**SLIDE 1 He will not leave the guilty unpunished**

Series: God Selfie

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Tracy Spaur

**Bumper:**

Props: buckhorn knife

Video

Intro: We’ve been talking about God’s selfie which caused me to think about my image of God as I was growing up. When I was 11 years old we moved from the urban area surrounding Washington DC to the rural Virginia county of Louisa. We attended a small church in Mineral, which at the time, I did not realize was the earthquake center of Virginia. We attended the Mineral Wesleyan Church, as that was the closest thing to a Nazarene church. Behind the pulpit was a picture of Jesus that I would stare at during the boring sermons.

**SLIDE 2** I found a picture of that from 1967. (show pic Wesleyan church) See if you can pick me out. I don’t remember why we were on stage but behind them you can see the picture of Jesus that hung there.

That was my perception of Jesus.

Since then, I learned that Jesus was not a Caucasian but a mid-eastern man with darker skin and dark hair. No one knows what Jesus actually looked like.

**SLIDE 3** Some claimed that the Shroud of Turin was a possible image of the resurrected Jesus. (show pic of Shroud of Turin)

This shroud has been kept at the Cathedral of Turin in Northern Italy since 1390 when it was claimed as the burial cloth of Jesus. Recently radiocarbon dating of the cloth shot down that claim showing its origin in the Medieval period.

You would think that some kind of image of Jesus would have survived. I think it was God’s will that there not be any images because if there were people would turn it into an idol or a lucky charm.

Instead, what God gave us a word-picture that describes who God is. We’ve been studying that word-picture

God describes himself using 8 characteristics. What is the first word that God uses to describe himself?

1. Compassionate! He cares! God cares about your life.
2. Gracious! He doesn’t want to deal with you according to what you deserve. He wants to treat you better than you deserve!
3. Slow to anger – When you and I mess up, He is patient with us.
4. Abounding in steadfast love. Abounding means, he’s got a lot of steadfast love! It’s not a shaky love. Its not a fickle love. God loves you with a love that is steadfast.
5. and faithfulness. God is abounding in faithfulness. You can depend on him. He is trustworthy! Take it to the bank and cash it!
6. Keeping steadfast love to thousands - It’s not to just a few people, its to thousands….thousands plural. He’s got so much love that it keeps on giving to thousands!!!!!
7. He forgives iniquity, transgressions and sins – The condition of sin, the attitude of sin and the acts of sin!

That’s how God describes himself to you and me using those 7 characteristics.

But there’s one more characteristic to add today.

**The 8th one is the one that balances out the full picture of God’s selfie.**

It’s the only one that is written from a negative perspective. Are you ready for it?

**SLIDE 4 God is not a pushover.**

He is gracious and yes, he is forgiving, but **He’s not a pushover** and there are limits to his grace. His grace is deep but it is not bottomless.

To say it another way, He is a **God of law and order**. He is just.

On the one hand he’s a lot like Santa Claus. But on the other hand, he’s also like a good police officer or good judge.

**I love our police officers!** Many of them attend our church.

Police officers show a lot of mercy in what they do.

**(Officer pulling you over)** How many of you have been pulled over by a police officer and you know that you are in the wrong and you deserve a ticket but instead they had mercy on you and let you go with a warning? (hands)

Didn’t you appreciate that?

But what if the **next day** you did the same thing and the same police officer pulled you over and somehow they let you off again.

Then the **next day** you did it again!!! At some point… mercy runs out because you have demonstrated that you don’t respect the law.

You have abused the mercy and grace that has been extended to you and now it’s time for judgment.

If that police officer continues to let you off he would not be a good police officer. Right?

How about a different example ---- parents. It’s important to be merciful and gracious with your children, right?

But it’s important to have dependable boundaries too. If you say “stop” and they continue to disobey you, they are learning a dangerous lesson.

They are learning that authorities are there to be pushed over.

If children don’t learn to respect the authority of their parents, then they will have problems with all the other authorities in life.

They will disregard teachers, principals, police officers, judges and eventually they will be in jail.

If you as a parent, don’t teach your child to respect boundaries, and if they continue to disregard your warnings and you don’t consistently carry through your threats of consequences …. Are you being a good parent?

God is both gracious AND God is just. Not one extreme or the other. He is both.

**SLIDE 5** The eighth characteristic of God’s word-picture selfie, reads like this: **“He will not leave the guilty, unpunished.”**

In the Hebrew language of the Bible, that sentence has only three words.

**Unpunished, not unpunished.**

The unpunished who are guilty of wrongdoing, if not forgiven, will not go unpunished. No one gets off scot-free.

Those who refuse repentance and refuse forgiveness will face the justice of God and receive the appropriate punishment. God is just.

But, as Alan Greenspan once said, “I know you think you understand that you thought I said, but I’m not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.”

