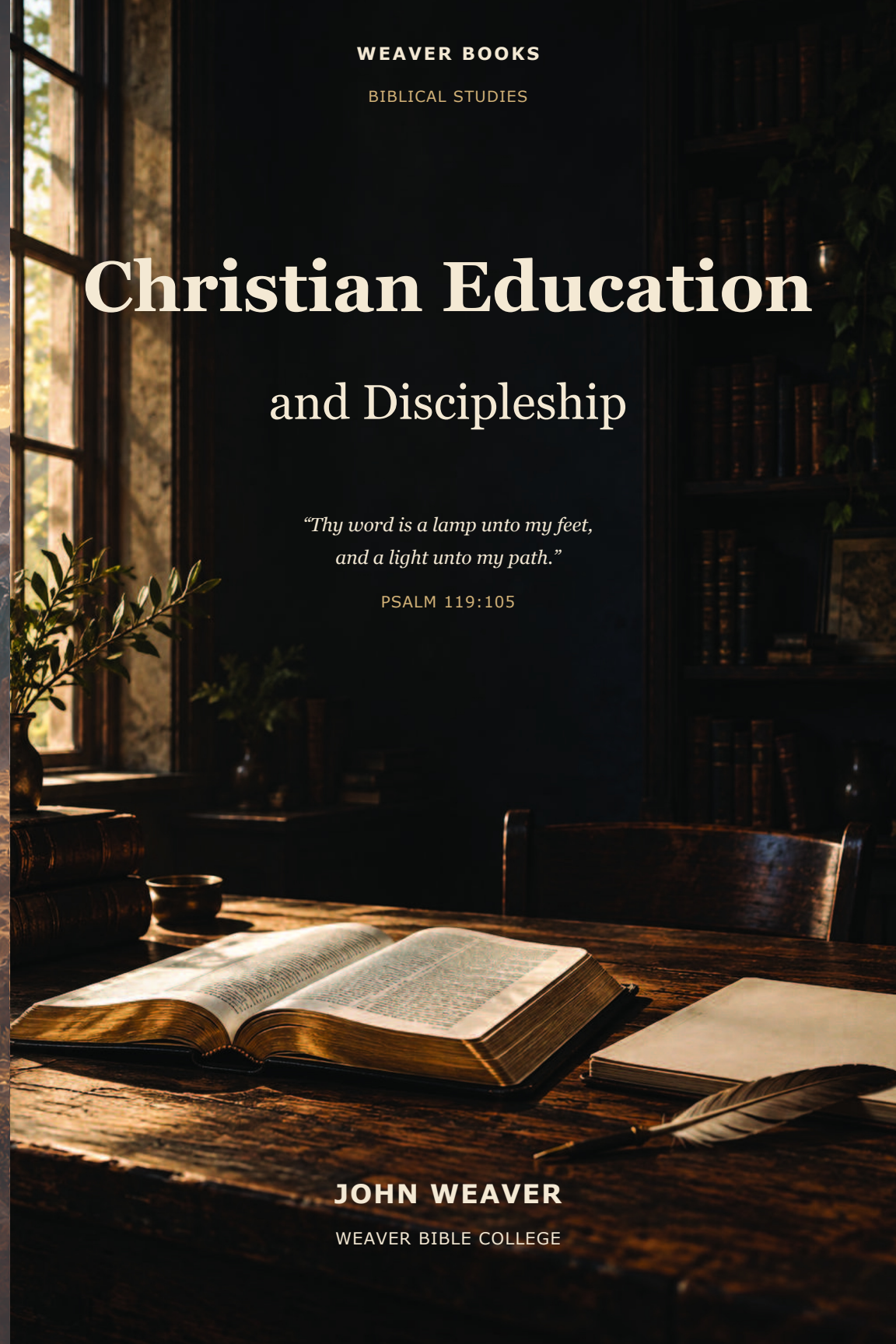


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"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

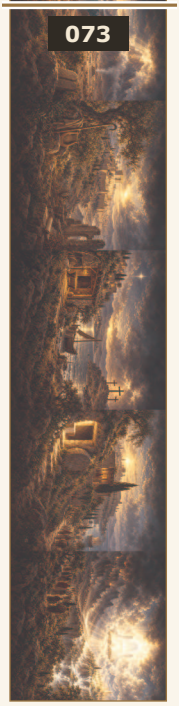
PSALM 119:105

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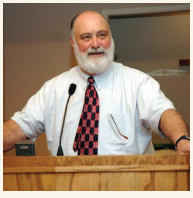
Study to shew thyself approved unto God.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15, EXCERPT

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JOHN WEAVER



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CHAPTER 1

The Death of Sam Davis

Introduction and Scripture Reading

Open your Bibles, if you brought them tonight, to two passages. The first is John chapter 15, and the second is 1 John 3. I think you will see why I am using these verses tonight, especially as I bring the message on the life and death of Sam Davis. Look in your Bibles to John chapter 15, verse 13, a very simple verse.

Our Lord says, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Now listen to that verse again: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Then, in 1 John 3, verse 16, the Word of God says, “Hereby perceive we the love of God.” The word perceive means to comprehend, to understand, and to lay hold on. So he says, hereby comprehend we the love of God because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

The Deficiency of Character in Our Generation

I believe I could make one statement with which everyone in here would agree: our generation is deficient in character. I suppose one

of the greatest tragedies of our time is a loss of integrity, morality, and character. I was talking to a black man back in our hometown the other day, and I said, "You know, I hate to say this, but it's the absolute truth. Most blacks and most whites under 40 are not even worth shooting today."

You just stop and think about that. We have sired a generation of people who do not want to work, who know nothing about work, nothing about honesty and integrity and morality. All they want is for someone to hand them something on a silver platter. Usually that is not sufficient. They want to be spoon-fed off that platter. Look around at our young people today, and you can tell that there is just absolutely no character—rebelliousness, shock through and through. I just cannot comprehend what is going on.

I was in a large store down in a neighboring town. There was a woman with a little boy in her carriage. I suppose the kid was four or five years old, and he was screaming and pitching a royal fit—really, just unbelievable. She took the basket and pushed it toward the man standing over there, who evidently was her husband and the child's father. As she pushed the basket, she said, "Look, he wants a toy that he already has at home."

"I can't do anything with him. See if you can do something." I thought to myself, Lady, I believe I could do something if you just let me have that kid for about five minutes. But you understand what I'm saying. We don't even discipline our children anymore. We don't run them. They simply run us.

There's a saying that I heard many years ago, and it's proved true, and I've tried to teach this to young people all across the country: God will use you on credit for the first years of your life. And after that, He's going to use you on character. If you don't have any character, you might as well forget it, because God's never going to use you after that. God wants holy and pure vessels to use.

Proverbs 30 gives a passage that evidences what our generation is like: "There is a generation that curseth their father and doth not bless their mother." "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their own filthiness." Here's a generation that's rebellious, a generation that thinks anything it does

is all right. “There is a generation. Oh, how lofty are their eyes and their eyelids are lifted up.”

“There is a generation whose teeth are as swords and their jaw teeth as knives to devour the poor from off the earth and the needy from among men.” Our Lord is picturing a generation that is absolutely characterless. Do you realize, as you look around today, it’s almost impossible to find what you and I would call a godly role model for children? We used to have heroes back when I was a boy. We liked George Washington and Daniel Boone and some of those other men.

But I have news for you. Years ago, when Walt Disney put that Daniel Boone movie on, what did Daniel Boone always say? “Make sure you’re right and then go ahead.” Make sure you’re right and good. He was talking about doing what was right. He was talking about having character.

But you look around today, and there are no positive role models. It does not matter whether you look from the political field to the sports arena, from the business realm to the home, or from the theatrical field to any other area. There are no positive, godly role models. In fact, those hailed today as heroes are mostly dishonest, lying, fornicators, money-grabbing, anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Bible, anti-family, and opposed to everything that involves character, uprightness, and purity.

Sam Davis: A Man of Character

It is invigorating, refreshing, and stimulating when you encounter someone who possesses character, integrity, and honor. One such man was Sam Davis. You may never have heard of him, but I want to tell you about him. Sam Davis is referred to as the Confederate hero. He was posthumously awarded the Confederate Medal of Honor, the highest honor that could be bestowed upon a soldier.

Sam Davis was unique. He was not only a Confederate soldier; he was also a Christian. You may object, “But Pastor, if you will simply study history, you will find that there were many Confederate soldiers who were Christians.” That is true. Most of you probably know about the two great revivals in the Confederate armies. If you

have not read about them, you need to read W. W. Bennett's book, Christ in the Camp, and then it's Jones's book, The Great Revival in the Southern Armies.

It is amazing how the Spirit of God moved, and thousands of men were converted. There were also such godly leaders as Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Stonewall Jackson was a tremendously and powerfully godly man. General Ewell, General Richard Stoddard Ewell, was in a war meeting with Jackson and several other generals. After they discussed possible plans and actions, Jackson simply got up and walked to his tent. General Ewell looked around and asked, "Where's he going?" Another general answered, "Don't you know General Jackson? He's going to pray."

He never undertakes an action without prayer. Curiosity got the best of General Ewell, who was not a Christian at that particular time, though he had been witnessed to. General Ewell followed Jackson to his tent, stood outside, and listened to Jackson pray and wrestle with God in prayer. General Ewell cried out, "If this is Christianity, I must have it. I must have it." He was converted through the testimony and through the prayer of Stonewall Jackson. When Stonewall Jackson was shot and his saddlebags were emptied, they contained only his Bible and a few tracts. He had passed out tracts throughout his entire army.

Sam Davis's Background and Military Service

So there were a multitude of Confederate Christians. But Sam Davis was unique in two ways: number one, in the way that he died, and he was unique at the age at which he died. Sam Davis died at age twenty-one, by hanging, which I shall explain shortly. He was born on October 6, 1842, and hanged on November 27, 1863. He was born and raised on a plantation right outside Nashville, in a little town called Smyrna, Tennessee. If you ever get the opportunity, as you go up 24, before you get to Nashville, Tennessee, it is off on the right. The home is still standing. It is a beautiful plantation home; the quarters are still there. Everything is there just exactly the way it was when Sam Davis lived there.

He was from that middle Tennessee area, a handsome, friendly young man admired by all of his friends in Rutherford County. When

he was eighteen, in the fall of 1860, he left home to attend the college, Western Military Institute in Nashville. At that college, he was not only very popular, but it was there that he demonstrated his trustworthiness and his honesty as well. Two men who taught at the military institution greatly influenced Sam Davis's life. These two men happened to be two famous Confederate generals: Bushrod Johnson and E. Kirby Smith.

When the War of Northern Aggression—or, as some of my friends like to say, Lincoln's War Against All Christian States, and that's a good identification—began in earnest, Sam, like other young men, realized that it would not be long before his home, town, and state were invaded as well. Even then, they were literally burning the churches, tearing up the schools, and doing everything they could to destroy the family. He knew that all this was coming to his home of Tennessee.

At the age of nineteen, he returned home from college and joined the Rutherford Rifles, which soon became Company 1, 1st Tennessee Infantry, Confederate States of America. Sam fought in Kentucky and several other places, but when western Tennessee was invaded, his company was rushed back to defend their native soil. Sam participated in some of the bloodiest battles of the war, including the Battle of Shiloh, which was extremely bloody. In three days of fighting, there were 11,000 Confederate casualties and 14,000 Yankee casualties.

By April 1862, Sam had served under four of the ablest military leaders in our country: Albert Sidney Johnston, who was killed at the Battle of Shiloh; General P. G. T. Beauregard, Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard; and also Lee and Stonewall Jackson. In fact, I have a bull at home named in honor of General Beauregard. My bull is General Beauregard. He was a tremendous general.

In the fall of 1862, General Braxton Bragg was appointed to replace Johnston, who had died at Shiloh. Bragg was organizing a special group of scouts, who were essentially information gatherers. They went out and literally sacrificed their lives to discover the enemy's strength, where they were, what they were doing, and any plans they could find.

These Confederate scouts were commanded by Captain Shaw, who, to protect his identity, went by the name of E. Coleman. Because Sam Davis was an honest, brave, trustworthy, and intelligible young man, he was chosen to be one of these famous Coleman scouts. The interesting thing about Captain Shaw was this.

He often penetrated the Yankee lines and walked openly through Yankee camps as an itinerant herb doctor, selling herbs and trying to tell those men what would help them in doctoring their wounds. Because of his military acumen, honesty, and bravery, Sam was selected to be one of these famous Coleman scouts. You have to remember that he was hanged when he was twenty-one. Yet Sam was so good, and looked so young, open, and honest, that on one occasion, when Yankee General Rosecrans was sitting in the St. Cloud Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee, while Nashville was occupied, Sam sat at the very table with General Rosecrans, listening to his plans and talk. The general never suspected that such an innocent, young-looking man was a scout.

Sam took that information and reported it back to Captain Shaw, who passed it on to General Braxton Bragg. Many times, Sam Davis and his compatriots wore their Confederate gray suits behind enemy lines. The details of the Yankee movements contributed to the Confederate victory at Chickamauga in September 1863.

At that time, the northern troops were making an all-out effort to capture and get rid of the Coleman scouts. They realized that as long as these scouts were around, there was no hope of surprise. In November 1863, Sam returned home for a brief visit. It turned out to be his last visit home. If you visit his home site in Smyrna, Tennessee, you can see the very glass, still there, that he tapped on to awaken his parents for a brief meeting. He did not even get to see his brothers and sisters, and he did not want many people to know that he was there.

Capture and Trial of Sam Davis

Not even the servants knew that he was there. He went in and took a last look at his sleeping brothers and sisters before heading out. His mother had found a federal overcoat somewhere, dyed it butternut gray, and given it to young Sam. That Confederate gray overcoat,

together with his homespun Confederate uniform—gray pants, et cetera—was the standard Confederate uniform.

It was in this uniform that Sam was captured. Let me repeat that: Sam was captured in full Confederate uniform. Why is that important? The rules of military justice say that if you are captured in uniform, you are to be treated as a prisoner of war, and not a spy. Sam did not classify himself, nor was he called, a spy. He was a scout, and he was captured in full military uniform.

Sam had been given papers by Captain Shaw, alias E. Coleman, and he wanted these papers gotten back to General Bragg. They contained detailed accounts of Yankee General Dodge and his movements. When young Sam was captured, those papers were found. Seizing upon, I suppose, the youthfulness of his captive, General Dodge quickly accused Sam of being a spy. He was desperate to know who this E. Coleman was, and told Sam that if he did not divulge E. Coleman's identity, he would be hanged as a spy.

This was totally contrary to military justice. But the information found in Sam Davis's papers was so exact and accurate that General Dodge believed E. Coleman was actually someone on his own staff. He had no idea who he was, but became convinced that someone on his staff was giving this information away.

According to General Dodge's testimony, when young Sam Davis was threatened with hanging, these were his exact words: "I know that I will have to die, but I will not tell you where I got the information, and there is no power on earth that can make me tell. You are doing your duty as a soldier, and I am doing mine. If I have to die, I will do so feeling I am doing my duty to my God and to my country."

Here was a young, 21-year-old boy who said, in effect, General, you may threaten me all you like, but there is no power on earth that will make me divulge the source of my information.

General Dodge then assembled very hastily a court-martial, and all of the arresting soldiers testified that Sam was in full military uniform. This meant that Sam had to be treated as a prisoner of war and not as a spy. But truth, right, and justice never seem to be an obstacle to those who are wanting to destroy the South, especially

those who are defending it. General Dodge needed a conviction. He wanted a conviction, and the court-martial readily gave him that conviction; they pronounced Sam a spy. So Sam Davis was sentenced to be hanged as a spy on November 27, 1863.

Refusal to Betray and Execution

With the sentence of death hanging over Sam, Dodge believed that he could break this young boy and force him to divulge who E. Coleman really was. He assigned one of his infamous scouts, Chickasaw Naron or Levi Naron, to break young Davis and force him to divulge this information. Naron repeatedly offered young Sam his freedom if he would merely tell them who E. Coleman was. Naron promised that Sam would not only be spared hanging, but would be given his horse and would be free to leave and return to his family.

Like most young men, Sam Davis had a girlfriend, a young lady he wanted to marry. Here was a young boy whose life was ahead of him. To save his life, all he had to do was utter a man's name. Yet young Davis steadfastly refused to divulge E. Coleman's identity. Many Yankee soldiers under General Dodge's command honored this firm resolve. Some came to Dodge and said, “Look, just tell him anything and then escape.” Many citizens from Giles County, Tennessee—Confederates and Confederate sympathizers who were not in the army but sympathized with the South—also urged young Sam to save his life: “No one will hold it against you. Just give them some name, give them some information, and get away.” Sam's response was, “Life is indeed sweet, and I do want to live, but I cannot betray a friend, and I had rather die a thousand deaths than to do so.”

When his friends from Giles County, Tennessee, visited him, he gave them these words: "I do not fear death. But it makes me mad to think that I'm to die as a spy." He fastly maintained his innocence, saying that he was not a spy but a scout. Chaplain James Young of the 81st Ohio Infantry was so touched by the plight of the young boy that he spent the final day and night with Sam. He even went to the gallows with him and prayed with young Sam to the end. At Sam's request, on the night before the execution, the chaplain sang with

him, "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand and cast a wishful eye." And Sam reiterated his faith in the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

Chaplain Young was there when Levi Naron, Chickasaw Naron, the Union scout who was intent on breaking young Sam, once again asked Sam to divulge the identity of E. Coleman. He said, "Look, if you will just divulge the identity, then you may live." Here is exactly what young Sam answered Levi Naron, looking him right into his eyes: "Do you suppose, were I your friend, that I would betray you? Sir, if you think that I'm that kind of man, you've missed your mark. You may hang me a thousand times, and I will not betray my friend. You may hang me a thousand times, and I will not betray my friend."

The Full Impact of Davis's Integrity

That is character in and of itself. There is someone with some integrity. But you don't realize the full impact of this young man's integrity and character until the full story is known. Sam Davis was not just being promised liberty if he would divulge the identity of E. Coleman. Yes, he was promised that liberty if he would just divulge the identity. But when Sam was steadfastly refusing to identify E. Coleman, saying over and over, "You can hang me a thousand times, and I will never betray a friend," the full impact becomes clear. Seven days earlier, on November 20, 1863, three Confederate scouts had been captured and thrown into the very same jail with young Sam: Joshua Brown, W. L. Moore, and Captain Henry Shaw, alias E. Coleman. Sam would not even have had to say his name.

All Sam would have had to do was point, because the very man they wanted was in the same jail with Sam Davis. How easy it would have been for Sam to save his own life. But Sam was not only a Christian; he was a true Southerner, and he had godly Christian character. Because Sam was willing to die, his three friends were able to live.

After Sam’s execution, his three friends were sent by train to a Yankee prison. Believe it or not, Captain Henry Shaw jumped from the train, escaped, and once again took up his scouting as E. Coleman and just kept right on going.

The evening before Sam was executed, he wrote a letter to his parents. It was written at Pulaski, Giles County, Tennessee, where Sam was hanged, on November 26, 1863:

Davis's Final Letter and Eyewitness Accounts

“Dear Mother, Oh, how painful it is to write you. I’ve got to die tomorrow to be hanged by the Federals. Mother, do not grieve for me. I must bid you goodbye forevermore. Mother, I do not fear to die. Give my love to all, your dear son. Mother, tell the children all to be good. I wish I could see you all once more, but I will never see you anymore. Mother and Father, do not forget me. Think of me when I am dead, but do not grieve for me. It will do no good. Father, you can send after my remains if you want to do so. They will be at Pulaski, Tennessee. I will leave some things, too, with the hotel keeper for you. Pulaski is in Giles County, Tennessee, south of Columbia, your dear son.”

Can you imagine? “I’ve got to die tomorrow, Mother, to be hanged by the Federals. Do not grieve for me.” Approximately two minutes after Sam refused Levi Naron’s last offer, at 10:20 a.m., the noose was tightened around Sam’s neck, and he was launched into eternity. When Levi Naron made that last offer, Sam was sitting on his coffin on the wagon, with a noose around his neck.

That was when he said, “You can hang me a thousand times, but I will never betray a friend.” John Randall, a Union soldier who helped capture Sam, said that never in his life had he witnessed such a pathetic and heroic scene. Sitting on his horse with tears streaming down his face, he saw many other federal soldiers weeping openly as young Sam was hanged. L. W. Forgrave, a soldier in the Union Army at Pulaski, later recalled the event. Listen to what this Union soldier wrote.

He said, "I was a musician at the headquarters of General G.M. Dodge at Pulaski, Tennessee, and helped to play the dead march at the murder of Sam Davis. With four years of service in the Union Army, I never witnessed such bravery as portrayed by him at the time of his killing." Note how he refers to Sam's death as murder and killing. "This boy Davis was offered a reprieve by a chief of scouts named Chickasaw Naron at headquarters if he would tell where his

captain was. As I could hear, he told them he would die a thousand deaths before he betrayed a friend. I could never obliterate the expression of Davis' face as he was a boy about my own age. He wore at that time a roundabout or pea jacket and a black slouch hat. I've wondered who his folks were very often and was glad to know that he was not forgotten. Davis is in heaven, I trust."

That was a Union soldier, and he said he played the dead march for the murder of Sam Davis. News of a young Davis boy being hanged soon reached Sam's parents. Fearing the worst, but still not convinced that it was their son, they contacted a family friend, John C. Kennedy, and asked him to go to Pulaski, Tennessee, to check whether or not it was their son who was hanged. Mr. Kennedy wrote:

Recovery of the Body and Legacy

"Mr. and Ms. Davis were not certain that it was their son who had been executed at Pulaski. They had made diligent efforts through various channels to trace the grapevine story that it was their Sam, but were not assured. At last the time was set to start on the search. Mrs. Davis gave me a piece of the plain linsey of that used for his jacket lining, and also described his boots, and told of other things that only a good and loving mother could have thought about. She was interrupted occasionally by suggestions from Mr. Davis. The start was made with two mules hitched to a very heavy carryall."

We had a meal sack containing a boiled ham and about half a bushel of corn pones, on which their son Oscar, a small boy who was to accompany me, and I were to live while we were gone. We reached Nashville that evening, too late to get a pass, but I procured a metal case and a box and had them put in the conveyance. The next morning I went to General Rousseau, who declined to give me a pass and sent me to General Grant’s adjutant general, who kindly and politely, but positively, refused also, replying to all my pleadings for his mother’s sake, “No sir, no sir, no sir.” I then returned to General Rousseau, whom I had known in Kentucky in my boyhood days, and again asked for a pass after some boyhood reminiscence.

He supplied one for myself, the boy, and the team to Columbia, which was as far as his lines extended, telling me that was all he could do. I gladly accepted the pass, written on a piece of paper,

elegantly printed and looking like a large banknote. We entered the lines at Columbia and drove straight through town, not stopping until we reached the picket on the other side. After looking over our pass, though he could not read it, and seeing the coffin and the small boy, he permitted us to go on. The same thing occurred when we reached the picket at Pulaski, who permitted us to enter the town.

When near the square, I left Oscar to hold the mules while I went to the provost marshal for a pass and to learn what he would do with us. His office was in the courthouse. He asked how I had gotten into Pulaski, and I handed him General Rousseau's pass. He looked up curtly: “This is no account here. What do you want?” I told him I had come for Sam Davis's body, who had been hanged, and that his parents wanted it home.

His manner at once changed. Extending his hand, he said, “Tell them that he died the bravest of the brave, an honor to them and with the respect of every man in this command.” He asked what more he could do to help me. I requested return passes and a permit to take up the body, which he cheerfully gave. I also asked whether I would have trouble or interference at the graveyard. He replied, “No, sir. If you do, I will give you a company, yea, a regiment, if necessary.”

Taking advantage of his cordial words, I asked how Sam was captured, as Mr. Davis had requested me to spare no pains to find out. He did not know the particulars, but showed me two books in which records were kept in his office. The only entry, after giving his name and description, was, as I remembered, “captured on Lambs Ferry Road by Captain McKenzie's scouts.” Before leaving home, I had referred to Mr. Richardson, the county court clerk, for assistance if necessary while in Pulaski.

We found him ready to aid in all his power. The grave digger agreed to take up the body for $20. The next morning, Mr. Richardson, Oscar, and I, with his assistants, were busy at the grave when four or five Federal soldiers came up. One advanced, raising his cap politely, and in a subdued tone offered, for himself and his comrades, to assist if I desired.

I thanked him sincerely, for I had not known what their presence might mean, but declined. When the box was raised and the lid removed, the white cap was still over his head down to his neck, tied with long strings wrapped around his neck two or three times. His boots were on, but the legs had been cut off at the ankles—that is, the legs of the boots.

I took from my pocket the piece of the jacket lining and saw that they were alike. When I removed the cap, I found that the face was black but recognizable. We then transferred the body to the metallic case. During the examination and transfer, the federal soldier stood in line with caps off, paying tribute in acts, if not words. Returning from the cemetery, the provost marshal told the chaplain who had been with Sam at the gallows that he had keepsakes for Sam's father and mother. He gave me a little book in which Sam had written a farewell message to his mother, and the buttons from his coat and vest.

We reached Nashville and drove to where the Adams Express Company office now is, the site of our present townsman, Mr. Cornelius's undertaking establishment. We turned the body over to him with specific instructions about the shrouding. Mr. Davis had said to me, "If you think it is best that Jane and I should not see him, do as you think best about the matter."

On the evening of the seventh day after leaving home, we drove in the big gate some distance from the house. Mr. and Mrs. Davis were watching, and when they saw the casket, Mrs. Davis threw her arms above her head and fell. All was sorrow in that home. I had a boy catch my horse so I could go home, see my old mother and father, and change clothing, but Mr. Davis prevailed upon me to stay and send for what I needed. The next morning, as I stood in the front yard, Mr. Davis came to me and hesitated. Catching his breath almost between each word, he said, "John, don't you think it's hard a father can't see the face of his own child?" I replied that I thought it was best that he and Mrs. Davis should remember him as they saw him last, and he turned and left me.

That afternoon I drove the carryall with the body across the creek to the old family graveyard, where he is buried, about 100 yards behind the family home. Monuments sprang up to Sam Davis almost

everywhere, dedicated to him as hero of the Confederacy. One of the most remarkable is the granite and marble statue south of the courthouse in Pulaski, Tennessee. It was dedicated to Sam Davis on the very spot where the gallows were built from which he was hanged. There is also a bronze statue on the Capitol grounds in Nashville, dedicated to Sam Davis.

Engraved upon the base of the statue are these words: "The boys will have to fight the battle without me. He gave all he had, life. He gained all he lacked, immortality." No wonder Sam Davis was posthumously awarded the first Confederate Medal of Honor—a young man of Christian virtue, character, honesty, and bravery.

Poem and Closing Application

Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote:

"When the Lord calls up earth's heroes to stand before his face, O many a name unknown to fame shall ring from that high place. And out of the grave in the Southland, at the just God's call and beck, shall one man rise with fearless eyes and a rope around his neck.

"For men have swung from gallows, whose souls were white as snow. Not how they die, nor where, but why, is what God's records show. And on that mighty ledger is writ Sam Davis' name. For honor's sake, he would not make a compromise with shame. The great world lay before him, for he was but in his youth. With love of life, young hearts are rife, but better he loved truth. When he stood at bay, he would not flinch nor stir one inch from honor's narrow way. They offered life and freedom if he would speak the word. In silent pride he gazed aside as one who had not heard. They argued, pleaded, threatened. It was but wasted breath. 'Let come what must. I keep my trust,' he said, and laughed at death.

"He would not sell his manhood to purchase priceless hope. Where presidents drag down a name and a crown, he dignified a rope. Ah, grave, where was your triumph? Ah, death, where was your sting? He showed you how a man could bow to doom and stay a king. And God, who loves the loyal because they are like Him, I doubt not yet that soul shall sit among His cherubim.

"O Southland, bring your laurels. And add your wreath, O North. Let glory claim the hero's name and tell the world his worth."

I have four children and six grandchildren, and I love them dearly. Yet I would count it an honor if any of mine could die as bravely, as honestly, and as justly as Sam Davis. He was a man of character, integrity, and honesty in this day and age, when people will sell their own mothers for a shot of dope. It is refreshing to find one young man who had such character.

He was not afraid of a rope. The rope might deprive him of his physical life, but never of his character, integrity, and honesty. As our Lord said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Sam Davis died that his friends might live. The first Confederate Medal of Honor went to Sam Davis.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, make us men and women of character. May we be men and women of our word, courageous, bold, and brave, learning not to fear man. As You said in Your Word, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso trusteth in the Lord shall be safe." Give us boldness, courage, and character. Help us stand for what is right, even in the face of death and disgrace. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask, Amen and Amen.

CHAPTER 2

How to Learn Biblical Truth

SCRIPTURE READING - Acts 17:1-10 (KJV)

Introduction: Contrasting Responses to the Gospel

This message is the second part of a two-part message. Normally, I expound the first three and four verses of this chapter and then reach down and get a couple of other verses. Tonight, however, I am skipping the first part and bringing a message entitled, “How to Learn Biblical Truth.” I will read the first part.

“Now, when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews who believed not moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of a

> baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar.
>
> "And assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason and the others, they let them go."

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night into Berea: who, coming thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of the honourable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people."

Now, I want you to note that Acts chapter 17 deals with one of Paul's missionary journeys, his second, by the way. First of all, Paul went to Thessalonica, and at Thessalonica there was opposition to the gospel. When you get to Berea, you find reception to the gospel. In the latter part of Acts chapter 17, he goes to Athens, where there is indifference to the gospel. So you have opposition in Thessalonica, interest in and reception of the gospel in Berea, and, of course, indifference there in Athens.

Let me begin by asking you a question which will hopefully stimulate your thinking before we ever get to our text today. For a moment, I want you to consider this: Why, humanly speaking, was there an interest in and reception to the gospel in Berea, in light of the fact that there was opposition to the gospel in Thessalonica and indifference to it in Athens? My question once again is this: Why, humanly speaking, was there interest in and reception of the gospel in Berea?

God's Sovereignty and Human Means

Probably the very first thing that is going to enter your mind is, "I know the answer to that, Brother Weaver. The answer is, because of the sovereignty of God."

Yes, I know that God is absolutely sovereign. In fact, the Bible says in Proverbs 16, verse 1, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." It is true that if anyone's heart is ever prepared, God prepared it, for the preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord.

Why, humanly speaking, did these Bereans have an interest in the gospel and receive the gospel where Thessalonica and Athens did not? It is true that God is absolutely sovereign. But when God moves, God does not work against the nature of man, but God works in man.

The Apostle Paul says in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 13, “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Bible tells us very plainly, in verse 13, that God has chosen us unto salvation.

Election is indeed a biblical truth. In fact, the word “elect,” or its equivalent, occurs 73 times in the New Testament alone. You have to believe something about the doctrine of election, or else you are going to have to tear 73 passages out of the Bible. That does not count all of the verses in the Old Testament. That is just the ones in the New Testament.

But notice what the Bible says in verse 13: we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Whereunto He called you by our gospel. God has not only ordained the end; He has also ordained the means to the end. Election is indeed the foundation of salvation, but election does not do away with the means that God has ordained. It is true that God has chosen us, but God has also chosen us through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

A Noble Character

Therefore, men must hear, and men must repent, and men must believe, and men must obey. Very obviously, we have been chosen by God, but it is through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

Why, humanly speaking, did the Bereans receive the gospel and have an interest in it, when those in Thessalonica and those in Athens did not? With that question in mind, we look at Acts 17 to learn biblical truth. There are many things that could be said about learning biblical truth, but the things considered here occur in this passage. In the first message in this brief series, we saw how to teach biblical truth based upon what the Apostle Paul says. Now we are looking at how to learn biblical truth.

The Necessity of a Noble Character

The Bible says, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” According to Acts 17:11, this is how to learn biblical truth. First of all, God tells us there must be a noble character: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica.”

The Greek word for noble is eugenes. It is translated “noble” or “nobleman” in our Bible and usually refers to someone who is well-born or someone who is of a noble family. It also means to be noble-minded. In fact, the Greek word eugenes is where we get our English word Eugene from, and Eugene simply means noble.

The interesting thing is that this word occurs only three times in the New Testament. One occurrence is Luke 19:12. That passage refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, but the word noble there is the Greek word eugenes. In that verse it is translated “nobleman.”

"He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." In this parable, the nobleman is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The illustration is taken from the practice by which a king would have someone represent him in a far-off district or another part of the land. The nobleman went and came before the king. The nobleman

was examined. His integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness were examined. Then he went back home, and the king would send word as to whether or not he would be the king's representative and hold title over that land. Here, of course, it refers to our Lord, because not all noblemen receive kingdoms—only our Lord in this particular instance.

Now look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 1:26. Here the word is used again, and this will help us understand Acts 17. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." He continues, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

Note specifically that not many noblemen are called. Does it say that none are called? No, but not many of them. The word noble here refers, as the English would say, to those "to the manner born"—or, in our day, high society, the rich and elite, the intellectual and the educated, so to speak. Some are called, but certainly not many. Our Lord says not many of them are called. In this passage it very obviously refers to someone of high birth, an aristocrat, someone high in the echelons of society.

But when you go back to Acts 17:11, where the Bible says that these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, it has nothing to do with those who were well-bred. It has nothing to do with the aristocratic. It has nothing to do with those "to the manner born." Rather, it refers to those noble in character, noble in integrity, and noble in honesty.

These were the individuals who heard Paul preach and said to themselves, basically, If what Paul is preaching is right, then I'm wrong. If what Paul is preaching is true, then I have been believing a lie. There's something wrong here. In other words, these people had a noble character in the sense that they were willing to admit their ignorance, their error, and their sin.

Do you realize that the first step in education is to realize that you do not know it all? I get so tickled because I have taught in college, and I find it absolutely astounding that many young men and a few

young women go to college to teach the teachers. That is a fact. They really take David literally when he said in Psalm 119, “I have more understanding than all my teachers,” because they go there and instruct the teachers. The Puritans had a saying: “How many would be wise if they did not already think themselves so?” That is a fact. The very first point in learning is to acknowledge, confess, and realize that you do not know. None of us knows everything, and none of us knows even everything about one subject.

You have to come to the realization that we are ignorant. You can study the Bible for a hundred years and still be ignorant concerning the scripture. There is no way in the world that one man can absorb, understand, and learn everything perfectly. You have to come to the realization that you are going to be absolutely honest with scripture and bow to what scripture says.

Let me give you an illustration. Many years ago, I was training a number of young men for the ministry. I would allow them to preach as often as I could and was always trying to find churches that needed pulpit supplies so they could gain experience preaching. Usually I found places for them. One church about 40 miles down the road from us had a pastor who had resigned and left, and they needed someone to supply the pulpit for that Sunday. They asked a young man I had been training if he would come and preach for them. He consented and drove 40 miles each way to preach there that day. When he arrived and it came time for Sunday school, another pastor was there who was looking for a church. The man I sent did not want to pastor the church; he was only going to help them as pulpit supply.

Honesty with Scripture: Examples of Dishonesty and Integrity

He was going to pastor, but he was not necessarily interested in that particular church. The man who was visiting, who had just shown up, was interested in that church. So they asked the visiting pastor to teach Sunday school, while the man I sent was still going to preach. That was all right with the man I sent there, and he sat down in the Sunday school class to listen to the visiting pastor teach.

The man was a notorious Arminian. This church did not use Sunday school quarterlies or any type of manuals; they simply opened the Bible and taught. It just so happened that morning that the Sunday school lesson was 1 Thessalonians 1. I do not know whether you are familiar with 1 Thessalonians 1, but it has only ten verses. That is all—ten verses.

Verse 4 says, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." The young man I sent sat in that Sunday school class and listened to that pastor teach from 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. Here is his firsthand report. He told me, "The pastor read verse 1 and commented on it. He read verse 2 and commented on it. He read verse 3 and commented on it. He read verse 5 and commented on it, and he went all the way to verse 10." Then he said, "Pastor, not only did he not comment on verse 4, he did not even read verse 4."

