, I've dishonored God in so many ways. And He looked up the bill and even though I was guilty for the bill, He said, "You don't have to do this." I could bankrupt Him; He has given everything to me. And that is the gospel that helps me stand here with you today. Jesus took our bill, and He forgave all of our sins. Amen?

And in the first three chapters of the book of Romans, Paul is explaining this. He begins by saying that we're all sinners, but we can be made right with God. And there is a crescendo that we have seen in the last two chapters and then we get to chapter 9. And there is an absolute change. He changes direction because he wants to address the issue that has been a part of the church in Rome. When these Jewish believers were coming back after five years in exile they began to establish division with their Gentile brothers and sisters.

This is what I think that we are doing. I think that we're rating one another. I'm using the word rate or rating because it is a more modern way of saying judging. And we're really good at this.

We're really good at judging. I am a professional judger. I love to rate. And I know that you do to. And I want to put it in modern terms so that we can relate to this.

When American Idol became a thing in the early 2000s some of us were just loving the fact that we could judge others by calling or texting without being judged back.

And there are apps now on our phones that allow us to judge experiences and so we leave ratings and reviews on Google or Yelp. Raise your hand here or at all of our campuses if you have Yelp loaded in your phone or Google. Now, nobody is raising their hand—okay, so you're lying in church just so you know. I know that there are many people who do have that.

People go crazy on Yelp and Google reviews. So I want to show you a few examples. Here's somebody who went very poetic about a garden decoration.

This person said:

Out of the corner of the eye the portly frog's visage seems to shift to motion in a sublimely artistic way. Like the Mona Lisa, the emotion conveyed by the face is complex and nuanced. This is no ordinary lawn ornament. It is a jewel of art worthy of the Louvre and unappreciated by all but the few who are fortunate to stumble onto it.

This dude has to get a life.

Here's another one. This person is rating a restaurant and I think that he actually rated this restaurant with a little bit more stars than they deserved.

"Good food but not happy about the rat that ran right up the middle of the aisle by my table, not happy at all. I am so sad to say this because I kind of liked the place."

He gave it two stars because of the rat. I would have done zero.

Here's my favorite one though. This dude was actually taken to jail, and he rated his jail on Yelp. He said:

As far as jails go, (so he's a connoisseur) this is the crème de la crème. First off, you don't even need a ride there. They pick you up from anywhere in the county. And sometimes they even get you out of bed and bring you and it's all free of charge.

So now we know how jails work, there's a review here to help us out.

It turns out that there is an app that helps you not only rate experiences at places, but it helps you rate people. And it's called People with two 'e's, the Yelp for people.

And I want to show you a screenshot (by the way, this is not on my phone, I don't want you to think that I do this) but you can actually rate anyone you meet by saying positive, neutral, or negative. Here's the disclaimer. Nobody rates this sermon on People. I need some grace.

The reason I am showing you all of this is because we are prone to judge, we are prone to rate. We may not do it on an app, but we do it in our hearts. And the last couple of years have unveiled and highlighted in a much greater way this ugly aspect of the human condition, which is that we rate people.

We judge people based on this point of reference that is us. Whether they do something right or not, they believe something we may or may not believe, we make an opinion and now we have tools where we can voice our opinions and ostracize them. And you all, I've been guilty of this. This is not a condition of the American people; this is a condition of humanity.

I'm not saying this to guilt us into anything, but to really understand how we can rise above this rating system. Because whether it is the more than 600 commandments in the Old Testament or the ideas that we have for our own lives, one way or another, we establish boundaries, we judge others, we push them away, and we're very vocal about it to the rest of the world.