So, let’s understand that we are all guilty before God of sin.

With God, there is no plea-bargaining. There is no tilting the scales. God knows our hearts and he knows our actions. If he says we are guilty then we are truly guilty.

**(Story)** I was listening to K-Love Christian radio station the other day and They were telling the story of a drug dealer who was caught by police and as they were frisking him, they found a chunk of illegal drugs in the man’s pocket. As the police pulled out the drugs and looked at the man, the man said, “But these are not my pants!”

In God’s justice system, everyone he finds guilty **is truly guilty.**

“as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one;”

(Romans 3:10, NASB95).

 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

(Romans 3:23, NASB95).

We have all sinned in some way and even if we have not committed all the sins possible, **we’ve thought about it!**

**But the good news is this:** God has a greater desire to forgive than he does to punish sinners.

**SLIDE 6-7** “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9, NASB95).

God does not want to punish you. He wants to forgive you and then transform your nature and your desires change you.

**Jesus came down on Christmas and died on Easter**

**to take your punishment.**

However, if you refuse to humble yourself and repent of your sinfulness, **God’s justice awaits you. God is not a pushover.**

The Bible tells us that there is coming a final day of judgment. Justice will be served.

“And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.” (Revelation 20:12–13, NASB95).

On that day justice will be done.

- The unrepentant will be judged and sentenced. Nobody gets away with anything. God promises “the unpunished will not go unpunished.”

You might say, that’s scary! You are right!

It’s called **the fear of God.** And that fear is sorely lacking in our culture today.

You and I need a healthy respect for God and his character of justice.

Yes, God is gracious and forgiving, but there are limits. God is not a pushover!

So, if you and I are smart, we will repent **now** and receive forgiveness **now.**

If we will do that, God’s forgiveness will completely remove the guilt of sin. **Hallelujah! That’s our message!**

Forgiveness is awesome! The debt to God can be paid in full.

But does that mean that sin is “no big deal”?

NO, because sin generates a second debt: The debt of negative consequences. These consequences have a lasting negative effect on ourselves, our families and others.

**The two debts that sin causes must be paid.** Let’s look at them individually:

**SLIDE 8 1. The debt against God.**

I have an announcement to make. This is not your world. This is God’s world.

There is a famous hymn that says, “This is My Father’s World.” That hymn reminds us that we are sojourners, pilgrims, travelers, tourists in God’s world.

This is God’s world and he has given you and me the privilege of living in it. It’s his earth, his air, his water, his food, his creation.

**SLIDE 9 You and I are renters.**  **We rent from God.**

We do not own anything, we are squatters.

100 years from today, your name will not be on any title.

We live in an illusion of permanence. We only rent temporarily. This my Father’s World, as the hymn says, “God is the ruler yet.”

So, when you and I sin, we violate God’s world. We pollute his world.

All sin is a sin against God.

Example #1 - In Genesis chapter 39, we read the story of Joseph and how he was enticed by his employer’s wife to have sex while her husband was out of town. Joseph said, “How could I do this great evil and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9)

Joseph understood the important truth that many of us have forgotten. All sin is a sin against God.

**SLIDE 10** Example #2 - That’s why David wrote in his confession, “Against **You**, You **only**, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight… ” (Psalm 51:4, NASB95).

We are tempted in our stupidity to think, “As long as I don’t get caught it’s okay.” No! It’s not okay. Because God caught you.

We look around and breathe a sigh of relief, “Oh good, nobody saw me.” Yes, someone did see you! You sinned against God!

**Example:** The other day I was at Walmart. There was this guy with his family in the outside garden section. He had in his hand a blue canister that looked like an Air Conditioning recharging canister. He looked around and then walked out of the garden area and went to his car parked near to the entrance and opened his trunk and put the canister in his trunk. Then he walked back in the garden section and rejoined his family like nothing had happened. I thought to myself, I just witnessed him stealing a $30 recharger and he got away with it. Or …did he?

**SLIDE 11** All sin is against God and all sin incurs a debt to God.

That man created a debt to God.

**Account transfer:** The good news is that if he will call on Jesus to forgive that debt. Jesus has this huge credit balance on his account! When He died on the cross, His death set up a large enough endowment that will pay the debts of all our sins!

Forgiveness is when Jesus transfers the payment for our sin from his account to our account and completely pays the debt!

That’s why we confess our sin to God and receive forgiveness from Jesus! Woo who!

Jesus completely pays the debt!

However, that’s not the only debt that needs to be paid. There is a second debt that occurs when we sin,

**SLIDE 12 2. The debt of negative consequences.** God can remove the moral guilt of our sin, but he does not remove the negative consequences of our sin.

**For example,** when someone lies to you and then asks you to forgive them. You can immediately forgive them, but you cannot trust them like you did before. The next time they tell you something, you are not going to trust them as much as you did.