There is something wrong with a man who will not admit what Scripture says. You may not understand it or like it, but you have to be honest and at least say, This is what the Scripture teaches. Here was a man supposedly a pastor, teacher, and theologian who was so dishonest that he would not even read a Scripture verse that contradicted his theology.

Years ago, I listened to Lester Roloff preach on the radio, and I love Lester Roloff. Lester Roloff was not a theologian, I can tell you that right now, but he could warm your heart and stir your heart when he preached. He was not a real singer, either. But he would be preaching and, right in the middle of the sermon, break out singing. I have sat there many times and just wept, listening to the man sing. His heart was so full of grace and mercy. He could not sing, but I heard old Lester Roloff on the radio.

Lester Roloff was teaching from Ephesians chapter 1. I was listening attentively when he came to verse 4: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” He read it and said, “Folks, the Bible says that we were chosen in him before the foundation of the world.”

Then he said, “I will be honest with you. I don't understand the doctrine of election. I probably don't even know how to teach it. But

I will tell you one thing: I believe it because the Bible says it very plainly." Then he went right on. At least the man was absolutely honest. But the problem with most people is that they are not honest.

The Danger of Preconceived Ideas and Pride

We come to Scripture with preconceived ideas. We want to read into Scripture—we want to eisegete, to read into Scripture that which we already think and believe—instead of exegeting it and bringing out what the Scripture actually, literally says.

Look at Acts chapter 17. Paul is preaching in Thessalonica, and verse 4 says, "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." But verse 5 says, "But when the Jews, who believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people." These Jews did not like what Paul was preaching or what those with him taught, so they became angry and assaulted anyone they could.

It is imperative that we understand that the God who is absolutely sovereign in salvation is equally sovereign in illumination. Look down at verse 13. These were the Jews from Thessalonica. Paul went to Berea, teaching and preaching there, but "when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people." They created more problems. If you do not see what I see, at least we ought to be able to agree to disagree.

If God is sovereign in salvation, then He is just as sovereign in illumination. That is why the Bible speaks of babes in Christ, young men, and fathers in Christ. You do not expect a baby to act like a teenager or a 20-year-old boy, nor do you expect a 20-year-old to act like a 55-year-old. They have different character traits and different attitudes.

My responsibility is to teach you, but I cannot open your eyes, illuminate you, or turn the lights on. Only God can do that. If God

does not open your eyes, you will never see truth; it is just that simple. So why should I get mad at you if you do not see what I see? And why should you get mad at me if I do not see what you see? We can share the Word of God with each other and argue with each other—not fussing and fighting, but giving biblical arguments to support our stance. Look at the Scripture. We do not have to cut each other's throat just because we do not see eye to eye on everything. It is wrong, wicked, and ungodly doctrine, or the lack thereof, that leads to wrong, wicked, ungodly conduct.

If we are ever going to learn the Scriptures, we must be willing to lay aside our error, our sin, and our pride. Turn in your Bibles, first of all, to Isaiah chapter 1. Watch what God says. We are going from Isaiah to the book of Amos, but look in Isaiah chapter 1, and let us begin reading with verse 16.

Turning from Evil to Reason with God

Notice what God says in Isaiah 1:16–18: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." Before God said, "Come now, let us reason together," He said, "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings, learn to do well, cease to do evil." You are never going to be able to reason with God until you cease to do evil, make yourself clean, and learn to do well. You are not going to reason with God until you turn from your error and your sin. It is very obvious.

Amos 5:14–15 says, "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." You have to seek the good and not evil, and you have to hate the evil and love the good. You are never going to love the good until you hate the evil, and you are never going to seek the good until you turn from that which is evil.

Proverbs 21:30 says, "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord." Do you realize it is pointless and useless to argue with God? There is no wisdom, understanding, or counsel

against the Lord. Period. What good does it do any man to fight against Scripture? Not a bit of good.

I had a pastor friend years ago. We were rejoicing over some truths and talking about the doctrine of election. His secretary was outside in the outer office. The door was open, and she could hear us.

We were not trying to hide anything. The conversation was just between the pastor and myself, and we were rejoicing over God's sovereignty, the doctrine of election. All of a sudden, the secretary jumped up from her desk, ran into the office, and got between her pastor and me. She was so upset that she said, "I don't care what the Bible says, I know God's not like that." Her pastor said, "Did you hear what you just said?"

It is useless to fight against God. It is nothing but hypocrisy on the one hand and sheer blasphemy on the other for us to cry to God for truth when we are unwilling to turn from the error we are holding. Why would we expect God to give us truth when we are unwilling to turn from that which is not true? The first step in learning truth is to realize that we do not possess all knowledge.

We are wrong in many things. I want to say this lovingly and kindly: I know you have regard for your parents, just as I have regard for mine, but just because your parents taught you something does not necessarily mean it is true when it comes to the Bible. Just because a preacher taught you something when you were a child does not mean it is true. I was taught many things by many preachers, and when I started studying Scripture, I found out I had been taught wrongly.

Most of us say, "But Brother Weaver, you don't understand; I was raised like this." I understand, because I was raised a certain way myself. I came to the realization that old black preacher was right when he said that their Bible showed us yet a whole lot of light on them commentaries. You start studying Scripture, and you will find out that God is right—not necessarily just the way you were raised or taught.

When God saved me and called me to preach, a number of pastor friends took me under their wings and taught me. When I went to

Bob Jones University, I encountered my first teacher who understood the doctrines of grace. He was teaching them, and it flew all over me. I knew what he was teaching; I knew exactly what he was saying.

And here's the thing that really hurt me: I realized that if he was right, all those men I loved, who had taught me during the few years before I got there, were wrong. I did not want my friends to be wrong. I stood up in class, pointed my finger at his face, and said, "Mr. Gaynor, you know that's not true. You're just saying that because it's intellectually acceptable, and you're wrong." He said to me, "Mr. Weaver?"

"Sit down and shut up." He said, "I will see you after class."

After class, I was hot and mad because, if he was right, all my friends were wrong, and I was wrong. He said, "You realize I could send you to the discipline committee and have you kicked out of school." I said, "Yes, I do." But I was hot and mad. He said, "But I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to report you."

He said, "Because I do know that you study, and I do know that you're honest. I'll make a deal with you." It was only about a month before school was out for the summer. "We will resume this conversation in the fall. We won't speak about it anymore until the fall, when you come back. But there's one thing I want you to do this summer: make sure that you always allow the Scripture to interpret your experiences. You never allow your experiences to interpret the Scripture." I said, "Yes, sir, I'll do that." That summer, God really dealt with me and showed me some things.

If I had time, I could spend hour after hour showing you how God taught me and opened my eyes. When I went back to school that fall, Mr. Gaynor was the first man I looked up. I knocked on his door and said, “Mr. Gaynor, I owe you an apology.” I told him that if he would get me in front of the class, I would apologize to him before the whole class, because he was right and I was wrong.

You have to come to the realization that we do not know all truth and do not have all truth. We have to be honest enough, and have a noble character enough, to admit when we are wrong and God is right.

Receiving the Word with Readiness of Mind

Now look back at Acts 17:11, because here is the second qualification for learning biblical truth. “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind.” Readiness is also translated forwardness of mind, ready mind, or willing mind. It refers to zeal, eagerness, spirit, and passion.

The word for readiness is the Greek word prothumia. Pro is the preposition to or toward, and thumos is the word for passion or heat. Literally, it is to have a passion toward something, to have spirit toward something. These people had a readiness of mind for the Word of God.

Paul said in Romans 1:5, “So much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that be at Rome also.” The word ready is prothumia there: “I’ve got a spirit of eagerness; I’m ready, I’m willing, I’m able.” In 1 Peter 5:2, Peter wrote to the pastors, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not of constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.” The word there is prothumos. Pastors must rule, preach, and teach with a ready mind. You want to know why Brother Mooney likes to preach so much? That’s why.

Preaching is my life. That is all I have done for forty-six years. A man said, “I’ll preach at the drop of a hat, and I’ll drop the hat myself.” You say, “Can you preach for an hour, two hours?” Yes. The longest sermon I ever preached at one time was two hours and forty-five minutes. They told me not to stop until I got through, and so I did. You say, “Man, you have to be out of your mind.”

Have you ever noticed that it is politically and socially correct to have a passion about anything and everything except the Word of God? People will spend money, work, and effort on a ball game. They will sit for hours on hard benches, cheer and yell until their throats are absolutely sore, and do it in all kinds of weather. Yet the same people cannot sit in church and listen to a message for one hour. I do not understand that mentality.

No one complains that the benches at a ball field are too hard, that it is not air-conditioned, that it is cold, or that the seats are not

padded. Nobody complains when the game goes into overtime: "Oh no, I have to sit there another fifteen or twenty minutes watching this box." What, would they quit this stuff and let me go home? No, you do not hear that.

It is not only people who love ball games; hunters and fishermen are the same. I have known hunters who would rise hours before daylight, sit in cold, freezing weather, eat a sandwich or a couple during the day, and return at night after being out in the weather all day, having killed nothing and not even seen any game.

The Need for Eagerness and Hunger for Truth

"Boy, we had a good time out there." Yet let the preacher go ten minutes over, and some cannot stand it. "We were supposed to have been out here fifteen minutes ago. What's wrong with him? Doesn't he know I've got things to do, places to go, and people to see?"

Isn't it amazing that when you get a passion for the Word of God and a passion for listening and learning the Word of God, all of a sudden you are a lunatic and have gone off the deep end? But that does not apply if you are watching football games, hunting, or fishing. No, it is only if you really want to hear and learn the Word of God. "He studies all the time. He's a Bible fanatic. You know what he is—he's in one of them cults." Isn't that amazing?

In Acts chapter 20, the Apostle Paul was preaching. Paul did not have any thirty-minute sermons. He preached until midnight, until Eutychus fell out the window and killed himself. Then Paul quit preaching, went and raised Eutychus from the dead, and went back and preached until the break of day. The only reason I do not preach past midnight is that I cannot raise folks from the dead.

It is hard enough to keep you awake during a sermon. Can you imagine preaching until early morning? I was in a meeting in Illinois where I preached that night, and the Lord just blessed. When I finished, everyone stood around talking; no one was leaving. I jokingly said, "If I knew everybody was going to stay around like this, I'd just preach another sermon." They sat down, and I preached another sermon. When I finished, they still did not want to leave. Their pastor got up and preached. When he finished, I got up and

preached again. We did not get out of that meeting until about one or two in the morning.

When you get really zealous and really want the Word of God, all of a sudden folks think you are funny. That has happened to me about twice in my life. David said in Psalm 119:97, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation day and night."

Here is what God is saying: if we really want to learn the truth, we must have a mind ready for the truth. We must have a mind eager for the truth, a mind that desires and hungers for the truth of God. How few people today are really willing to discuss the Word of God, study the Word of God, and go deep into the Word of God.

What we will do is go home, read a chapter, and let that be it. We do not study. We read every now and then. It is amazing, too, when there is a special meeting: folks do not come every night. They should, unless God providentially hinders them. I understand work, and I understand sickness. The same thing happens with coming to church. Some folks who come Sunday morning will not come Sunday night.

Have you ever wondered about that? Why in the world is that? Some say, "Brother Weaver, it's probably not real natural to just want to listen to the Word of God and study all the time." It may not be natural for some folks, but it sure is for some other folks. I want to show it to you in the Bible. Turn in your Bible to Acts chapter 13, beginning at verse 13. Watch carefully:

"Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down."

After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, "Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Can you imagine anyone being so stupid as to ask the Apostle Paul if he had anything to say? I have threatened for years to preach a message on the mistake of a great rabbi, and one of these days I am going to do it. He said, "Ye brethren, if ye have anything to say, say on."

Paul stood up, beckoned with his hand, and said, “Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.” Then, beginning in verse 17, he preached and taught a history lesson. In verse 39 he concluded: “By him, that is, by Jesus Christ, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” He warned them, “Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.”

When the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Before Paul could get away, they essentially said, “Wait a minute, Paul, you are coming back next week, aren’t you? We want to hear more of this.” That did not satisfy them either. When the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. It was not enough for them to have the promise that Paul and Barnabas were coming back; they had to follow them. And Paul preached again.

The next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. Paul did not have any thirty-minute messages. He preached. What would make people so eager and so hungry to hear the preaching of the Word of God?

Here is what will give you a ready, eager mind toward the Word of God. The Apostle Paul said, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

When you heard us preach, you did not sit back and say, “That’s what Paul thinks. That’s what Barnabas says. That’s what Silas wants.” No. When you heard us preach, you received it as it was in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. If you ever come to the realization that this is God’s Word and that God is giving you what He wants you to have, you will understand that God is preparing you for what is ahead of you.

When I was in boot camp at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, I never will forget the first day I went into the mess hall and they served me creamed beef on toast. I looked at that stuff and said, "I'm not eating that slop." I had been working on the farm. My mother fixed grits and eggs and biscuits and toast and meat, and I was used to a real breakfast.

So I turned my nose up and walked out of the mess hall. When we fell in formation, the sergeant said, "Boys, full field packs, five-mile march up and down hills, up and down it." About an hour later, I could have eaten fifty pieces of that creamed beef on toast. I learned to like it. They knew what they were going to do with us; I did not. They were giving me something that would give me energy and strength.

God puts out for you that which He has ordained for you, and God says you need a ready mind to get it. You need to be ready and eager. You need to understand that this is His Word and it is for you. If you want to learn truth, you have to have a noble character.

You have to be willing to admit that you are wrong and in error many times. But you also have to have a mind eager and hungry for truth, zealous of truth. If you go back in your Bibles to Acts chapter 17, you will see the third thing that is required. Notice what he said in verse 11: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

Searching the Scriptures Daily

What did they do when they heard Paul preach? They compared what he preached with the Scripture. Here is the practice: they searched the Scriptures. Searching the Scriptures does not mean that you just run the verses through a concordance. It does not mean that you merely look up several parallel passages. There is more to searching than that. The Greek word for search is anakrino, which literally means to investigate, to examine, to scrutinize, to judge, or discern. This word is specifically used in a forensic sense, of a judge holding an investigation.

It denotes a thorough examination of the witness that is being examined. Anakrino: ana is the preposition usually translated “up” or “upwards,” and krino means to judge or discern. Thus anakrino literally means to discern into or discern up.

The Apostle Paul used this word in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 3: “Mine answer to them that do examine me is this.” Paul had enemies. They were scrutinizing him, turning him every which way they could, and seeking to find something against the Apostle Paul. It is the same word; it means to examine closely. When you look in Luke 23, verse 14, Pilate examined Jesus. Here he was, as a judge, trying to determine guilt or innocence. He knew Jesus was innocent, but he gave Him an examination.

Therefore, when the Bible says that these people searched the Scripture, it means more than looking up verses in a concordance, more than reading parallel passages, and more than merely reading. They were scrutinizing, examining, and discerning these verses and passages in their context in order to obtain their full meaning.

They were searching for a biblical interpretation and a biblical application. Look at verse 11: they searched the Scripture. That is the practice. The period is daily. The Bereans were not spasmodic, not on again and off again. They did not study only weekly or monthly; they studied daily. It takes constant, consistent, and dedicated time to learn the Word of God. This is the absolute truth: you cannot learn the Bible in Bible college. You may learn some things about the Bible, but the only way you can learn the Bible is to read it yourself and study it yourself. You are never, ever going to get in college what you need to pastor or what you need to live.

I do not care how many years you go to theological school. The only way you can know the Bible is to study it for yourself. Most of you read your Bible every day. I believe that. Most of you probably read the Bible all the way through once a year, or at least all the way through, however long it takes you. I appreciate that, and I am thankful for it, but I would rather read one verse and understand it than read forty chapters and not understand the thing I have read. I want quality, not quantity. What good does it do you to say, “I read my Bible all the way through two times this year,” when you still do not know what is in it or what it said?

You merely read it; you never searched it, discerned it, examined it, or scrutinized it. The Bereans searched the Scriptures, and they did it daily. Do you know where I get most of my messages? From my reading every day. I read the Bible every day, not to get a message, but for my own benefit. Usually, while I am reading it, I see things I have never seen before. I think, “I need to preach on that,” and then I start studying it, examining it, and scrutinizing it.

That is how I got this message on Acts chapter 17. I want to know what these words meant and how they applied to me. I am simply pointing out the fact that we have to do it. Let me show you what it really means. Hold that seventeenth chapter, but turn in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 2. I want you to look at this: Proverbs chapter 2.

The Cost of Truth and Diligent Study

Proverbs 2:1–5 says, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

Let me go back and read this same passage with the emphasis that we need. God says, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then, and only then, shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

If you knew that somewhere on your property there was a chest full of gold doubloons hidden there by a pirate, you knew it was there. You did not know where, but you knew it was there. Here is my question: would you take the shovel and dig a little and quit, saying, "I'll pick up here next month"? No. You know what you would do? You would dig until you dug your whole yard up. You would keep digging until you found that treasure.

This is exactly what God is saying. You have to keep at it. You have to cry. You have to have a mind eager and ready, and you have to scrutinize and examine until you get the truth, until God shows you His Word. Now, watch this. Here is my question: Why is it that we do not learn the truth, hold it, value it, and esteem it very highly?

Let me ask this another way. How is it that some of you have already forgotten what I preached on Sunday? How is it that some of you have forgotten what your pastor preached two weeks ago or a month ago? Here is the answer why you have already forgotten: because you did not work for it. You did not put anything into it; you did not search it out, examine it, or try to make it yours. There is not a one of you who has worked and studied and put effort into the sermon that I am preaching tonight—not one of you.

I have, but you haven't. And you know what that mentality breeds? Easy come, easy go. It doesn't matter; he'll be back next year, and I'll get it next time he comes. That's the truth, and you know it. The reason we willingly and readily miss church and the preaching of God's Word is that we have not put anything into it. The pastor has, but you haven't. It doesn't mean anything to you. You haven't prayed or studied all week.

I remember when I was a boy. We had a brand-new 1958 Ford. My mother asked me if I would take the trash to the dump. I said, "Yes, ma'am." I would have done anything to drive that new Ford. I put the trash in the trunk, and my friend and I got in the car. I drove down our dirt road, turned onto the highway, then onto another dirt road, went to the dump, put the trash out, and came back. When I reached the highway, I stopped at the dirt road.

I looked left and right and didn't see anything coming. I pulled that thing down in low and said, "Bill, watch this." Then I mashed the accelerator to the floor. I spun out of the dirt road, hit the highway with the tires squealing, and that heavy Ford sat down in the rear. Just as it did, I looked in the rearview mirror and saw my father coming around the curve in his pickup truck.

I drove twenty miles an hour the rest of the way home. There's a long story to that, but here is the point: it was easy for me to lay down rubber and burn those tires when I wasn't buying them. When

I grew up, married, and had to buy my own tires, I didn't peel off, because it cost me something.

When truth costs you, you don't forget it. That is why the Bible says, in Proverbs 23:23, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." If it has cost you something, you are not going to sell it. If it is valuable to you, you are not going to sell it. The Bible says in Proverbs 25:2, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter."

Look at Acts chapter 17. When I began this message, I asked you: Why, humanly speaking, did the Bereans have an interest in the gospel when Thessalonica opposed the gospel and Athens was indifferent to it? Verse 11 says, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Therefore many of them believed. Humanly speaking, there was interest in the gospel in Berea because of opposition and indifference, because they had a noble character, received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily. In light of that, using the means God ordained, many of them believed.

Results and Applications

God chose us unto salvation through sanctification and belief of the truth. He has ordained the end, and He has also ordained the means to the end. These people did exactly what God would have them to do, and therefore they believed. He gave them the gift of faith. Paul said in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 7, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

God is not going to let you go to bed dumb and wake up in the morning smart. It does not work like that. Consider what I say. Meditate on it. Think upon it. Study it. Search it. Discern it. While you are doing that, seek God for illumination. The Lord gives you understanding in all things. God does not give understanding willy-nilly; He gives it as you meditate and study upon His Word.

In verse 12, you have a blessed result: "Therefore many of them believed." In verse 13, you have a beneficial result: "But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was

preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people." How can that be beneficial? Opposition only grounds and strengthens true believers. It separates the wheat from the chaff and demonstrates who genuinely believes.

Look back at Acts 17, verse 5: "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort." It is always ignorant, unlearned, and vulgar people who stir up trouble. When you have knowledge of the Word of God, you do not act like that.

Ask yourself this question: What can the devil do? What can the world do? What can the world system do with a man who has bought the truth and refuses to sell it? Nothing. Nothing. How do you explain the martyrs in the Bible and in the first century? They were people who had bought the truth and refused to sell it, even at the price of their lives. They valued the truth more than anything: "Buy the truth, and sell it not."

Let me make a couple of applications. The first is this: There will never be any growth in grace and in knowledge until we actually relinquish sin and error. The truth is, most of us know about our sins. We do not have to guess; we know our sins. We are simply not willing necessarily to repent of them. David said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

The Bible says, in 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." But grow in grace and knowledge.

The little word "and" is the Greek word kai, k-a-i, and kai is translated another way in our Bibles. Very frequently, it is translated as "even." So you could read that, "But grow in grace, even in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." You are not growing in grace unless you are growing in knowledge. If you want to grow in knowledge, you will have to turn from your error, turn from your sin, and begin to embrace the truth.

Secondly, without receiving truth with a readiness of mind and searching the Scripture to discern it, there will never be real conviction for truth. Truth that costs you nothing means nothing to you. Why are so many willing to compromise and deny the

Scriptures? It never cost them anything to begin with. If you buy the truth, it means something to you; if you put something in it, it means something to you.

What did our Lord say in Mark 7 and Matthew 15? He was quoting Isaiah 29:13: "What you have is taught by the precept of man." God never taught you anything; if He had, you would not compromise it or throw it away. Your theories are taught by the precepts of man. Why can men like Demas forsake God for the world? Because truth never meant anything to them to begin with.

Thirdly, wherever and whenever truth is embraced, believed, and practiced, there will be opposition. These Jews set up trouble for Paul at Thessalonica, problems in Berea, and opposition everywhere he went. That is why he said in 1 Corinthians 16:9 that an effectual door was open to him, and there were many adversaries. You cannot move without producing friction. If you are doing something biblical and right, you will have opposition, period.

Lastly, no one will ever learn the truth apart from the word of truth. Our Lord said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Peter said that we are to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby. The Bible is our sole authority for faith and practice. We have to learn to love it, learn it, and live it. We can live it only as we learn it, and learn it only as we love it. How do you learn biblical truth?

You have to have a noble character to say, “I’m wrong. God’s right.” You have to have a mind that hungers and is eager, zealous, willing, and ready for the Word of God. You have to be able to search the scriptures and compare what you hear preached with the Word of God, so that you see for yourself what God teaches. When you put work and effort into it, you bought it, and you are unwilling to sell it or part with it.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask You for Your grace and mercy. Teach us to study, Lord, and to build up ourselves in the most holy faith through Thy Word. David said:

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought

thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Help us, Lord, to be holy and godly by loving Your Word, learning it, and living it. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 3

The Loss of Life, Liberty, and Property

Introduction: Christianity or Idolatry

I preached a message a couple of years ago after being asked specifically to deal with this subject. Although I preached it at the meeting, I was asked to bring this message, and I have never preached this message to our church. There should be at least one part that would be very familiar to you, hopefully. But I think it is expedient today that I bring this message to help us genuinely understand and see what is going on in our own land. This passage deals with Solomon, and the issue before us is Christianity or idolatry.

In 1 Kings 11:4, the Bible says, "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father."

Verses 5–8 continue: "For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the

Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods."

Then verse 33 says, "Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father."

The anger of the Lord was directed against Solomon because of his paganism and because of his idolatry. Let me make one simple statement. The truth I want to emphasize up front is that the issue before us has only two choices. We either have Christianity or idolatry.

God as the Source of Life, Liberty, and Property

The Word of God teaches us that God is the author of life, liberty, and property. Without Him, we would have none of these. He created us, sustains us, preserves us, and has made us stewards of His earth. God is the transcendent owner of all things. Four times in Scripture we are told that “the earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” You will find that in Exodus 9:29, Psalm 24:1, 1 Corinthians 10:26, and 1 Corinthians 10:28. Moreover, Psalm 115:16 tells us, “The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.”

Since God is the transcendent owner of all things, He is the one who determines how everything is to be used. Since the earth and all things therein are His, He has the absolute right to dispossess anyone who does not give Him His rent, His recognition, or His due. As we study the Bible, we find that kingdoms, empires, nations, families, and even individuals are all under His control and either rise or fall at His pleasure.

You remember that I preached on “Who Is That God?” and dealt with Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was arrogant, boastful, and unwilling to submit to the Lord God. God told him that he would be driven with the wild animals for seven years, until he learned one important lesson: “till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.” Certainly, God is in control.

God has graciously and mercifully given us life, liberty, and property. So here is my question: Since God has given us life, liberty, and property, why is it that we have basically lost all three in the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Some time ago, I preached a series of messages entitled “Where We Are and How We Got Here.” It was a fifteen-part study on the War of Northern Aggression, showing the applications for today. What I want to do today is exactly the same thing: show you an age-old heresy in paganism and make application in our present time. I want you to see exactly where we are politically, economically, and spiritually.

So if you understand the source and the cause of our loss of life, liberty, and property, at least we would be in a position that we might endeavor to remedy the situation by the grace of God. As I read from 1 Kings 11, Molech was mentioned. In Deuteronomy chapter 18, God is condemning all aspects, all kinds of idolatry. God says, "When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations." So He is talking about the nations that He cast out.

"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God." He talks about wizardry, witchcraft, and divination. All of these things are condemned as pure paganism, but the chief sin He mentions first is making your sons and your daughters pass through the fire.

Molech Worship Introduced by Solomon

This is known as Molech worship. As you read through the Bible, you will find the word Molech spelled different ways. Sometimes it is Moloch, sometimes Milcom, Malcham, and Melech. It is still the same individual. It is still the same paganism, the same idolatry, and the same humanism. Molech worship was known for the sacrifice of children. That is why He said in Deuteronomy 18 about those who make their children pass through the fire.

In 1 Kings 11 and verse 7, you see the sin here of Solomon: "Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon." It was Solomon who introduced Molech worship into Israel. Verse 4 explains: "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father." So we find that Solomon introduced this Molech worship into the land when he was old.

If I were to ask you what some of the main complaints of old age are, I am sure that none of you would know the answer by experience. We would have to answer: loss of power, loss of control, and loss of ability. Roy asked me one time, "Pastor, why didn't you tell me getting old had so many problems?" Well, let's be honest. When you're 70, you just can't work and do like you could when you were 20. Getting old brings a loss of ability, a loss of control, and a loss of power.

It is important to understand—and I'll make this application a little bit later—that Solomon introduced this idolatry into the land when he was old. Because he introduced it, there were other kings that followed after. King Ahaz in 2 Chronicles 28:3 worshipped Molech as well. We read this: "Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel."

So King Ahaz was guilty of Molech worship as well. In 2 Chronicles 33:6, you will find that this was also one of the sins of

King Manasseh. The Bible says, "And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger."

So now you say, "Wait a minute, Brother Weaver. I understand that these were sins of the kings and sins of the rulers." Ah! But the general populace were involved as well.

Here is what the Bible says. Hold Jeremiah 7, because we will come back there momentarily. Jeremiah 7:31 says, “And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not.” Notice what God says: “neither came it into my heart.”

Now turn to Jeremiah 32:35. God is talking about the people in general: “And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.”

By the way, it was King Josiah, in 2 Kings 23:10, who put an end to the worship of Molech. He was the one who defiled Tophet in the valley of the children of Hinnom, so that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech. You remember that he even dug up the priests’ bones—that is, the priests of Molech—and burned them there on the altar. So he defiled it and broke that altar, so that no one would cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire to Molech again.

Now go back to Jeremiah 7, because we have been talking about Molech worship. I do not know whether you have noticed it or not, but it happened in the valley of the son of Hinnom. It was also referred to in the Bible as Tophet. Look in Jeremiah 7; we will read verses 31 and 32, and you will see that it is called by both names. Here is Jeremiah 7:31–32: “Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of

the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place."

The Nature of Molech Worship

If it was the valley of the son of Hinnom, why was it called Tophet? The answer is simple when you understand how Molech was worshipped. Molech was represented as the body of a man with the head of a bull. It was a huge bronze statue, hollow inside, with a raging fire built within it that made Molech glow red. Molech had his hands extended, and the children sacrificed to him were placed on those hands. I have read several accounts. Some said the children simply rolled into his mouth or into an opening; others said the arms moved ingeniously and took them into his mouth. At any rate, the heat would make the bronze arms and body exceedingly hot and glowing red. When the children were placed in his arms, naturally there would be screams from the child being sacrificed.

The Hebrew word "toph" literally means to roll like a drum. They played drums, using large drum rolls to drown out the cries and screams of the children as they rolled into the mouth or belly of Molech and were consumed in the flames. It is also recorded that mothers who sacrificed their children stood stone-faced and dry-eyed, without emotion, to demonstrate that they had voluntarily sacrificed them to Molech.

Sometimes, however, when children were passed through the fire to Molech, they were not sacrificed and burned to death. The passing through the fire could be what we would call a lustration or a purification. A priest would hold the baby and pass him over the burning fire and heat. In that instance, the child was not consumed but remained unhurt; thus he was dedicated and given to the service of Molech.

Molech Worship and Political Religion

What in the world has all this to do with life, liberty, and property? There are a couple of applications. We could make the application of sacrificing children to abortion for the god of lust and convenience. That's worship of Molech, basically, especially in our day and time when the government pays for abortions. What about lustration and

purification? We could also make an application where our children are dedicated to the god of paganism and humanism through state education. They're trained to think like little pagans and little humanists, if they think at all.

Molech Worship as a Political Religion

I remember years ago when I was in Jesup, you remember the lawsuit that was brought by the boy in California because he graduated from the public school there and he couldn't even read. And yet he had a graduation ring on his hand. The superintendent of the school system at that time in Jesup, Georgia, made this statement. It was printed in our paper that that would never happen in Jesup, Georgia, because he was going to guarantee that any child that graduated from Wayne County High School would at least be able to read the TV Guide.

That's state education for you. Molech worship was an aspect of Baal worship. The word “Baal” means “Lord.” The word “Molech” means “King.” So Molech worship then is the worship of the state. It is the worship of government. It is the worship of the king or the ruler as God. It is idolatry. Molech worship is a political religion. Our word “politics” comes from the Greek word “politikos,” which literally means “of a citizen.” Politics requires the involvement of citizens, and it ultimately involves the worship and homage of the citizens, whether to the one true and living God or to a paganistic, humanistic god. Everyone is involved in politics. I've heard Christians say, “Well, I don't think a Christian should be involved in politics.” You are involved in politics if you are a citizen of any state. You are involved in politics because that's what it means literally: “of a citizen.” What we fail to understand is this: all government is religious in nature.

I don't care if we're talking about state governments or county governments or the federal governments, all government is religious in nature. You cannot separate government and religion. It is impossible.

That does not mean that you have to have a state church. It does not mean that the United States has to have a national church like England does, the Church of England. It does not mean that we have

to elevate the Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Church, or the Methodist Church to what we would call our national church. It does not mean that at all.

When I say that government is religious in nature, it simply means this: all government is religious. Why? Because in government, you deal with law. All law is religious in nature. Whether we are talking about county government, state government, or federal government, consider what happens when legislators propose a law, read it, and determine that it is good or bad. How are they making that determination? They are determining it based upon their understanding of good and evil, and their understanding of good and evil is a product of their religion—that is, what they believe or do not believe. Therefore, whenever a legislator says, "This is a good law," that is a religious statement. When he says, "This is a bad law," that is also a religious statement, because one's religion determines his understanding of good and bad.

You may have a government that has God's law, which would be a Christian government, or you may have a government that has pagan law, which would therefore be a pagan government. Whether Christian or pagan, government is still religious in nature. As a citizen, you support government. Whether it is state, county, or federal government, you are involved in politics because the word simply means "of a citizen."

What we have today is the pagan concept of government. Our nation was established as a Christian nation, but we are no longer a Christian nation. To understand what I am teaching, you have to understand the nature of Molech worship. Molech worship was a political religion: it was the worship of the state or the worship of the king as God. The king or ruler became identified with God, or as God, to the extent that he wielded absolute and total power.

Some of you probably have read or heard on the news that just this past week in Atlanta, Georgia, 30,000 people gathered to receive Section 8 houses, free government housing. There were a few fights, and several people were taken to the hospital, but the paper went on to say, "Thankfully, no real riots broke out." Why were 30,000 people in Atlanta looking for free housing?

Because government is claiming to be God: “We will house you. We will feed you.”

Remember what I just said. The king, the state, or the civil ruler claimed to be God to the extent that it exercised absolute power. Did you hear recently where Representative Jim Stark said openly, “There is nothing that the federal government cannot do”? What did he just get out of his mouth? The government has all power. It is God. Isn’t it amazing? The Word of God places limitation on government, and the Constitution of the United States places limitation on government. How then can a representative say that there is nothing the government cannot do?

The Philosophy of Monism and the Pyramid

In order to understand Molech worship, you have to understand the philosophy that undergirds it. The philosophy is known as monism—M-O-N-I-S-M. Monism is the belief that the universe, man, and everything in it consists of one stuff, one ooze, or one being. In modern philosophy, the term designates any metaphysical theory stating that there is only one reality and that everything else came from and basically exists from that one reality. All monism teaches is that we are one stuff, one ooze, one being. The only difference is that the more of the stuff, ooze, or being you have, the higher you are.

The pagans always used the pyramids, and the pyramids had a very basic reason for being. On the far right, there is a pyramid with “monism” written under it and to its right. At the bottom is earth, followed by grass, flowers, trees, birds and cattle, and then man and men. At the very top is the king, or the civil ruler.

What monism says is this: everything is one stuff. At the bottom you have earth or dirt, then grass, flowers, trees, birds and cattle, and man and men. At the very top you have the king or the civil ruler. The only difference between the flowers and the dirt is that the flowers just have more ooze, more stuff, or more being. The only difference between the cattle and the earth is that the cattle just happen to have more. The only difference between the king and man, or men in general, is that the king just happens to have more stuff. Everybody, everything, is simply made out of one stuff.

The pagans then used the pyramid to picture man ascending out of the earth and reaching toward heaven in order to assume godhood. Everything comes from one stuff. Notice that the king, or the civil ruler, is at the very top. At the peak, you have the king. That is why, in paganism, he is referred to as the axis mundi: the go-between between heaven and earth. He is also called the cosmic axis, or the world axis, or the pillar, or the center of the earth. At the very top, you have the king who is supposed to be the one who connects heaven and earth. He was the one with the most stuff, with the most ooze, with the most being.

I hope you are trying to understand. Where did the divine right of kings come from? Paganism. Why did they believe in the divine right of kings? Because the king had more stuff. He had more ooze. He had the right to rule; he was higher up on the totem pole, or, as the pagans would say, higher up on the pyramid. The concept of philosopher kings—Plato and Aristotle—and the ruling elite of modern-day philosophy also came from pure paganism.

This is monism. It says that everything is made of one stuff. The more stuff you are, the higher you are on the plane, and the more right you have to rule over individuals. When the pagans wanted to picture the gods descending, they used an inverted pyramid. Where the two pyramids touched was where the king stood, because he was the go-between, the mediator. Do you remember what the Bible says in 1 Timothy 2:5? "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

The pagan claimed to be the mediator. In claiming to be the mediator, he was claiming to be God: the gods spoke through him, he was their representative, and he was the one who held the universe together. The Bible says in Colossians 1:17 that Christ "is before all things, and by him all things consist." The pagans were claiming the same exact position and power that Jesus Christ claims.

Monism teaches what we would call continuity. It would have to, if everything is made of one stuff. But the Bible teaches discontinuity. It teaches that God is transcendent. God may be seen in the earth since the earth is His creation, but God is not in the earth; God is above the earth. Here is the earth, the created being; here is the Creator above. The Bible teaches a discontinuity.

