

TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

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It's Time to Declare Bankruptcy

01
Pastor Tim Dilena

"The whole world is bankrupt, it's just that not everyone has declared bankruptcy yet."

—C. S. Lewis

How does the story of a man getting a speeding ticket in a little city outside of Dallas, Texas go viral on YouTube? None of my tickets ever went viral. The young man in the video drove every day with an expired registration to a minimum wage job. He struggled to make ends meet for his new family. Unable to afford the bills for both his home and the car, something had to be sacrificed. One day while driving, he saw a red light behind him pulling him over. When the officer asked for his license and registration, he immediately came clean. "Officer, I needed to either feed my family or pay for registration. I chose food. I am guilty. It's been hard." The officer took the young man's license and returned after a few minutes with the ticket.

Now we probably would have shown mercy and not given him the ticket, but he had broken the law; he deserved the ticket. He needed to pay for it but could not. With his head down, he opened the ticket. The policeman had cited him for driving with an expired registration. But the reason the story went viral is because the officer had included a \$100 bill with the citation, to pay for it!

The offense: He broke the law. The problem: He could not pay for his trespass. The blessing: It was paid for him.

“ The offense is sin; the remedy is the cross. The remedy means little if the debt is denied. ”

The Offense: The entire world has received a citation from God. "What is the offense?" you might ask. The answer: We are all sinners. The Bible tells us, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 NASB); and "as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10 KJV).

You may ask yourself, why is sin such an offense? A verse that many may be familiar with, John 3:16, says, "For God so loved the world..." Yet the God who so loves us, hates sin and evil. "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; You cannot tolerate wrongdoing" (Habakkuk 1:13 NIV). God deeply loves the world, but He cannot tolerate sin. "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2 NKJV). The condition of God's beloved

people has separated them from Himself. So how do we pay for the offense and bridge that separation?

The Problem: We cannot pay for the offense, nor can we fix it ourselves. Therein lies the dilemma. What God furiously hates is in those He passionately loves. How does God deal with the people He loves who are in the condition He hates? How does He deal with the citation? Who can atone for it?

When I was growing up, I couldn't exactly define what a rhetorical question was. I just knew there were certain questions you should not answer because they were not meant to elicit a response. Here are some of the big parental rhetorical questions I heard growing up: Are you still awake? How many times do I have to tell you? Who's making all this noise? Are you deaf? I quickly learned that a rhetorical question is asked for a purpose other than obtaining the information it is asking for.

God is our Father and He wrote the Bible. In Proverbs, we can see God the Father speaking to His children, through Solomon, asking us a massive rhetorical question when he asks "Who can say, 'I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin'?" (Proverbs 20:9 NASB). He was not looking for an answer. He was making a huge statement—creating an exclamation point with a question mark!



This same statement is later emphasized by God through John when he says, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10 NASB).

Both John and Solomon declare that no man can fix his sin issue by himself. A third party is needed. If the "he" in 1 John 1:9, is not God, then you must come up with your own cleanser. Many people are trying to do just that. Some compare themselves with people who are worse than them, thereby considering themselves clean. Others attempt to use the scales of good deeds over bad deeds. In fact, all religions, apart from Christianity, teach that heaven or the afterlife is what we get as a result of our good works. There are also those who try to cleanse only the outside—attempting to look good without actually being good. And then there are people who create a whole theology that everyone is basically good anyway, so we all go to heaven no matter what. However, the Bible tells us in Mark 10:18 that "only God is good!" One of the worst crimes of humanity is to try to fix this separation from God on our own.

If any of these other cleansers that people have come up with were indeed effective, then Jesus coming to die for our sin was a scandal, and God is a fool. We must conclude that we cannot fix our own sin condition. The Bible refers to this condition as a debt we owe. In other words, we must declare bankruptcy!

That is the message of the cross, but the only way for it to be effective is if we do not attempt to mitigate sin ourselves. The offense is sin; the remedy is the cross. The remedy means little if the debt is denied.

The word atonement means taking action to amend a wrong that has been done. When you apologize for doing something wrong, that is an act of atonement. Perhaps you are wondering, "Why did Jesus have to die on the cross to forgive my sin? Why is sacrifice necessary for the atonement of sin?" Simply put, justice demands it. A debt cannot be forgiven without a payment; it is not settled with a mere, "I'm sorry."

Very few people have owned a credit card without plunging into debt at some point or another. Now imagine you ended up in debt and decided to change your spending habits. You call up VISA and say, "Please forgive me. Yes, I racked up \$5K by undisciplined spending, but I'm fixing my ways. Going forward, I will only charge what I can pay for at the end of the month." What will they say? "Great, but you still must pay what you owe!" In the same way, some people are making promises to God, saying, "I'm going to be a better person. I'm going to start coming to church." God says, "Great, but you still must pay the debt you owe."

The Blessing: In our case, the blessing was not a \$100 bill or an apology, but a crucified Savior who paid the debt for you and me. At the cross, the citation was dipped in the blood of Jesus as our payment! Christ's death on the cross was the action taken by God to fix the wrong that we have done. The atonement—the payment—is the cross. Through Jesus' death, the debt has been paid and our separation from God has been bridged. Jesus' death was our payment—in full!