Listen,

**Forgiveness is a gift, but trust is earned.**

The negative consequence of the sin of lying is the loss of trust.

That’s why sin is so damaging. It creates debts to God, to yourself and to others.

**It’s the principle of consequences.** What we do has effects on us and those around us either positively or negatively.

**Illustration:** Let’s say that I decided to cut my bathtub in two because I thought it would be fun. And I also thought it would be fun to videotape it for the selfie challenge… take a look!

**(VIDEO-bathtub)**

The next time someone takes a bath in that tub, there will be consequences. In fact, every time anyone in my family takes a bath in that tub from now on, there will be consequences.

God is warning us that sin has consequences for us and our families.

The iniquity of parents has negative effects on their children.

**SLIDE 13** God warns us in this 8th part of his selfie that “the negative effects of the iniquity of the parents is passed on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”” (Exodus 34:7).

Some of you have experienced the negative effects of the iniquity of your parents and grandparents.

**Example:** In my family, my father had an anger inside of him that erupted from time to time on everyone in our family. That anger injured me emotionally. His anger came from harm done to him by his father, and his grandfather.

So that anger caused hurts that were passed on from generation to generation.

When I felt that same anger welling up inside of me I began to ask God where does this anger come from????

I learned from a wise teacher, that the roots of my anger came from emotional hurts inside of me that needed healing. I started asking God to heal my inner hurts. He led me on a path of discovery and healing. I read books by Christian psychologists who showed me how the emotional harm from fathers is passed on to their children. Just like God warned that it would be passed on from generation to generation.

God healed me over time through his grace and love. Christian counseling helped me as well, as my counselor showed me the roots of my pain and the Spirit of God healed me at the roots of my pain.

**People who have generational hurts act out in different ways: Some…**

- Become avoiders. They run away from their hurt and avoid conflict.

- Become clowns. They escape though humor. They distract from their pain by clowning around.

- Become addicts. They escape their pain through self-medications like alcohol or narcotics or sedatives.

- Become victims. They take on the identity of a victim and see themselves as powerless.

- go the opposite way and become control freaks. They try to control their environment to protect themselves from further harm.

- Become bitter. They become the sarcastic complainer. A bitter person who criticizes everyone around them.

- Become achievers. They try to compensate by achieving goals

- Become better. They seek healing through the power of God and the gift he gives to counselors and wise friends.

That’s what I did. I wanted to become better. Even though I was not responsible for what happened to me, I was responsible to do whatever it took to get better.

You may not be responsible for the hurt that others have done to you, but you ARE responsible to get better.

**SLIDE 14 You need to own your recovery.**

You need to own your issues.

Victims don’t get better.

You have to own your recovery.

**(“Pass the Buck” story)** Back in the Frontier days, people would play cards at night because there were no cell phones or TVs. So each one would take turns dealing the cards. As the story goes, many of them carried knives (Buckhorn knife) with buckhorn handles. To keep up with who was supposed to deal next, someone would lay their buckhorn knife on the table pointed toward the next dealer. If they didn’t want to deal, they could pass the knife to the next player. It became known as “passing the buck.”

This saying become a euphemism for not taking the responsibility that you were supposed to take and “passing the buck” to someone else. “Passing the buck” became synonymous with being irresponsible.

**SLIDE 15** (Pic of President Truman) President Harry Truman is famous for having a plaque on his desk that read, “The Buck Stops here.” That meant he wasn’t going to pass the buck, but he was going to take responsibility to act. The Buckstop here!

So, when the iniquity of your parents or grandparents rolls down to you, you need to:

**SLIDE 16** STAND UP AND SAY, **“IN JESUS’ NAME, I AM THE BUCKSTOP GENERATION!”**

There is hope!

1. Hope to heal. God can heal your wounded heart. His love can heal the hurts of rejection and abuse. That healing can help you be “The Buckstop Generation” in your family.
2. Hope to change. God can change your heart. He can take out your heart of stone and give you a new heart. He can help you change your behavior. He can change situations and bring miracles.
3. Hope to cope. God can give you the grace to endure the consequences that can never be reversed.

-His grace is sufficient for our every need!

**The same grace that held Jesus on the cross**

**can hold you as you bear your cross.**

There’s hope to heal, there’s hope to change, there’s hope to cope and there’s ….

4. Hope for the future. Because the Law of Consequences not only works for the negative, but it works for the positive effects as well. You can be the buckstop person who stops the negative and starts the positive consequences.

(describe an imaginary ripple video)

You can be a blessing to those around you and cause POSITIVE ripples. You can be the….

**Buckstop generation AND the Blessing Start generation**

5. Hope of heaven. Even if nothing gets better for now. It’s not eternal, it’s temporary. You have the certain hope of heaven!

There may be l**asting** effects in your life but it’s not **everlasting**!

Prayer