The Six-Pointed Star and Paganism

When these two pyramids merge together—when man ascends to godhood and the gods come down to man—you have what is known as a six-pointed star.

The six-pointed star, commonly referred to as the Star of David, is not the Star of David. David had nothing to do with it. In fact, the truth of the matter is that the star represents pure, unadulterated paganism. If you really want to study the six-pointed star, one of the best books is simply referred to as The Six-Pointed Star, written by O. J. Graham. It is a little paperback book, about that thick, and very excellent.

But in case you do not have time to read that book, let me show you the Scriptures. Turn to the book of Amos and then to the book of Acts. We will look at both passages: Amos chapter 5 and Acts chapter 7. You want to know where the six-pointed star came from? Here it is.

It did not originate with David. David had nothing to do with the star. Notice what God says to the children of Israel in Amos chapter 5. Let us begin reading at verse 25: "Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves."

The word "Chiun" here in the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, and our Lord and the apostles quoted from the Septuagint—is translated as "Remphan." Our Lord and the apostles quoted from the Septuagint. Acts 7:42–43 states: "Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon." The six-pointed star was always associated with Molech worship, not the true worship of the one true and living God. If you go back in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 11, Solomon introduced Molech worship into Israel when he was old, as that chapter records.

Look at verse 4: “And it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.” One of the most difficult things for any man—I am sure it is true of women as well, but it is worse for a man—is the loss of power and control.

Stop and think about this. When our children are two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, and ten years old, we normally think we will never have any problem with them. They are under our power and control; they obey us. Wait until they are eighteen or nineteen. You cannot do anything with them. You cannot do one thing about their sins, their leaving home, or their licentiousness. The most difficult thing for a father is the loss of power and control.

Multiply that, I suppose, ten thousand times for a man like King Solomon, who was always in power, always in control, and always had ability. He spoke, and it was done. Now that he is old, he is losing it all. Instead of crying out to the one true and living God, reaching up to heaven, and asking God for power, ability, and control, Solomon turns to paganism and reaches down. Molech is the god of power. He is the state; he is God walking on earth. Here is Solomon’s sin: he reaches down to Molech instead of up to the one true and living God. In Molech worship, the state or king is viewed as the true and ultimate order.

Let me say it again. The king or ruler became God to the extent that he exercised and manifested absolute power. Power manifested in the political realm was considered the manifestation of divine power. Thus, the king or state demanded total sacrifice: “Your life is at my disposal.”

You say, “That is pure paganism. Nothing like that happens in modern times.” Have you ever heard of the military draft? “We’ll take your children whether you like it or not. Whether you agree with it or not. If you try to stop us, we’ll put you in prison as well.” That is Molech worship. The sacrifice of children was considered the supreme sacrifice. “We want your children in our schools. We will educate your children. If you do not send them to our schools, we will put you in prison.” Thus, children were either sacrificed through idol worship or through the multitudinous wars of the state.

Those who were lustrated or purified were given to the service of the state in different areas of service. The state controlled education, economics, and every area of life.

Molech worship was and is a political religion. In the first century in Rome, you had the same Molech worship. However, in the first century, it was called swearing allegiance to the genius of Caesar. In the Roman Empire, you could believe anything you wanted to believe. If you wanted to believe in Zeus, have at it. If you wanted to believe in Aphrodite, go for it. If you wanted to believe in Jesus Christ, wonderful. They could care less, just so, once a year, you swore by the genius of Caesar and said, "Caesar is Lord." When you said "Caesar is Lord," you were saying that Caesar is at the top of the pyramid. He gives me the liberty to believe like I believe. The early Christians refused to swear by the genius of Caesar. They refused to say "Caesar is Lord," and so Christians were not put to death for being Christians.

Christians were put to death for being traitors to the Roman Empire and traitors to the cult of emperor worship. When a government claims total jurisdiction, as the modern state does, it claims to be as God, the total governor of man and the world. It claims to have total jurisdiction from the cradle to the grave, from the womb to the tomb. Since it claims to be God, it claims to exercise authority and have control over everything.

Welfare, farming, the family, education, business, law, capital, labor—every sphere. For the Molech state, there are no boundaries. It claims to be God and dominates every area of our life. It claims the lives of our children in education and warfare, all for the benefit of the state. Molech worship is tyranny and totalitarianism in actuality. The New World Order is nothing but Molech worship. If you do a little study on the Bohemian Grove, they actually have an idol of Molech where our ruling elite go and sacrifice unto. Molech worship is a political religion.

Molech Worship as a Result of Apostasy

It is also a result of apostasy. In 1 Samuel chapter 8, the children of Israel demanded a king that they might be like other nations. And what did God tell Samuel?

"Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." A king rules by his law. That is true of God, and it is true of man. The only way to understand 1 Samuel chapter 8 is to see it as a transition from one law structure to another. When they refused God as their king—and the Bible says pointedly in 1 Samuel 12:12 that God was their king—they also rejected His law. When they received a man, they received man's law. They traded God for a man and God's law for man's law.

What does God do in 1 Samuel chapter 8? He tells Israel the price they are going to pay for their rejection of God. First, there will be an unbiblical military conscription in verses 11 and 12: "The king's going to take your young men." They will be forced, drafted, and coerced to fight for the state at the order and whim of the civil ruler.

Secondly, He speaks of compulsive labor battalions. He even tells them that young women will be forced to work for the king. We have devolved to such a state in our day and time that young women are no longer made simply to be cooks and confectionaries. Now they have to fight in the army as men, which is totally and completely unbiblical. But that is part of the price we pay for apostasy.

Thirdly, there will be a conscription not only of young men, but of young women and animals as well, according to verse 16. Do you realize what national identification for animals exists now? Government—whether state or federal—does not today need to declare an emergency to confiscate your goods. They can take whatever they want, and they normally do. If you loan your car to someone, and that person is stopped at a roadblock and happens to have a marijuana cigarette, your car is guilty as well, and your car will be confiscated.

This is part of the price we pay for our apostasy. Fourth, he goes on to say in verses 16 and 17 that the state will expropriate land, livestock, and equipment. Fifth, it is going to demand a tithe like God, in verses 14 through 15. Most people would be happy if they took only 10 percent, but usually it is 50 or 60 percent. Sixth, he points out that we will be his servants. The word “servants” is the Hebrew word “ebed,” which literally means “slaves.”

The War of Northern Aggression did not end slavery; it merely enlarged the plantation. Now we are all slaves. Seventh, God says He is not going to listen to a wicked and rebellious people when they cry and beg Him for mercy because they realize what they have gotten themselves into. In other words, He is going to let us suffer for a while.

Molech worship is not only a political religion; Molech worship is a product of apostasy. Thirdly, Molech worship involves man's predestination. I will be dealing with that phrase in the not-too-distant future, but remember this: when man attempts to play God, he will endeavor to demonstrate his godhood in every area, including predestination. He wishes to conform the world and mankind to his desires and schemes for his own honor and glory.

Man's Predestination vs. God's Sovereignty

Why do you think the international bankers want control of everything? Not for God's honor and glory, I can assure you. How does man predestinate? Have you ever heard of social manipulation, redistribution of wealth, population control, welfare, chemical warfare, healthcare programs, chemtrails, or Obamacare? That is man's attempt at predestination. The truth is, everyone believes in predestination. The contention is not about predestination; everybody believes in it. The contention is, who does it? Is it going to be God or man? Man wants control of all things and wants to determine the outcome of everything. While man is willing to have predestination for himself, he denies it to the sovereign God of heaven and earth as a divine prerogative. So when man wants to play God, he tries to predestinate every area.

He tries to determine the outcome of everything. That is what all these federal and state social programs are about: social manipulation and social control. Please understand that there is no such thing as brute factuality or brute reality. God determines reality. Reality is not what man says; reality is what God says. God said in Isaiah 46:9, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me." Then in Isaiah 46:10, He said, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do

all my pleasure." He continued, "Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."

Only God's predestination shall stand. Man's predestination shall fail. Period. I am thankful for that.

Very quickly, Molech worship involves a non-theistic salvation—a salvation that has nothing to do with God. In Molech worship, one is saved not by the saving atonement of Jesus Christ, but by the state. Molech worship teaches salvation by the state. Thomas Paine, in The Rights of Man, said, "The nation is essentially the source of all sovereignty. Nor can any individual or any body of men be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it."

Non-Theistic Salvation and the State

The nation, or the state, is essentially the source of all sovereignty, and no one can have authority unless he gets it from the state. That is pure paganism and humanism. It says the state is sovereign; the state is God. Paine is claiming exclusive sovereignty for the state and saying that the state is the source of salvation. Hegel, the Marxist, went further: "The state is God walking on earth." When the state plays God, it also has its own humanistic salvation.

Why were 30,000 flocking to obtain state or federal housing, or state and federal cheese? Because to them the state is God, and their God is supplying their needs. Rushdoony pointed out that ancient Rome regarded religion itself as a public domain and therefore licensed and controlled it. The word "liturgy," Greek in origin, means "public service." Religion is indeed a public concern, more so than the state.

But not thereby a matter for state control. Rome, like all ancient pagan states, equated the public domain with the state's domain, seeing all things as aspects of that domain. So Rome wanted to control religion, just as today the feds want to control religion. That is why they want every church incorporated.

Whenever a church has 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, it has signed an agreement with the government not to preach against public policy. If you do not believe that, pull up IRS Publication 557 and look at it. The two requirements for IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status

are, first, that whatever the church believes must be genuinely held and believed. No one is going to argue with that. Second, you are not to speak against what is known as public policy. In today's terminology, sodomy is public policy. Abortion is public policy. Socialism is public policy, and so is a lot of other things.

Henry L. Mencken said: "It, the state, has taken on a vast mass of new duties and responsibilities. It has spread out its powers until they penetrate to every act of the citizen, however secret. It has begun to throw around its operations the high dignity and impeccability of a state religion. Its agents become a separate and superior caste, with authority to bind and loose, and their thumbs in every pot."

Henry L. Mencken wrote this in 1926: “But it still remains, as it was in the beginning, the common enemy of all well-disposed, industrious, and decent men.” Now note what Mencken said. He said, the state has become sovereign, seemingly. It has its thumb in every pot. Its agents have become a separate and superior caste, no longer public servants, but public masters, by the way, with the authority to bind and loose: you do what I say or else. It still remains as it was in the beginning—the state, the common enemy of all well-disposed, industrious, and decent men. He saw what was coming.

The salvation that statism offers is found only in total and complete submission to the state in every area. If you want to be taken care of temporarily, worship the state. It will be your mama. It will be your papa. It will be your nursemaid. It will provide for your temporal care, but you have to give it total and absolute submission and sacrifice.

While you are worshipping it, the state envelops you in its tentacles of tyranny and totalitarianism. You have to remember this: the only salvation any government can provide is a temporal one, not an eternal one. Proverbs 8:35–36 says, “For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.”

So all the state can give you is death. All society can give you, apart from Jesus Christ, is death. Molech worship provides a

non-theistic salvation. It will provide a temporal salvation, but not an eternal one.

Conclusion: Choose God's Law or Molech

What is the answer? We must either be saved by God or by man. We must have a law system. No one can survive without a law system: no state, no nation, no family, no individual. The question is not whether or not you will have a law system. You will have a law system. The question is, whose law system will you have? Will you have God's, or will you have man's?

To whom then shall we go for salvation, direction, and legislation? You know what the Bible says in Isaiah 33:22? “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.” Everything we need, we have in Jesus Christ. If we genuinely desire life, liberty, and property, we must submit ourselves to the Word of God in every area of our life. We must repent of our sins, turn from our humanistic ways, and apply God's Word to every sphere of life.

God has ordained civil government. According to Romans 13, civil government is to be God's deacon, God's exactor of righteousness, and God's public minister. It is not to be an idol or an alien law system, nor a rival god. When government becomes a rival god with an alien law system, it has nothing to do with God's ordination.

Since it looks as if our society is on the verge of collapse, our economic system is about to be swallowed up and go down the drain hole, and society as we know it will probably be changed, let me ask you a question. Suppose tomorrow everything collapsed. All of a sudden our money is no good. You can't call 911. There is no government aid because the government has ceased. There is a total collapse. Suppose a number of us live through that collapse and have the task of rebuilding our families, our communities, our state, and our country. Whose law structure will you use to rebuild?

If you use God's law structure, you will rebuild wonderfully. If you use the same humanistic law structure that caused the collapse, all you will do is collapse again. If we would use God's law structure to rebuild tomorrow, why do we not apply it today?

Jeremiah 22:13 says, “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.” Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness. If that is true with a house, how about a community, a state, or a nation? Habakkuk 2:12 says, “Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!”

We must understand that our choice is between the worship of the one true and the living God or the worship of Molech. Under the one true and the living God, we have life, liberty, and property. Under Molech, we have the loss of life, liberty, and property. Under God, we have a structured, ordered society; under Molech, tyranny, totalitarianism, and despotism. God says, “They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them” (Proverbs 28:4). One of the main ways to fight against the wicked is to keep God's law personally and apply it to every area of our lives.

Use it. Live by it. Teach it. Instruct others. For God only is the sovereign Lord, and God only gives us life, liberty, and property.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your truth and because you have delivered us from Molech worship and brought us into the kingdom of thy dear Son. We acknowledge your sovereignty and your law. Everything that we have, everything that we are, and everything that we ever will have and ever will be is only by your grace and mercy. Help us, Father, to live for thee. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Sam Chapman

Introduction and Biblical Foundation

Psalm 144, verse one. And the message today is going to be a historical biblical message. I've had this message for some time, and it just really has been impressed upon my heart afresh, so I want to bring you a message today. The title of it is Sam Chapman, Mosby's Fighting Parson, and you will understand as we get going. Psalm 144, verse one: David said, "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight." You must remember that David was a shepherd, and David was certainly not raised necessarily in a martial context, but God taught David to fight. And David is blessing the Lord for teaching his hands to war and his fingers to fight.

Historical Fighting Parsons

Some of you probably know that there have been many fighting parsons throughout history. In fact, the ones that we're the most familiar with are those that we know of during the War for Independence, better known as the Revolutionary War. Some of those men were like James Caldwell, the Presbyterian pastor, whose

wife Hannah was shot and killed by a British soldier. There was Thomas and Moses Allen, who were brothers. Moses was around Savannah, Georgia. In fact, Midway, his church was burned by the British there. There was Naphtali Daggett.

There was also Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg. There are a few other names that should ring out as you think of the Revolutionary War heroes and those pastors who fought there. When you come to the Second War for Independence, better known as the War of Northern Aggression, there are numerous names that find out. One of them that stands out is General Leonidas Polk. He was an Episcopalian pastor, and he was also the founder of the School of the South in Suwannee, Tennessee, which is still in existence today, and I might add a very beautiful, beautiful place as well. Then, of course, there was General William Nelson Pendleton, who happened to be an Episcopal pastor. He was also chief of artillery for Robert E. Lee.

And he named his four favorite guns Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And he was known to say, "Aim low, boys, and fire, and may God have mercy on their poor misguided souls." And there was also the noted Baptist pastor, General Mark Lowry, who was also known as a fighting parson. What many people do not know is that there was a whole company of pastors from Mississippi, which was known as the Preacher's Regiment.

Preachers in the Ranks

Gary Pitts, in Chaplains in Gray, records that one of the first companies to arrive in Virginia in 1861 contained 50 members of a single church. Another regiment that arrived the same year counted 600 men of the same denomination, while still another numbered 13 Baptist preachers among its soldiers. The 9th Arkansas, organized at Pine Bluff on July 20, 1861, was popularly known as the Parsons Regiment because it boasted 42 ordained ministers in its ranks. A newspaper account mentions an Arkansas Preachers Regiment on its way to the battlefield, commanded by a Methodist preacher, Colonel Bradley, also from Pine Bluff; one soldier was a preacher over 70 years of age. Many other military units were composed of preachers and ministerial students. In Mississippi, practically the entire student body enlisted together with the faculty members in the

Mississippi College Rifles, marching away to battle 104 strong. Georgia had one regiment with 12 missionary Baptist preachers, one primitive Baptist preacher, and one Methodist preacher.

Sam Chapman: Mosby's Right Arm

I have mentioned Sam Chapman before, especially in the message on William Thomas Overby, who was a hero and a member of Mosby's Rangers. The fighting parson I want to talk about today was known as the right arm of John Singleton Mosby: Samuel F. Chapman, better known simply as Sam Chapman. Colonel Mosby said of him, "He was a Baptist preacher who prayed through a six-shooter, which he claimed was the most efficacious form of prayer, especially in dealing with Yankees." Another Ranger, Ludwell Lake, said, "He was the bravest man I ever knew." Mosby also said Sam was one of the noblest and most heroic soldiers in the Southern Army. Sam was born in 1838 to William and Elizabeth Chapman. His ancestors had lived in Virginia since 1729, and the family had acquired great wealth; their home was always noted for its hospitality.

As a young man, Sam received a higher education from Jedediah Hotchkiss, the noted cartographer for Stonewall Jackson. There is an entire book in my library on Hotchkiss entitled Make Me a Map, which is exactly what Stonewall Jackson said to him: "Make me a map of the valley." Sam went to study under Hotchkiss when he was 12 years old. Hotchkiss said that Sam was even with anyone in the school, and if he continues to study as he does at this time, he will undoubtedly be foremost by the close of the session. When Hotchkiss said this, Sam was taking 14 different courses. Sam attained a high degree of maturity under Hotchkiss's tutelage.

Sam's parents were Christian, and their children were raised in church. They attended Main Street Baptist Church in Luray, Virginia. Sam and his brother William were saved and baptized on the second Lord's Day in May 1858. The church records also state that at that same time, Phoebe, a colored woman of John Boonton, and Fanny, a woman of color of Charles Flynn, were baptized. So on the same day that Sam and William Chapman were baptized, two slaves were baptized as well. On October 26, 1858, when Sam was 20 years of age, the church recognized that Sam had been called into the

ministry and had certain gifts. The church minutes record: "At a call meeting of the church on the motion, it was unanimously resolved that it was the opinion of this church that Brother Samuel F. Chapman has gifts for usefulness in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Wherefore, on motion it was resolved that this body grant him a license to exercise his gifts in preaching and exhortation to his fellow men, whereas in the providence of God his lot may be cast." So Sam had been called into the ministry, and the body of believers at Main Street Baptist Church had recognized his calling and his gift. Sam then immediately began to prepare for the ministry. He enrolled in Richmond College, which had begun as Virginia Baptist Seminary, and began his work in 1859 through 1860 to prepare him for his life's work.

Chapman's Early Military Service

However, as most of you know, in April of 1861, the war broke out. Sam then returned to Page County, as did his brother, and they both joined the Confederacy. Sam enlisted as a private on May 3, 1861, in the Warren Rifles, listing his occupation as minister.

Sam was involved in the Battle of First Manassas. Their position was so absolutely dreadful that after the battle Sam mused, "Our fate was to be under the fire of infantry and artillery for two days with scarcely a sight of the enemy, so dense was the foliage in our front. Yet in the battle, the Warren Rifles still suffered one killed and seventeen wounded." Sam was not going to stay in the infantry long because he became a lieutenant in the Dixie Artillery commanded by his brother William. Shortly thereafter, Sam's younger brother, Edmund, also joined the Dixie Artillery. The Dixie Artillery would fight the entire four years of the war, but they were going to fight without Sam and William Chapman because Sam and William both joined Mosby's Rangers. Sam did have some very exciting times during his years in the Dixie Artillery.

But there he not only earned commendations, but also a reputation for being fearless and brave. Many individuals were eager to join Mosby's Rangers, but Mosby was very particular. One of the most humorous incidents I read concerning one man who got in Mosby's Rangers dealt with young Henry Cabell or Cab Maddox. It

turned out that Mosby and his men were chasing Yankee Major Cole. As they chased Major Cole, they passed a boys school at Upperville. Cab Maddox saw them and couldn't stand it. He jumped on his pony and joined Mosby chasing the Yankees with nothing but a McGuffey's third reader in his hand, whooping and hollering the whole time. Cab never went back to school. He spent the rest of his time as a ranger with Mosby. When Sam joined Mosby's Rangers, Mosby told Sam, here's what you need.

"If you will fight with me," Mosby said, "have a good horse, at least one, preferably two or more revolvers, a place to hide away in between raids, a good story to explain why you aren't in the army should a Union sympathizer or Yankee soldier get inquisitive." So have all the pistols you can have and a good horse, a place to hide, and a good story to say why you're not in the army. When Yankee Colonel Wyndham accused Mosby and his men of being nothing but horse thieves, Mosby offered no denial. He simply said that all the horses we had stolen had riders, and the riders had sabers, carbines, and pistols. So if you want to call us horse thieves, have at it. All the horses we took had men on them, and they were armed.

Incidentally, when Mosby and his men went into Fairfax, Virginia, and captured Yankee General Stoughton—that's a wonderful story in and of itself—they slipped in through all the Yankee guards and all the Yankee soldiers. Mosby went into the house where General Stoughton was sleeping, pulled the covers back, slapped him on the buttocks, and said, "Wake up. It's Mosby." Stoughton said, "Have you got him?" "No," Mosby said, "he's got you." So they captured Yankee General Stoughton. By the way, Stoughton at that time was the youngest Brigadier General in the Northern Army. After he was exchanged, he found he had no assignment and finally left the army. He started a law practice in New York and died in 1868 at the age of 30.

Now, Yankee Colonel Wyndham, whom I had mentioned earlier, who had accused Mosby of being a horse thief, would have been captured in the Fairfax raid, with the exception that he had taken a train to Washington the night before. Colonel Robert Johnstone, who was the brigade commander of the 5th New York Cavalry, escaped by the skin of his teeth. He escaped absolutely naked

without a stitch of clothes on, and he hid all night in a privy—that is, an outhouse. And he stayed there all night, terrified, shaking not only with fear, but with cold. With the cold, it was wintertime.

The Battle of Miskel's Farm

He did not come out until daylight. Colonel Johnstone endured much ridicule, not only from his hiding place, but also from appearing at headquarters the next morning totally out of uniform and without anything else as well. And he too passed into oblivion. During that Fairfax raid, Mosby and his men not only captured General Stoughton, but two captains and 30 other men along with their arms and equipment and 58 horses. When Abraham Lincoln heard of the capture of General Stoughton and the loss of the horses during the Fairfax raid, he said, "Well, I'm sorry for that. I can make Brigadier Generals, but I can't make horses." So, Lincoln was more concerned with the loss of the horses than he was with his Brigadier General. When Sam joined Mosby's men, he asked a veteran cavalryman what was likely to happen during a cavalry charge. And the man said, "Besides the possibility of a saber stroke or a pistol shot, you have a good chance of being knocked from side to side by a friend or foe, or being knocked down horse and rider and being run over." I'm sure that was very encouraging to young Sam, but he still was going to be one of Mosby's top men. In fact, he was known as Mosby's right-hand man. One of the most exciting battles for Sam was the Battle of Miskel's Farm. Mosby and his men had been searching for the Federals, but they had withdrawn and they'd even moved away. In fact, after riding for a day or two, they had not found the first Yankee. So it was cold, it was late, and Mosby and his men settled down to spend the night at Miskel's Farm. Now, Mosby did not post any sentries because he had not seen a Yankee in several days. Now, Dick Moran, one of the Rangers, had stopped at the Green Farm, by the way, but the rest of them had gone on to Miskel's Farm.

Mosby took full responsibility because he did not post any sentries. It was cold, it was late, and they all settled down in Miskel's Farm. Mosby and some of the men went into the house to sleep; the rest slept in the barn. What Mosby did not know is that Captain Henry Flint, a Yankee captain, with 148 hand-picked men, were on

his trail. When they passed the Green Farm, where Dick Moran was staying, Moran saw them. He waited until they got totally out of sight, then jumped on his horse and rode as fast and furiously as he could to Miskel's Farm. He got there just barely ahead of the Yankees, and shouted, "Mount up, mount up, the Yankees are coming!" There was a lane that led up into Miskel's Farm, fenced on both sides.

There was a gate, and as the Yankees came into the lane through it, they shut and locked it. Captain Flint said as he rode up the lane, "At last we have Mosby where we want him. He cannot get away." He divided his men to circle the house and barn.

The alarm had been given. Sam had already placed a saddle on his horse and was putting on the bridle when the Yankees began firing. The river was at the Rangers' backs, and they could not cross it. The Yankees were in their front circling them, and high fences were all around. Sam and the rest believed that the boldest front often wins the fight, so those able to get on their horses attacked fiercely. Mosby and the men in the house came running out, fighting on foot until they could reach their horses.

Captain Flint attacked the barn and was instantly hit with six balls to the chest; he was dead before he hit the ground. William Chapman, Sam's brother, also had a close encounter. As he came out of the house running toward the barn, a fierce wind blew the brim of his hat down over his eyes. When he removed it, a Yankee was pointing a pistol at his head not more than a foot away. The Yankee pulled the trigger, but the cap snapped and the weapon did not fire. Chapman's Colt did not misfire, and before he got on his horse, he shot six times and emptied five saddles.

Sam was one of the few Rangers that carried a sword. He was often ahead of all the other Rangers, and this time he rode directly into the swarm of Yankee soldiers. Mosby stated that before Sam got to the gate, he had already exhausted every barrel of his two pistols and had drawn his saber. Now listen to what Mosby said.

"He was just in front of me. He was generally in front of everybody in a fight. It was no fault of the Union cavalry that they did not get through faster than they did, but Sam seemed to think it

was. Even at the supreme moment of my life, when I just stood on the brink of ruin and had barely escaped, I could not restrain a propensity to laugh. Sam, to give more vigor to his blows, was standing straight up in his stirrups, whaling the Yankees left and right with his saber." The Yankees were scattering everywhere, trying to escape Mosby's Rangers. The locked gate that was supposed to keep Mosby in was now keeping the Yankees in, and they were trying to get out very fiercely. In fact, they made every effort to knock it down, and they did. Sam and his brother both almost lost their lives at the Battle of Miskel's Farm. Some of the Yankees got out after the gate was knocked over, and Sam chased two Yankees and called on them to surrender. But surrender was not what they had in mind. They drew their sabers and began fighting. While Sam was fighting with one, the other hit Sam over the head with his sword, but thankfully the sword turned flatwise and just stunned him momentarily. It was at that time that Sergeant William Lyle Hunter came up and knocked one soldier off his horse and the other one then surrendered. Sam very quickly came back to consciousness and realized what was going on. The sergeant asked him, "Why didn't you just shoot him?" Chapman responded, "I never felt like shooting a man who was running away." So he just chased them down and fought them hand to hand until they surrendered. At this battle, Mosby and his men killed nine Yankees, badly wounded 15, captured 82 prisoners, and captured 100 horses with all their arms and equipment. Mosby lost one man with four wounded. The battle at Miskel's Farm demonstrated pure courage, a combat mentality, and a determination to fight to the end on the part of Mosby and his rangers. You've got to remember this: at this particular battle, Mosby and his men were surprised, outnumbered four to one, completely boxed in, and completely unprepared for the fight. And yet, they won the fight.

Biblical Principles from the Battle

Now, I want to tell you, this demonstrates several biblical principles. Let me give you the first one. The very first biblical principle that we're to understand is this: Ecclesiastes 9, verse 10. Scripture says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." Stop and think about that. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with

all thy might. Do you realize if our hearts are not in a fight, we will probably not win. I don't care what you're doing. I don't care what kind of fight it is, whether it's an intellectual battle, an economic battle, a legal battle, a physical battle. If your heart is not in the fight, you're most likely not to win. God said whatever your hand finds to do, you do it with all of your might.

Secondly, we must use all of our strength and our courage and leave the consequences to God. I want you to turn in your Bibles to 2 Samuel and look in chapter 10, 2 Samuel chapter 10, because I want you to see how this principle is enunciated even in the life of Joab. 2 Samuel chapter 10 and notice verse 10. Joab went to the battle. And he found that he had been completely surrounded by the Syrians and by the Ammonites. And so what Joab did was this. He divided part of his forces between himself and his brother Abishai. Look in 2 Samuel chapter 10, notice verse 11. Here's what he says to Abishai. In fact, let's read verse 10. He says, "And the rest of the people he delivered at the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put them in array against the children of Ammon. And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee." Now watch verse 12. "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good." What is he saying? We're going to fight. We're going to use our strength. We're going to use our courage. We're going to do what we can and leave the consequences to God. And may I tell you, everything is in the hand of God anyhow. So you might as well trust him and do what you can do by the grace of God and do it with all your might.

There's a third principle here: We must remember that our battles are not just for us as individuals. Certainly, every warrior, every fighter wants to win and wants to live, but there are others that we have to be concerned with as well. Look back to Nehemiah chapter 4, verse 14. These people thought they were about to be attacked by their enemies, and Nehemiah tells them: "And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible. And fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses." Do you realize a lot of the battles that

we fight are not just for ourselves? Even the legal battles. The things that we go through are eventually to benefit our children and our children's children, our wives, our brethren, our friends. So when you are engaged in battle, you've got to remember it is just not simply you that is involved.

And I do not doubt for one instant that these principles were not in the minds of Sam and William and a number of other men as well. They were fighting for their lives, their land, liberty, and their families. In fact, they fought so well at the Battle of Miskel's Farm that Mosby's report said that Sam and eight others were officially to be recognized for their promptitude and boldness in closing with the enemy. The Battle of Miskel's Farm made such an impression upon John Singleton Mosby that 40 years later, Mosby wrote to Sam Chapman from California: "I just wish you could be here with me. I would feel as young as I was at Miskel's Gate when I burst out laughing in the midst of the fight, when I saw you standing in your stirrups, whaling the Yankees with your saber left and right." Sam had passed through a number of battles unscathed, not even a scratch.

Chapman's Wounding and Marriage

In fact, he had passed through so many battles unscathed that a lot of men began to think that Sam was invulnerable. However, there came a time when a bullet did indeed pierce his body. He was severely wounded. He was out of the battles for a while and yet he was still alive. How it happened was like this. You remember Sam had spent some time in the Dixie Artillery.

In one battle, Sam was firing a howitzer and literally mowing the Yankees down until he fired his last shot. He noticed then that his horse had run off. There was only one other Ranger with him, Ranger Montjoy, so they fought on foot. When Sam ran out of ammunition, he took the ramrod from the howitzer and began to fight like Samson wielding the jawbone of an ass, knocking every Yankee to the ground that he could.

At that time a bullet went through his thigh, and Sam fell to the ground, absolutely defenseless. As he lay there, a Yankee cavalryman rode up, his face flushed with anger, and said, "I'm going to finish

you. Turn over on your back." Sam asked, "Why?" since he was now his prisoner. The Yankee responded, "Because you shot me in the shoulder." Sam replied, "Well, I had a right to shoot you as we had not ceased firing then." While the cavalryman was determined to finish Sam, several other cavalrymen came up and persuaded him to desist. Sam was wounded and taken to be treated. That afternoon, the Yankee cavalryman came to his bedside and begged his pardon, which was readily granted, saying, "I would not have talked to you so, but I was confounded mad. You shot me as I rode past you after some of your men."

Sam was then taken to the Fitzhugh home, and no sooner had he gotten there than he lost consciousness from loss of blood. A Yankee officer, seeing this, grabbed a canteen off another soldier and threw cold water in Sam's face, which revived him. Sam later recalled, "I've often wondered since if I should die as easy as that." He stayed behind enemy lines ten days before he could be moved, and he said that he experienced great care and consideration at the hands of the Yankees.

Mosby later called Sam one of the noblest and most heroic soldiers in the Southern Army. He went on to say that Sam had passed through so many fights unscathed that the men had a superstition that he was invulnerable. His hour had come at last, and a bullet pierced the celestial armor of the soldier priest. Sam was then taken into friendly lines to Salem to recuperate.

And there he was with friends. I wish to point out the wonders of God's mysterious and wonderful providence. No one in this room, and no one that I know of, would prefer to be wounded, certainly not a life-threatening wound. However, in this case, Sam's wounding produced a great blessing. While recuperating, he stayed with friends, and the one who ministered to him and nursed him and helped him most was young Eliza Rebecca Elgin, nearly 19 years old. Sam was about 21, and he was totally smitten with this young lady, known as Miss Beck. After 10 days, he proposed to her and asked her to marry him. I only know of one other couple—he proposed after three days. They're good friends of ours and still married. But after 10 days, he asked Miss Beck to marry him.

Well, she did not accept his proposal. She cared for him, but she did not think that she loved him. So when Sam left, he wrote her a letter declaring how deeply he felt for her, how much he loved her, and how serious was his proposal. Although Miss Beck turned him down temporarily, within a year she became Mrs. Samuel Chapman. Sam was Mosby's first adjutant and lieutenant. His brother William was a captain, but after the raid at Miskel's Farm and Sam had married Miss Beck, Sam was promoted to captain for his courageous character.

Further Exploits and Humorous Incidents

I suppose that courage was exemplified in both acts, fighting and marriage. But he was promoted to captain. Mosby said of Sam that he was always riding in the forefront. He said his character as a soldier was more the model of the Hebrew prophets than the evangelist or the Baptist in whom he was so devout a believer. He was generally in front of everybody in a fight. Again, Mosby described Sam as the only man I ever saw who really enjoyed fighting and who generally went into the fray with his hat in one hand and banging away with his revolver with the other.

Now, I know that war is not funny, and I know that fighting and death are serious. Howbeit that does not mean that there are not humorous incidents that happen during war. And one of those humorous incidents involved Sam Chapman and John Singleton Mosby. The Federals had a picket post that was called Guard Hill, which normally had about 75 men present. Sam had been sent to reconnoiter and he saw that that post had been greatly reinforced. In fact, now they had about 250 cavalry as well as 75 infantry. And so when he came back and reported to Mosby that the guard post had been greatly increased, Mosby's response was, "So much the better."

"Now we'll get two good horses apiece instead of one." So they planned then on attacking Guard Hill. And of course it was right at dark. Chapman and his men rushed the Federals, firing and yelling like Indians, and they drove the Federals so quickly into complete darkness that they were only able to capture about 16 of them, but they also captured about 70 horses. The problem was this. The night before they attacked, there had been some rioting and some fighting

up on the hill by some of the Yankee sentries. After Mosby and his men had captured these 16 Yankees and 70 horses, Captain Michael Arrer of the 15th New York Cavalry rode to the top of the hill to inquire what was the cause of the disturbance. He was thinking some of the sentries were fighting like they had been before.

So he rode up to Sam Chapman and asked, "What's all this fuss mean?" Sam replied, "It means that Mosby has got you." The shocked captain, with the whites of his eyes widening, remarked, "Well, this beats hell, don't it?" Two days later, he was dismissed from service for having grossly neglected his duty while in command of the pickets, though the dismissal was later overturned. Sam held to a biblical philosophy of divine providence. He considered that Mosby's men were organized for fighting and that whenever divine providence presented an opportunity for a fight, it was simply his duty to embrace it, to fight with all of his might, and to trust the Lord for the consequences. Mosby and his men were indeed fierce fighters, usually fighting when outnumbered three, four, and sometimes five to one.

Charles Humphreys, a chaplain under Yankee Major Forbes, gives an eyewitness account of one battle: "Mosby and his rangers were upon us, swooping down like Indians, yelling like fiends, discharging their pistols with fearful rapidity and threatening to completely envelop our little band." During this battle, the Yanks broke and ran some distance to a fence where they tried to form again, but it was absolutely useless. The rangers drove them with unfettered fierceness, and the Bluecoats had no place to run. The fight became hand-to-hand, saber-to-saber, revolver-to-revolver at point-blank ranges.

Humphrey then says: "No words can picture the confusion and horror of that scene. Horses leaping madly in the pangs of death. Riders crushed beneath their ruthless feet. Then the panic-stricken crowd galloping over their fallen companions and closely followed by the insolent foe"—that's Mosby and his men—"hearing their little rally, and some brave spirit scorning defeat and startled courage in his companions and turned to face the enemy, but only to die." Mosby had won the fight with over 100 captured and dozens left on the field dying and dead. After the battle, Mosby's surgeon, Dr. Will

Dunn, treated men from both sides. Mosby and his men were usually very gracious and compassionate men.