So what does Paul say about this? We are at Romans 9, and I want to begin in verse 2 so I can show you how he changes this crescendo in the book of Romans and stops so that he can say this in verse 2:

*"My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief..."*

In the original language this is a very physical worry, the emotion that he is feeling is deep and visceral. In his gut he feels something for his people, the Jewish people, the Jewish nation. In the whole book he has been making the presentation: my Jewish brothers and sisters. They have decided to trust the law, all of the commandments, more than trusting God. He says:

*"My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief..." for my people, "... my Jewish brothers and sisters... They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises."*

He is saying, "These people of Israel, they had a mission, they had a purpose, they were to receive the promise of God. They were to be the cradle of the Messiah. And they are missing out. Why are they missing out?" Because they are trusting their bloodline more than they are trusting the blood of Jesus.

They are putting their eyes on something that made them exclusive, over 600 commandments that, if they could fulfill all, gave them capacity to say, "You're not doing it. You are here and you're missing out on 430 of them. You tried really hard, but you're still short on your 10."

I finally got my Indiana driver's license, by the way. And I'm so proud because this state is so difficult with driver's licenses. Twenty years ago, when I first came to this country, I tried to take the test. There were 100 questions, and you could only miss about three of them. Who can beat those odds?

I tried three times and eventually the state judged me, a driver who was not supposed to be driving in these streets. There was a judgment that came on me. So I did what anyone would do, I went to another state. I got a license in another state and then eventually transferred it here 20 years later. Because I missed all of the questions and I was not able to have that blessing and that privilege here.

The people of Israel, this nation, they were focusing on something that was not what God meant for them to focus on. So it makes some people ask the question when they look at Christianity, when they look at the church, people ask the question, "Is God really that exclusive? That we would have to fulfill hundreds and hundreds of commandments in order to be perfect."

This is why Paul is talking to a group of people who are not perfect, because there is no way to fulfill all of those commandments. We keep reading in verse 6 because Paul addresses a question that he knows that he's going to get from the Christians at Rome, which is, "Well, if God gave the promise to Israel, if He chose them, did He fail?" He says, "No," in verse 6. And this is the explanation:

*"... for not all who are born into the nation of Israel are truly members of God's people! Being descendants of Abraham doesn't make them truly Abraham's children. For the Scriptures say, 'Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted,' though Abraham had other children, too. This means that Abraham's physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. Only the children of the promise are considered to be Abraham's children."*

He's saying, "You cannot confuse heritage with faith." And he gives us one of three examples in this chapter. I trust you will find the other two in your own reading.

But in this first example he says, "Look at Abraham. Abraham, who was not Jewish, was called from the land of Ur and he was brought to the Promised Land, he was cool without having the proper bloodline or the proper heritage in that he had a son as part of the promise. He also had other children. And Paul is saying it is this one child who was chosen to fulfill the promise that was given to Abraham making him the father of all nations."

But this promise is not necessarily a promise that makes God exclusive, it's a promise that shows us the purpose that Isaac had as Abraham had him—part of the fulfillment of this promise.

Now, why did this nation do this? Why are the people of Israel looking at the law in this way? If nobody's perfect, and they know it, the leaders of Israel know then they themselves are not perfect, and their reason is: Because we pick and choose.

And we do this with the Word of God. Those of us who have been believers for a long time, we pick and choose the commandments that we want to fulfill, and we think that that is good enough to receive the favor and the grace of God. In fact, that's how the world sees us.

There is a writer who gave a TED Talk, a presentation, and then wrote a book called *The Year of Living Biblically*. His name is A. J. Jacobs. And what he did is he spent a whole year trying to fulfill all the 600 plus commandments that he found in the Old Testament.

He let his beard grow and even rented a goat once. He tried to stone an adulterer by picking up a little pebble and throwing it at somebody he knew was committing adultery. And by the end of that year this is his conclusion, "Finally I learned that thou shall pick and choose. And this one I learned because I tried to follow everything in the Bible, and I failed miserably."

Can anybody relate? We can't do it. We have to pick and choose and anyone who follows the Bible is going to be picking and choosing—the key is to pick and choose the right parts.

This is what the world sees in Christianity. And the reason why the world sees us that way is because we tend to live this way. We pick and choose, and they get to see our gaps.

I was thinking the other day, "What if I spent one day trying to live biblically?"

