

**I. Pain Machine**

- A. This fallen world is a morally broken Pain Machine. I am very conscious of this truth. Every time I stand before you, I know that everyone comes with some problems. Everyone comes here with pain, with struggles, with hardships, with opposition, and sometimes with sorrows too great to bear.
  - 1. The stories are real.
  - 2. The pain is right there, right at the surface.
  - 3. For some, the tears are ready to fall.
  - 4. No one gets a pass from the Pain Machine.
- B. I am preaching today within days of the murder of our brother, Charlie Kirk. Whatever else he is, he is exactly that. A Christian and therefore our brother in our family of faith. A human created in the image of God. A husband. A father. A missionary of the gospel of grace to a generation. He died a martyr for the faith.
- C. This was pure evil. This was demonic.
- D. Because, you may not know it, but the rocket fuel of the morally broken Pain Machine is an invisible battle. It is a fierce and unceasing conflict between the forces of good and the forces of evil. God vs the devil. Angels vs demons. Truth vs deception. Light vs darkness. Heaven vs hell. Love vs hate.
  - 1. The Pain Machine was on display not only in in Charlie's cowardly assassination, but also in the absolutely despicable celebrations of it by so many people with hearts so shriveled they could look at that murder and laugh even as his panicked little girl ran to him.
  - 2. That's not just sick, it's evil.
    - a) It is demonic.
      - (1) This is mortal combat.
    - b) We lost one of our Generals this week.
    - c) I'm praying that God would raise up a 100,000 to replace him.
- E. I am convinced that if you could talk to Charlie Kirk right now in heaven, he would say the very words that our church studied last weekend:
  - 1. St. Paul looked at his impending execution by the Roman Empire, and he said, "I am being poured out as a drink offering."
  - 2. Which simply means, my whole life is a thank you card to God... and what you call an execution, what you call a tragedy, what you call a victory for evil, what you call my martyrdom, I call the sign-off on my lifelong thank you card to God.
    - a) So was Charlie. The end. Love Charlie Kirk.
- F. This fallen world is a morally broken, demonically fueled Pain Machine.
  - 1. If I did not believe there is an answer, I would feel overwhelmed.
  - 2. If I did not believe there is an answer, I could not do what I do.
- G. But I believe with all my heart there is real and genuine and authentic hope.
  - 1. I would love to introduce you to the Answer, because the Answer is more than a philosophy or an idea or a program or a pill.
    - a) The Answer is a person, and His name is Jesus.
- H. And He's not a distant, disconnected answer. He's not a theory or a philosophy you study. He is the God who saw the Pain Machine —He saw the grief, the addiction, the betrayal, the loneliness, the sheer evil of it all—and He didn't look away.
  - 1. He stepped into it. God became human without ceasing to be God.
  - 2. He put on skin and bone, and He let the gears of that machine tear into Him for you. He took the worst of the pain, the worst of the sin, the worst of death, so that you wouldn't have to. He absorbed the penalties. He satisfied cosmic justice. He defeated the darkness and smashed the devil in the teeth.
    - a) Jesus is the answer to your pain because He's felt your pain.
    - b) He's the answer to your struggle because He's overcome the world.
    - c) He is the only human who can look the Pain Machine in the face and actually say, "I win."
- I. And that brings us to what's happening right here, right now.

**II. The Public Declaration**

- A. In a few minutes, you're going to see 59 people get into this water. I need you to understand what you are witnessing. This isn't just a religious ritual. This is their public answer to the Pain Machine. This is a line-in-the-sand moment.
  - 1. This is a jersey swap. They are publicly taking off the jersey of the team that has let them down—the team of striving, of self-reliance, of sin—and they are putting on the jersey of Jesus Christ. They are telling the world whose side they are on now.
  - 2. This is a public signing day. They are officially committing to a new contract, under new management, with a guaranteed outcome that the world cannot offer.
  - 3. This is the ultimate declaration of a new identity. They are standing up and announcing that their name is no longer "Addict," "Failure," or "Outcast." Their identity is now and forever tied to the only One with the power to make them clean.
- B. Every single person who steps into that water is looking the Pain Machine in the eye and serving it a final notice. They are saying:
  - 1. "You don't get the final say in my life.
  - 2. The anxiety doesn't win. The depression doesn't win.
  - 3. The addiction doesn't win. The failure doesn't win.
  - 4. The anger doesn't win. The illness doesn't doesn't win.
  - 5. The loneliness doesn't win. The discouragement doesn't win.
  - 6. The self-harm doesn't win. The lust doesn't win.
  - 7. Jesus wins. Only Jesus. Jesus wins."

- C. Their story of public victory begins with a private certainty. And that's what I want to talk to you about. Because God wants that for you, too.