However, there were a couple of instances where no mercy was shown. If you will listen to my message on William Thomas Overby, you will find that that was one instance when Overby and several others were hanged, shot, dragged—you just have to listen to the message. These men had been captured in battle and were supposed to be treated as prisoners of war, yet they were brutally murdered by the Yankees. So Mosby sent word that he's going to hang everyone out of Custer's command that he catches in retaliation for what they did to his men.

No Mercy for the Merciless

But there was another instance in which no compassion was shown to the Yankees. Ranger James Williamson, a firsthand eyewitness, gives an account of the totality of the destruction perpetrated by the Yankees: "They robbed the people of everything they could destroy or carry off. Horses, cows, cattle, sheep, hogs, etc. Killing poultry, insulting women, pillaging houses, and in many cases robbing even the poor Negroes. They burned all the mills and factories as well as hay, wheat, corn, straw, and every description of forage. Barns and stables, whether empty or full, were burned."

If you don't want to take the Southerners' word for the looting and destruction, listen to the Yankees commander's report. Lieutenant Colonel Casper Crowninshield reported destroying 200 barns, eight mills, 10,000 tons of hay, and 25,000 bushels of grain. Additionally, he rounded up and carried off 474 beef cattle, 100 sheep, and 87 horses, estimating the value of the property at nearly half a million dollars. Sheridan, in his report to Union General Halleck, reported 5,000 to 6,000 heads of cattle, 3,000 to 4,000 heads of sheep, and nearly 1,000 fatted hogs had been driven off, destroyed, or stolen by his brigade. He also claimed capture of 500 to 700 horses, said the monetary value was in the millions, and that the destruction in the valley and in the mountains is most complete. You remember it was General Sheridan who said he had destroyed the Shenandoah Valley so completely that a crow flying across it would have to carry his own provisions.

Charles Humphrey, the Yankee chaplain, said of the devastation and human suffering: "This was the most unpleasant task we were ever compelled to undertake. It was heart-piercing to hear the shrieks of women and children and even see men crying, begging that at least one cow, only one support might be left. But no mercy was allowed."

It was a terrible retribution on the country. Listen to what he said: "But no mercy was allowed." On one occasion, when the Yankees were looting and stealing and burning homes and leaving helpless women and children weeping and begging for help, word reached the Rangers. Captain William Chapman, Sam's brother, along with Sam, gathered the Rangers and caught the villains in the act. As the Rangers attacked, they shouted, "Take no prisoners, no quarter, no quarter today." The entire Ranger Command took up the cry, "No quarter, wipe them from the face of the earth." The villains were so overwhelmed, they fled in confusion, and yet they were not shown any mercy. When the last of them were cornered, they tried to surrender. But surrender was not a word to be used that day. A neighborhood woman who witnessed the affair stated concerning the Yankees, "They begged for life. But their day of grace was passed."

Look in your Bibles to James 2:13. Remember the Yankee chaplain Humphreys who said, "But no mercy was to be shown." That was when the Southerners were begging for mercy. In James 2:13, the Word of God says: "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." So obviously, these Yankees had showed no mercy. And now no mercy was shown to them. Do you realize? There is a time when mercy shall cease. Hosea 1:6 says: "For I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away."

Sinners that have despised God's grace and God's mercy in Jesus Christ will discover one day that they will face an absolutely just God who will show them no mercy. There is a time when mercy is passed. Those who show no mercy shall receive no mercy. And those Yankee villains who were looting and burning and pillaging and fighting against helpless civilians were shown no mercy. When the war finally

ended, Mosby, instead of surrendering, disbanded his men. His men were all called and lined up.

War's End and Chapman's Legacy

After he inspected the lines, he drew a paper from his pocket and read: "Soldiers, I have summoned you together for the last time. The vision we have cherished of a free and independent country has vanished, and that country is now the spoil of a conqueror. I disband your organization in preference to surrendering it to our enemies. I am no longer your commander. After an association of more than two eventful years, I part from you with a just pride in the fame of your achievements and grateful recollections of your generous kindness to myself. And now at this moment of bidding you a final adieu, accept the assurance of my unchanging confidence and regard. Farewell. John Singleton Mosby, Colonel."

Silence reigned for a few minutes, then men began to choke back tears and rush to shake their commander's hand. James Joseph Williamson, a ranger, recalled: "Strong men who had looked unmoved on scenes which would have appalled hearts, unused to the painful sights presented on the field of battle, now wept like little children." Mosby stood beside a fence and took the hands of those who gathered around him. His eyes were red, and he would now and then dash aside the struggling tears which he was unable to wholly suppress. Men would silently grasp one another's hands and then turn their heads aside to hide their tears. But at last it became so general that no pains were taken to conceal them. It was the most trying ordeal through which we ever passed.

There was a reunion, the very first one, of Mosby's Rangers held in Alexandria, Virginia, on January the 16th, 1865. Many rangers attended. One ranger did not: Sidnor Ferguson, better known as Sid, who had joined Mosby's Rangers when he was 17 and after the war became a Methodist preacher. When invited to attend the reunion, he refused, fearing that if he did attend, several souls might be lost. Mosby replied to Sam Chapman when he read Sid's excuse: "I suspect Sid could sin and has sent more people to heaven by his shooting than his preaching." Probably that was true, because Sid stayed with him throughout the entire war. Sam also participated in

a number of the revivals that were happening during the Confederate armies.

Closing Prayer

He was often involved in the prayer meetings and assisted the chaplains as much as he could. Sam had an absolutely wonderful ministry after the war. It would take another message just to tell how God used this man. He was fruitful, faithful, and blessed, and he finally went home to be with the Lord on May 21, 1919. Inscribed on his tombstone are these words: "A faithful minister of the gospel. A brave Confederate officer." "An honorable and a useful life. I fought the good fight. I've kept faith." Here was a man who understood biblical principles, lived a godly, holy life, not only during the war but after, and had a very extensive, fruitful ministry. Sam Chapman, Mosby's fighting parson, the right-hand man of John Singleton Mosby. And as Mosby said, he was one of the bravest men I have ever known. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we thank you for your love, mercy, goodness, and kindness. Lord, we rejoice to hear about men like Sam Chapman—men who are not only brave and courageous but holy and godly, men whom you used not only in defending their lives, families, and liberties but in spreading the Gospel, the principles and truth of your Word, building up your Kingdom, and exalting the Lord Jesus Christ. Encourage us, Lord. May we learn to fight the good fight, lay hold of eternal life, and be faithful and true no matter what. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Teaching Rebellion

Introduction: Rebellion Defined

“Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.”

“Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie: Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the Lord; because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord.”

Rebellion, in one sense of the word, does not need to be taught, since all are sinners and all are rebels against God by nature. It is our

nature, our tendency, and our inclination to rebel and to do our own thing. We wish to transgress and to rebel; and when we do, it does not matter what is right or wrong, nor does authority matter, because we simply want to follow our own determinations.

The very first thing to remember is this: first and foremost, rebellion is against God and His law. Even godly people sometimes commit rebellion—sometimes unknowingly, sometimes knowingly, and simply through emotions and circumstances.

But even Moses and Aaron rebelled against the Lord. For the Bible tells us in Numbers 27:14 that God said, "For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin." So even Moses and Aaron, in this instance, rebelled against God. Rebellion to God and His law was the preeminent sin of the Israelites through the Old Testament; it was their leading sin. Nehemiah 9:26 says, "Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations." They rebelled against God and cast His law behind their backs.

Rebellion may take many and various forms. We may not recognize it at the beginning, but inevitably it will manifest itself, and inevitably the judgment of God will be upon it. In a general sense, rebellion can only be against lawful authority. If there is no lawful authority, it is not rebellion; it is simply resistance to tyranny and usurpation. Mark this down and hold it in your mind, because an application will be made from it at the end of the message. There are many ways to rebel. One may attempt to seize lawful power and authority unlawfully, and that is rebellion. Likewise, one could use lawful authority and lawful power unlawfully and still be guilty of rebellion.

Forms of Rebellion

Here is why: God has ordained and set the boundaries and limits for every institution He ordained. The Bible teaches sphere authority. God created the family, the church, and the state, and He delineated

their limits and boundaries. Thus, when you read about the kings in Psalm 2:2-3, the Bible says, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." The kings did not like the limitations God had set upon them or the boundaries within which He had enclosed them. Therefore they said, "Let's cast away their cords. Let's break their bands."

Scholastic Rebellion

When we say, "We'll do what we want to do. We will define our own power and define our own authorities," we deny God's ordained limits and boundaries. That in itself is rebellion, whether it is done individually, scholastically, familially, ecclesiastically, or nationally.

Educational Rebellion

Would you send your children to a place where your rightful authority as a parent was denied? Would you pay someone to teach your children rebellion? Would you consider sending your children into an unsafe environment where perverse sex acts are taught as normal? Would you place your children in a situation where they had to use the bathroom with transgenders and expose them to all kinds of unsafe and abusive situations?

The average parent will say, "No, of course not. I would never do that to my children." However, if you send your children to a government school, that is exactly what you are doing. You are paying someone to teach your children rebellion against God, the Bible, and your parental authority. Moreover, you are putting them in an unsafe environment.

For instance, in June of '16, just six months ago, Howell, Michigan—the Howell School District said President Obama was forcing them to allow the opposite sex in the bathrooms, locker rooms, and showers. District leaders wrote an explanatory letter to all school parents stating that the United States Department of Justice and the Department of Education found that Title IX prohibits discrimination against students based on their transgender status. The Obama administration announced that all public schools

in the nation must allow males who identify as females to use the girls' intimate facilities, and vice versa, or else lose millions in federal funding.

As far as educational rebellion is concerned, there is absolutely no place in the Bible, and there is no place in the Constitution, where the United States government has the power to educate anyone. God created only three institutions: the family, which is a ministry of education; the church, which is a ministry of grace; and the state or government, which is a ministry of justice. Nowhere in the Bible has God granted government the authority or the power to educate. Nowhere in the Constitution has that power been granted.

The Constitution is known as an express powers document, or a limited powers document. When it is called an express powers document, all that means is that all of the power or authority that the federal government has is expressed in the Constitution. If it is not in the Constitution, they do not have that power. That is why Article 10 says that all other powers are reserved to the states or the people thereof, respectively.

When the Constitution is called a limited powers document, it is saying that the federal government is limited to those powers that are enumerated and enunciated in the Constitution. The federal government, then, oftentimes assumes power and authority that is not delegated to it. When it assumes power and authority that has not been delegated, it is usurpation and rebellion.

Rebellion in Government, Home, and Church

Vice President and United States Senator John C. Calhoun said, "The Constitution has admitted the jurisdiction of the United States within the limits of the several states only so far as the delegated powers authorize. Beyond that, they are intruders and may be rightly expelled." Any time the federal government goes beyond the Constitution, it is a usurper and an intruder, and it may be lawfully expelled. Rebellion can take place in the government, but rebellion can also take place in the home.

Children can rebel against their parents. Wives can rebel against their husbands. Husbands can rebel against Jesus Christ, who is

their head. Most people have never really thought about 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 3, where the Apostle Paul wrote, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." God's delegated order of authority is God, Christ, man, woman; or, you could say, God, Christ, husband, wife.

That is why in Ephesians chapter 5 God speaks both to the wives and the husbands: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Wives can rebel against their husbands, and husbands can rebel against Jesus Christ. Rebellion can take place in government, in the home, and in the church. There are many professing Christians who have rebelled and are still in rebellion against a lawful, godly preacher. I have known good and godly men who were simply run off from the church because the people did not want to hear the truth. The pastor was trying to teach them, but their minds were made up. They said, "No, we're not going to listen and you're not going to do this," and thus they ended up running the man off.

Christians are admonished in Hebrews 13 and verse 17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

Let me put it to you very plainly: I will give an account for each one of you, for everyone who comes to hear me preach. If I say, "Lord, they listened well, they applied the truth, they did what you commanded us to do through your Word," God said that will be for your joy. But if I have to say, "Lord, they wouldn't listen, they were stubborn, they were rebellious, they were hard-headed," God said that would be for your grief.

Rebellion can take place in the government, in the home, and in the church. Rebellion also works both ways. It is not only that people sometimes rebel against a godly pastor; sometimes an ungodly pastor or church officer rebels against God and the people. Jeremiah encountered a number of such individuals, especially in Jeremiah 28 and 29. We must understand that rebellion works both ways: sometimes the leader is in rebellion against God.

To understand the context of Jeremiah 28 and 29, turn back in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 24. This passage deals with what God showed and taught Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 24, God gives Jeremiah a picture: he sees baskets of figs. Some of the figs are very good, and some are very bad. The good figs represent those people who had already been sent into captivity in Babylon. The bad figs are Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and the people who were left.

Historical Context: Good and Bad Figs

Jeremiah 24:1 says: "The Lord shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the Lord, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. Then said the Lord unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good."

"For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."

God says, “Look, here are the good figs.” The good figs happen to be Jeconiah, the king, and all the people that He sent into Babylon for their good. God said, “I’m going to bring them back. I’m going to build them up. I’m not going to pluck them down. I’ll give them a heart to know Me. They’ll be My people and I’ll be their God.”

Now, as to the evil figs, which cannot be eaten because they are so evil, the Lord says: “So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt: And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.”

Very obviously, God is saying that Zedekiah and his kingdom—the people who are left—are corrupt and vile, and God intends to destroy them. God has taken Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, sometimes called the Chaldeans—they are one and the same—and given him all the kingdoms of the land. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar is called in the Bible by God, “my servant.” He was a heathen king, but God still calls him “my servant,” showing that God has absolute sovereign power and control even over the heathen. God is going to send Nebuchadnezzar into the land to chastise and judge Judah and Jerusalem. This is how God has ordered Nebuchadnezzar to capture and control Judah and Jerusalem.

God's Sovereign Use of Nebuchadnezzar

In Jeremiah 25, God tells them why He is sending Nebuchadnezzar: "Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations." So God says, "Nebuchadnezzar, My servant, I am sending him against all of these people."

In Jeremiah 27:4, God says, "And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters; I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him." God says, "Look, I've given everything into his hand."

In Jeremiah 25:11-12, God says, "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations." Everybody is going to be serving him for 70 years until God takes him down; it is just that simple.

So, here are the good figs that have been sent into Babylon, according to Jeremiah 24, for their good. Jeremiah now knows that this captivity is going to be 70 years long. Therefore, Jeremiah writes to the captives in Babylon and tells them what to do in Jeremiah 29.

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 29:1-7 (KJV)

Jeremiah's Letter to the Exiles

> Jeremiah 29 verse 1: He writes a letter and he says, "Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon; (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem;) By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of

> Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."
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> So Jeremiah says, "Here's what you might as well do. You might as well make sure that you build yourself a good house, plant yourself a good garden, some vineyards, and you're going to be there a while. So you need to marry. You need to make sure your sons and daughters marry. Do not diminish yourselves. Just continue to go and live and pray for the peace of that city there. And you're going to be having peace yourself."

False Prophets: Hananiah and Shemaiah

Everyone in this room understands that Jeremiah was God's prophet, sent by God. He is also known as the weeping prophet. He wept over the people, preached to the people, and taught the people, but unhappily no one would listen to him. The truth of the matter is that no one wanted to repent or do what was right. If you will go back to Jeremiah 26, notice what he says in verses 12 and 13: "Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you."

Jeremiah said it was very simple: if you do not repent, you will perish. God sent him and gave him all these words. Therefore, they were to amend their doings, but they refused to listen. It is amazing to me how many people will refuse the plain words of God now.

Here is what has happened so far. God has sent the good figs into Babylon for their good for seventy years. The bad figs are still in

Jerusalem, and Zedekiah is their king. Everything Jeremiah is preaching is against the flesh: they have to go through this for seventy years. It is also against Zedekiah and his government, and of course Zedekiah does not like that. In light of Jeremiah's preaching the truth, there now arise what I would call governmental preachers, or state preachers. You could call them false prophets, which they were, or ear-ticklers, which they were, because they were preaching contrary to Jeremiah. They were preaching and teaching what King Zedekiah wanted to hear, and what the people wanted to hear. If you will look in Jeremiah chapter 28, let us begin there and see what Hananiah has done since we read about him in the latter part of this chapter. Watch verse 1 of Jeremiah 28: "And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the Lord,"

In the presence of the priests and of all the people, Hananiah said, “Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the Lord: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.”

Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and of all the people that stood in the house of the Lord, “Amen: the Lord do so: the Lord perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the Lord's house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place.”

Hananiah was preaching and teaching what the people wanted to hear. He said that within two years everything would come back, including the vessels stolen from the temple and all the people. Jeremiah said, “Amen, I’m for that. That’s what I’d like to have happen.” But Jeremiah knew it was not true. God had already told him they would be there seventy years.

Watch how Jeremiah answered Hananiah. In verse 7 he said: “Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people; The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.”

Jeremiah's argument was that history was on his side. There had been many prophets: some preached peace, while others preached war and pestilence. Yet the test of a prophet was whether his words came to pass: “Then shall the prophet be known.” Jeremiah could wait two years, but he already knew better, because Hananiah had declared that the exiles would return within that time.

Hananiah was so arrogant and sure of himself that God had instructed Jeremiah to make a wooden yoke and place it around his neck. The yoke symbolized the truth that God had placed that burden upon all the nations, which would serve Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah 28:10-11 records: “Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it. And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years.” And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

Jeremiah had already said that if Hananiah's word came to pass, they would know whether he was God's man. Hananiah therefore impudently took the yoke from Jeremiah and broke it. But God had already declared seventy years, while Hananiah declared two. After Hananiah broke the yoke, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: “Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also.”

The wooden yoke was only a symbol, and Hananiah broke it while claiming that he would break the yoke from the nations within two

years. But God said to replace it with iron, because His word was absolutely sure: they would remain there seventy years. Hananiah could not break an iron yoke. False prophets are ultimately exposed, and their prophecies revealed as nothing but lies. The implication was clear: Hananiah was lying.

His prophecy was not true. Jeremiah said to Hananiah, "The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month."

Note these things. First, Jeremiah told Hananiah, "The Lord hath not sent thee." Secondly, "You are a liar." Thirdly, "You are causing the people to trust in a lie." Fourthly, "You are teaching rebellion against the Lord." Fifthly, "God is going to kill you." That is exactly what God did. Hananiah died in the same year, in the seventh month.

This was one man who opposed Jeremiah and his preaching. The same judgment fell upon the false prophet Shemaiah. In Jeremiah 29:30, we read: "Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie: Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the Lord; because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord."

In other words, God said, "I'm going to cut off his line. He'll not have any children come back. Neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people"—that is, he would die in Babylon. Why? "Because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord." Again, God says that this man taught rebellion against the Lord. Here are two men who opposed Jeremiah. Turn back to Jeremiah chapter 20. There was another prophet by the name of Pashur.

Pashur: Another False Prophet

And he likewise was teaching a lie. Jeremiah 20 verse 1: “Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib.”

The name Magor-missabib literally means “terror on every side.” You will understand the name once you look at verse 4: “For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.”

The Root of Rebellion: Rejecting God's Word

Now look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 28. Why did God send the Judahites, the Benjamites, and the Simeonites into captivity into Babylon? Why did He send the entire southern kingdom there? You could also ask, why did God send the northern kingdom into Assyria? Here is why. In Jeremiah 26 verse 13, Jeremiah told the people, “Amend your ways, change your ways, and if you repent God will not do the evil that He is planning to do to you.”

But of course they would not listen. Deuteronomy 28 sets forth the blessings and the curses. In verse 45, Moses is ending the curses, and he says: “Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because

thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee."

Now God says, "Look, this is very simple. You can serve Me and have joy and happiness and plenty, or you can not serve Me and serve your enemies by being enslaved in hunger and in terror." In other words, God is showing the difference between His service and the service of His enemies. God says, "Look, here you go. I am going to send you over there so you will understand. It would have been very simple just to obey Me and be blessed. But now you have disobeyed Me, and now you are cursed."

Now here is the thing: These men—Shemaiah, Pashur, and Hananiah—were all teaching rebellion against the Lord.

I want you to pause and think with me. Some time ago, I was reading through the book of Jeremiah, and I came to this passage, and the thought hit me. All I said to myself was, "Wow, most people have never thought about it in this light." Here is the first thing I want you to consider: There are many individuals like Pashur, Hananiah, and Shemaiah who have forged a commission from God and preach a counterfeit peace and a counterfeit gospel.

They are not preaching the truth; they are preaching a lie. You say, "Well, how do I know whether they are preaching the truth or whether or not they are preaching a lie?" The answer is found in Isaiah 8 and verse 20. Isaiah said, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." So, in order for you to know whether or not a man is preaching or teaching a lie, you must know the Word of God. You must read it. You must study it. You must know it, or else you will likely be led astray by one of these individuals who is preaching a lie. It is just that simple.

Application: Teaching Rebellion Today

Preaching a lie is bad enough in and of itself. You would have to know that you are preaching a lie. Why would I sit here and say, "Well, God spoke to me and God told me this," when God had not said a word to me? I understand that a man can be deceived, and that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. But if you are preaching and teaching a lie, you have to know that it is a lie. So it is bad enough to preach and teach a lie. What is even worse is when you get people to believe in and trust in that lie. But when you understand that the heavy sin, the main sin, is that they were teaching rebellion against the Lord, let this sink into you.

The Word of God is not being preached. The preacher is preaching rebellion against the Lord. That is a heavy, awesome thought. Do you realize that one of the reasons most Christians are so confused, ungodly, and unbiblical is that they usually assume anyone who calls himself a preacher or a reverend is truly so and has been sent by God, when in reality that is not the case?

One of my good friends, as a young man, was seriously thinking about entering the ministry. He went to his pastor, whom he admired, and told him, "I'm really thinking about entering the ministry. I have a hunger to know the Word of God and to teach the Word of God. Can you give me some counsel and advice?" He said, "I've never forgotten what he said." The pastor replied, and I quote, "It's a good living and an easy profession." Of course, this fellow did not become a preacher. But there he was: a man who entered the ministry as a profession because it was an easy living and a good living. So many people listen to all the radio preachers and all the TV preachers, and they become so confused that they have no idea which end is up.

And the truth of the matter is this: unless someone is actually teaching, expounding, and applying the Word of God, they are teaching rebellion against God because they are teaching people to resist God, His rule and His reign, and His law. That is exactly what these other men were doing. Lies, falsehoods, and untruths teach people to disobey God; hence, they are being taught rebellion against God.

So let me spell this out for you. It does matter where you attend church. It does matter to whom you listen. It does matter what you hear. And it does matter whether or not the Word of God is being taught in its purity, because anything else is teaching rebellion.

I told you when I first started this message that rebellion could only be to lawful authority. If there is no lawful authority, it is not rebellion; it is resistance to tyranny or usurpation. Since rebellion can only be to lawful authority, the implication is very clear: God and His Word are our lawful authorities. That is what Jeremiah was trying to teach these men and those people, but they would not hear.

When the religious leaders caught Peter and the other apostles, they said, "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Peter and the others answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Why? Because God is the lawful authority.

Whenever you teach anything other than the Word of God, you are teaching rebellion. Can you imagine the churches in this country that do not truly teach the Word of God, yet teach their people to live contrary to God and His law? They may be some of the sweetest, kindest, most civil, most likable, and most lovable preachers in the entire world, but they are teaching rebellion against God.

It is only common sense that if you want people to trust in a lie and believe a lie, you had better be likable and lovable, because folks are not going to follow someone who is mean, ugly, hateful, and lying to them. Probably Hananiah, Shemaiah, and Pashur were all likable men. They were just teaching a lie and, in doing so, teaching rebellion against the Lord.

Conclusion: Obey God Rather Than Men

So let this thought stay with you all week: If it is not the Word of God, it is rebellion.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We thank You, Heavenly Father, that Thou art indeed the one true and the living God, and besides Thee there is none other. Thou art the sovereign, omnipotent Ruler of the

universe. We bow to Thee and recognize Thee and Thy law as our lawful authority. Help us, Lord, to be obedient unto Thee in all that we say and do. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Why Some Will Not Listen

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Samuel 17:5-14 (KJV)

Make him afraid, and all the people that are with him shall flee. And I will smite the king only, and I will bring back all the people unto thee. The man whom thou seekest is as all returned, so all the people shall be in peace. And the saying pleased Absalom well and all the elders of Israel.

Then said Absalom, call now Hushai the Archite also. Let us hear likewise what he said. And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake on him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner. Shall we do after his saying? If not, speak thou. And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time. For said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field. And thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people. Behold, he is hidden now in some pit, or in some other place, and it will come to pass when some be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, there is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom.

> And he also that is valued whose heart is as a heart of a lion shall utterly melt. And for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valued men. Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee from Dan, even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that thou go to battle in thine own person.
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> So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground. And of him and of all the men that are with him, there shall not be left so much as one. Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it in the river until there be not one small stone found there. And Absalom, that all the men of Israel said, the council of Hushai the Archite is better than the council of Ahithophel.

Introduction: The Problem of Not Listening

The title of the message is "Why Some Will Not Listen." Every parent at some time has become frustrated with children simply because they will not listen. Likewise, many husbands and wives become frustrated with each other because one spouse seemingly will not listen. Any pastor can tell you that he has often become frustrated because he looks out among the congregation and some appear not to be listening at all. In counseling, whether one-on-one or couple-on-couple, you find that many times it simply does not register because people are not listening.

Moreover, in witnessing, you may find that you can speak very plainly and people appear interested, but they do not really care. I have had people actually tell me they did not want to hear anything about Jesus Christ, and certainly did not want to hear anything about the Bible. Thus, over and over we repeat ourselves simply because people will not listen.

I think television has probably destroyed the attention span of most people in this country. I began to think that the average individual could not listen more than three to five minutes without being distracted or needing a break. When I checked, I found I was extremely generous with three to five minutes. An article stated, “The average human attention span is now shorter than a goldfish’s.”

A recent study found that the average human attention span had fallen from twelve seconds in 2000, or around the time smartphones hit the scene, to eight seconds today. In comparison, scientists believe that the goldfish has an attention span of nine seconds.

Three to five minutes was very generous if the average individual cannot pay attention for more than eight seconds straight. Have you ever wondered how our forefathers learned everything they learned? Here is the answer: They listened. When you stop and think that all the colonial children, most of them, by the time they were five or six years of age, could already read, write, and speak not only English, but Greek, Hebrew, and Latin.

Historical Contrast: How Forefathers Learned by Listening

It was a qualification to get into Harvard, Yale, Princeton, or any of these schools. You already had to be able to read, write, and speak Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. That's astounding. An excellent example is Sam Adams. Sam Adams received what you and I would call a top education at the Boston Latin School. He was educated among some of the elite, or the most well-off, in Boston, Massachusetts. He learned not only the classics, but Latin and Greek as well. At age fourteen, in 1736, he entered Harvard College. At age eighteen, he graduated with a bachelor's degree, and at age twenty-one, he received his master's degree in art and was able to write a very controversial thesis about the Commonwealth.

How did they learn? How did they gather so much in their minds? The answer is that they didn't have television, radio, computers, smartphones, or tablets. In other words, they actually had to pay attention. They had to listen, and they had to listen very, very well.

Biblical Emphasis on Hearing

We are going to be examining 2 Samuel, but think about what our Lord said and how often He said it. In Matthew 11:15, our Lord said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." In Matthew 13:9, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." In Matthew 13:43, He said, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their

Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." In Mark 4:9, He said again, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

In Luke chapter 8, speaking about the parable of the sower and the good-ground hearer, He said, "Another fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold." And when He had said these things, He cried, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." When He was talking about salt that had lost its saltiness, in Luke 14:35 He said, "It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Over and over our Lord made this simple truth very clear: if you have ears to hear, you must hear. Here is the truth we are to grasp from all of these verses: if you have ears to hear, if you have the ability to hear, then you are responsible and accountable to hear.

Actually, these verses mean far more than just a responsibility to hear what we would call audio waves. You are responsible to hear, but also willing, ready, and attentive to hear. In each of these passages, the Greek word for hear is akouo, which literally means to hear, to hearken, to attend to, to consider, to understand, to perceive, and to give ear to teaching or to the teacher. There is another truth we must comprehend in light of these verses.

Distinction Between External and Internal Hearing

We have to distinguish between ability and responsibility. Anyone who has the ability to hear is also responsible to hear. But we must grasp this fact: there is a difference between external hearing and internal hearing. There is a difference between merely hearing sound waves and perceiving the truth spiritually. So many people may hear externally and audibly, but they cannot hear spiritually. Therefore, anyone who has the ability to hear physically does not necessarily have the ability to hear spiritually.

The Natural Man's Inability and Continued Responsibility

Inability does not negate responsibility. I am going to say this again a little later, but listen carefully: inability does not negate

responsibility. Let me show you what I mean. Hold 2 Samuel, but turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 2, and look at verse 14. Here the Apostle Paul makes a very clear statement.

He says this: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." In this passage, the natural stands opposed to the spiritual. The natural man denotes those governed by their natural instincts, animal passions, and desires. The natural here is in opposition to the things of the Spirit of God.

This refers to unregenerate and unconverted men, but more than that, it refers to men controlled by their own passions and desires. So he tells you in verse 14 that the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. Why? They are foolishness unto him. Truth to the natural man is folly. It is absolutely worthless, useless, and undesirable. Since the natural man is unregenerate, he does not have the power or ability to see truth. Look at verse 14 again.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." Then notice: "Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." I remember that even when I was a boy in school, our teacher taught us the difference between may and can. May is a term of permission; can is a term of ability.

So Francis could ask me, "Pastor, may I play the piano?" I would look at him and say, "You have my permission if you have the ability to play the piano." He could ask me, "Can I play the piano?" and I would respond, "I don't know whether you can or not. I've never heard you." Can is a term of ability. Thus our Lord says in verse 14, "Neither can he know them." That is, he does not have the ability to discern spiritual truth.

When the Bible speaks of the natural man as totally ignorant of spiritual truth and without the ability to see it, this does not necessarily mean that he is ignorant by the world's standard. He could have four or five earned PhDs and an IQ off the charts. But as far as the truth of God is concerned, he is totally ignorant. He cannot see it; he cannot perceive it.

He is governed by his passions, by his desires, by his pride, and by his intellect. Turn back to Psalm 49, where God likens these men to brute beasts. Psalm 49:12 says, "Nevertheless man being in honor abideth not, he is like the beasts that perish." So man that is in honor and abides not in honor is like the beasts that perish. Then, in verse 20, he says, "Man that is in honor and understandeth not, he's like the beasts that perish." So a man who is unregenerate, a natural man, cannot understand, will not understand, and does not understand. God says he is like the beasts that perish.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14, God says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Romans chapter 8 gives a passage that not only further explains and elucidates this truth, but emphasizes this truth quite clearly as well. Beginning with verse 6, the Bible says, "For to be carnally minded is death." There is the natural mind and the unregenerate mind. "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." So there again, they are in opposition.

Verse 7 tells us why the carnal mind is death: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." The word enmity is a very strong word for hatred. He says, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." That is a term of ability: it has no ability to be subject to the law of God. Then verse 8 says, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." The natural man has no ability to please God.

Verse 9 says, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If you do not have the Spirit of Jesus Christ, then you are not a Christian. If you do not have the Spirit of Jesus Christ, you cannot perceive the truth. If you do not have the Spirit of Jesus Christ, it means you are carnal-minded, natural-minded, unregenerate, and unsaved. That is what it means.

Such a one, according to Romans 8, hates God and God's truth. He refuses it, rejects it, repudiates it, counts it absolutely foolish, and refuses to hear it, consider it, or seek to understand it.

Why would anyone waste his time on that which he despises and thinks is foolishness? Clearly, the unregenerate, natural, carnal man is not interested in the Word of God. But consider this: inability does not nullify responsibility. Whether a man is unregenerate or saved by the grace of God, each man has the responsibility to hear God. Why? God originally created man upright.

Solomon says that man sought out witty, sinful inventions. God created man with original knowledge, righteousness or holiness, and dominion. In his sin and rebellion, man forfeited that dominion, knowledge, and holiness. He lost his ability to please God because of his sin and rebellion.

But listen very clearly: just because fallen man is unsaved, unregenerate, natural, carnal, fleshly, and beastly does not mean that he has no responsibility to hear God. Just because man has lost his ability to hear does not mean that God has lost His right to command. God can still command, and He does command. Moreover, every unsaved man is still God's creature. God created him; therefore, he owes God submission and obedience. He cannot escape his responsibility because he is sinful. He is also a sinner, and therefore owes God repentance. Just because a man is fallen, unregenerate, or has lost his ability to please God does not mean that he has lost his responsibility.

Being unsaved prohibits one from hearing the Word of God spiritually. He may hear it physically, but he does not hear it spiritually. That does not negate his responsibility to hear it. The unsaved have ears to hear and may hear the Word of God audibly, but they do not have the ability to hear it spiritually.

Absalom's Rebellion and the Counsel of Ahithophel and Hushai

When you look at 2 Samuel, you have to understand that the context takes place in Absalom’s rebellion against his father, David. Absalom planned and executed a rebellion that was quite successful. In other words, it was so successful that it drove David from the throne. David had to flee into the wilderness to keep from being overpowered and overcome by Absalom and the men who were with him.

One of the conspirators with Absalom was Ahithophel, one of David's counselors. There is a reason why Ahithophel joined with Absalom, but I will not get into it right now. Instead, look at the attitude of Ahithophel in 2 Samuel 17. Remember, Ahithophel was a diplomat and a counselor. He said unto Absalom, "Moreover, Ahithophel said unto Absalom, let me now choose out 12,000 men, watch, and I will arise and pursue after David this night, and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak-handed, and will make him afraid, and all the people that are with him shall flee, and I will smite the king only, and I will bring back all the people unto thee. The man whom thou seekest is as all returned. So all the people shall be in peace. And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel."

Ahithophel was saying, "I am the one that will lead this raid. I'll take care of David myself. You do not even have to worry about it." He was saying that now was the time to strike while the iron was hot. They needed to hit David before he could regroup, resupply, or recover from the initial shock of being driven from the throne and out of Jerusalem. Ahithophel wanted to attack David that very night.

The counsel that Ahithophel gave Absalom was correct. It was the right thing to do. Oddly, Absalom had been listening to Ahithophel up to this point. But in verse 5, Absalom did something absolutely out of character in one sense: "Then said Absalom, call now Hushai the Archite. Let us hear likewise what he said." Hushai the Archite was David's friend, and when David was fleeing from Absalom, Hushai went to David.

Hushai said, "I'm going with you." David said, "No. If you go with me, you're going to be a burden. You go back to the palace, and it may be that you can defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. Whatever you hear, you tell the priests. The priests have two sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, and they will send word to me by Ahimaaz and Jonathan." So Hushai went back to the palace and waited for Absalom to come.

When Absalom came, the first thing he asked Hushai was, "Why did you not go with your friend? Why are you not with David?" Hushai said, "Nay, nay, but whom the Lord and the Lord's people choose, him shall I serve and his will I be." He pretended to be with

Absalom. Ahithophel had given great counsel, but Absalom said, "Let's ask Hushai what he thinks."

Look at Hushai's counsel, verse 6: "And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner, shall we do after his saying? If not, speak thou. And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time."

I didn't say it was not good counsel. He just said it was not appropriate at this particular period, at this particular time. Hushai explained: "For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field. And thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people. Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place. And it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom. And he also that is valued, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt. For all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valued men."

Now here is his plan: "Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee from Dan, even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that thou go to battle in thine own person. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground. And of him and of all the men that are with him, there shall not be left so much as one. Moreover, if he has gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river until there be not one small stone found there."

The counsel that Hushai gave was wrong—totally wrong. First of all, he said, “I counsel that you gather all Israel from Dan, the most northern tribe, to Beersheba, the most southern town.” Do you know how long it would take to get everybody in the land together? Moreover, what he was saying appealed to the pride of Absalom. He told him, “and that thou go to battle in thine own person.”