Trying to really obey all of the commandments." By 9 a.m. I probably would have broken several because I like to eat bacon with my breakfast. By 10 a.m. I probably would have sinned in my heart because I would have thought ill of people who actually know how to drive around roundabouts. By the way, what is up with all of the cul-de-sacs in this state? And how do you drive them?

It would be so hard for us to fulfill all of the commandments. But this is not what God wants us to understand. This is not for us to pick and choose and make other people feel bad because they are picking and choosing the commandments that are convenient to them.

The purpose of the law (if you've been reading the book of Romans and you have been here for the last few weeks as we've been unpacking this book you might remember) is to understand that we are sinners, to understand that we need God, and to see that God's plan for our lives is to pursue Jesus as we understand that He is pursuing us. Not to pick and choose, not to give our guilt to others who are picking and choosing commandments that are different for them, but for us to understand that the law was given to us so that we can see what sin is in our lives, but not so that we guilt others.

A few months ago I met a lady who had a terrible childhood. She was the daughter of a biker and her family belonged to this gang. It was the first time that I actually learned about some of what these gangs do. I have nothing against anybody who rides a motorcycle. But I know that this particular group was so terribly abusive of her that the things that she told me that she went through, I would not be able to share with you from this stage because it would give you thoughts that I don't want you to have.

And the reason she was sharing all of this was so that she could make the point that there was no way that she could be loved by Jesus. She is telling me, "I'm not perfect. I haven't done the right things. I have sinned over and over again. I didn't grow up in a Christian family. There is no way that God ought to love me because I've broken every single commandment that I see in the Word of God."

I think what we need to understand is that we need the love of Jesus because: God's love is offered without requirements. God's love is offered to us without any kind of background or pedigree.

So if there is anybody here who needs to hear this this morning, I don't know who you are but you may need to hear this: regardless of your past, regardless of what you have done, regardless of what people have done to you, regardless of how many commandments you have broken out of the 600 plus, God is offering His love to you without any kind of requirement or any kind of background or bloodline or heritage or pedigree.

He's not interested in that. He is interested in who you are today, He loves you today, and He's offering His love to you today. He loves us that much. Amen?

Paul continues to address these believers who are divided and now we enter into a territory that is a little controversial in chapter 9, because there is an idea that has been used to divide the church and I want to present to you my argument.

He says in Romans, chapter 9, verse 11:

*"God chooses people according to his own purposes; he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works."*

Now this is really good news to us because some of us are thinking, "I want to be called by God to do something for Him, but I don't know if I am worthy enough." And now we are understanding from the Word of God that He chooses people independently from our works, independently from our sin.

A lot of people take this choosing of people to say that God chooses and elects only those who are to be saved. And I don't know where you stand with that, but I personally know, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son for everyone."*

In fact, He is using the word here purpose. He has chosen the people that He mentions in this chapter, He has chosen all of us for a purpose. It's an election of service, not an election of salvation. Salvation is offered to all, and it's offered regardless of our sin. In fact, in verse 22 he says:

*"... even though God has the right to show his anger and his power,"* because He has created us, *"... he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction."*

Here's what we can learn from this, you all:



God's patience and purpose are greater than our sin.

His election is an election for us to understand our service to Him and our particular purpose in calling us to Him, but His salvation is offered to everyone. And He has a plan and election with a purpose with each and every single one of us.

And if we think, "Why should I be selected for this particular purpose?" The answer is: You've been selected because He loves you and to serve Him in a particular way, not because of your background, not because of where you come from, not because of your heritage, not because of your bloodline but because He loves you and His love is greater than our sin.

I love that Paul uses the word patience because I've got none. I am a horribly impatient person.

As I mentioned before, my wife and I dated for two-and-a-half years, long-distance—two different continents. And I remember waiting and waiting and waiting for her so much. And I remember telling people about her and because she was never there sometimes people thought I had an imaginary girlfriend, "Is she here right now? Am I stepping on her?" And then I would show them a picture of her, and they would go, "Psh. Yeah right."