### III. A Know-So Proposition

- A. The Apostle John, one of Jesus's closest friends, wrote this. Listen close, because he's writing this directly to you.
  - 1. *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may KNOW that you have eternal life..."* (1 John 5:13)
- B. I want you to lock in on that one word: KNOW.
- C. Not hope so. Not think so. Not "cross your fingers and pray you were good enough."
  - 1. God's standard for His children is absolute, settled, bedrock CERTAINTY. ASSURANCE. .
- D. Why is that so radical? Because the Pain Machine you live in runs on the fuel of uncertainty.
  - 1. You don't know what the doctor will say. You don't know if the business will survive. You don't know if your kids are going to be okay. The world is designed to keep you guessing, anxious, and afraid.
- E. Into that chaos, God makes you one, glorious, non-negotiable offer: Certainty. A settled confidence about the most important question of all questions: Where you will spend eternity.
- F. So how do you get it? How do you move from the anxiety of "I hope so" to the power of "I know so"?
- G. God didn't leave it to theory. He gave us a case study. A real-world example of a man who went from confusion to certainty in a single afternoon. He put a roadmap in the scripture to answer that exact question.
- H. This isn't an accident. You being here today, hearing this, is not a coincidence. Today is your appointment with destiny.
- I. Let's look at the story. It starts with a man and an angel...

### IV. Appointment with Destiny

- A. *"As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, 'Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza.' So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah."* (Acts 8:26-28)
- B. So how does God deliver this certainty? He orchestrates an Appointment with Destiny.
- C. Look at the story. It starts with a bizarre command from an angel to a man named Philip: "Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza." (Acts 8:26)
- D. No explanation. No mission briefing. Just a command to go to a barren strip of dirt. Philip has no idea why, but he obeys. He starts walking.
- E. Meanwhile, another story is in motion. A man from Ethiopia—7,500 miles from home. This isn't just any man. He is the treasurer for the queen. He is powerful, successful, a man who controls the wealth of a nation. He has everything the world says should make him happy.
  - 1. And he is spiritually starving.
  - 2. I have a feeling that there are some here today who could say the same thing.
- F. He's been to Jerusalem searching for God, and now he's heading home with more questions than answers, reading a scroll from the prophet Isaiah.
- G. Do you see the pieces on the board? A man sent by an angel to a desert road he doesn't understand. A powerful man, haunted by a question he can't answer. Two lives, moving on two separate tracks, are about to collide. This is not a coincidence. This is a setup.
- H. The Holy Spirit makes the final move. He says to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside that carriage." (Acts 8:29)
- I. The plan ignites.
  - 1. *"Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' The man replied, 'How can I, unless someone instructs me?' And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him."* (Acts 8:29-31)
- J. Philip asks the one question that matters: "Do you understand?"
- K. And the powerful man gives the most honest answer in the Bible: "How can I?"
- L. He had religion. He had the Word of God in his hands. But he was missing the key. And in that moment of raw honesty, he invites the man with the answer into his life.
- M. This is more than a chance meeting. This is an Appointment with Destiny.
- N. But he was missing 3 crucial elements. They're non-negotiable. I need these elements. You do. I do. We all do. Just like this leader from Ethiopia.

### V. PERSONAL CONFIDENCE

- A. That powerful man in the carriage was missing the one thing his money couldn't buy and his power couldn't command: Confidence before God. His situation brings us to the first and most important question you will ever answer.
- B. I invite you to be honest with yourself right now.
  - 1. **If you were to die today, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven?**
- C. I'm not asking if you hope so. I'm not asking if you're a good person. It's a simple yes or no question. Do you know? Do you know for sure?
  - 1. For many here today, if you're being real, the answer is "I'm not sure." No. I'm not confident. I don't know. I'm not sure."
  - 2. If you hesitate, you are in that carriage with him. You're seeking, you're trying, but that deep-down, settled, know-so confidence just isn't there. And that is the exact place God has been waiting to meet you.
- D. That's exactly where God wants to meet you. It's why he drew you here today in ways you can't even begin to imagine.
  - 1. *"The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this: 'He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. He was humiliated and received no justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was*

taken from the earth.” The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?” So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.” (Acts 8:32-35)

2. And with that question, Philip leans in. He doesn't give him a Bible study. He gives him the answer key to the universe.

#### VI. BIBLICAL CLARITY

- A. He connects the dots from that prophet, 800 years in the past, and shows him he was painting a crystal-clear portrait of Jesus Christ. He tells him that Jesus was the Lamb of God, led to the slaughter—to the cross—to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. Your sins. My sins. He took the punishment you deserved. He paid the debt you could never pay. He died for you, to pay for your sins and reconcile you to God.
- B. And then Philip drops the bombshell of grace.
  1. He looks this man in the eye—a man who, under the old religious law, was considered a permanent outcast, ritually excluded from the assembly of God—and he tells him:
    - a) “The barrier is gone. The rulebook has been torn up. The cross of Jesus Christ just kicked the door down for you. The invitation is for YOU.”
- C. This is the Good News! It's not about you being good enough for God; it's about God being good enough to go out and get you!
- D. This brings us to the second critical question.
  1. **If you were standing before God and He asked you, “Why should I let you into My heaven?” what would you say?**
    - a) Would you start listing your accomplishments?
      - (1) “Well, I was a pretty good person. I gave to charity. I tried my best. I wasn't as bad as that guy.”
    - b) Would list your religious stuff?
      - (1) Baptism. Confirmation. Confession. Communion. Rosaries. Devotions. Sacrifices. Obedience. Works?
    - c) What would you say?
    - d) Where would you point?
    - e) What's your answer?
- E. The only answer that works is the one that first Isaiah the prophet and then Philip the evangelist gave the Ethiopian.
- F. It's the answer I'm giving you today.
- G. The only answer that can ever give you or me or anybody an absolute know-so confidence is this:
  1. Why should you let me into heaven? Father, I am not worthy, but You should let me in because Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed on the Cross for my sins. I couldn't earn it, so He paid my way. I believe in him. My faith is in Jesus. Not in my goodness, my religion, my performance, my improvement, my efforts. My faith is all in with His sacrifice and Your Grace. God I'm with Jesus. That's why.”
- H. That is the biblical clarity that leads to personal confidence. And when that truth finally lands in your soul, it demands a response.