In other words, Absalom would march at the head of this great army, come upon David, destroy him, destroy all the people, and be

victorious. Absalom saw all of this wonderful prophecy and counsel taking place in his mind, while Hushai was merely buying time for David so he could get the help that he needed, the food that he needed, and the supplies that he needed. Everything Hushai said was basically incorrect.

The Divine Reason Absalom Would Not Listen

Now my question is this: Why did Absalom and the elders of Israel at that point reject the good counsel of Ahithophel and receive the bad counsel of Hushai? I want you to look in 2 Samuel 16:23. Here is an amazing statement about Ahithophel. The Bible says that the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counseled in those days, was as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God. So was all the counsel of Ahithophel, both with David and with Absalom. Ahithophel was such a wise counselor that inquiring of him was the same as inquiring of the oracle of God. In other words, it would be the same as God speaking. Whether or not you like Ahithophel is immaterial.

The truth of the matter is that this is an excellent compliment. The counsel that Ahithophel gave to Absalom was spot on. It was right counsel. That does not mean everything Ahithophel counseled was biblical. In fact, I will show you a passage where he gave some unbiblical counsel, but it was right counsel given the circumstances.

Why, then—why then—did Absalom not listen to Ahithophel? Verse 14 of 2 Samuel 17 tells us why: “And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.” Why did they think that? “For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.”

The word defeat in the Hebrew is para, and it means to defeat, to make void, to break asunder, to disappoint, to bring to naught, to frustrate, and to disannul. We read in 2 Samuel 15:31 that, when David was fleeing and was told that Ahithophel was with the conspirators and with Absalom, David prayed, “Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” Then, of course, he sent Hushai the Archite back that he might defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

Here is something absolutely astounding to me. Up until this point, Absalom had listened to Ahithophel every time, and it was right. Now, all of a sudden, he rejects Ahithophel's counsel and takes the counsel of Hushai. When Ahithophel found out that his counsel was rejected, the Bible says he went to his house, set his house in order, and hanged himself. He knew that, when his counsel was not followed, it was over. He knew that David was going to defeat Absalom, and so he went and hanged himself.

Ahithophel gave good advice, but it was not always biblical advice. In 2 Samuel chapter 16, beginning with verse 20, we find good advice that was not biblical advice. Absalom and his men came to Jerusalem. "Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, give counsel among you what we shall do. And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house. And all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father. Then shall the hands of all them that are with thee be strong. So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house, and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel."

Was that biblical counsel? Of course not. God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The law of God said a man and his son shall not go in unto the same maid. Absalom's act was totally wrong according to the Word of God. How, then, can I say that this was good advice? I did not say it was biblical advice; I said it was good advice based upon the circumstances. Look at verse 21 again: "And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house, and all Israel shall hear."

Now watch this: "That thou art abhorred of thy father." Then he makes this statement: "Then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong." You see, Absalom knew that it was the tendency for a father to forgive his son, to overlook his sin. And Ahithophel said, "If you want these men to fight for you, you have to make sure that they know there's no turning back. You're either going to kill your father, or he's going to kill you. Go in unto his concubines, shame him, and put yourself in a position where your father will utterly abhor you. Then say to those men, 'It's on. I will kill him, or he will kill me. So shall the hands of all them that be with you be strong.'"

This bad advice was unbiblical, but good under the circumstances. Verse 23 says, "And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counseled in those days, was as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God. So was all the counsel of Ahithophel, both with David and with Absalom."

Why did Ahithophel say, "Go in unto your father's concubines"? Of course, this was part and parcel of God's correction and chastisement of David. David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had done everything he could to cover up his sin. He even killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the children of Ammon.

Second Samuel 12, beginning at verse 11, says, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house." That is Absalom. "And I will take thy wives before thine eyes and give them unto thy neighbor." That is Absalom. "And he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun." That is the top of the house. "For thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun." And David said unto Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord has also put away thy sin. Thou shalt not die."

God's goal was to correct David, not to slay him. Ahithophel's counsel to Absalom to go in unto his father's concubines was part and parcel of David's chastisement. But if Absalom had followed Ahithophel's counsel in 2 Samuel chapter 17, David would be dead, and so would his family.

Since Absalom had listened to Ahithophel the whole time, and everything had turned out exactly as Ahithophel said, why did he not listen to him now? The answer is given in 2 Samuel 17:14: "For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom."

David prayed in 2 Samuel 15, "Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." God did not do that. The counsel Ahithophel gave in 2 Samuel 17:1–4 was good counsel; it was the right counsel. But God closed the ears of Absalom and those with him to the good counsel and opened their ears to the bad counsel. The reason Absalom and those with him would not listen to the good

counsel was because God intended Absalom and those that were with him. God sovereignly allowed Absalom to believe a lie. When a person will not listen to the truth, will not receive the truth, and will not believe the truth, the only alternative is a lie.

The Principle of Judicial Hardening

In 2 Thessalonians 2, the Bible says, “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.” Why are they perishing? “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” What happened when they would not receive the truth? “And for this cause”—because they would not receive the truth—“God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” God did not destroy the good counsel of Ahithophel; He fixed it so that Absalom and those people would not listen to Ahithophel.

Ahithophel gave the right counsel, but Absalom would not listen. He followed his own desires, pride, rationalization, and thinking, and destroyed himself. He fell upon his own sword, so to speak. All God has to do to destroy anybody is just let us alone. Leave us to ourselves, and we will destroy ourselves. When one rejects the Word of God and refuses to hear truth, he rejects that truth at his own peril.

Applications and Warnings

Your wisdom, understanding, and reasoning abilities shall fall and fail. You cannot and will not ever defeat God or His Word. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not God’s Word. “Thy word is magnified,” he said, “above thy name” (Psalm 138). If God’s Word ever fails, then God is not God. The reason some people will not listen is because God has appointed them to fall. He will destroy them.

I want to give you one good illustration. I spoke to a nominal Roman Catholic—a Roman Catholic in name only. He never went to church. I was witnessing to him about Jesus Christ, and he told me to my face, "Don't ever talk to me again about Jesus Christ or the Bible. I don't want to hear it." The very next week, that forty-two- or

forty-three-year-old man who smoked woke up at four o'clock in the morning, went into the bathroom, and began coughing. He coughed so hard that a blood vessel in his brain burst, and he fell to the floor dead.

When people will not listen, it is a very, very bad sign. You can only reject the Word of God at your own peril. The Bible says in Psalm 33:10, "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought. He maketh the devices of the people of none effect." It does not matter what you plan. Psalm 2 asks, "Why do the heathen rage? Why do the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth have gathered themselves together against our Lord and against His Christ, and they said, 'Come, let us break His bands, let us cut His cords asunder.'" What does the Bible say? "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision."

It is absolutely foolish to reject the wisdom of God and the Word of God. Proverbs 19:21 says, "There are many devices in a man's heart. Nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord that shall stand." Isaiah 46:10 says, "Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand and I will do all of my pleasure.'" No one will overthrow the counsel of God. Only God can do as He pleases. David said in Psalm 115:3, "But our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

When you encounter someone who will not listen to truth or receive the Word of God, that person is in a very, very dangerous position. A man has to be an absolute fool to fight against God and reject His wisdom. All God has to do is leave him to himself, and he will destroy himself. He will follow his own passions, desires, and pride. It is like Hosea 13:9, where God said to Israel, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

And that's exactly what men do. We destroy ourselves. Let me show you another passage. Our Lord said the same exact thing that I've just got through preaching to you. Look in Matthew chapter 15, beginning at verse 12: "Then came his disciples and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?" Well, Lord, You upset the Pharisees. You've hurt their feelings. Lord, they're mad at You. Lord, they'll probably vote You

out. You hurt their feelings. "Knowest thou not that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?" But look what our Lord said.

"But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Watch it. Let them alone. They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall in the ditch." What did our Lord say? "Let them alone." Someone who does not want to hear the Word of God and will not listen to the truth—our Lord said, "Let them alone." And just like Absalom, he's appointed them to fall. He's appointed them to fail.

Do you realize the same thing happened in 1 Kings 12 with Rehoboam? Rehoboam asked counsel of the old men, and they gave him good biblical counsel. Then he asked counsel of the young men, and they told him everything wrong. But what did he do? He listened to the young men, not the old men. When you read verse 15, the Bible said the Lord brought it to pass. But people don't listen. It's evidence that they're set up to fall. They're set up to fail.

If you have eyes to see, if you have ears to hear, and if you have a heart to believe, you should be eternally grateful and thankful to the Lord Jesus Christ for His grace and mercy to you. Our Lord often spoke in parables. Do you know why He spoke in parables? Here's the answer. Matthew chapter 13, verse 13: "Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive."

“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” Then he says this to his disciples: “But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.” If you see truth, hear truth, love truth, and desire truth, it is only because of the grace and mercy of God in your life. God opens your eyes, your ears, and your heart. You should be eternally grateful, thankful, and appreciative that God has given you the ability to see and hear.

I am reading through the Old Testament again, and I am in 1 and 2 Kings at the moment. When I read about these wicked kings and wicked people, I cannot help but bow my head and say, “Lord, thank you. Thank you that you have opened my eyes. You have opened my ears and my heart. I do not want to rebel against him. I do not want humanism. I want his truth and his word.” It should scare and frighten every lost man who refuses to hear God’s truth.

Closing Prayer and Thanksgiving

Because if they will not listen, like Absalom and the Pharisees, God has appointed them to destruction, and all he is doing is leaving them to themselves. They will destroy themselves. If you can see, hear, and believe, thank him. Praise him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word, your truth, and your mercy. We thank you, Father, for eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to believe. Thank you, Father, for giving us the Lord Jesus Christ, your only begotten Son, to be the propitiation for our sins, our substitute, our sacrifice, and our surety. We give thee praise for thy so great salvation, and ask you, Lord, to open our understanding more, that we may hear and comprehend thy word, love it, and desire it more and more. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

You Must Ask The Right Questions To Get The Right Answer

You Must Ask the Right Question to Get the Right Answer

Introduction: The Importance of Asking the Right Question

"And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored, and lo, it is even in my sack." "And their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done to us?"

Everyone has asked a question and received a wrong answer, even when he already knew the correct answer. Many times we ask the right question and still receive a wrong answer.

One of the most interesting times in my teaching career was when I taught fourth grade. I have taught every grade from fourth grade through college. I will never forget my first year teaching fourth

grade. I received our history book for that year. It was about an inch thick, and I thought, "Oh no, I'll be through with this thing in a month or so, and what am I going to do for the rest of the year?" So I went through three chapters the first week.

I had some very brilliant students in that class. I gave my first quiz, and every student failed. I thought, "Whoa, wait a minute. It can't be the students. It's got to be the teacher." I realized that a fourth grader is not like a high school or college student. I had to back up and start all over. I had to do what we have always done: tell them, tell them what I told them, and tell them a third time what I told them.

After laboriously going over the material again and again, everybody was doing very well. It is a very interesting thing to teach the fourth grade, I can assure you. On one of my fourth-grade history quizzes, I asked, "Will you please name the King and Queen of Spain who allowed Christopher Columbus to sail and actually paid for his voyages?" One student evidently got his Bible lesson and his history lesson mixed up. When I asked who sponsored Christopher Columbus's voyage, naming the King and Queen of Spain, he wrote, "King Ferdinand and Queen Jezebel." Not Isabella.

The same student, a mischievous little boy, cute as he could be, could not think of Pilgrim's Progress when I asked him to name the three books found in every Pilgrim or colonial home. They were the Bible, Fox's Book of Martyrs, and Pilgrim's Progress. When I received his test paper, he had listed the Bible, Fox's Book of Martyrs, and Reader's Digest.

That is the way it goes. But the point I am trying to make is simple: when we ask the wrong question, many times we should expect to get a wrong answer. A good example, especially when speaking to our children, is asking, "Why did you do this?" When we ask why, we open the door to an awful lot of different answers. The truth is, we already know why: people are sinful, depraved, wicked, sometimes just plain ignorant, and sometimes very careless in their actions.

The correct question is not, "Why did you do this?" but, "What did you do?" Therefore, the second question should be, "What needs to

be done to correct this and make it right according to the Bible or according to biblical law?" How do you correct this from a biblical standpoint? When you ask why, you can get a multitude of questions and a multitude of answers. Many may be right, and some may be wrong, but it is not the why that needs to be dealt with; it is the what.

The Wrong Question of Joseph's Brothers

When you look in verse 28 again, here are Jacob's sons, who had gone down to Egypt for corn. You will remember that Joseph, their brother, had made himself strange to them, and they did not recognize him. Moreover, he had spoken to them through an interpreter. When they left, he had all their money put back in their sacks. So they stopped, by the way, to give their answers per vendor, and they found this money in the mouths of their sacks. Note, if you would, in verse 28: "And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored, and lo, it is even in my sack."

"And their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done to us?" Now, that is a good question: "What is this that God hath done to us?" But it is not the right question. The right question should be, "What have we done to bring this judgment or this set of circumstances or this situation upon ourselves?"

In reality, they really knew what was happening. If you look back at Genesis 42, beginning in verse 21, here is what they said: "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required." Notice very carefully that they said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." They saw the anguish of his soul; they saw him suffering, and they knew he was scared. When he besought them—that is, when he begged them and asked them—they hardened their hearts, turned a deaf ear, and would not hear.

The Brothers' Deception Exposed

These men had gone to visit Joseph, whom they did not recognize. Joseph had said, "You are spies." They answered, "No, no, no, we're not spies." In fact, look in your Bibles at Genesis 42:11. After he accused them of being spies, they said, "We are all one man's sons; we are true men; thy servants are no spies." The interesting thing is that they said, "We are all true men." The Hebrew word for "true," when used as an adjective, means true, honest, veritable, and just. Thus they told Joseph that they were true, honest, just, and trustworthy men, when in reality they were liars and deceivers.

SCRIPTURE READING - Genesis 37:17-28 (KJV)

I want you to watch carefully. Remember now, they have claimed to be true men—honest, just, trustworthy. Genesis 37, verse 17: “And the man said, because Joseph is now seeking his brothers. They are not where they were originally. So he asked, and the man said, ‘They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan.’ And Joseph went after his brethren and found them in Dothan. And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near to them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, ‘Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.’ And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hand.

“And he said, ‘Let us not kill him.’ And Reuben said unto them, ‘Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.’ And it came to pass, when Joseph was coming to his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him; and they took him and cast him into a pit, and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread, and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels, bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, ‘What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us

> sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh.' And his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt."
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> Now let me stop there just for a moment. The Bible says that the Ishmaelites were coming, and then in verse 28, the Bible says there passed by Midianites, merchantmen, and then they sold him to Ishmaelites. Well, who did they sell him to, the Ishmaelites or the Midianites? The answer is both. They were Ishmaelites because they were descendants of Ishmael, but they also lived in the land of Midian. So they were also Midianites.

It is like claiming to be an American, a Weaverite, or a Georgiaite: I am American, I am of the Weaver family, and I live in Georgia. These were Ishmaelites who lived in Midian. So they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites who were of Midian.

Reuben returned unto the pit and found that Joseph was not there. He rent his clothes and returned to his brethren, asking, "The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?" They took Joseph's coat, killed a kid of the goats, dipped the coat in the blood, and brought it to their father, saying, "This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no." Jacob recognized it and mourned:

"And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days."

"And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."

Did they lie to their father? The answer is yes. Did they deceive their father? The answer is yes. Did they acknowledge their hatred of Joseph? The answer is no. Yet they said to Joseph, "We are all true men," when in reality they were liars and deceivers.

Here is the real kicker. Genesis 37:2 says, "These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding

the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report."

Genesis 41:46 says, "And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt." Joseph was seventeen, and now he was thirty. That means he had spent thirteen years in servitude before being brought out. For thirteen years they lied to and deceived Jacob.

They lied to Jacob and deceived him. Add the seven good years in which Joseph stored up all the food, and that makes twenty years. Then, possibly in either the first or second year of the famine, they went down into Egypt. Thus, the sons of Jacob had lied to and deceived their father for twenty to twenty-two years.

The Right Questions: What Have We Done?

God had given them twenty-two years to confess their sins, acknowledge their sins, and make things right with their father, but they did not. Yes, God was bringing their sins out into the open. But what these boys did not understand was that the question was not, "What has God done to us?" It was literally, "What have we done ourselves?" What did we do to bring this situation upon us? What did we do to get into the mess that we are in right now? They could have asked that question, and the next question would have been, "What must we do to straighten this out? How can we straighten this out in light of the law of God?"

When I was pondering this passage, I wondered about something. Look back in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 37, beginning particularly with verse 35. After Jacob had seen Joseph's coat, "and all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him." Can you imagine that, for twenty-two years, they deceived their father? I wonder what Jacob thought of his sons when the truth came to light. How would a father deal with something like that? For twenty-two years, your own flesh and blood had deceived you, making you think

that another son of yours had been murdered or slain by a wild animal, when in reality he had not.

How could you ever trust those boys? How could you ever believe what they said again? Undoubtedly, there had to be some distrust on Jacob's part toward them.

Another question that you have to ask is this: How in the world could these men live with such a grievous sin? How could they even sleep at night? They understood that they hated their own brother. They knew that they had sold their own brother into slavery. They knew that they had lied to, misled, and deceived their father. How could they continue knowing their own wickedness? It has been absolutely astounding to me how men can literally sear their own consciousness and their own conscience.

Let me give you an illustration. I read an article about young Mexican girls who were professional murderers, professional hit women. Some of them were very beautiful, and some had killed seventeen or twenty people without remorse at all. My question would be, how could you even sleep at night knowing that you murdered someone? To me, it simply boggles my mind, and I cannot figure out how these boys could literally sleep at night. They did not ask, "What have we done?" They did not ask, "What must we do to correct this situation?" They asked, "What is this that God has done to us?"

Application to America's Decline

Now I want you to take this same thought and apply it to America and to other nations as well. Ask yourself, "What is happening in our country?" The answer is basically the same thing that is happening in other countries. But we must remember that four hundred years ago, the pilgrims fled to America in order to have religious freedom and freedom in general. Today, there is no place to flee to. Where would you go if America totally collapses? Where would you go if we turned into a full-scale dictatorship? There is simply no other place to flee. Each country that you look to is literally being controlled by the same cabal and an elite group that seek to play God, control the world, and control the lives of every individual in the world. So what has happened? Americans, and especially American Christians, have

become apathetic, careless, indolent, and, at the same time, could care less about truth because we are more sinful and in deeper rebellion to God and His Word.

We have refused to believe the threats of our enemies. We have laughed them to scorn and derided their determination to destroy us, thinking that somehow we are exceptional and nothing like that will ever happen to us.

Let me give you some quotes. While addressing the Western bloc at the MSC on November 18, 1956, in the presence of communist Polish statesman Gomułka, the first secretary Nikita Khrushchev said about the capitalist states, “It doesn't depend upon you whether or not we exist. If you don't like us, don't accept our invitation and don't invite us to come and see you. Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you.” Twelve diplomats from NATO and the Israeli ambassador got up and stormed out when he said that. Khrushchev also said, “We will take America without firing a shot. We will bury you.”

Again, he said, “We can't expect the American people to jump from capitalism to communism, but we can assist their elected leaders in giving them small doses of socialism until they awaken one day to find that they have communism.” That is exactly what is happening. He also said, “We do not have to invade the United States. We will destroy you from within.” People laughed at that. You remember the scene where Khrushchev took his shoe and beat on the podium and said, “We will bury you.” Everybody thought it was ridiculous. Yet seemingly everything he said has come to pass.

What have we done to ourselves? What is happening to us? Just as those boys were finding out the righteous judgment of God in revealing their sins, we are discovering the righteous judgment of God in revealing our sins as well. We have allowed the communists, liberals, and unbelievers to infiltrate our seminaries and educate our preachers. We have allowed them to indoctrinate young preachers in liberalism, liberation theology, critical race theory, and all kinds of man-made theologies absolutely contrary to the Word of God. Worse still, many professing Christians listen, are gullible, and take everything in simply because someone has a PhD behind his name. It is called the tyranny of the experts. We have listened to those

preachers and people. The average American Christian can walk down the street, run face-to-face with truth, get knocked down by truth, rise up, brush truth off, and continue in error and heresy without ever considering who he bumped into. No.

The Failure of Education and Parental Responsibility

See, we no longer study our Bible. Some still read their Bibles, but we no longer really study them. Notice how many Bibles are left on the pews of the church buildings each Sunday. I realize most Christians have more than one Bible, but just walking out without your Bible is mind-boggling. I do not know how you could do that, but it happens.

Robert L. Dabney was a pastor, an author, a theologian, and a soldier. He was a deacon to General Stonewall Jackson and the author of many volumes. In 1879 he wrote, "Humanity always finds out sooner or later that it cannot get on without a religion. And it will take a false one in preference to none."

"Infidelity and practical ungodliness will become increasingly prevalent among Protestant youth and our churches will have a more arduous contest for growth if not for existence." In his book, The Practical Philosophy, and also in The Discussions, he gave this prophecy: "You may deem it a strange prophecy, but I predict that the time will come in the once free America where the battle for religious liberty will have to be fought over again and will probably be lost because the people are already ignorant of its true basis and condition." In 1879, he said, "We'll have to fight again, but we will probably lose."

The truth is that we refuse to educate ourselves and our children. For the last hundred years or more, we have turned our children over to the government, to governmental schools, sometimes known as public schools. But they are not really public schools. If you think they are open to the public, try walking into one.

They are basically governmental schools, and we have left our children to be trained and taught by people who are basically unbelievers. I understand that there are some real, genuine Christians still teaching in government schools. But the truth is, they

cannot communicate the truths of the Bible. They cannot communicate that which they believe.

Consequently, it is absolutely impossible to teach morals, ethics, and right from wrong apart from the Word of God. It is also impossible to maximize education when it must be reduced to its lowest common denominator to make sure that no child is left behind. The good students, the great students, and those who want to excel must be brought down to that lowest common denominator so other students can be pulled up and carried along, even though they do not care about anything.

I am simply pointing out that Dabney opposed the government, or public-school, movement in 1879. He did so, first, on biblical grounds, because God gave parents the obligation to teach and educate their children. Second, he pointed out that God never bestowed that responsibility upon government. It is not the government's responsibility; it is the parent's responsibility.

Dabney also said that our public education would be totally secularized. When he spoke of public education being secularized, remember that in the 1960s the Supreme Court took Bible reading and prayer out of the public-school system. Dabney warned against this in 1879. He wrote, "But nearly all public men and divines declared that the state schools are the glory of America, and they are a finality, and in no event to be surrendered. And we have seen that their complete secularization is logically inevitable. Christians must prepare themselves then for the following results. All prayers, catechisms, and Bibles will ultimately be driven out of the public schools."

That is exactly what has happened. If you want your child educated, to know the Bible and true history, to be patriotic, to understand the Constitution, and to be able to read, think, analyze, and apply the truth, then you must teach him yourself. It is just that simple. It is never going to happen otherwise. It is impossible to teach apart from discipline and control.

And neither exists today in governmental schools. For instance, if three or four of you started making a row and fussing, hollering, and making all kinds of noise, there would be no way for me to

communicate truth or teach, because it would distract from what I was trying to do.

I had an incident like that happen to me many years ago. I was preaching in Ohio in a packed church building. Right in the middle of my sermon, in the middle of the church and a pew, sat a man who was drunk. He stood up and started shouting, screaming, cursing, and trying to deny everything I was saying. I looked at the pastor and then back at the man. I said, "Sir, this is not your church and this is not your pulpit. You have not been invited to speak. I have. If you want to stay here, sit down and shut up and listen. If you do not want to stay here, you may walk out. If you do not want to walk out and you continue, we will take you out."

He kept going. The pastor motioned to four men, and they picked him up and took him outside. He was not allowed to come back in. Did I finish my sermon? Yes. But here is my question: I wonder how many heard anything after that incident.

It is impossible to teach without discipline and control. So if we are not going to teach each other or our children, you have to ask: Whose fault is it? It is ours. God has never delegated education to the state or to government. He has delegated it to pastors, preachers, teachers, and families, but never to government. When we refuse to obey God and educate our own children, you have to ask, "What have we done ourselves?"

The situation we are in is getting worse, and the reason it is getting worse is that we have to ask the right question in order to get the right answer.

Economic Judgment: The Debasement of Money

Do you realize that not only the average Christian American, but the average American, is as broke as he possibly can be and in debt up to his eyeballs? I read recently that the average American could not afford a $1,000 emergency bill. Stop and think about that. What is wrong with us? Have you ever stopped to think that we have allowed the Federal Reserve and our Congress to systematically bankrupt us to the point that our currency is absolutely worthless? The only reason we can still have any passing of these Federal Reserve notes is

that a few people still have a little confidence in them. And that is it. Most people have no idea what money is and no understanding concerning money.

I went to pay for some gas, and I think it was seventeen bucks. I handed the young girl a twenty Federal Reserve note, and she handed me back three ones. I said, "Something's wrong." She said, "Didn't I give you back three ones?" I said, "Yes, but something is still wrong. I gave you one piece of paper. You gave me three. I now have three times as much paper as I did before I gave you that one, and I've got your gas."

"Oh," she said, "but those pieces of paper don't have twenty on them." I said, "It's the numbers that make it valuable. Give me your pen. I'm going to write twenty on each one of them." "No, no, no. You can't do that." I said, "Well, which is it? Is it the numbers or the paper that makes it valuable?" She just stood there and stared at me.

Listen to what the Constitution of the United States says. Article One, Section Eight, Clause Five: "Congress shall have the power to coin money, regulate the value thereof, and of foreign coin, and fix the standard of weights and measures." Congress shall have the power to coin money, not print money, because the founding fathers wanted gold and silver to be our money.

Article One, Section Ten, Clause One says, "No state shall enter into any treaty, alliance, or confederation; grant letters of marque and reprisal; coin money; emit bills of credit; make anything but gold and silver coin a tender in payment of debts." No state shall make anything but gold and silver coin a tender in payment of debt. Every time we exchange Federal Reserve notes, we're violating the Constitution of the United States. Isn't that amazing?

From these two constitutional statements, let me give you five basic economic principles. The first is this: the basic unit is the dollar.

A dollar is not a piece of paper; the word "dollar" is a unit of measurement, like the word "quart." You do not walk into the grocery store and say, "I want a quart." You say, "I want a quart of milk" or "a quart of orange juice." A dollar is a unit of measurement, like twelve inches, a half gallon, or a linear foot. The unit of

measurement of the American dollar happens to be 371.25 grains of pure silver. When you say, "I want a dollar," a dollar of what? A dollar of silver or a dollar of gold? A dollar of gold is different from a dollar of silver. The basic unit of money in this country is 371.25 grains of pure silver.

The second principle is this: Only gold or silver coins and currency that is specie-backed banknotes—that is, banknotes that have gold and silver behind them—can be legal tender. Only gold or silver, or currency that is banknotes backed with gold and silver, can be legal tender in this country. Number three, no state can issue coins or currency. Number four, no one may counterfeit U.S. government-issued coins or currency. Number five—and you must understand this—fiat money, that is, fiat notes and bills of credit, is forbidden.

That is what the Constitution said. So you cannot have what we have today constitutionally—Federal Reserve notes without any backing whatsoever. We therefore have to ask: If these five points are true, and they are based upon the two articles of the Constitution, what has happened to our monetary system? And the answer is that we have accepted the lie that paper is money.

We have forgotten our original continental currency. During the War for Independence, paper currency was printed without backing. Soldiers were paid in this continental currency, which was absolutely worthless. They used it as padding in their boots and around their shins to protect their shin bones. It was so worthless that it was called “shinplasters.”

That is the origin of the expression, “It is not worth a continental,” referring to the continental dollar, which was backed by nothing. It is like the incident in Germany when the mark became worthless. A woman had a wheelbarrow full of paper money on her way to buy a loaf of bread. Seeing a fight, she set down the wheelbarrow and began parting the people to see who was fighting. After her curiosity was satisfied, she turned around and found that someone had dumped out the money and stolen the wheelbarrow. The wheelbarrow was worth more than the money.

So I am simply pointing out the fact: we have been deceived. We have done this to ourselves. Ludwig von Mises said, “Government is the only entity that can take a valuable commodity like paper, slap some ink on it, and make it totally worthless.” That is just about the truth.

The Honorable Louis McFadden, chairman of the House of Banking and Currency Committee in the 1930s, said, “Federal Reserve notes are not redeemable in gold or silver or any other commodity. They have not been redeemable since 1933. In the sense they are not redeemable, Federal Reserve notes have not been backed by anything since 1933.”

Listen carefully: this was a congressman. He said, “The term ‘lawful money’ and ‘lawful money of the United States’ shall be held and construed to mean gold or silver coin of the United States.” Lawful money is gold and silver coin.

Now, I have a two-part message that I preached many years ago on biblical money and inflation. I am going to take one illustration out of that two-hour message and tweak it a little, bringing it up to date to show you basically what has happened.

In the 1900s, you had a $20 gold piece. You also had a $10 gold piece and a $5 gold piece. Now, the $20 gold piece was minted in 1911. The $20 gold piece, as well as the $10 and the $5, was not only biblical money; it was also constitutional money. But along with this $20 gold piece, you also had a $20 banknote. They were interchangeable. So I could take a $20 banknote into the bank, hand it to the banker, and get a $20 gold coin. Or I could take a $20 gold coin to the banker and get a $20 banknote. They were interchangeable. That happened and was true up until 1933, which was a mere eighty-eight years back. So what has happened? Well, let me try to spell it out for you and make it as understandable as I can. I want you to consider the price of gas.

In Georgia, gas is around $2.30 a gallon. You can find it cheaper, but usually it is about $2.29. Florida is about the same, though other states may be higher. So, if you take a $20 bill—a $20 Federal Reserve note—to the gas station and buy gas at $2.30 a gallon, how many gallons could you get? The answer is nine gallons.

Suppose your car gets twenty miles to the gallon. How far could you go on a $20 Federal Reserve note worth of gas? The answer is 180 miles. Driving north from South Georgia, you probably would not make it out of the state. If you were in North Florida, you might not make it to Miami. Thus, a $20 Federal Reserve note would get you nine gallons of gas.

How about a $20 gold coin? I am going to be on the low side. A $20 gold coin today, I will say, is worth 1,900 Federal Reserve notes. It is probably worth more, since gold is around $1,900 an ounce, and a $20 gold piece is worth more than that. But let us say it is worth 1,900. How much gas could you buy with a $20 gold piece worth 1,900 Federal Reserve notes? You could buy 826 gallons. At twenty miles a gallon, how far could you go? You could drive 16,529 miles.

That is the distance from Jacksonville, Florida, to Los Angeles, California, there and back, seven times, because the distance from Jacksonville to Los Angeles is 2,437 miles.

So here are my questions: Who stole your gas? Who stole your vacation? Who stole your money? Why is it that today you cannot take a $20 Federal Reserve note to the bank and say, “I want a $20 gold coin”? Where did the gold go? Where did the money go?

The answer is the international bankers and bankers in general. You have to ask yourself: Who owns most of the gold and most of the silver in today’s world? The answer is the bankers, Congress, and government. It is not the average individual.

Now ask yourself, “What in the world is happening here in this country?” The answer is that God is judging us and bringing our sins to light. What have we done? What are we doing? I have no doubt that we are under the judgment of God. I have no doubt that God’s judgment will increase. I have no doubt that we are going to suffer, and I have no doubt that our suffering will not get far worse.

However, the fault is ours. We have sinned, rebelled against God, disobeyed, and walked wickedly. We have been content with ignorance and with not educating ourselves. We have trusted in the God of convenience and the arm of the flesh, and now we are reaping what we have sown. We have lost everything. Now that we have an administration in Washington, D.C., that is totally communistic in

outlook, plans, and schemes, it will finally destroy what little liberty we have left.

What is the average American going to do? He is going to sit back, complain, and do nothing. He will happily stretch out his hand for universal basic income and trade his freedom for servitude. We have forgotten the adage, "Come shackles, come shackles." Every time you get something from someone else, especially government, there is always a catch involved. The average American is going to watch this country die a horrible death and could care less about his children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren.

Biblical Basis for Judgment and Call to Repentance

So you have to ask, "What is God doing to us?" The answer is, "What we have done to ourselves." Look in Isaiah 42, beginning with verse 22, and see how applicable this passage is in light of what I have been preaching. God says, "But this is a people robbed and spoiled."

"They are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come? Who's going to listen? Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart."

God said, "I gave Jacob for spoil. I gave Israel to the robbers." Why? Because they sinned against Him. They refused to listen. They refused to walk in His ways. Therefore, God says, "I poured out my fury. I've set you on fire and you didn't even know it. You got burned and you never even took it to heart."

You have to ask the right question to get the right answer. Let me make some applications. The first one is this: the enemies of liberty and freedom are already talking about reeducation camps and detention camps. So, if you do not agree with the communist stooges and the socialist stooges in power, they want to reeducate you. Some

have even suggested that Trump supporters should have their children taken from them, deprogrammed, and never returned to their parents. Wow.

I've got news for you. Once you are in the camps, it's too late to fight. Once you're in the camps, you may repent all you want, but you're in the camps. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who spent many years in a communist gulag, wrote and said this, listen carefully, "And how we burned in the camps later thinking what would things have been like if every security operative, when he went out at night to make an arrest, had been uncertain whether he would return alive and had to say goodbye to his family; or if during periods of mass arrest, for example in Leningrad, when they arrested a quarter of the entire city, people had not simply sat there in their lairs, paling with terror at every bang of the downstairs door and at every step on the staircase, but had

understood they had nothing left to lose and had boldly set up in the downstairs hall an ambush of a half a dozen people with axes, hammers, pokers, or whatever else was at hand. The organs would very quickly have suffered a shortage of officers and transport. And notwithstanding all of Stalin's thirst, the curse machine would have ground to a halt. If, if we didn't love freedom enough, and even more, we had no awareness of the real situation, we purely and simply deserved everything that happened afterwards." Wow.

SCRIPTURE READING - Judges 10:10-14 (KJV)

He said we wouldn't fight. We got what we deserved.

The second one is this: We need to understand that it is our sins and our rebellion and our ignorance that gets us into trouble. Israel had sinned against God so many times, and God delivered them so many times. But yet there came a time when God said no more. This is from the book of Judges, chapter 10, verses 10 through 14:

“And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim. And the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, and from the children of Ammon, and from the

> Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen. Let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation."
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> Isn't that amazing? God said, "I delivered you so many times and you kept forsaking me and you kept disobeying me. You wouldn't listen to me." Now you got your false gods. You cry to them, see if they can deliver you. You know what God said to Israel in Hosea chapter 13 and verse 9? He said, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help."
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> Now is the time to fess up. Now is the time to acknowledge our sins, our ignorance, our weakness. Now's the time to acknowledge our rebellion. Now's the time to ask God for mercy. We must ask the right question to get the right answer. And the right question is, "What have we done to ourselves, our families, our society, our states, and our nation? And what must be done to correct it and bring it into conformity to the Word of God? What does God demand?"

Conclusion: Ask the Right Question and Repent

> How shall we then live? We do not need to know the why. We need to know the what. What must be done. When you ask the right question, you'll get the right answer. Not "What has God done to us?" but "What have we done to ourselves?" And God allowed it in his judgment because we sinned against him.
>
> Father, we bow the knee to thee. We thank you for your word, your truth, your grace, your mercy. And we do pray, Father, that you would turn us.

Turn us, O God.

CHAPTER 8

How to Teach and Learn Biblical Truths

Part Eight

SCRIPTURE READING - Acts 17:1-13 (KJV)

Introduction: The Problem of Doctrinal Ignorance

Open your Bibles to Acts chapter 17. I want to take the time to read the first 13 verses, although we will not be dealing with all 13 today. I want you to see the context as I bring a message again on how to learn biblical truth.

"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews, which believed

> not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.
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> And when they had taken security of Jason and of the other, they let them go. And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people."