For two-and-half-years I waited for her. Finally the Lord gave us the go ahead to get married. I sought the confirmation in prayer. And then the next step was to buy her a ring. I was a college student who was broke at that point. I had no money. So I sold a guitar that I had, and I went into a jewelry store, and they laughed at me because I am going to buy the smallest ring. And now I like to call this ring the ring of faith, because it was as big as a mustard seed but the fruit that it yielded is amazing.

You see, God is pursuing us with patience. He's going after us. And He wants us for salvation and for purpose. He wants us so that we can be forgiven and so that we can have a mission with Him and a calling.

Let's keep reading in Romans, chapter 9, verses 30 to 32. Paul gives us a summary of these few words that he shares with us. He says:

*"What does all this mean?" This is a summary. I probably should have started there. "Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God's standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place. But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him."*

They were trying to seek God's favor by doing the things and God is not as interested in us doing the things if our hearts are not following Him and full of Him.

In modern terms, most of us here probably don't have a Jewish background.

Some of us, most of us, may have a Christian background. And if you don't have a Christian background you can still see this. Some of us who are believers, we put our trust in Christian activity. And putting our trust in Christian activity is not the same as actively trusting Christ. Amen?

We are enamored with doing the things of the ministry. We love to be part of the church, we're doing things and we are serving people, but sometimes we fall in love with the activity more than actually loving Christ in a personal way. Amen?

I remember a few years ago we were living next door to this man who was a recluse. And I didn't really know why he wouldn't come out of his home. But I saw that our neighbors would take care of his yard. And it was really weird for me because you would think that I would be great at taking care of yards, but I'm horrible at taking care of yards.

So, I wanted to get in well with the people of the neighborhood. And I realized that the one thing that I could do was to bring in his trash cans after they were emptied. So I started to do this week after week. And sometimes I tried to time it in a way that my neighbors could see that I was doing something useful for this man. That I was bringing in these empty trash cans. Until one day I realized that some of his neighbors would do things for this man because they knew him. And I actually never got to know him.

I don't want us to miss the fact that we can know Jesus and that we can know Him is such a way that activity for Him becomes secondary. In other words, we probably could make the mistake that the Jewish people made of falling in love with the activity of doing things for God and for one another as opposed to falling in love with Jesus.

Some of us need to go back to the fact and we need learn to be sons and daughters of the King, regardless of what you love to do, which is very important. We should be gathering and serving, but we should be in love with Jesus and have a relationship with Him. Some of us need to understand this:

Trust in Jesus has to be greater than trust in holy tasks.  
We need to move away from that.

Then Paul, in chapter 10, moves away from this and he gives us a way to heal from all of this, which is why I love Romans, chapter 10 and I hope you do to. In Romans, chapter 10, he begins to give us the anecdote for this sickness that we have as humans. He begins by saying this, and I want to use it as a disclaimer. He says in verse 6 of chapter 10:

*"Don't say in your heart, 'Who will go up to heaven?'"*

Have you wondered about whether somebody is going to go to heaven or not? I knew a man once who was asked that by a co-worker. He was like, "Do you think I'm going to go to heaven because of the things that I do and don't do?" And I love the response this man gives his co-

worker. He says, "Well, you better not ask me, because it really is not up to me in the end. It's up to somebody greater."

So for us to say who's going to go to heaven or not, like the Jewish people were doing or like some of us do today, it's something that we've got to heal from.

Let's go to verses 10, 11, 12, and 13. He says this. This is the anecdote. This is the fix. This is medicine we need:

*"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved."*

Amen. Let's give glory to God for that. Then he makes things equal. He says:

"Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect." There is no racial supremacy in the kingdom of God. People from different backgrounds can all come together under Him. And he says:

*"They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For 'Everyone...'"*  
Everybody say everyone. Let me hear it. Let me hear you say it again as if you had a great breakfast this morning: everyone *"who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

You all, a relationship with Jesus is the anecdote against religion. It's the anecdote against the rating system. And what we do is, we take a series of statements like that, and we actually may decide to fill in the blank.