Rising from Weakness to Victory

02

Stan Jouk, 212 Next Director

Seasons are a part of life. You can't lock-in unending victory. And no matter your failure, it is not an indicator of your future, either. Each season is marked by unique battles and temptations that set a stage in which we are to search out and prove God's Word true.



The sixth chapter of Judges marks a miserable season for God's people. Just prior to this is a chapter-long song of victory by Deborah and Barak, who saw God do the impossible, but now things were very different. Midian, along with other raiding peoples of the east, swept down on Israel's settlements at unexpected times to devour all the produce of the land. They left behind no sustenance, no sheep, or ox or donkey—they laid waste to Israel. God's people had no power to stand against their enemies and were brought very low. Israel had to hide their meager supplies in dens and caves and lived day-to-day fighting for survival.

Many of God's people are living out a similarly miserable season. The challenge of making it through each day easily extinguishes any hope of living for the higher call of God. But it was a season in which God's people cried out to Him and a deliverer was raised up from among them.

I love this story because God reveals His great power through a willing but underwhelming vessel, Gideon. The only true hero here is God. The preincarnate Christ appears to Gideon, calling him to

deliver Israel from great oppression. It's a picture of Jesus meeting His people at their lowest to empower them for the impossible. No matter how long defeat and oppression reigned, when Jesus is revealed, everything can change.

God chose to empower Gideon with two simple reminders in Judges 6:12, "The Lord is with you," and you are a "mighty warrior." Gideon immediately protested. He saw his powerlessness, low status, Israel's track record and, most of all, the sense of abandonment by God as insurmountable obstacles to God's call. No one like him had any strength before, where would sufficient power for deliverance suddenly come from?

The power would come from the call itself! The angel of the Lord reiterated His previous words and simply called Gideon to step out in the only strength he had, his weakness (vs. 16). Our actual strength with God is knowing well that we have none, this is what makes us able to do God's work. The New Testament reminds us that His strength is perfected in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). The proficient knowledge of our own weakness is what makes us able to operate in God's power.

Gideon simply had to step out in obedience towards intimidating situations and impossible odds, God did the rest. We have many reasons for why we don't rise to face terrifying opposition, but it's ultimately our ignorance that keeps us from winning impossible victories. Instead, we must choose to obey the call of God who has specifically chosen our weakness to attain victory.

God Calls a Leader in Crisis

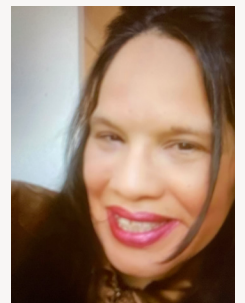
03

Luz Rodriguez

Luz currently leads two connect groups, "260 Journey" and "What Does God Have To Say? A Biblical Worldview from A to Z." But for over three years, Luz led the group, "Educational Awareness on Human Trafficking," because her daughter was kidnapped at age 15. After her daughter was kidnapped, Luz prayed fervently and constantly, walking the streets at all hours to look for her daughter. Church leaders, congregants and choir members prayed with her. Young people from church walked the streets with her to look for her daughter and post flyers until 3AM. Miraculously, her daughter was rescued after two excruciating weeks. "Through it all," Luz says, "God is faithful." She says this was the closest she's been to the Lord.

But the journey wasn't over. Her daughter had endured inconceivable trauma. The Lord gave Luz two words that she continues to hold onto: patience and process. During this ordeal, Luz joined a 260 Journey Connect Group. A few months into the group, her leader asked her to colead the group. Later her leader encouraged her to lead her

own group. This happened all while her daughter was still recovering, and Luz was working on court cases to convict two of the kidnappers. Luz thought she couldn't do it, but she obeyed and started a 260 Journey group.



Going through the study a second time, she learned new things. She said sometimes you think you're going through it, but then you hear other people's stories from different backgrounds. While leading the group, she was healed of the pain and trauma from her daughter's kidnapping. Talking to Luz, there is a common theme as she discusses the different connect groups she's taken part in: rejoice. In each group, there is rejoicing over who God is and what He says to them as they gather.

Summit Revival Services Recap



Summit recently concluded its annual Revival Services, spanning two days of impactful worship, the Word and community. Kicking off the event, Pastor Tim Dilena called on worship leaders from Times Square Church, Summit and World Challenge to come to the stage together, leading us in a worship moment that won't be forgotten. Our hearts were ignited with the message that our stories are not recast when we make mistakes, but rather, the script of our existence gets rewritten through God's divine intervention.

In an afternoon session with ministry leaders, Pastor Carter Conlon shared moments of his personal testimony, taking the time for questions and inspiring the group gathered with the importance of being led by the Holy Spirit to navigate life's journey. Pastor David Ham delivered a powerful message centered around the theme of saying "yes" to God's calling and purpose for our lives. Drawing from the biblical narrative of the Tower of Babel, he underscored the significance of yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit for kingdom impact.

Pastor Jay Fallon concluded the Revival Services with an invigorating session focused on the essence of revival and resurrection power. "Revival", he implored, "is being aware of who He is. We need to be aware of His presence in our lives. God revive our capacity to believe!"

You can hear these impactful services in their entirety by visiting Summit International School of Ministry's YouTube channel. God never fails to show up when we set aside this time to seek Him at these annual services. If you were with us in person, thank you for taking the time to worship with us. We pray you were as blessed as we were! If we missed you this time, we look forward to seeing you next year.



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