In this series, I have covered three reasons why we must interpret Scripture. Then I gave several messages on six prerequisites for interpreting Scripture. And then I gave several messages which included thirteen ways to consider Scripture each time we read through the Bible. I am now finishing this week and next week on how to teach and how to learn biblical truth.

I believe that one of the greatest shortages, or the greatest weaknesses, however you want to say it, of modern Christianity is that most Christians are absolutely totally ignorant of Bible doctrine. They may know a great deal about many things, but they know very little about Bible doctrine. Very few Christians can explain the doctrine of justification by faith, sanctification, election, or any other major doctrine. Not only can they not discuss or explain these doctrines, they could not do so in an intelligent manner. The truth of the matter is, we have lost a great deal in this day and time.

The truth of the matter is, our conduct is supposed to be based upon the Word of God. If our understanding is wrong, our conduct will be wrong. If our doctrine is wrong, our lives will be wrong as well. Anyone who believes wrongly, you can mark it down, is going to act wrongly. It is true. It is impossible for you and I to be obedient to that of which we are ignorant, and impossible to be obedient to that which we do not know and understand.

That is why the Bible says in Proverbs 23, verse 7, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Our conduct is based upon our thinking; we actually act out what we believe. David said in Psalm 116, verse 10, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." We do not merely speak what we believe; we also actually act out and do what we believe. Our conduct, then, is based upon what we believe.

Duty Is Based on Doctrine

Now, we can talk about holy and godly living. There are many pastors I know who encourage their people to live holily and to live godly, and I certainly commend them for that. However, let me point something out. It is impossible to live a holy life or a godly life if you do not even know what holiness or godliness is, cannot explain it, and have no basis or foundation for it in your life. It is just impossible for you to do. It is useless, in one sense, for a pastor or preacher to encourage people to do something they do not understand.

Our duty is based upon our doctrine. In 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 58, the Apostle Paul said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. What is going to make someone steadfast? What is going to make them unmovable? What is going to make them always abounding in the work of the Lord? Is it games, gadgets, gimmicks, promotions, praise, awards, or contests? No. It is none of those things. It is Bible doctrine.

That conclusion, that application, is drawn from everything Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 15. What is he teaching? He is teaching the

bodily resurrection of the dead. He taught that Jesus Christ was raised bodily from the dead; He was the firstfruits of those that sleep. He said that our resurrection is based upon His resurrection. In other words, His resurrection guarantees our resurrection.

How, then, could Paul say, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"? Here is how he could say it: "Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." How do we know it is not in vain? I have preached for fifty-seven years. I have never been written up in Time magazine as the pastor of the year. I have never been written up in a paper saying that everybody ought to hear John Weaver. I have been attacked a lot, but I have hardly ever been praised.

But I do not need the praise, and I do not care about the condemnation. It does not matter what people say or think, because the Lord knows not only the heart; He knows the conduct, the action, and everything. Therefore, be steadfast and unmovable, regardless of whether people praise you, and regardless of whether there are awards and contests, because you know your labour is not in vain in the Lord. How do I know that?

The Command to Teach No Other Doctrine

Because of Bible doctrine—biblical doctrine—the resurrection of the dead. My duty is based upon my doctrine. Bible doctrine.

The apostle Paul makes a tremendous statement to Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 1, beginning with verse 3: "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."

"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

Let me ask you a question. He says in verse 5, "Now the end of the commandment is..." Where is the commandment? What commandment is he talking about? Go back to verse 3. He says, "I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine."

The word "charge" is paraggello, which is also translated as "commandment." So the commandment he is talking about in verse 5 is the word "charge," or "command," in verse 3, where he said, "I besought thee to command or charge some that they teach no other doctrine."

In other words, you are to be orthodox and not heterodox. Now, watch what happens. Here is what he is talking about: teaching Bible doctrine. Look in verse 5. "Now the end of the commandment..." What commandment? The end of the commandment that you preach no other doctrine than Bible doctrine. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

To understand verse 5, you have to turn it upside down. Why do you have to turn it upside down? Because he gives the end first. He says the end of the commandment is... So what comes first? What comes first in verse 5 is faith unfeigned. That is an unhypocritical faith, a real, genuine faith. That real faith then produces a pure heart, and then that pure heart produces what he calls charity, or love, out of a pure heart, or of a good conscience. The good conscience is next. So it is the good conscience that produces the love out of a pure heart. You have to have an unhypocritical faith; you have to have a good conscience; and that produces love out of a pure heart. That is the end of the commandment.

Everything in our lives is to be based upon Bible doctrine. The point is very simple: it does no good to tell people to live a holy life if they do not know what holiness is or have no foundation for holiness. Likewise, it does no good to tell people to study the Bible if they do not know how to study. We have to have a foundation—a biblical foundation.

Context of Acts 17: Three Responses to the Gospel

This message is concerned not only with how to teach biblical truth, but also with how to learn biblical truth, and these things are intimately tied together. Consider Acts 17. The Apostle Paul is on his second missionary journey, and he makes three stops. First, he stops at Thessalonica, in verses 1–9. Secondly, he stops at Berea, in verses 10–13. Thirdly, he stops at Athens, in verses 17–34. When he reaches

chapter 18, he moves on to Corinth, where he stays for eighteen months.

Acts 17 can be divided into three simple thoughts. First, there was opposition to the gospel in Thessalonica. Secondly, there was interest in the gospel in Berea. Thirdly, there was indifference to the gospel in Athens.

If you look in Acts 17, beginning with verse 18, you will see that this indifference was based not only upon unbelief, but also upon bad philosophy. "Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him," that is, the Apostle Paul, "and some said, What will this babbler say?" That is an interesting word, actually meaning a seed picker.

"Others thought he seemed to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?" Clearly, these people were indifferent. All they wanted to do was simply to pick. In verse 32, we see this indifference: "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter."

With this outline in mind, I want to teach you today and show you from Scripture how to teach biblical truth. Hold on to this, because next week you will see a very clear parallel in how to learn biblical truth.

Paul Reasoned Out of the Scriptures

How did Paul teach? Acts 17:2 says, "And Paul, as his manner was." In other words, he did this everywhere. This was how he taught: "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

First of all, the Bible says that he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. The only way we will ever teach the truth is to reason out of the Scriptures.

The word “reason” is the Greek word dialegomai, made up of two words: dia, a preposition meaning “through,” and lego, “to say.” It literally means “to say through.” It is translated in our Bibles as “reasoned,” “dispute,” and “to reason with.” Literally, it means to mingle thought with thought. It means to converse, to discourse, to argue, and to discuss. One important meaning of “reason” is to mingle thought with thought. In a presentation of truth, your thoughts must be logically connected, where one thought logically and consistently follows the previous thought. Thus, it refutes what I would call a helter-skelter presentation of the Scripture.

So, let me ask you a question. Most of us have been in church all our lives. Have you ever been to a church and heard a preacher or teacher speak—maybe preach or speak for an hour—and, after the hour was over, wondered what he said, why he said it, or what the point was? You were just as ignorant when you came out as when you went in. You had no idea what he was even saying.

You can teach and preach and say a lot of good things. You may even say a lot of true things. But if the thoughts are not logically connected, no one understands exactly what you are saying. A good illustration of that is modern-day politicians. Does anybody understand what Nancy Pelosi says? Or Joe Biden? I mean, come on! All I am saying is that if it is not presented in a logical, consistent manner, no one can understand it.

Therefore, it should be a fundamental fact, obviously understood, that the Bible says He reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. If you and I are going to teach the Scriptures, we have to reason out of the Scriptures. Notice that the Apostle Paul was not teaching his pet peeves. He was not teaching what he learned as a Pharisee, what he was raised up with as a family member, or what Grandpa or Grandma believed. He was teaching out of the Scriptures.

You see, if you are in a debate, or if you're just talking with someone, and you express your opinion, and your friend expresses his opinion, one opinion is as good as another. It's just an opinion. You may safely disagree with an opinion, because an opinion is an opinion. But you can't safely disagree with Scripture. So the point I'm trying to make, and this is what Paul is doing in Acts chapter 17, which we shall see later, is that Paul is endeavoring to shut these

people up to the Word of God so that they can see that if they disagree with him, what they're doing is disagreeing with God. They're disagreeing with Scripture.

One of the principles of the Reformation was sola scriptura, which means the Scriptures alone. So the Scriptures alone are our sole authority for faith and practice. Paul reasoned with them out of the Scripture.

Reasoning with Scripture: Logical Argumentation

Now, let me go a little bit further with this word, dialegomai. He not only reasoned with them out of the Scripture; listen carefully, he reasoned with Scripture. That's not another way of saying exactly what I've just said. The Apostle Paul used Scripture as he reasoned out of the Scripture, and he did so in a logical, consistent way. One of the meanings of reasoned is to mingle thought with thought. In simple terms, it means to argue logically and completely, in a thorough manner.

Now, let me show you. Look in Acts 17 and verse 17: “Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.” Notice the word “disputed.” When you and I hear that word, we think of an argument. We can say, “Gary and Steve had a disputation,” and imagine that they got into an argument. It was very heated.

Would you be surprised if I told you that the word “disputed” in Acts 17:17 is the exact same Greek word found in Acts 17:3, dialegomai? It is translated “disputed,” and it is also translated “reasoned.” Look in Acts 18:4: “And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.” There it is translated “reasoned” again. Then, in Acts 18:19: “And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.” There it is again.

Now look in Acts 19, beginning with verse 8: “And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing”—it is the same word—“disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.” Verse 9 continues: “But

when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus." The word "disputing" in verses 8 and 9 is exactly the same word as "reasoning."

Notice again Acts 19:8: "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." The word "persuade" is the Greek word peitho. It means to persuade, to induce someone to believe by words, to move someone to do something, to have faith, to believe, or to be persuaded of a person—to trust and have confidence.

What, then, would be an implication of learning to reason scripturally, based upon what we have looked at in Acts 17, 18, and 19? Acts 19:8 says that Paul spoke boldly for three months, "disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." But verse 9 says that when some were hardened, did not believe, and spoke evil of that way before the multitude, he departed, separated the disciples, and continued disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

The Result of Scriptural Reasoning: All Heard

So when he reasoned biblically, some got mad, some got glad. Watch verse 10: "And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." They all heard. What is it we try to do when we communicate truth? We want to communicate the truth of God's Word. We want to communicate the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whether people believe or whether they disbelieve, the consequences of God—that's not our business. Our business is to teach and proclaim the whole Word of God. Consequently, Paul's reasoning, Paul's disputing, Paul's arguing, and Paul's mingling thought with thought meant that, when everyone heard, regardless of whether they believed or not, the whole of Asia heard the Word of God.

Now, let me just tell you that the problem with most preaching today is that there is no logical, scriptural connection in the thoughts. Many messages convey some truth. They may convey a half-truth, but listen carefully: a half-truth presented as the whole truth becomes an untruth. A half-truth presented as a whole truth becomes an untruth. We have to learn to present the whole truth in a logical, consistent manner.

Opening the Scriptures: Expounding and Explaining

Let me give you an illustration. Suppose I told you today that I'm going to teach you on Acts 17, verses 2 and 3, and I'm going to teach you from the Scripture how to teach truth. When I started teaching, I started mentioning sanctification; I may mention election; I may mention justification; I may say a lot of good things; I may say a lot of true things. But wait a minute: when you left, would you understand anything about Acts 17:2–3? The answer is no, because I really didn't teach that. I just used that as a text, and I just said some things. They may have been true, and they may have been good, but that was not a logical, consistent explanation of this particular passage.

Now, let me give you one of my favorite illustrations. I read this years and years ago, and I've never, ever forgotten it. I got so tickled at it because it is so true. There was a time when it was mandatory that, if you preached a sermon, you had to have three points. Three points. In fact, when I was a young preacher, it was still a kind of a joke: "You've got to have three points and a poem."

I was reading about a preacher who was preaching through the Bible expositionally and happened to come to Numbers 2:21, where the Bible says, "And Balaam rose up early, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab." His points were these: Number one, a good trait in a bad man: Balaam arose early. Number two, the ancient art of saddlery: he saddled his ass. And number three, some concluding remarks about the woman at the well. What connection does the woman at the well have with Balaam saddling an ass?

The truth is that this is exactly how many sermons are presented today. There is nothing there consistently and logically. If truth is not presented logically, if we do not reason out of the Scripture and

with the Scripture in a logical, consistent manner, we cannot communicate truth.

Now go back to Acts 17 and look at verse 3. Paul, in verse 2, reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. Verse 3 says, “Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.” Not only did Paul reason out of and with the Scripture; he was also opening it. What does it mean to open the Scripture?

Most Christians think that opening the Scripture means sitting down with someone, opening the Bible to a certain passage, and saying, “There it is; read it for yourself.” That is not opening Scripture. The word for “opening” here is dianoigo. It literally means to open by dividing asunder, to drawing asunder, to open thoroughly that which has been closed, such as the opening of the eyes of the blind or the ears of the deaf. It means to rouse someone to the understanding of doctrine.

This same word is used in Luke 2:23. It refers to the firstborn, or the first in birth, because in birth the womb is opened thoroughly: “As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.”

Now, go back to Acts 17 and look at verse 3. So the word "opening" here means to open thoroughly in the sense of Scripture. Hence, it means to cause one to understand. It means to cause one to grasp the truth. So when one expounds something thoroughly, when he expounds it with reason, and when he expounds it completely, he's giving the sense of the Scripture. Let me show you. Look back in your Bibles to Luke chapter 24 very quickly. Luke 24.

Because Jesus Christ is on the Emmaus Road with two believers, and you remember how He joins Himself to them, and they're discouraged because it was the third day, and He joins them and says, "What's wrong with you?" Well, they said, "We thought Jesus Christ was the Messiah, but He was crucified. Besides all this, it's the third day." And I want you to note something. Look, if you would, in Luke chapter 24, beginning there with verse, oh, let's see, verse 25. "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that

the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

Now watch what He did. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

Now, the word "expounded" is a different word than dianoigo, but I want you to know it literally means the same thing. It means to unfold the meaning of that which is said. In other words, He explained, He interpreted, He expounded what the Scripture said. Look at it again. "He said, O fools and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded..." In other words, He began with Genesis and went all the way through everything concerning Himself. He explained it in detail. Now, look if you would please in verse 32 what the result was. "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" What is opening the Scripture? It means that you open it thoroughly, that you expound it, that you explain it.

Look in your Bibles to Mark chapter 7. Here is the same word, dianoigo, beginning with verse 32: “And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears. And he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.” Same word. “Be opened, and straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.”

In other words, when our Lord opened his ears, he heard as he had never heard before. He spoke as he had never spoken before. The word “open,” then, means not simply to put someone in front of the Bible and say, “Read it for yourself.” It means that you are expounding, explaining, and interpreting the Scripture, showing them what the Scripture actually means.

Look very quickly in your Bibles to Nehemiah 8, beginning with verse 7. We will start in the middle of that verse: “And the Levites caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly,” that is exposition, “and gave the sense,” that is explanation or interpretation, “and caused them to understand the reading,” that is application. So what is preaching? Preaching is exposition, explanation, and application.

No one opens a Scripture unless he expounds and explains a Scripture. Opening, therefore, means to give the sense and the understanding thereof. Paul not only reasoned out of the Scripture and with the Scripture; he opened it. He explained it.

Alleging: Setting Teaching Beside Scripture

Now go back to Acts 17 and look at verse 3. Paul, as his manner was, went into the synagogue and began to teach. In verse 2, he reasoned out of the Scripture and with the Scripture. In verse 3, he opens, but now he does something else: opening and alleging.

"...that Christ must needs have suffered," now follow it with me, "and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I'm preaching to you, is Christ." Now most of us have never really grasped what this word "alleging" means. I could say, well, I'm alleging that Steve stole one of my pistols. Now, if I allege that, I'm not just really accusing him outright of doing it. I'm just alleging it. And we think of alleging as something that is not necessarily true, but it's just something that we're going to say. No, that is not what this word means.

Now, I want you to watch. Paul opened and alleged. So what in the world does it mean? First of all, the word "alleged" is from the Greek word paratithēmi. Para is a preposition which literally means alongside of. Tithēmi is a verb which means to cause to stand. So actually the word paratithēmi means to cause to stand beside of, or in the place of, or to set it near, or to set before in teaching. So, I want you to follow me now.

I'm going to show it to you from Scripture in just a moment. So here's what Paul is doing. He's reasoning out of the Scripture. He's

reasoning with the Scripture. He's opened the Scripture. He's explained it. He's interpreted it. And now he is alleging. Look what he is alleging. Look in verse 3 again. "Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead." Now watch it.

"And that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." So here's what he's doing. He's preaching that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, that Jesus Christ is the only salvation, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and so he reasons out of the Scripture, listen, he reasons with the Scripture, he explains, he interprets, and now what he does, he takes what he says and sets it right down beside the Scripture and says, "You compare what I just said with what the Scripture says, and you will find that what I said is what the Bible says. And therefore, what I'm saying is biblical and right."

Now let me show you. I'm going to show you the same word. I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Mark chapter 8. Look in Mark chapter 8. Here is one of the instances where our Lord fed a large number of people. I want you to look in Mark 8, beginning there with verse 6. The Bible says, "And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them." To paratithēmi. "And they did set them before the people." Paratithēmi. "And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them." Paratithēmi.

He had the fish and the bread; He broke it, blessed it, multiplied it, and set it alongside the people so that they could assimilate it, eat it, possess it, and make it theirs. This is exactly what Paul is doing in Acts 17.

He is setting everything he says right beside the Word of God. He is saying, “What I am teaching you about Jesus Christ is exactly what the Bible says about Jesus Christ. What I am saying and what the Bible says are one and the same.”

You can teach any doctrine, just like the Apostle Paul. Your major premise would be this: the Bible teaches—and then you can insert whatever doctrine you want. The minor premise is this: the Bible is open; that is, it is expounded, explained, and interpreted to

demonstrate the truth. The conclusion is: What I have just said is what the Bible says. What I am saying and what the Bible says are one and the same.

The Mixed Response to Faithful Teaching

That is exactly what Paul is doing. He reasons out of the Scripture and with the Scripture; he opens, explains, interprets, and applies it. Then he sets what he has just said right beside the Scripture and says, “Look for yourself.”

Now let me quickly dispel a myth. Some may think that if they learn to preach and teach like Paul, reason out of and with the Scripture, open, and allege, people will flock to them, thousands will be saved, and they will have one-hundred-percent success. That is not true.

Look in Acts 17, again at verse 4. Paul was one of the greatest teachers who ever lived. With the exception of Jesus Christ, I would say he was one of the best. God used him to write most of the New Testament. Yet when he preached, “some of them believed, which is wonderful, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.”

But watch this: "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar." In Athens, when they heard Paul preaching the resurrection of the dead, "some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." So Paul departed from among them. "Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

Most rejected, but just a few did indeed believe. The Apostle Paul was probably the second greatest teacher in the world. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself would be the greatest teacher. He not only knew truth; He was truth. He was truth personified.

In John chapter 6, He is teaching that He is the bread of life. "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" When Jesus knew that His disciples murmured at it, He said, "Doth this offend you? What and

if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

But there were some who did not believe. Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who should betray Him. He said, "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."

"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

Can you believe that? Jesus Christ gave one of the greatest expositions on the bread of life in John chapter 6. And what did they say? "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" Many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

Duty is ours, and the consequences for God's. Our responsibility is to teach the whole Word of God. What people do with it is between them and the Lord. We cannot make anyone believe or cram truth down their throats, but we are responsible to teach the whole Word of God. If we learn to reason out of the Bible, reason with the Bible, to open and to allege as the Apostle Paul did, one thing we can know for sure is that they heard the Word of God. They are shut up to that Word, and they will give an account to God for what they heard, how they heard it, and how they responded or did not respond. The whole object of preaching is to shut people up to the Word of God.

Conclusion: Seriousness in Preaching

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: "If we play at preaching, we have chosen an awful game. To shuffle texts like cards and to make literary essays out of themes which move all heaven and hell is shameful. We must be serious as death in this solemn work. An earnest brother may make a mistake in grammar, and at this they observe it with a sneer. The Lord's people mock at him. Other devout believers err in a classical allusion, and this also affords the mockers pleasure. The earnestness and the devotion go for nothing. Or rather, these are the secret reasons for the contempt of these

superfine and superficial critics. The gospel is nothing to them. Cleverness is their idol. As for themselves, these gentlemen are mainly concerned to find out what will bring them the most honor in the philosophical school to which they belong. They have neither convictions nor beliefs, but only tastes and opinions, and the whole matter is a sport from the first to the last to them. I pray you above all things to keep clear of the scorner's chair and the trifler's campstool. Be seriously earnest."

When it comes to teaching and preaching, we cannot shuffle text like cards, make a game out of it, or reduce it to our own cleverness.

It has to be reasoning out of Scripture, reasoning with Scripture, opening it, explaining it, applying it, and then placing it side by side with the Word of God so that people can see this is truth. Once that has happened, they have been shut up to the Word of God. The Word of God will do one of two things: it will either draw them savingly to Jesus Christ, or drive them away from Him in condemnation. But the Word of God will have been taught.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for Your truth. Thank You, Lord, for teaching us how to teach, how to convey truth, and I pray that You also help us to learn truth and to have real doctrinal convictions of the truth. Help us, Lord, to be careful to honor Thee in all that we say and do, to live for Thee, to be holy, to be godly, and to be obedient. Father, thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is salvation. May we repent of our sins and trust only in Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

A Biblical Philosophy of History

Introduction: The Biblical Mandate to Remember History

The message is basically on a biblical philosophy of history. Notice Deuteronomy 32, beginning with verse seven: “Remember the days of old. Consider the years of many generations. Ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.”

There is indeed a biblical philosophy of history. History is not only relevant; it is absolutely necessary if we are going to understand the eternal decree of God. The Bible says in Ephesians 3:11, that eternal decree which he purposed in Jesus Christ, our Lord. There is absolutely nothing outside of God’s eternal decree. There is nothing over and above and beyond God. If anything is over and above God, if there is anything over which God does not have control, or anything out of the bounds of his decree, then God would not be

God. That thing, whatever God could not control, would be God. Obviously, God is in control, and he is God. Moreover, this decree is eternal, since it was before the foundation of the world.

God's Eternal Decree and the Singularity of His Purpose

Many times we, as theologians, pastors, and preachers, talk about the decrees of God. I do not care which theological book you pick up—Berkhof, Thiessen, who was an Arminian, or Hodge—it does not matter. All of them deal with the decrees of God. So why am I using the singular? The answer is that the Bible uses a singular. The reason we talk about the decrees of God is because we only think in succession: one thought after another. But God is not like us, thankfully. He is over and above and beyond us, and God is able to have one thought which would encompass and entail everything that he created and everything that he ever intended to bring to pass. That is why the Bible talks about that eternal decree which he decreed in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

History as Linear and Beginning at Creation

When we come to history, we have to understand that history is linear. I thought about Genesis 1:1 when our brother mentioned it earlier: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Have you ever stopped to think about that verse? There is so much in it. Consider what that one verse refutes. It refutes atheism, because “in the beginning, God.” It refutes polytheism, because only one God is mentioned. It refutes pantheism—not everything is God, because God created the heaven and the earth. It refutes dualism, which teaches, in Greek philosophy, the eternality of the spirit and the eternality of matter. The Bible teaches us that history did indeed have a beginning: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth.”

History began at creation, and it will end when this world ends. History, of course, is applicable only to us. There is no past and no future with our heavenly Father, because there is only one eternal presence with him. God has decreed everything that will come to pass in time and in history. For instance, in Isaiah chapter 46 and verse 10, he said, “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from

ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Acts chapter 15 and verse 18 says, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."

You and I are concerned with the past, as well as the future and the present. We must know our past in order to obey our heavenly Father, because he said in verse seven, "Remember the days of old." "Consider the years of many generations. Ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee." We must ask, consider, and remember. God did something in time when he created the earth, when he divided the nations, and when he set the bounds of the people. So we must ask: What does that mean? How does it apply to us? What are you and I to learn? What does it mean when he said that he set the bounds of the people? The answer to all these questions can be learned only by studying history.

The Bible as a History Book and the Command to Pass on Knowledge

The Bible is indeed a history book. Yes, there are twelve books in the Bible known as historical books, but in one sense all the Bible is a history book, because it either has come to pass or will come to pass. It will be fulfilled in time, and we are commanded to pass on to our children and grandchildren that which we have learned.

That was the passage read this morning from Psalm 78: "We will not hide them from the children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done." In other words, the Bible gives us many historical incidents. We can also gather from God's providence that which He brings to pass in time and in history.

History Defined: God's Decree Unfolding in Time

Let me say something for these young people. I remember when I was young—that was a long time ago, Brother Bill—and I was in history class. I thought, "Why in the world should I remember all those dates? Why should I remember what happened in 1492 or 1776?" Until I learned what history was. History is nothing less than God's eternal decree coming to pass in time. That is what it is.

History is actually from the Greek word historia, which means inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation.

It is the discovery, collection, organization, and presentation of information about past events that enables one to make applications to present circumstances and situations. An understanding of what God has done in times past gives us the ability to make proper application now, in our time and history. Let me give you an illustration from Matthew 21:32, a wonderful verse.

Our Lord said, “For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.” John came to them in the way of righteousness, and they did not believe him; but the harlots and publicans believed him. When they saw it, they did not repent afterward that they might believe. Our Lord was saying that they were responsible and accountable to learn from what God does in the lives of other people.

Whatever God does in the life of an individual for that person's good is to be studied and learned from. Whatever God does in judgment against the wicked man is to be learned from as well. Jesus Christ held the Pharisees answerable and accountable because they were bound to profit from the work God had done in the lives of the publicans and the harlots. They had not learned from history or studied what God had done in the lives of other people. God also holds us accountable to learn from what He has done in the lives of others in times past.

People try to say, "Well, there's a difference between secular history and sacred history." No, there's no difference, because all history is God's history. History really and truly cannot be known apart from God.

Learning from Providence: Weather, Judgments, and Personal Testimony

It is not only from the lives of men and women that we are to profit, nor merely from what God has done in their lives. We are also to learn from all of God's providential acts. In Amos chapter four, God

teaches us that He chastised Israel by droughts, famines, locusts, plagues, war, and supernatural intervention. Yet they did not repent. After each judgment, God always said, "Yet you have not returned to me, saith the Lord God." God did each of those judgments to gain their attention and teach them that they needed—and yes, must—repent. But it is not only those kinds of judgments from which we are to learn.

What about grasshoppers, locusts, all the plagues, and agricultural failures? When you study Joel chapter one, you will find that God clearly teaches us that locusts, palmerworms, and caterpillars are instruments of God's judgments. Therefore, we are accountable to learn not only from famines, but from droughts and from anything imaginable. I never will forget. In 1954,

I was 10 years old. There was a drought, and it looked like everything was drying up. My father was a farmer, so he went around to all the neighboring farmers—most were Christians—and invited them to a prayer meeting to pray for rain. One of our neighbors was not a Christian. Moreover, he was a drunk. But he was a farmer, and, just out of courtesy, my father went to him, told him about the prayer meeting, and invited him to come and attend if he wanted to. He realized the man would not pray, but he invited him since the meeting was for the farmers.

This man laughed in my father's face and said, “What good will that do?” His farm joined ours, and a fence separated his land from ours. The next day, God sent rain, and, as a boy, I watched that rain fall right on our farm from this fence over, while not one drop got on the drunkard's land. Talk about impressive. It impressed me. God tells us that we are to learn from such things.

Here is something we have to understand: there is no such thing as luck, chance, fate, or fortune in a world that is ruled by God. Everything is divine providence.

So let me ask you another question. Everybody today is talking about climatology. Is there anything that we are to learn from weather? We are talking about history and a biblical philosophy of history. Job 37:9 says, “Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. By the breath of God frost is given: and the

breadth of the waters is straitened. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud: and it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth." Now look at verse 13: "He causeth it to come"—that is, weather—"whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy." So here is a question.

Are we accountable to learn from meteorology and climatology? The answer is yes, because God sends weather based either upon a blessing, chastisement, or a curse. Our English word meteorology comes from the Greek. Meteoros means that which is high, lofty, or in the sky; meta means above, aero means air, and logia refers to study or logic. Meteorology, then, is the study of things that come from the sky, the things that come down from above. Does God control that? Of course.

In Jeremiah chapter 14 and verse 22, the question is asked: "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? Art not thou he, O Lord our God? Therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things." In other words, it is God who sends the rain. Therefore, the study and teaching of history will always be important, because history is a compendium of the events and people that have brought us where we are today. If we do not know where we are today, or from where we have come, we certainly will not know where we are going or where we are headed.

The Danger of Ignorance and the Rewriting of History

People have stated it plainly and accurately: our lack of knowledge in time past makes us absolutely right for destruction. I want to give you several quotes. Here is one from Milan Kundera. Listen carefully, because this is happening today. He said, "The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory, destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have someone write new books, manufacture new culture, invent a new history."

Before long, the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. Do you realize how our monuments are being destroyed and our history rewritten? George Orwell's 1984 is like present-day newspaper reading.

General Patrick Cleburne, who was killed at the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee, understood this truth when he said, "Surrender means that the history of this heroic struggle will be written by the enemy, that our youth will be trained by Northern school teachers and will learn from Northern school books their version of the war, will be impressed by all the influences of history and education to regard our gallant dead as traitors and our maimed veterans as fit subjects for derision."

Is that not happening today? Anyone who stands up for our Southern heritage or our colonial heritage is viewed as someone off the rock, insane, politically incorrect, or not up with modern-day teaching and philosophy.

The truth of the matter is this: Patrick Cleburne was certainly right. We have swallowed the line of Northern history hook, line, and sinker. When you look around at Southern culture, it is being destroyed on every hand.

I remember when I was in college, I had a class in voice and diction. My teacher, Mr. Pratt, wanted everything pronounced correctly, exactly the way he pronounced it. One day he said, "Mr. Weaver, you did very good, except you still have that Southern accent."

I asked him, "Mr. Pratt, do you know why I have that Southern accent?" He said, "Why?" I said, "Because I was born in the South, and I'm planning on keeping my Southern accent, and I'm not ashamed of my Southern accent." And I'm not.

My wife and I were in Montana with some friends, and we were at a restaurant whose owner was originally from the South. The people with us called him over so he could introduce himself. My wife spoke, and before he said one word to me, he said, "It is so wonderful to hear another Magnolia mouth." He meant someone from the South, because he recognized that accent.

Here we are, having our culture destroyed because we have not understood history. It was Karl Marx who said, "People separated from their history are easily persuaded." And that's true. When you're ignorant, you're very easily persuaded.

Joseph Stalin said, "Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past." Adolf Hitler said, "The big lie is a major untruth uttered frequently by leaders as a means of duping and controlling the constituency." And that is where we are today. We are being controlled, subjugated, and made submissive without even knowing or realizing it. The problem is that we live in the present, and we plan and worry about the future.

History, however, is a study of the past. Given all the demands upon us as we try to make a living and keep our heads above water, who has time to worry about the past or even think about it? I believe that is one of the problems we are facing. I believe it is one of the plans, because that is what Pharaoh did to the Israelites when they wanted to worship God. He told them they did not have enough to do; they needed more work and had to be kept busy, with their minds kept off these things, so they would not want to go into the wilderness and worship their God. Let me tell you something: the way our economy is and the way we now have to work is unbelievable.

Do you realize that when I was a boy, my father worked, not my mother? She worked in the home as a housekeeper. She kept the house, cooking, and washing, but she did not work outside the home. Today, most husbands and wives work together and still cannot make it. I will shake you with this little truth: when Alice and I got married, which will soon be sixty years ago, I gave her ten dollars a week to buy groceries for us. I would fuss at her if she did not bring two or three dollars back. We were able to live a whole week on groceries bought for six or seven dollars, just the two of us. Bread was twenty-five cents a loaf, gas twenty-five cents a gallon, and milk fifty cents a gallon; that was pretty cheap back then.

The point is this: what we could do in a few hours a week back then now takes almost all week. We need to learn, and we need to learn to read. I like what one young man had on his shirt earlier: TV is the greatest propaganda and the greatest purveyor of falsehood.

The Importance of Reading and Studying History

There are many books in that room right in there. I would encourage you to buy as many of them as you can possibly buy. I do not get a

discount or a percentage from Brother Bill; I am just saying that you need the books. You need to read, and you need to learn. The only way you are going to learn the Bible is to study and read it for yourself. You do not learn the Bible in Bible school.

The same thing is true with history. I enjoy listening to people teach history. I enjoy listening to Brother Bill, Brother Black, and anybody who is going to teach the truth. But you are not going to remember everything that you hear. Many times, you are going to remember almost everything that you read, especially if you underline and take notes.

I never will forget Rushdoony. I was at his place before he died, and he looked at me and said, "John, my body is falling apart." But he said, "My mind is just as clear and just as good as it always has been." Then he said, "Just last week, I remembered a quote that I read in a book in 1935."

I believe it was '35 or '45, one of those. He said, "I went to my library. I pulled the book out. Would you believe I opened at the very page the quote was on?" I thought, I could not even remember reading a book that long ago, but he did.

You need to read, study history, and learn. If I can learn in a few hours what it took someone else a lifetime to learn, I am better off. If I can learn what they learned in a week, I am better off, even if it took them several years to learn it. We need to learn to read.

In James chapter five, verses 10 and 11, James wrote, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." He said, "Behold, we count them happy which endure." He continued, "You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." "Take, my brethren, the prophets"—study their lives. If you want to find out about affliction, study suffering, or learn about patience, study history. That is what he is saying.

Then, in Hebrews chapter 11: "What shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,

obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong." If you want to find out about courage, boldness, and victory, you need to study these men.

Matthew Henry, who died in 1714, said: "The remains of good and great men, like Elijah's mantle, ought to be gathered up and preserved by their survivors, that is, their works follow them; the reward of them, they may stay behind in their benefit." Whenever we read about Lee and Jackson, Ewell and Stuart, we are gathering up their remains, and they are to remain for our benefit.

These words certainly apply to the Apostles Paul, Peter, James, and John, and to a host of others. They also apply to Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Robert L. Dabney, and many others of past centuries. Macaulay the historian says, "A people which takes no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestry will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered by remote descendants." If you do not remember what your ancestors have done, you are probably not going to do anything to make your descendants remember you as well.

History is for our profit and benefit. We are to learn from the wisdom of others and from their mistakes. Rushdoony said, "History, therefore, is not the outworking of impersonal forces, but a personal conflict between the forces of God and anti-God, Christ and anti-Christ, with the ultimate victory assured to God in his Christ. The Bible as a whole presents a view of history as conspiracy with Satan and man determined to assert their right to be gods." Think about George Soros, Klaus Schwab, and Yuval Noah Harari, who has already said that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a myth; in fact, Jesus Christ is a myth to him. He said it is a conflict between those who want to be God and the one who is the living God.

Do we wish to avoid the mistakes of Adam, Lot, Abraham, and a multitude of others? If so, we must study their lives. Do we wish to emulate their holiness, godliness, and obedience? If so, we must study their lives. The same is true even of the wicked, although I am not interested in spending a great deal of time studying Stalin, Hitler, Mao Zedong, and their ilk. However, I do want to know what motivated them, what they did, and why they did it, so that I can

understand what I am to avoid and stay away from. We must know their vices, rebellions, and wickedness in order to avoid their sins and pitfalls. We must understand their mindset in order to conduct our lives properly.

When I was in college, I had to take a class in philosophy. I hated and despised the class. Any class I took that I hated, I made sure I made an A in, because I wanted to ensure that I never had to repeat it. But when they were teaching Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, my thoughts were these:

"Why am I learning this? I'm here to learn about the Bible. I'm here to learn this. I'm here to learn. Why am I learning this?" It never dawned on me until after I was out and studying the Scripture that I found out there is a biblical philosophy, along with multitudes of humanistic philosophies. I need to know those philosophies so I can refute them from the Bible and make sure that I do not imbibe any of those wicked, ungodly thoughts in my mind. The same is true when studying the lives of others. We should study the lives of Stuart, Ewell, Cromwell, Cleburne, Jackson, Lee, and many others, and then apply those principles to our lives.