For some of us we decide on what we are putting in place of the gospel. And my question to you is, "What are we putting in place of Jesus?" Is it our family name? Is it the way that our heritage makes us feel or our bloodline or the way that we vote or the way we live, the way we dress, what we do for work, or is it the gospel?

We have to understand that we have fallen in this trap and the gospel is the anecdote against religion. And by that I mean that religion is a system of commandments that we use to rate or judge one another so that we can establish our preferences as our purposes, so that we can push others aside.

There are people in your life who, like me, I'm guilty of this—we have seen what they post, we know how they voted, we know the people they hang out with and in our hearts or maybe even vocally we have expressed judgment on them. And we need to understand that God's love is bigger than our sin, their sin, and that any judgment or opinion....

In fact, here's how I want us to understand this. This requires a surrendering. This is why the book of Romans is hard. And I hope that during this series you're not walking away from these messages thinking, "The preacher said exactly what I needed to hear, and I am so happy because I am doing things right." And if that is you, then you are following a god called self.

But hopefully we are all being challenged by the book of Romans and what Paul wrote that Jesus inspired him to understand. We have to surrender our understanding or our sense of preferences and our sense of what people ought to do or not to do in order for them and for us to know Jesus.

I want us to hang on to that word surrender. Because what we need to do is to surrender our judgment of others so that God's love through us can be greater than the opinions that have been implanted in us. We are all, at some point or another, exposing, expressing, repeating opinions that we have made based on points of reference in our lives that may not be what God wants. And we have to surrender all of that.

This is a great time for us to understand that we have to out love people's opinions. We have to out love our own preferences. We have to out love those who think that because of how they live or what they do that we're not going to like them because we're believers, because we are Christians.

And if you've found somebody in the last few months or years who has said, "You probably won't like me because you're a Christian and I do this or that or the other," you need to spend time getting to know that person and out loving that person.

In fact, Paul gives us not only a solution for this problem of the religious system, but he also gives us a strategy, because the natural question is, "What do we do? What do we do about all of this?"

He says in Romans, chapter 10, verses 14 and 15, about them, the Gentiles that these Jewish believers should love:

*"But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, 'How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!'"*

What he is saying here is, if you are saved you are sent and if you are sent then you must love in the way that Jesus loves, and you must proclaim the love of Jesus. And this doing is not for us to earn salvation, this doing is so that other people can know the love of Jesus in such a way because they can see by our actions and by our words, "God loves me in spite of who I am. God loves me no matter what. And I want to now surrender my life to Him."

So our role is to stop judging, to surrender to His love, to spread His love everywhere. And if we see people posting something that we disagree with, we surrender our opinions, we stop rating people, and spread His love onto them intentionally.

If we see people who are sick with the virus of sin, which is an even greater pandemic, we decide to be sent because we are loved and to show love to those who need to see that kind of love.

If we see people who don't understand what our faith is about and they think that it is about adding and subtracting commandments, then we can say, "It is so not about that. It's about the fact that God loves you, God pursues you, and I'm here to do the same because I am saved, and I am sent and because you need to hear I will tell you. Because you need to see, I will show you the love of Jesus that helps me overcome this rating system." Amen?

And all of that exposition is for us to understand that we can leave all of that behind, we can be thankful for the law, never disrespect it, but we can rise above the rating system so that others can know the love of Jesus beyond opinions and beyond this world.

Let's pray:

Jesus, thank You for speaking to us through Your Word. May we be able to receive the challenge and to follow You and to say yes to You, regardless of our background, regardless of what we may think of ourselves, so that others who have been bogged down by their own background or what they think of themselves can know You, Jesus. That we may rise above this rating system that we have built so that other people can know Your love and other people can be saved and they, themselves, can be sent.

Jesus, take our lives and take this church that we'd be able to give You glory with everything we do. And we pray these things in Your powerful name, Jesus, redeeming Son of God. Amen.

Let's stand up and worship Him.