#### VII. The “POINT OF NO RETURN” CHOICE:

- A. That kind of truth—that bombshell of grace—isn't something you just file away for later. It doesn't ask for your consideration. It demands a verdict. It is a lit fuse, and what you're about to see is the explosion.
- B. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water.
  1. “As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptized?” He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing.” (Acts 8:36-39)
- C. Do you see the physics of this moment?
  1. This is spiritual spontaneous combustion. This is the Point of No Return.
  2. This is that pivotal, psychological threshold where your old life is no longer an option. The boats are burned. The bridges are turned to ash. Retreat is impossible.
    - a) He doesn't say, “That was a great message, Philip. I'll think about it and get back to you.”
    - b) He doesn't say, “Let me go home and get my life cleaned up first.”
  3. NO. The moment he understood the radical, scandalous, unconditional grace of God, his old way of thinking was incinerated. He wanted to identify with Jesus publicly and immediately.
- D. This is the Point of No Return. It is not the moment you commit to being good enough for God. It is the moment you finally and fully surrender to the fact that Jesus saves people who are not good enough for God. He makes you what he requires to you too be. It's a gift, not pay check. It's faith not works. He paid the price, not you.
- E. He started his journey confused and seeking. He ended it confident and celebrating.
- F. He moved from uncertainty to confidence, from confusion to clarity, and from consideration to a point-of-no-return choice.
- G. And now, so can you.

#### VIII. Your Divine Appointment

- A. So why this story? Why did God make sure this one conversation, on one desert road, two thousand years ago, was recorded for eternity?
- B. He did it for you.
- C. This isn't just history; it's a mirror. God wrote this down because He knew you would be here, in this room, at this exact moment. The same Holy Spirit that told Philip to run to that chariot has orchestrated your life to hear my words today.
- D. That feeling in your chest right now? That stirring in your soul? That is not a coincidence. That is your Appointment with Destiny. The Spirit of God is looking you in the eye and asking the same question He asked the man in the carriage: “Do you understand?”
  1. Do you get that this isn't just a story; it's an offer?
- E. If you were to ask me, “Bill, are you sure you're going to heaven?” my answer is an immediate, unshakeable YES.

- F. When I stand before God and He asks, "Why should I let you in?" I won't list my accomplishments. I won't talk about this church. I will lock eyes with Jesus Christ—the one with the scars in his hands, feet, and side—and I will point to Him.
  - a) My entire case is this: Because of Him. Only Him. Jesus plus nothing. He is my Plan A, and there is no Plan B.
- G. That is not arrogance. That is absolute confidence in the finished work of Jesus Christ. And that is the confidence He is offering you, right now.
  - 1. The Bible says, "These things are written so that you may KNOW that you have eternal life." Not hope, not wish, not wonder. KNOW.
- H. This is your moment. The man in the story had his point of no return on the side of a road. Yours is right here, right now.
- I. It's not enough to admire Jesus. It's not enough to agree with His teachings. You have to receive Him. You have to make the choice.
- J. We use the ABCs. It's not a formula; it's a framework for the most important decision of your life.
  - 1. **Admit. Believe. Choose.**
- K. In a moment, I'm going to pray a simple prayer that covers these ABCs. If you're willing to make that point-of-no-return choice, I want to invite you to pray this with me.
- L. This isn't a magic formula. This is you talking to God from your heart. Make these words your own.
- IX. The Prayer of Salvation
  - A. ADMIT: Father, today, I admit I need you. I don't know for sure I am going to heaven. I haven't had an answer for why you should let me in. I have sinned. I have failed. I need you. I need a Savior. I admit it.
  - B. BELIEVE: I believe that Jesus came to fix all that. I believe he is your son. I believe he died on the Cross. I believe he died for me. He absorbed my sins. He received my guilt. He took all my punishment. He died for me. I believe.
    - 1. God I don't get how all this works, but I'm telling you as best as I can that believe in Jesus.
  - C. CHOOSE: So right now, I choose Jesus. Right now, I receive him as my Savior, into my life. I say yes to the gift of eternal life. Yes to forgiveness of all my sins. Yes to becoming a member of your family. I say yes to Jesus. And I'm asking you as best as I can, because of Jesus, please save me. Please forgive me. Please make me your child forever.
- X. One more song... and then baptisms.