Honoring the Honorable: Lessons from the Civil War and Beyond

Let me ask you some questions to set the stage for what I want to impress upon you today. Is it important to know that Kings Ahab, Manasseh, and Jeroboam were mass murderers who murdered their own people? The answer is yes. Do these men deserve respect, honor, and recognition? You would say, "Of course not." Why did they not deserve it? The Bible says in Romans chapter 13, verse 7, that we are to give honor to whom honor is due. In order to receive honor, one must be honorable; therefore, we are not to give honor to dishonorable men. Ahab, Manasseh, Jeroboam, and a host of others were dishonorable wretches. You would never honor those men because they were mass murderers. If you would not honor Jeroboam, Manasseh, and Ahab, would you honor William Tecumseh Sherman and Philip Sheridan?

They were mass murderers as well. How would you know whom to honor and whom not to honor if you do not study history? Why

would you dishonor a mass murderer from the Bible and honor a mass murderer in time and history? Consider some quotes from General Sherman. He wrote to General Grant: "Our method of warfare is different from that in Europe. We're not fighting against an enemy army, but against an enemy people, both young and old, rich and poor, must feel the iron hand of war in the same way as the organized armies. In this respect, my march through Georgia was a wonderful success."

Again, speaking of the war in North Alabama, Sherman said, "The government of the United States has in North Alabama any and all rights which they may choose to enforce in the war—to take their lives, their homes, their land, their everything, because they cannot deny that war does exist there. And war is simply power unrestrained by constitutional compact. To the persistent secessionists, why, death is mercy, and the quicker he or she is disposed of, the better."

Sherman's position was that they could kill anybody and destroy whatever they wished. Writing to his wife on July 31st, 1862, he said, "The war will soon assume a turn to extermination, not of soldiers alone. That is the least part of the trouble, but the people. There is a class of people, men, women and children, who must be killed or banished before you can hope for peace and order." He was not making war merely upon soldiers, but upon women and children. He continued, "Until we can repopulate Georgia, it is useless to occupy it. But the utter destruction of its roads, houses, and people will cripple their military resources. I can make them march and I can make Georgia howl."

After the war, Sheridan and Sherman were sent to the plains to deal with the Indians, and they murdered Indians as well. Sherman said, "The more Indians we can kill this year, the fewer we will need to kill next, because the more I see of the Indians, the more convinced I am that they must either all be killed or be maintained as a species of pauper. Their attempted civilization is ridiculous."

Sherman said, “We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux, even to the extermination of men, women, and children.” He was willing to kill anybody and everybody. He was indeed a mass murderer. So was Philip Sheridan, who was just as bad as Sherman.

Grant gave Sheridan an order to destroy the Shenandoah Valley, and Sheridan systematically looted, burned, and destroyed crops, barns, homes, houses—anything and everything he could. So much so that he wrote General Grant that if a crow flew over the Shenandoah Valley, it would have to take its own provisions with it. Sheridan was quoted as saying, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian."

That anecdote came from his campaign against the Indians. Comanche Chief Tosawi, also known as Silverknife, reportedly met Sheridan in 1869 and said, "Me Tosawi, me good Indian," to which Sheridan is said to have replied, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead." From this came the anecdote, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." Thus Sherman and Sheridan killed civilians—women and children—not only in the South, but among the Indian tribes after the war was over.

Why do I need to know these facts? Who does God command me to honor? Those who deserve honor. He does not command me to honor those who are dishonorable and violate His law. How can you honor someone who makes war contrary to God and His commandments? When you read Deuteronomy chapter 20, God tells you plainly that you are not to make war against His creation.

He said, "If you come to pitch against the city, and there are fruit trees and there are nut trees," you cannot cut those down, because they are for food. You cut down a tree that has no value, and there you make your siege. In other words, God forbids man to make war against creation. What, then, did Sherman and Sheridan do? They burned houses and crops, killed animals, and left them lying and rotting.

Moreover, in 1 Samuel chapter 15, Saul was sent to take care of the Amalekites, but the Kenites were in the way. Saul told the Kenites, "Get out of my way. I'm not to make war on you. My object is the Amalekites." The Kenites got out of his way. The point is this: you do not honor those who make war against God's creation, nor those who make war against innocent civilians.

I have been asked why I keep teaching about the War of Northern Rebellion—quote-unquote, Northern Rebellion. I have several sermons on who the rebels were; and, by the way, I show that it was

the North who was in rebellion, not the South. But the truth is that many have asked, “Why in the world are you teaching all of this? Why do you keep bringing this up? That happened 150 years ago, 175 years ago. Why is that important?”

The Relevance of All History: Principles Do Not Die

Many think that because something happened a long time ago, it is irrelevant. I can answer that by asking other questions. If the War of 1861 to 1865 is irrelevant because it happened so long ago, what about the war from 1776 to 1783? Is that relevant? What were the principles involved? Is there a connection between the principles of the war of 1776 to 1783 and the war of 1861 to 1865?

Why did our founding fathers resist George III? What were the principles there, and were those principles applicable in 1861? Why should we know about Jamestown and the Pilgrim Fathers? What have 1607 and 1620 to do with anything today? That was much farther back than 1861 and 1865. Were there causes, issues, and principles involved even then that led up to the War of 1776?

Why did the Mayflower sail from Holland? What were English people doing in Holland? Who was on that ship, and why were they on it? What is the significance of the Mayflower Compact? Is it relevant today? It is much farther back than 1861. Who gets to determine what is relevant and what is not? Why can Bill say, “I believe this is relevant,” while Brother Black says, “I don’t think this is relevant”? Really?

What we are doing is bringing God’s providential acts in time and history to our bar of human reasoning. We are making a pronouncement ex cathedra: “This is relevant and this is not relevant.” Really? Let me show you something. Look in your Bibles to Romans chapter 11, beginning at verse 33. The Apostle Paul says, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”

“How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be

recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

"For of him"—that is, originally—"and through him"—that is, providentially—"and to him"—ultimately—"all things." All things have meaning only because of God. Everything relates to him, and therefore has meaning because God ordained everything that comes to pass, and he ordained everything that comes to pass in eternity. He is the sovereign God.

Once you deny God's sovereignty, once you do away with God, you may safely decide what is relevant and what is not relevant, what is important and what is not important. Did the Solemn League and Covenant brought out by the Covenanters have any impact upon America? Understandably, what happened from 1638 to 1688 seems like a long time ago. Yet those Scots Presbyterians who fought tyranny and despotism had a decided effect upon America. They preserved a biblical framework of reference concerning tyranny and despotism, and many Southern people and regions were populated by the Scots-Irish.

In 1776, Horace Walpole, Prime Minister of England, said, "Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson," referring to John Witherspoon. In England, the war for independence was known as the Presbyterian Rebellion. One ardent supporter of George III wrote home, "I fix all the blame for these extraordinary proceedings upon the Presbyterians. They have been the chief and principal instruments of all these flaming measures. They always do and ever will act against government from that restless and turbulent anti-monarchial spirit which has always distinguished them everywhere."

Merle d'Aubigné wrote concerning America, "Calvin, John Calvin, was the founder of the greatest of republics. The pilgrims who left their country in the reign of James I and landing on the barren soil of New England founded populous and mighty colonies where his sons—his direct and legitimate sons—at that American nation, which we've seen growing so rapidly, boasts as its father the humble reformer on the shore of Lake Leman." He said, basically, that Calvin was the founder of America.

If you are wondering whether 1861 to 1865 is relevant, what about 1492? That is supposed to be when Columbus discovered America. Why study the life of Columbus? Why did he seek a new world, and why was he willing to risk his life to do so? Why was an Italian sailing under the auspices of the King and Queen of Spain? What was his main desire? Did he really desire to conquer for Christ? You need to study and find out.

What about 1215? Does that have anything to do with us today? King John at Runnymede was forced by the barons to grant their rights, and we got the Magna Carta. Most people have no idea that its principles affected the Constitution of the United States. In fact, most of us are so totally, abysmally ignorant. I read about an American couple visiting England who stood at Runnymede before a sign that said, "Magna Carta signed here by King John at 1215." The American looked at his watch and said, "Wouldn't you know it, we missed it by 45 minutes." That is about what most folks think about history. But was it important? Yes.

If you say that what happened from 1776 to 1783 is not important or relevant because it happened so long ago, what about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? That was over 2,000 years ago. Is it no longer relevant? Is it not important? Please understand this: Principles do not die. Principles do not have funerals. A principle from 1215 is just as valid as one from 1492; one from 1492 is just as valid as one from 1688; and one from 1688 is just as valuable and viable as one from 1776. Those principles were prevalent and viable in 1861 and 1865, and they are present and viable in 2022. President Jefferson Davis, our only president, said, "The principle for which we contend is bound to reassert itself, though it be at another time and in another form." Someone once said, "Jeff Davis is dead." I replied, "I know. But a dead statesman is a whole lot better than a live politician." I will take Jeff Davis any day of the week.

"The principle for which we contend, the principle for which we are fighting, is bound to reassert itself in a different time, in a different form." I want you to consider this: the very issues that are plaguing America today, the very issues that are causing division, strife, and unrest, are the exact same issues that our forefathers faced in 1776 and in 1861.

The principles have not changed. We are facing today exactly what they faced in 1776 and in 1861. Was there one principle applicable in 1776 that was also applicable in 1861? The answer would be yes. South Carolina seceded in December 1860. Horace Greeley, an ardent abolitionist and founder of the New York Tribune, said on December 24, 1860, after South Carolina seceded, “If Jefferson's word in the Declaration of Independence justified the secession from the British Empire of three millions of colonists in 1776, we do not see why it would not justify the secession of five million Southerners from the Federal Union in 1861.” There was certainly more than one principle, but the principle of secession is still with us today. Even Texas is still talking about secession, and many of the counties in Oregon are talking about seceding; they are already voting on it and uniting with the state of Idaho, as are some in Washington as well.

Secession was nothing more than a peaceful solution to political problems that Lincoln and the Northern states were denying and trying to destroy the Constitution to which they were bound. President Jefferson Davis said, “I love the Union and the Constitution, but I had rather leave the Union with the Constitution than remain in the Union without it.”

It is important to see how these principles are played out in time and history, and to see the end of those who deny them as well. God is not mocked. We have to understand that we do indeed reap that which we sow.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Titus, chapter 1, verses 2 and 3. This shows the eternality of God's decree and how that decree comes to pass in time and history. The apostle Paul writes, “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” When did God promise eternal life? Before the world began. You can read Hebrews 13:20–21 in reference to that eternal covenant made between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost before the world began.

It was promised before the world began. That was His eternal purpose and His eternal decree. But verse 3 says, "hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour." So that which God ordained in eternity is revealed in time.

So many people have tried to say that history is a waste of time. It cannot possibly be a waste of time, because history is nothing less than God's eternal decree coming to pass in time. I have heard some who tried to be very pious say, "History is a waste of time. What we should be doing is preaching the gospel." My question is: preaching whose gospel, or whose interpretation of the gospel? Your interpretation of the gospel may not necessarily be the gospel.

The Gospel as All-Encompassing Good News

I have heard people say, "The gospel is so simple. It's the good news of Jesus Christ and his salvation." I certainly agree that this is an aspect of the gospel, and a very vital and pivotal one. However, the word gospel actually comes from the Greek word euangelion, which literally means good news or good tidings. Is not all of God's Word good news and good tidings? Are not all of God's acts and providence in time and history good news and good tidings?

Someone says, "The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2 and verse 2, 'For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.'" Is that the gospel? If you read all of 1 Corinthians chapter 2, you will see that Paul's statement there is the wisdom of God pitted against the wisdom of man. He went on to say in verses 4 and 5, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

When the Apostle Paul talked about Christ being crucified, he was talking about a biblical philosophy in contradiction to a humanistic philosophy. When you read Paul's sermons, especially in Acts 13 and Acts 17, they are full of history.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul writes, “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

I remember, as a young preacher boy, older preachers telling me that this was the gospel in a nutshell: Christ died according to the scriptures, was buried, and was raised again according to the

scriptures. I have a question for you. I am not denying that this is certainly part of it, but was not Jesus Christ prophesied and born according to the scriptures? Did He not live according to the scriptures? Did He not fulfill the law according to the scriptures?

Of course, the answer is yes to all those things. So why is Paul simply talking about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 and pointing that out? Because in the Corinthian church there were people denying the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead. Paul is taking that part of the gospel and emphasizing it in light of those who were denying the bodily resurrection.

The gospel is not facts about Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the gospel. Anything and everything that pertains to Jesus Christ is the gospel. He is the good news because Jesus Christ is the good tidings of God the Father. The word gospel actually means good news or good tidings. You know what the Bible says in Proverbs 11:31? "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner."

Is it not good news that we are going to be rewarded by our obedience, by God's grace and mercy, in time and history? That is good news. If we live right, we are blessed. Blessings always follow obedience. Curses always follow disobedience. That is good news. Is it not good news that we are going to see the wicked brought down in time and history as well as eternity? Yes. And I have news for you.

I can hardly wait until God brings some of them down, and He shall bring them down. Is that good news? Yes, that is good news. God is going to overthrow the wicked, bring their evil down upon their own heads, and cause them to fall into the very pit they dug. How about Romans 8:28? "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Is that good news? It is indeed good news for the child of God. God takes everything we think is bad, everything we think is affliction or suffering, and everything we do not like, and makes it for our good. Is it not good news that He overthrows His enemies? Is it not good news that Haman is hanged on his own gallows?

Is it not good news that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church? Is it not good news that God grants His people victory in time and in history? Through Jesus Christ, does He not oftentimes overrule the desires and wants of the wicked and give His people victory? Is it not good news that Jesus Christ is Lord, that He exercises dominion and control over every detail, and that not a hair of our head can fall to the ground without our Heavenly Father? A sparrow cannot even lie upon the ground without our Heavenly Father. Is it not good news that God is absolutely sovereign? He is the centerpiece of history because everything is His story. Everything about Jesus Christ is the gospel; everything that God does in time and history, in His providence for His people, is good news and good tidings.

Conclusion: Praying for God to Act Again in History

I want you to look at one last passage. Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to Psalm 44. Psalm 44 is, to me, an absolutely wonderful passage. Look at it and try to make application for our lives today. Beginning with verse one, the psalmist says, “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us,”

What work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How Thou didst drive out the heathen with Thy hand, and plantedst them; how Thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them.

Now look what he says: “Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.” “We’ve heard with our ears, O God; our fathers told us about these mighty works that You have done in time past. They told us how You drove out the heathen and gave them this land. Yes, they had to fight, but You gave them the victory. You put them in there. They did not win this land by their own might or power. It was by Your divine power.”

Then he says, “Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.” In other words, “Lord, do it again, O God. You have done it in time past; You have done it in history. Do it now for us. We want Your deliverance, just as You did it in days gone by. Make bare Thy

mighty arm. Show forth Thy strength and Thy power," or, as David says, "Rise up, O God, and judge them, that they may know that they are but mere men."

There is a biblical philosophy of history: all history is God's history. We can see that from creation in Psalm 19 and Romans chapter one. Anything that we study, as long as we study it to discern our God, His glory, and His purpose, is indeed biblical. I do not care if it concerns geography, meteorology, or anything historical—to find out about the God of nature. Matthew Fontaine Maury, one of the greatest of all, was reading Psalm 8. He read about the paths in the sea and said, "If God says there are paths in the sea, then there are paths in the sea." Matthew Fontaine Maury came up with the ocean currents, so to speak. From Psalm 8, he was nicknamed the Pathfinder of the Seas.

Matthew Fontaine Maury is known as the father of modern oceanography and naval meteorology. He was also called the Scientist of the Seas because of his extensive published works, especially Physical Geography of the Sea, the first comprehensive book on oceanography. Incidentally, Maury was a Confederate naval officer.

It is not unbiblical to study any war or period in history, as long as we study it to find God's honor and glory and to learn God's principles. Psalm 111:2 says, "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."

There is the doctrine of soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, and that is true. But our God is so great. He not only saves; He is the Creator, the Controller, the One who defines everything, and the One who finishes everything. All history is God's history because God is absolutely sovereign. We need to examine all of God's acts in time and history so that we can discern His eternal decree.

Do you remember Deuteronomy 29:29? "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Whatever God has revealed in His book or in His providence is for us to learn and study.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your love, grace, and mercy. We are thankful for all that You have done for us. Teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, and give us Your will in our lives, that we may glorify You. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

The Union's War Against Women and Children

Introduction: Biblical Principles of War

The Bible says in Proverbs 11 and verse 16, "A gracious woman retaineth honor and strong men retain riches." August the 13th, 1863, is a date that should go down in infamy. It was on that date that harmless and innocent women and children were murdered under the auspices of a federal general, Thomas Ewing.

There is a biblical principle taught throughout Scripture: you do not make war on civilians or innocent individuals. In 1 Samuel, chapter 15, when Samuel came to Saul and said, "God is sending you to destroy the Amalekites. I want you to wipe them out," Saul got an army of 210,000 men, and in the way were the Kenites. Saul told the Kenites, "Look," he said, "you treated us well when we came out of Egypt, but God has sent me to destroy the Amalekites. Now you need to get out of the way." That is exactly what they did, and that was the right thing to do.

But there is another principle, found in Deuteronomy chapter 20 and verses 19 through 20: "When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them, for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down, for the tree of the field is a man's life to employ them in the siege. Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down, and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee until it be subdued."

So here are two principles: you do not make war against innocent people, and you do not make war against creation. Creation is not the enemy. The sinner is the enemy. The enemy is the enemy, but not creation. God forbids war to be made against His creation.

Union Generals' Rejection of Biblical Principles

Neither President Lincoln nor Generals Sherman, Sheridan, or Ewing understood or believed any of these principles. Sherman, Sheridan, and Ewing did to innocent men and women exactly what I am going to tell you about, under the auspices of Abraham Lincoln, who knew everything they were going to do.

While I am talking about General Thomas Ewing, a Union officer, I will also speak briefly about Sherman and Sheridan, because Thomas Ewing and William T. Sherman, William Tecumseh Sherman, were brothers-in-law. Obviously, they shared the same attitude toward war and toward the Southern people, whom they wanted destroyed.

William Tecumseh Sherman left a sixty-mile-wide, three-hundred-mile path of death, desolation, and destruction through Georgia and up through South Carolina. Afterward, he wrote: "Look to the South and you who went with us through that land can best say if they have not been fearfully punished."

"Mourning is in every household. Desolation is written in broad characters across the whole face of the country. Cities are in ashes. Fields laid waste. Their commerce gone. Their system of labor annihilated and destroyed. Ruin and poverty and distress

everywhere. And now pestilence added to the very capsheaf of their sack of misery."

When Sherman went through Georgia with his bummers, they literally burned and destroyed everything in their path, whether creation or men, women, and children. Sheridan was the same way. In a report dated October 7, 1863, General Sheridan wrote to General Grant and boasted: "I've destroyed over 2,000 barns filled with wheat, hay and farming implements, over 70 mills still with flour, wheat, and have driven in front of the army over 4,000 head of stock, and have killed and issued to the troops not less than 3,000 sheep."

"Tomorrow I will continue the destruction down to Fisher's Mill. When this is completed, the valley from Winchester to Staunton, 92 miles, will have but little in it for man or beast." That was here in the Shenandoah Valley. Sheridan's troops burned crops, killed thousands and thousands of cattle and sheep, and destroyed simply to be destroying. Sheridan boasted that even a crow flying over the Shenandoah Valley would have to carry his own rations. General William T.

Sherman, on January 31, 1864, said this in Athens, Alabama: “The government of the United States has any and all rights which they choose to enforce in war, to take their lives, their homes, their land, their everything. War is simply unrestrained by the Constitution. To the persistent secessionist, why death is mercy, and the quicker he or she is disposed of, the better.” This war was not simply against soldiers; it was against women and children as well.

To demonstrate this, in a letter General Sherman wrote to the Secretary of War, William Stanton, on January 21, 1864, Sherman said, “There is a class of people, men, women, and children, who must be killed or banished before you can hope for peace and order.” Stanton replied, “Your letter of the 21st of June has just reached me and meets my approval.” What did he say? Kill them all—men, women, and children. While the war against men, women, and children started well before 1864, this is documented evidence that they were not fighting soldiers alone.

Arrest and Imprisonment of Women and Children

They were fighting men, women, and children. If you really want to get angry and upset, I would encourage you to read Walter Bryan Cisco's book, The Union's War Against Innocent Civilians. Just do not have any loaded weapons around when you are reading it. It will upset you. It shows the lack of mercy and compassion that the North had for Southerners. He said very clearly that men, women, and children needed to be killed.

In Missouri, those who sent packages of food and clothing to sons, brothers, or husbands in the Confederate Army were usually arrested for giving care and comfort to the enemy. Many were women, and some were children. They were arrested and thrown into Gratiot Street prison in Missouri.

This prison was notorious because it held not only Confederate soldiers, but also spies, guerrillas, civilians suspected of disloyalty, and Union soldiers who had committed crimes or misbehaved. On the roll of the Gratiot Street Prison were the names of 212 women, along with children. The male names under the children would have been the little boys, and the female names would be understood. Usually these women received the punishment of banishment. Some, however, were sent to prison in Jefferson City, Missouri, the capital, or even to Alton, Illinois. Many times these women were there with small babies as well.

One newly arrived woman wrote from that prison on February 7, 1864: "Great heavens. My blood boils. Women in this hole of filth and blasphemy. I could scarcely believe it when I saw with my own eyes Mrs. Mitchell, who is here with her little daughter, five or six years old. She is charged with smuggling goods through to the Confederates. The Northern armies move, making deserts in their tracks, and a loving woman is imprisoned for stretching out her hand to the needy. Other ladies besides Mrs. Mitchell were confined here, but I have not yet learned their names."

Stop and think about it. Here was a woman with a five- or six-year-old daughter. This was Fannie Coons, the wife of J. A. Coons. She was arrested and put in prison for organizing what was known as a charitable event. In other words, she was trying to raise

money to help people who were suffering. They arrested her and threw her in prison for being disloyal because they believed some of the money and goods would be sent to the Confederates as well.

Plenty of people—men, women, and children—were arrested simply because they had brothers, fathers, or husbands fighting for the Confederacy. They were viewed as disloyal and arrested. The mentality of disrespecting and dishonoring women and children was very prevalent in the Northern Army.

The Wickedness of General Benjamin Butler

One Union general became universally loathed and hated because of his wickedness. All God-fearing people, not only in the South but also in the North, despised him. His name was Benjamin Butler. He had two nicknames: Beast Butler, and Spoons Butler, because he was a notorious thief who always stole silverware. I could tell you more about Spoons Butler and his son-in-law. His son-in-law was a military governor of Mississippi. He was military governor of Louisiana.

Larry MacDonald, who has been dead for a number of years, was a congressman and the one who was shot down on the Korean airliner. Speaking at a large event in Florida, where fried chicken was served, he looked at the hundreds present and said, “I can look and tell who’s from the South and who’s from the North.” When everyone looked around, he added, “I’ve watched you eat. Southerners always eat their chicken with their fingers, and Northerners always use a knife and a fork. You know why? Because you Yankees stole our silverware.”

That was true of Spoons Butler, I can assure you; he stole all the silverware he could steal. He was also called Beast Butler because he demanded honor, and his men demanded honor, when they were dishonorable and lived dishonorable lives as well.

Women in New Orleans especially despised him, as did the Union soldiers. Beast Butler then issued Order Number 26:

“As the officers and soldiers of the United States have been subject to repeated insults from the women calling themselves ladies of New Orleans, in return for the most scrupulous non-interference

and courtesy on our part, it is hereby ordered: When any female shall by word, gesture, or movement insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States, she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town, plying her avocation."

Let me spell it out: she was to be treated as a prostitute. Butler claimed that the Union had been courteous, though it had not, and declared that any woman who disrespected him or his men was to be treated as a prostitute.

What contemptuous acts had these women committed? First, they would leave the streetcars when Union soldiers boarded. Second, they would walk across the street rather than meet a Union soldier. Third, they liked to sing "Dixie." Fourth, when Union soldiers walked by, they would often turn their backs. For these acts, they were to be counted as prostitutes. When New Orleans mayor John Monroe protested this infamous Order 26, Butler had him arrested and thrown into prison. General Ewing, Butler, and other Northern generals failed to take into account the Southern regard for women.

Southern Honor vs. Union Disregard for Women

Southerners have always historically been protective of their wives, their daughters, and their children. Of course, once again, this is a biblical principle, because the Bible tells us in 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 7, "Likewise, ye husbands, give honor to the wife as a weaker vessel, and being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." Then, in 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 1, we are to treat older women as mothers and younger women as sisters with all purity, the Bible says. Then 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 3 tells us to honor women who are widows, widows indeed. And of course, the Bible also then, in Proverbs chapter 6, tells us that there is a rage which goes into a man when his wife or when his daughters are molested.

I have four daughters, and I jokingly, all my life, said all my boys are girls. But my girls could out-shoot just about anybody. They would go deer hunting with me. We had deer tree climbers, and I would put one up a tree 100 yards away and another one 200 yards away. I might be 200 yards away from them when I was hunting, so I

gave my girls strict orders: "If any man comes to your tree and tries to bother you in any way, you shoot him."

“And when I get there, I’ll question him and find out what his motives were.” I said, “Just go ahead and shoot him. I’ll talk to him later.” But I didn’t listen. Let me tell you something: you mess with my daughters, I could hurt you badly. You mess with my granddaughters, I’ll chew you up and spit you out and smile while I’m doing it. This is Southern people. We have always regarded our wives and our girls that way.

These men did not understand anything like that. They did not understand that there is a righteous anger when somebody’s wife or daughters are mistreated, and that righteous anger usually calls for vengeance and justice. Union officers did not understand this simple principle: when you mess with a Southern man’s wife or daughters, it makes him a more effective fighter. It makes him more determined. He is not going to let you get away with anything like that.

Quantrill's Code of Honor vs. Union Brutality

General Blunt was a Union general, but his adversary was Confederate Colonel Benjamin F. Parker. They were in the same area. Here is what General Blunt wrote to Colonel Parker: “I’ve instructed the officers in command of troops in the border counties of Missouri that every rebel or rebel sympathizer who gives aid directly or indirectly shall be destroyed or expelled from the military district.”

“These instructions will not exempt females from the rule. Therefore, all persons known to be in arms against the federal authorities of this district will be summarily put to death when they are captured. The only constitutional right that we’ve granted them will be the right to make a choice of the quality of the rope with which they are to be hung.” What did he say? Females, women, are not exempt from this rule. They would kill them like they killed anybody else.

Now contrast General Blunt’s attitude with Quantrill’s attitude. William Quantrill was viewed as a guerrilla and an outlaw. All who

rode with him were viewed as outlaws and guerrillas. The James boys, the Youngers, and the McCorkles rode with him. Quantrill has been known as a bloodthirsty man who simply liked to kill, but that is not true. He gave this order to his men: “If I find any man insulting a woman, I’ll hang him from the first limb that I come to.” Again, Quantrill said, “There is but one offense for which he would have a man shot. No matter how much a woman may abuse you, take her abuse.”

"Let her talk and scold and say nothing to her in resentment. We're fighting men and not women." Thus Quantrill differed quite differently from these Yankee generals. Consequently, none of Quantrill's men were ever accused of insulting a woman whatsoever.

Just to show how despicable the Union troops were, Federal soldiers had no such code of honor. In the spring of 1862, Mattie Brinker and a number of other young girls were captured by Federal soldiers and used as human shields as they searched for Confederate guerrillas. They put the young girls in front of them, so if the guerrillas shot at them, they would kill their own daughters or girls. Captain Henry Flesher, a Union captain, sent fourteen soldiers to capture three Anderson girls.

Their ages were sixteen, fourteen, and ten. When the Union soldiers arrived, there was a young boy there, ten or twelve years old. They noticed that the young boy was missing and assumed that he had gone to notify the guerrillas. So they put the Anderson girls in front of the lead soldiers on their horses. If those soldiers were shot at, the girls would be hit first. As they went down the road, some guerrillas jumped over a stone wall with shotguns. The guerrillas had to shoot over the heads of the soldiers and the girls because they were not going to hit the girls.

Consequently, the guerrillas really could not do anything, and they got away. Patrick Reddington, the officer in charge of these fourteen men, said that if any of his men had been hit, he would have ordered the girls shot.

Union General Thomas Ewing and General William T. Sherman, his brother-in-law, held the same view concerning Southerners. General Ewing was assigned to command the District of the Border.

Faced with the seemingly impossible task of stopping these guerrillas, especially Quantrill's men, he began in 1863 arresting women who were family members of Quantrill's guerrillas, along with other women suspected of supporting Quantrill and his men. Originally, General Ewing intended to arrest these ladies and charge them with sheltering Union enemies, but he ordered General Order Number 10:

General Ewing's Order No. 10 and Targeting Families

"All persons who shall knowingly harbor, conceal, aid, or abet by furnishing food, clothing, information, protection, or any assistance whatever to any emissary, Confederate soldier, Confederate officer, partisan ranger, or bushwhacker, robber, or thief shall be promptly executed."

That meant that if a woman had a husband who rode with Quantrill, and he came home and she fed him, she was to be executed. If a child had a father who rode with Quantrill and carried in food or messages, he was to be executed.

General Ewing wanted to get rid of all these guerrillas, and he was having a hard time doing it. Many of these women were simply arrested for what you and I would call pro-Confederate activities or pro-Confederate cheering. Let me tell you how effective these guerrillas were. If you read about the war in Missouri, Paul Peterson has two wonderful books on Quantrill in Missouri, “Quantrill of Missouri” and “Quantrill at Lawrence.” In those books, he points out how 4,000 Confederate guerrillas kept 60,000 Union soldiers at bay.

Stop and think about that. It seems almost phenomenal: 4,000 guerrillas and 60,000 federal troops. They were not fighting 60,000 at one time; it was simply 60,000 soldiers assigned to guard the border under Ewing. Yet they kept all these soldiers at bay.

Here is what these Confederate guerrillas would do. They had carbines, just as the Union had carbines, but the Confederates also had a pistol on each side, a pistol under each arm, and usually two more around the saddle horn. They would line up with the Yankee soldiers and let the Yankee soldiers shoot. They would shoot their

carbines, throw those carbines over their shoulders, and then run their horses wide open, as hard as they could, into those Union soldiers. They would pull out those pistols and empty them. When they were empty, they pulled out two more and emptied them. When those were empty, they pulled out the other two and emptied them. The Union soldiers could not stop them, because a Union soldier usually had only one carbine, and sometimes he might have a pistol, but that was it.

These guerrillas were causing havoc among the Union soldiers. Ewing now wanted to clear out the families of the guerrillas. He ordered any woman or child who was sympathetic to them or helped them in any way to be arrested and executed. Let me show you how the Kansas City Daily Journal supported his move. They wrote, “It is an utter impossibility to rid the country of these pestilent outlaws, partisan rangers.” In other words, you are an outlaw if you want to keep your own property. You are an outlaw if you want to defend your own city and your own home. So it said, “It is an utter impossibility to rid the country of these pestilent outlaws, partisan rangers, so long as their families remain.”

One of the greatest difficulties the military authorities had to encounter, according to one account, was “the constant and correct information which the families of the bushwhackers give of every movement the troop makes. With the aid of these spies dotted all over the country and living in perfect security, a hundred bushwhackers may defy the utmost efforts of five hundred soldiers to eliminate them.” That is true.

Harrison Trow also wrote with Quantrill. He said that “a body of federal troops, especially enrolled and uniformed to persecute women and to prey upon non-combatants,” gathered in a half-day raid “a number of demonstrative Southern girls whose only sin had been extravagant talk and pro-Confederate cheering.” They were taken to Kansas City and imprisoned in a dilapidated tenement close upon a steep place.

Imprisonment in the Longhorn Tavern and Deliberate Collapse

These women had originally been imprisoned in the Union Hotel. Some, who happened to be relatives of Quantrill or Quantrill's men, were then separated. Among them were Charity McCorkle Kerr and Nanny Harris McCorkle. Their husbands, Nathan Kerr and Jabez McCorkle, rode with Quantrill, and eighteen-year-old Nanny McCorkle's cousins were the Youngers by marriage.

What many people do not understand is that a lot of these Southern families were related. Cole, Jim, and Bob Younger were cousins to Jesse and Frank James, who were cousins to the Dalton boys. These families were basically interrelated.

Captain Henry Flesher and fourteen men went to capture the Anderson girls: sixteen-year-old Molly Anderson, her fourteen-year-old sister Josephine, and her ten-year-old sister Martha. They were sisters to Bill Anderson, who later received the nickname Bloody Bill Anderson. Also arrested were Susan Crawford Vandiver and Armina Crawford Selby, names that will be heard in my message on the life and death of Riley Crawford.

Even General Ewing had a nemesis, another Union general, George Caleb Bingham. Bingham was an artist, and he painted a wonderful picture against General Ewing's General Order Number 10, which basically ordered everybody out of the country. Union General Bingham said of the order, "These females were arrested and confined under the pretext of holding them as hostages for the good behavior of their brothers, husbands, or relatives."

One Union general stated that the women were supposed to be in sympathy with, or actually engaged in, the Confederate cause. Simply stated, they had done no wrong, were being used for wicked, vindictive purposes, and were unlawfully and illegally arrested.

At first these women were put in the Union hotel. Then they were separated, especially those associated with Quantrill and his men. They were imprisoned in the Mechanics Bank at Delaware and Commercial, an old building down a steep incline on the edge of the river. The building became so infested with vermin and rats that it

was totally and completely unhealthy, not only for the women but even for the guards.

Maddy Likens, a woman who was there, described it this way: “As a place of imprisonment for such as this city, an old dilapidated brick building on the levee was taken possession of by the military authorities and set apart as a prison for rebel women. After the building had been occupied as such for some time, it became infested with rats and vermin of all kinds so as to render it unfit for human beings to live in.”

She continued: “Even the health of the guards who had access to the river for bathing suffered from so much the stench and torture of the vermin as to lead them to appeal to headquarters for a change of location.” The authorities were not concerned about changing the location for the women in prison, but the guards said, “We can't handle this, we can't stay here.” Eventually, the ladies were moved into the metropolitan block of McGee's addition, known as the Longhorn Tavern.

General Thomas Ewing took this building without notifying the owner or asking permission. He simply took possession of it in July 1863 and proclaimed it a women's prison. At first he tried to deny this, but a letter was produced bearing his signature: “This certifies that a certain house in McGee's addition to Kansas City, Missouri, known as Number 13 Metropolitan Block, was occupied as a prison by my order from some day in the latter part of July 1863 until the 13th day of August last when it fell.”

The building General Ewing confiscated—without permission or the knowledge of the owner—belonged to his nemesis, General George Caleb Bingham. Bingham was an artist who had inherited the building from his father-in-law, Robert Thomas, who had died. Wanting a room especially for his artwork, General Bingham hired an architect, and they added a third floor, which he used as an art studio until George Caleb Bingham was called and nominated to be Missouri’s treasurer. He then took his family and moved to Jefferson City, the capital of Missouri, leaving the building unoccupied. General Ewing simply took it. I am sure he knew it belonged to General Bingham. While the women were in the building, they were treated horribly.

Their food was thrown at them and sometimes thrown to them. The guards sang ribald songs, used suggestive language, and used unhealthy and ungodly language. They simply cared little about them. If you doubt the inhumane treatment these women received, consider that Charity McCorkle Kerr was ill with a fever, very sick because of improper diet and exposure. The other women were not doing well, but they attempted to supervise and work with those who were weaker and sicker.

Ten-year-old Martha Anderson had upset the guards and made them angry. In response, they took a 12-pound ball and chain and put it around her ankle. Here was a little 10-year-old girl trying to pull a 12-pound ball and chain every time she walked.

It is almost inconceivable for us to think of the anger, hatred, and ill will that most of the Yankees had toward Southerners. The fact that these were women and children made absolutely no difference. The guards determined that the building could be easily undermined. It was a middle building between two others, and if it was brought down, the other buildings would fall as well. So the guards began secretly removing blocks, rocks, and sleepers from the foundation.

The walls started to crack, and the ceiling began to give way. In the building to the left were some grocers. They noticed the same thing and knew the building was in danger, so they moved their groceries out and found another place to sell them. The women complained. General Ewing sent someone to investigate. When he examined the walls and cracks, he returned and said, "It's fine."

As conditions continued to deteriorate, there were more complaints, and a second investigation was conducted. Of course, the investigators came back and said, “Everything is just fine.” But everybody knew that it was not.

On August 13, Captain Parker requested Thomas Barber to go with him and inspect the building one last time. As they stood on the third floor, they saw the walls begin to separate. They knew the building was coming down, so they fled as quickly as possible. All they had time to do was scream at the women and tell them the building was falling. They waited until the guards left to get water,

then went under the building and pulled out the last sleeper with a rope, just before the building collapsed. When it fell, it brought the corporal building down with it as well. The women were screaming.

They headed for the windows, doors, and balconies. All but five escaped with their lives. Those killed instantly were Susan Crawford Vandiver, Armina Crawford Selvey, Josephine Anderson, Charity McCorkle Kerr, and Mrs. Wilson, who was also injured and died later. Ten-year-old Martha Anderson could not run because she had a 12-pound ball and chain. Her legs were crushed, and she suffered other injuries. She never walked again. Josephine Anderson was buried in the ruins.

Aftermath: Blame, Cover-up, and Quantrill's Revenge

Bricks covered her head and body. Piteous cries came from the pile: “Please help me. Please take the bricks off my face. Please, please.” Then there was nothing; she had died.

At first, the Federals tried to blame the collapse on the women, saying they were in the basement trying to dig themselves out and escape. Really? The women were confined on the second and third floors with guards; they could not get to the basement. The next explanation was that a windstorm had taken the building down. Really? A windstorm in Kansas in August? Since it was the middle building, a windstorm would have had to take all three buildings down.

That was not going to fly. Some suggested that the building fell because of its age and deterioration. The truth of the matter is that the building was built in 1857 and was only six years old. Moreover, affidavits said that the building was in excellent shape before General Ewing took it as a woman's prison. General George Caleb Bingham, who owned the building, filed a claim against the federal government for $5,000 in damages, insisting that the building collapsed by the intentional undermining of Union troops intent on murdering the women. Bingham wrote concerning General Thomas Ewing:

“This was published in the Washington Sentinel. He said that "the building fell with the force of a mountain avalanche upon the ruins

of the adjoining buildings, thus producing a scene of horror in the death groans and shrieks of mangled women, which fiends could only contemplate without a shudder. In vain had they, upon the first discovery of the danger, begged in piteous accents to be released. Their earnest appeals were to hearts as callous as that of the general by whose authority they were confined."

"While their prison walls were trembling, its doors remained closed, and they were allowed no hope for release except through the portals of a horrible death into that eternity where, in that great day, which is to right all wrongs, they will stand as a witness against the human monster, who, to promote his selfish aspirations, could cruelly plan, with satanic coolness, the desolation of a large district of the country and the utter ruin of its defenseless inhabitants. That the death of these poor women, crushed beneath the ruins of their prison, was a deliberately planned murder, all the facts connected therewith sufficiently established.""

Even Union General Bingham said they murdered them. The federal soldiers who were undermining the building would always eat there, and some even boarded at the B.F. Duke boarding house. Mrs. Duke oftentimes overheard them talking about the progress they were making in undermining the building. She went to General Ewing and begged for the women to be moved, but he refused. What they did not know was that Mrs. Duke was a cousin of Bill Anderson.

Numerous affidavits supported the fact that the building was maliciously and deliberately destroyed. Builders, eyewitnesses, and citizens testified that it was in excellent condition before it was demolished. A federal surgeon, before they began picking through the ruins, said, “You will never find a Federal soldier under those ruins.” And they never did. No inquiry was made by General Ewing, and no soldier was ever arrested, tried, or punished for a crime that would shock the sentiments of every decent individual. This demonstrates that General Ewing was the man who ordered it.

The collapse of the prison at 1425 Grand, Kansas City, Missouri, on August 13, 1863, was nothing less than malignant murder, butchery, and savagery perpetrated against innocent women and children. Much of what happened is interconnected. These women and children were wives, sisters, and daughters of men who rode

with Quantrill. When news of the collapse reached their families, they went wild. They understood that it is one thing to make war against men, but another thing to make war against women and children.

At their graves, John McCorkle, Quantrill's scout, said, "This foul murder was the direct cause of the famous raid on Lawrence, Kansas. We could stand no more. Imagine, if you can, my feelings: a loved sister foully murdered, and the wife of a dead brother seriously hurt by a set of men to whom the names assassins, murderers, and cutthroats would be a compliment. People abuse us, but did we not have enough to make us desperate and thirst for revenge? We tried to fight like soldiers, but were declared outlaws, hunted under a black flag, and murdered like beasts. The homes of our friends were burned; our aged sires who dared sympathize with us had either been hanged or shot in the presence of their families, and all their furniture and provisions loaded into wagons, with our livestock taken to the state of Kansas."

The beautiful farming country of Jackson County, Cass County, and Johnson County was worse than a desert, and on every hillside stood lone, blackened chimneys as sentinels and monuments to the memory of our once happy homes. These outrages had been done by Kansas troops, calling themselves soldiers, but a disgrace to the name of a soldier. Our innocent and beautiful girls had been murdered in a most foul, brutal, savage, and damnable way.

This was August 13, 1863. Do you know what happened on August 21, 1863? That was the raid on Lawrence, Kansas. It was this murder of the women and children that Quantrill and his men said, "We've had enough. We've had enough." When Quantrill raided Lawrence, he had a list of 180 men who were to be killed. They were especially trying to capture Senator Jim Lane.

You'll hear more about him later. Jennison was a wicked, wicked, ungodly man. Jim Lane escaped by fleeing in his nightshirt and hiding in a cornfield. To show you the attitude, James C. Edwards wrote this short poem on the raid of Lawrence, and I think it expresses the feelings not only of those men, but probably of most Southerners if that had happened to us. He wrote this: "Men at war never war with women, but women of the South they take to an

ancient cell which killed as it fell with the aid of the Union's weight. We're going to ride, we're going to track you down, we're going to burn Lawrence to the ground."

When they arrived in Lawrence, Quantrill said to his men, "Boys, this is the home of Jim Lane and Jennison. Remember, that in hunting us they gave us no quarter, shoot every soldier that you see, but in no wise harm a woman or a child." Frank Smith recalled that Quantrill also shouted, "Molest no women or children, kill every man in federal uniform."

When Bloody Bill Anderson was killed, he had a silk handkerchief with 56 knots in it for the 56 Yankees he had killed. There was no quarter. No mercy. When Quantrill's men attacked Lawrence, they shouted, "Remember the women and remember Osceola." Osceola was a town in Missouri. Jim Lane and Jennison raided it. It had no military value and no soldiers were there, but Senator Lane's nemesis, who had run against him in the Senate, lived there; it was his hometown. They burned the town down. Of 800 buildings, only three were left standing. The town had nearly 3,500 people before; afterward, 200 remained. They took 161 old men and young boys, lined them up in the middle of the street, and killed them.

Lawrence, Kansas, was known as the city of stolen goods. Everything stolen from Missouri and the South was carried back there. Jim Lane, I think, had three pianos in his home that he had stolen from Southerners. I am simply pointing out that everything is interrelated. If you want to know what happened, you need to find the cause, and you can always find the result.

Applications: Sowing and Reaping, Modern Tyranny

Let me make a couple of quick applications. Galatians 6:7–8 is exceedingly true in every area. When God says, “Be not deceived; whatsoever you sow, that’s exactly what you’re going to reap. If you sow to the flesh, you’re going to reap of the flesh corruption. If you sow to the spirit, you’re going to reap of the spirit life,” that is true. Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Sooner or later, you’re going to reap exactly that which you sow. Mark it down. That is exactly what happened to these Yankees: they reaped exactly that which they sowed.

If you find it difficult to believe that the government would commit such a heinous act in 1863, you are not prepared to live in the twenty-first century. A government that considers its citizens expendable and does not seek to protect them will use, abuse, and misuse them any way it sees fit. Cannon fodder or merely sheep to be sheared, it does not matter. A parallel now exists in our day and time between the one-world government, the great reset, and biblical Christianity.

Do you realize that you and I are looked upon today as fanatics, right-wingers, white supremacists, racists, and dogmatists? Look at everything being forced, or attempted to be forced, upon people today—not only public education, but vaccination. The war still exists. It is a war between the righteous and the ungodly.

War is war, and it has never really stopped. I sympathize with those who go to school boards and talk about transgenderism, sodomy, and all that, but you do not take your children out. Teach them yourself. You say, “I’m not qualified.” Yes, you are.

I still know more than my children, and I knew more when I was younger. My father knew more than I did. I am simply saying that we need to understand we are at war, teach the biblical principles of truth and righteousness, and learn to trust in the Lord and not in man. There is still a war against women and children, including men.

If you have never read Rushdoony's book, "The American Indian," I encourage you to do so. It is a short book. Rushdoony was a missionary to Indians for eleven years. In that book, he demonstrates how the federal government destroyed the American Indian; in the next section, how it destroyed black folks; and in the last section, how it is destroying white folks. That is a fact.

We are still at war, and they are still trying to eliminate and destroy us. I am thankful that the Lord Jesus Christ said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His church. Thank you, Father, for Your love, grace, mercy, goodness, and kindness. Help us, Lord, to love Thee, live for Thee, and honor Thee. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

A Burning Question

Introduction: The Power of the Gospel

Romans 1:16 gives us the verse I am using to begin: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” I will be expounding another passage, but I think you will see why I am using this verse.

Years ago, I was listening to a radio program in which Ravi Zacharias was speaking. He was holding a question-and-answer service at one of the universities; I think it was Yale, but Ravi has been dead for several years now. I never will forget one of the questions that was asked. Ravi was, I think, a leading thinker and a biblical proponent at that particular time. One student asked him about the power of the gospel, or more specifically, the power of the Word of God.

This young man could not grasp how people could simply read the Bible and remain uninfluenced and unchanged, or read the Bible and never be converted. Therefore, he was questioning not only the power of the gospel, but also the power of the Word of God.

Ravi gave several good illustrations and stated, “There are plenty of things in the Bible that we’re not completely sure of, and that God, the judge of all the earth, is going to do what is right.” I had to leave while listening to the program, and it was not over, so I do not know whether he eventually answered the question. But the question has been asked of me in times past, and I was thinking about it this week.

Reading Alone Is Insufficient

I decided to give a biblical answer to it. In fact, I gave a similar answer years ago in the series of four messages, “Why Can’t We Just All Get Along?” explaining the differences of opinions that arise from reading the same Scripture, or the same Bible. Let me make a statement to begin with, and then challenge you and, I hope, improve the answer from the Word of God.

I believe that each individual should read the Bible, saved and unsaved alike. Simply reading the Bible will not save anyone, nor will it necessarily make anyone more spiritual or holy. The Bible is not a lucky rabbit’s foot or a charm. Moreover, an individual can have what you and I would call a great mind and a great intellect, and he could read the Scripture over and over until he can quote long portions of Scripture. But quoting the Bible does not save anyone, and quoting the Bible does not make anyone spiritual.

I must point out the fact that in Matthew chapter 4 even Satan quoted the Bible. Clearly, he is not saved, and certainly he was not spiritual in the sense of being right with God. So does the fact that many read the Bible and remain unconverted, or many read the Bible and remain unchanged and uninfluenced, prove or demonstrate the powerlessness of the Bible? The answer is, of course not.

When someone wishes to lose weight and reads diets on a daily basis, does that prove that the diets are worthless and ineffective simply because he is reading those diets and not losing weight? We do not lose weight by reading diets; you have to apply the truth of the diet. Then, of course, you would probably lose weight. But simply reading the Bible does not necessarily prove that someone is spiritual, and neither does it prove that someone is going to be

converted. In fact, there are many people who have read the Bible just to try to disprove the Bible as well.

The point I am trying to make here is very plain: reading the Bible will not profit you unless it is mixed with faith and unless it is applied to your life. Consider what the Word of God says in Hebrews chapter 4 concerning all of these people who not only came out of Egypt, but saw the great works of God: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

Look carefully at Hebrews 4:2: "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." It does not matter whether we read the Scripture or hear it taught; it must be mixed with faith.

The Dynamite of God Needs a Fuse

When the Apostle Paul says in Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation," everyone knows that the Greek word there is dunamis, from which we get dynamite. The gospel is indeed the dynamite of God. Dunamis is also the source of many English words, such as dynamics and dynamo—anything expressive of inherent power. A stick of dynamite may have inherent power, but unless there is a fuse to ignite it, or some way to set it off, that power will never be displayed.

When I was a boy, you could go to the hardware store and buy sticks of dynamite. You cannot do that today. We used them to blow stumps, and I started helping my father blow stumps when I was seven years old. I remember those sticks of dynamite quite well and how well they blew those stumps out of the field. Dynamite has explosive power, but it has to be ignited.

Just as one may casually read about diets every day and never lose weight, so one can read the Bible every day and still not be converted, and still not be what we would call spiritual, holy, and godly. Our Lord said it to the Pharisees in John 8:24: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

Biblical Illiteracy and the Need for Understanding

Reading is not the same as believing, and hearing is not the same as believing. One of the greatest problems in our day, especially in Christendom, is ignorance—specifically, biblical ignorance. There was a time when practically everyone read the Bible, saved and unsaved alike, although the unsaved were never saved in the sense in which you and I speak of being saved.

They would be decent people, moral people, but they would read the Bible for the principles therein. Even when I was a young boy, I heard people talk about trying to live by the old Book, whether they were saved or not. They acknowledged that the Bible was full of wisdom and morality. In fact, many of us remember that, in the beginning of our country, there were books that taught the Bible through what you and I would call the ABCs.

For instance, the New England Primer was one of them. Many children in colonial days learned their ABCs like this: "A—All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. B—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. C—Children obey your parents. D—Depart from evil and do that which is good." They continued down through the alphabet until they had learned all the ABCs. At the same time, they were learning Bible verses.

Massachusetts led the way in teaching the Word of God when it passed the Old Deluder Satan Act in 1647. The law demanded that everyone read the Bible and that everyone be taught to read it. That is why it was called the Old Deluder Satan Act: they were going to make sure that everyone understood the Scripture. Thus, the early public schools—or, to use the term very generally, the schools where children went in the 1600s and early 1700s—were schools where they learned to read by reading the Bible. They were taught the principles from the Word of God.

In the nineteenth century, the primary books were the McGuffey Readers. They were not only moral, but based upon the Bible as well. It is amazing, when you consider the history of the Bible and how it was read, that today very few people really read the Bible, and even fewer truly study the Word of God. There was a time when Christians devoured the Word of God. They took it upon themselves to view

Scripture exactly as the prophets did. Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.” The Word was the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

David is talking about the law of the Lord. He said, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."

Desiring the Word as Nourishment

Now notice verse 10: "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

He said, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, much more than fine gold," and, "Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." I am sure that each one of us would be delighted to find a treasure chest full of gold. Well, the Word of God, he says, is far more precious than that. Then he said, "Moreover by them is thy servant warned." And here is an amazing statement: "And in keeping of them there is great reward."

Many years ago, I met a man who was extremely wealthy. He was an unsaved man, and he told me very pointedly and up front that although he had a great deal of money, he tithed. I think everyone should tithe. I believe that is a biblical fact, because a tithe is nothing less than God's tax on the use of His earth. The unsaved use it exactly the way the saved do. Everybody is obligated to pay God's tax.

Knowing that he was unsaved, I asked him why he tithed. He said, "Because I have learned that God blesses me when I tithe." I thought that was amazing. That is what he said: "And in keeping of them there is great reward."

He was tithing for the wrong reason. He was not tithing for God's honor and glory. He was not tithing out of obedience to God. He was

tithing just so that God would bless him. Evidently He did, because he's an extremely wealthy man.

If you look in your Bibles to Psalm 119, verse 103, David said, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" He speaks of the sweetness of the Word of God, sweeter than honey. In 1 Peter, chapter 2, verses 1 through 3, he says, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

Note what he said: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." There's never been a baby that was born alive that did not want its mother's breast milk. Why? Because that is the nourishment, that is the sustenance, that is exactly what he needs. God is telling us that if we are babes in Christ, we need the milk of His Word. Just like a young child craves and hungers for milk, so likewise, we as God's children should hunger and crave the milk of His Word.

I get so tickled sometimes watching Alice when we have to feed a young calf. We have a bucket where we make up the milk. When the mother's not feeding the calf, we go out there, and you do not have to coax that calf once he tastes that milk. The calf comes, and he just craves it.

That's all there is to it. And that's exactly what God is saying.

If a baby is born and never desires milk, something is wrong with that child. There is something wrong with a professing Christian who says they are saved and yet never desires the Word of God. I want to show you the absolute necessity and importance of the Word of God. The emphasis upon the Word of God cannot be overestimated or overemphasized, because we have been commanded to read and study it.

Milk is absolutely necessary for growth and for life. You cannot progress to meat as a baby unless you have been raised on milk. No mother is going to take a ten-ounce steak and set it before a three-month-old baby. The baby could not eat it, even if she chewed it and gummed it and put it in the child's mouth. Probably the child

could not even digest it. There has to be milk before you can get to the meat.

I want you to turn back in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, chapter 5. Let me show you where we are in our biblical ignorance today. This is why in most churches you are always having feuds and fights, with people getting upset, not understanding, and becoming angry. I just heard this past week of a local church that had split because of unbiblical, ungodly activity. But look at what the Scripture says.

Hebrews chapter 5, beginning with verse 11: "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

The author of Hebrews is telling us why some Christians never can stomach meat: they never grow up. They never get off the milk. Milk is necessary, but milk is not that which sustains us all our lives. It is the meat of the Word.

The Letter Kills, the Spirit Gives Life

Consequently, we have so many people who are absolutely and totally ignorant of the Word of God. Let me tell you: as important as the Word of God is in our lives, simply reading it will not change us. Simply reading it will not make us more holy and godly, any more than reading a book on physics would make us an engineer or an architect. We could read a book on medicine, but that would not necessarily make us a doctor.

The same thing is true when we sing the hymns in church. Do you realize that most people sing out of rote memory? They never think about the words they are singing. I get tickled at times listening to and watching people. I have been in Armenian churches where they

were singing, “Ye chosen seed of Israel’s ransom from the fall.” How can you sing that and not think about the doctrine of election?

Years ago, I was preaching in South Carolina. I arrived at the church building early, and a lady was inside practicing the special she was supposed to sing that night. She had a beautiful voice, there is no two ways about that. She was singing, “I found Him, I found Him.” I listened for a few minutes, and finally she stopped. I said, “You’re singing that beautifully. The only problem with that is—you didn’t find Him. He found you.”

The Scripture says that He seeks and saves that which was lost. You did not find Him; He found you. She said, “Oh, in that case, then He found me,” and she started singing about that. That is how she sang it that night. So, when you think about all of this, ask yourself: What am I saying? What am I hearing? What am I saying?

Now I want to show you two passages. The first is Psalm 47, and then we are going to 1 Corinthians. Look in Psalm 47 and notice what David says in this psalm. Psalm 47, and Paul’s instruction in 1 Corinthians. This is a psalm of jubilation, a psalm of praise, a psalm that would get you excited. So look at Psalm 47.

The Psalm says, “O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.” Already that is emotional. “Clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.”

Now look at verse 7: “For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.” Does it stop there? No, two more words: “with understanding.” We are to understand why we are praising God and what we are praising Him about. We are going to be singing praises, but they are to be sung with understanding.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 15, the apostle said, “What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the

understanding also." It does not matter whether we are praying or singing; understanding has to be involved. Let me say this again: it is not just reading the Bible that counts, but understanding the principles and the truth expressed in the Bible.

So the question must arise: where do we receive or acquire understanding? We acquire understanding from God Himself. Proverbs 2 and verse 6 says, "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." The apostle Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 7, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

Now you will understand why I gave you all of this introduction. I want you to look at a very difficult passage in one sense of the word. Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 3. We will come back to the beginning of it, but right now look at verses 5 and 6.

The Apostle Paul says, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." He is talking about himself as a minister and preacher, those who were with him, and those of us who are alive today. Our sufficiency is of God, not of man, "who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament."

"Not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The Apostle says we are not sufficient in and of ourselves for this ministry, but God has made us able ministers—not of the Old Testament, but of the New Testament. He is not pitting the Old Testament against the New Testament, nor the New Testament against the Old Testament. He is not saying that the Old Testament is to be thrown away; it is over and done with. He is not saying that whatsoever. He is saying that what is more important than the letter is the spirit.

You remember what our Lord said in John chapter 6 and verse 63? "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Look back at verse 6: "who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." He is going to make a comparison and a distinction. In verse 7 he says, "But if the ministration of death,

written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away." Look what he called the law written in tables of stone: the ministration of death. He says that glory Moses had was to be done away with. "How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?"

Look in verse 7: "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away." The law was not to be done away with; the glory of it was to be done away with. Moreover, the way of writing the law was to be done away with.

It is no longer on tables of stone. When you read the book of Hebrews, you find that He has now written His law in our hearts and on our minds. The law is not written in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of our heart.

For instance, let us go back to the beginning of 2 Corinthians chapter 3. The Apostle said, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."

The Apostle Paul is giving us this distinction. He is going to talk about the letter, and he is going to talk about the spirit as well. Note in verse 7 that the written letter was called the ministration of death.

In verse 8, the Spirit is called the ministration of the Spirit. In verse 9, Paul says, "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." Here we have another comparison. The letter is the ministration of condemnation, and it was glorious; but the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness is going to exceed in glory.

Clearly, the Apostle is making a contrast between the ministry of condemnation and the ministry of righteousness, or the ministry of death and the ministry of life, or, if you want to say it, the letter and

the Spirit. As I said before, I will repeat it again: the Apostle is not saying that the Old Testament is done away with. That is not what he is saying at all.

Why, then, does he call the written law the letter of the law? Why does he call it a ministration of condemnation and a ministration of death? The answer is that the law, as well as the letter of the Word of God, shows us our duties, our faults, our failures, our responsibilities, our sins, our rebellions, as well as our guilt and condemnation in not accomplishing those duties and responsibilities.

Neither does it give us the strength or power to accomplish those things. The only thing the letter can do is condemn, because it gives us a sense of our failure and a sense of our guilt. Galatians 3:10-12 says, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.” In other words, if you are going to live under the law, you must keep the law personally, perfectly, and perpetually, which no one has done.

If you're going to live under the law, then, of course, you're responsible to keep the whole thing. You cannot. And so it is a curse for us. It is a condemnation for us. What the law does is show us our sins and our wickedness. No man can be saved by the law. That is evident. The apostle says it like this: "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." If there had been a law given that could have given life, then Jesus Christ would not have needed to have suffered, bled, and died. But there is no law that can do that. So it is the Holy Spirit that gives life. The gospel is the letter of life.

The Holy Spirit Makes the Word Effectual

It shows the way of life, but it is the Holy Spirit of God who lights the fuse of that dynamite and makes it effectual in our lives. So the Word

of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit is that which is made effectual in our lives.

John Gill writes: "The law is the letter, not merely because it is written in letters, for so likewise is the gospel, but because it is a mere letter hereby showing what is to be done or avoided without any efficacy or power in it, or communicating any to enable persons to obey its command, to give life to its observers, or either to sanctify or justify any who are under it or the works of it. It is a mere letter as observed by an unregenerate man who only regards the externals of it. Being unacquainted with its spirituality. The gospel is the spirit. It contains spiritual things and not things merely natural, moral, and civil, as does the law, but spiritual blessings and promises. It penetrates into the spirit and soul of man and comes from and is attended with the spirit of God." That is a good quote. Adam Clarke gives a fuller explanation with some good illustrations.

“Not of the letter, but of the spirit. The apostle does not mean here, as some have imagined, that he states himself to be a minister of the New Testament in opposition to the Old, and that it is the Old Testament that kills and the New that gives life, but that the New Testament gives the proper meaning of the Old Testament. For the Old Covenant had its letter and its spirit, its literal and its spiritual meaning.

“The law was founded on the very supposition of the Gospel. And all of its sacrifices, tithes, and ceremonies refer to the Gospel. The Jews rested in the letter, which not only afforded no means of life, but killed by condemning every transgressor to death. They did not look at the spirit, did not endeavor to find out the spiritual meaning, and therefore they rejected Christ, who was the end of the law for justification, and so for the redemption from death to everyone that believes. The new covenant set all these spiritual things at once before their eyes and showed them the end, object, and design of the law. And thus the apostles who preached it were the ministers of that spirit, which gives life.”

“Every institution has its letter as well as its spirit. And every word must refer to something of which it is the sign or the significator. The gospel has both its letter and its spirit. And multitudes of

professing Christians, by resting in the letter, receive not the life which it is calculated to impart.

"Water in baptism is the letter that points out the purification of the soul. They who rest in the letter are without the purification, and dying in that state, they die eternally. Bread and wine in the sacrament—the ordinance of the Lord's Supper—are the letter. The atoning efficacy of the death of Jesus and the grace communicated by this to the soul of the believer are the spirit. Multitudes rest in this letter, simply receiving these symbols without reference to the Atonement or to their guilt, and thus lose the benefit of the Atonement and the salvation of their souls."

"The whole Christian life is comprehended by our Lord under the letter," and then He quotes the two words our Lord speaks: "Follow me." "Does not anyone see that a man taking up this letter only and following Christ through Judea, Galilee, Samaria, the city, the temple, the villages, the synagogues, the mountains, would lose his own life?"

Why? Because the words "follow me" refer to the spirit; that is, we are to obey Him, submit to Him, and live from Him. He is our Lord and Master. Multitudes of Christians follow only the letter and not the Spirit. I may disagree with a few words in there, but I think he hits the nail on the head as to where we are today, because so many church members and professing Christians are resting in the letter and not in the Spirit.

Here is the truth in our day and time: We have kept the letter of the gospel, but we have lost the spirit of the gospel. We have lost the dynamite. We have lost the power of the gospel. We depend upon our expositions and our exegesis rather than the power of God. I do not care how great a preacher a man is; man is incapable of providing the power. Sermons, illustrations, and oratory are incapable of providing the power. The only power that can make everything real to us is that of the Holy Spirit of God. He ignites the dynamite of the gospel and of the Word of God in our lives. Without Him, all we have is the letter.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:13: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which

ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." The apostle thanked God for the Thessalonians because, when they received the Word of God that they heard from Paul, they received it not as the word of men, but as it was in truth, the Word of God. When they heard Paul preach, they did not say, "That is just what Paul thinks. That is just what Paul believes." They realized that when Paul was expounding, explaining, and applying the Word of God, that was God speaking; that was God's Word.

Paul was not saying, "I think," or "in my opinion"; he was expounding the Word of God. They received it as it is in truth, the Word of God. Then he said, "which effectually worketh also in you that believe." The word "effectually worketh" is a little Greek word, energeo. It is where we get our English words energy and energize. It means to make effectual, to energize, to display activity, and to be operative. So it was the Holy Spirit of God that made the Word of God effectual in their lives.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 3, beginning with verse 12, the Apostle says: "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Paul is talking about the veil upon the minds and hearts of those who merely went with the letter. Even when Moses is read, the veil remains upon their minds. They are blind; they cannot see, perceive, or understand. What is the answer? There needs to be a divine energy, a divine stick of dynamite placed. How does that happen? Verse 17 answers: "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." No man has the liberty to turn from

himself and his sins unto Jesus Christ apart from the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who gives liberty, regenerates, convicts, and converts.

He says, “Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.” How in the world can the mind or the heart turn to the Lord when it is blind? The answer is, “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” In other words, He opens our blinded eyes, frees our stubborn wills, and enables us to come savingly to Jesus Christ.

Now, hang on, that’s not all. That is true in salvation. We are saved by the grace of God, and we read the Scripture. But here is my question: What kind of effect has simply reading the Scripture had upon your life? Because the Word without the Spirit is nothing but a letter.

Applications: Seeking the Spirit's Power

Look in verse 18. Here is how we must read the Scripture: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” As we read and study our Bibles, it is not merely, “I’m reading my Bible.” Years ago, when I was a boy, you went to Sunday school and had to fill out that little form: “Did you read your Bible this week?” Check it. “Were you at prayer meeting?” Check it. They couldn’t care less whether you learned anything. Did you read it just so you could check, “Yes, I read my Bible”?

The point is this: it is not the reading that is important as much as the understanding and application. I’d rather read and understand five verses than read five chapters and not understand a thing. When we read our Bibles, it must be with this prayer: “Blessed Holy Spirit of God, open my eyes, show me, teach me, illuminate me, enlighten me, change me from glory to glory into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is God’s will that we be conformed to His Son.

That's what He said in Romans chapter 8. That's the whole end of everything. I'm afraid many Christians have made reading their Bible like singing their hymns: they sing them without thinking about the verses or words. We read our Bibles and never think about

what we have read. How many times have you read your Bible and then caught yourself saying, "What did I just read? What was in that chapter?" Your mind had been somewhere else, and yet you were reading your Bible. The point is this: the Bible is not a lucky rabbit's foot or a charm. It is a letter, and it has to be energized by the Holy Spirit of God in order for us to understand it.

Let me make some applications. First, the gospel has not lost its power; we have lost the power of the gospel. The gospel is the dynamite of God. We have depended upon anything and everything to make it effectual except the Holy Spirit. Most churches today are nothing more than entertainment centers, social clubs, and recreational buildings, while preachers try anything and everything to get people to attend and stay there—except the power of God. When God works in a man's heart, he does not need anything else. The gospel has not lost its power. We have lost the power because of our sins, our disobedience, and our lack of trust in the Holy Spirit of God.

When we read our Bibles and study them, we must seek understanding from the Holy Spirit alone. In John 16:12–14, our Lord said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” What? The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. He is the Spirit of truth.

He takes the Lord Jesus and shows Him unto us. Now, let me try to answer this burning question one more time: How is it that so many people can read their Bibles and be unaffected, unchanged, and uninfluenced? The answer is that they are reading the letter without the Spirit.

There are many things in the Bible that we do not understand. If I am reading a book and the author has a paragraph that I do not know how to understand, I do not really know what he means. It could be interpreted this way or several different ways. How am I going to find out what the author meant when he wrote that paragraph, page, or chapter? The easiest thing to do is to talk to the

author: “I do not understand this. What did you mean when you wrote this?” The author can usually explain it.

May I ask you who wrote the Bible? You say men wrote it, but the Holy Spirit inspired it. He is the Author of it. He is the One who can explain it, interpret it, and enlighten us to understand. So the point I am trying to make is that so many people read their Bibles without seeking the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Preachers preach without seeking the power of the Holy Spirit.

We're trusting in everything and anything but God. There is one other answer, and it deserves another message. In Matthew 13, beginning with verse 10, our Lord has been speaking in parables: “And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?”

“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”

Have you ever learned to be thankful for the truth that God has allowed you to see? You may not understand all truth, but if our God has sovereignly showed you truth, you may rejoice in that, because God does not give His truth to everyone. Neither does He give the truth in the same amount or at the same time.

So here is the burning question: Why is it we can read our Scriptures and never change? The answer is because we're reading the letter and not asking the Holy Spirit to change us from glory to glory and to make us more and more conformed to the Lord Jesus

Christ. Only the Holy Spirit of God can make the Word of God effectual in our lives. That is true of the unsaved, and that is true of the saved.

Paul said, we want to be able ministers of the New Testament—that is, ministers of the Spirit—preaching the letter, but preaching the letter in power under the anointing of God, the unction of the Holy Spirit as it is called in Scripture. Let's read with understanding. Let's sing with understanding. And let's pray with understanding.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. Lord, we thank You for the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, we do have to confess and acknowledge so many times we've ignored Him. We've ignored His influence, we've ignored His ministry, His impact, His teaching. And we've tried to accomplish things on our own. And we always stumble and fall and fail when we do that. Our churches are in great need today. Your people are in great need today. I pray that You'd awaken us. And help us, Lord, to not be content with just reading, but understanding what we read. Help us not be content with just singing, but understanding what we are singing. Help us not be content with just saying prayers, but understanding what we're praying. Give us Your grace and give us Your mercy, we pray. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose name we ask, amen.

CHAPTER 12

The Work of God

Introduction: The Works of God in Scripture

If you'll open your Bibles today, please, to the book of John, John chapter 6. John chapter 6, and we're going to be looking at verse 29, and we will come back and get the context, but look, if you would, at John chapter 6 and verse 29, one simple verse. John 6 verse 29: "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." So obviously then the title of the message is "The Work of God." When you and I think of the works of God, we automatically think of His works in creation, redemption, and in providence. There are many wonderful works of God that only God can perform and accomplish because He is omniscient, He is omnipotent, He is omnipresent, and absolutely nothing is impossible with Him. And although we classify the works of God under three heads, that of creation, redemption, and providence, there would be innumerable or multitudinous works under each one of those heads that we would classify. But I want to give you just a quick overview very quickly of what the Scripture says concerning the works of God.

And I just want to show you six or seven verses from the book of Psalms. I want you to hold John 6; we're coming back there. But if you look in Psalm 26 and verse 7, very quickly, Psalm 26 and verse 7, I'll quote some of these, but I want you to see especially the last one that I'm going to be quoting and reading. So if you look in Psalm 26 to begin with, and here's what the Bible says: "That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works." So if you look in your Bibles now to Psalm 33 and verse 4, Psalm 33 and verse 4: "For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth." So all of God's works are done in truth. Look in Psalm 40 and verse 5, which is one of my favorite verses. Psalm 40 and verse 5, the Word of God says this: "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done."

"And thy thoughts which are to us-ward, they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." Will you just pause and think that God thinks of us? The psalmist said, they are more than can be numbered. So it says, "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done." Then, in Psalm 46 and verse 8, he says, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth." Here is a work of the Lord as far as judgment and destruction are concerned as well.

In Psalm 66 and verse 3, the Word of God says this: "Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works!" Notice that: "How terrible art thou in thy works! Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee." Wow. Wow. Through the greatness of thy works.

Look in Psalm 73 and verse 28. Every one of these passages is absolutely phenomenal when it comes to the works of God. The Word of God says this: "But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works." And then we talk about Psalm 104.

In Psalm 104, verse 24, he says, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works!" That is, how variegated, how many there are. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."

Then Psalm 105 and verse 2: "Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works." And verse 5: "Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth." The last one is Psalm 111, beginning with verse 2: "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."

“His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the Lord is gracious and full of compassion. He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.” But look again at verse 2: “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.” So we could ask several questions. How many have pleasure in the works of God? How many actually seek out the works of God? And I am probably correct when I say how few really seek out the works of God.

When the Bible speaks of the works of God, it does so in many different ways. But in John 6:29, it is not the works of God, plural, that is being spoken of; it is the work of God. He said, “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

Context of John 6: Carnal Motives in Following Jesus

So in our text, we are talking not about the multitudinous works of God, but about one particular and specific work of God. Let me give you the context. When you read John chapter 6, you find that many people came to and followed Jesus Christ for various reasons. A lot of those reasons were carnal and fleshly. John 6:2 says, “And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.” A great multitude followed him because they saw his miracles, which he did on them that were diseased.

The truth is that any supernatural activity will draw attention, and it does not necessarily have to be God’s supernatural activity. The devil is a counterfeiter and an imitator. Whenever anything “supernatural” happens, people flock to that spot or service, thinking they are going to see a miracle or perhaps have a miracle exercised upon them. Some years ago, there was supposed to be a miracle

happening somewhere in France, and people flew there by the hundreds and thousands. Whether it was really true or not, I have no earthly idea. But people are drawn to that. These people were following Jesus Christ because they actually saw the miracles that He performed.

I may have pointed this out before, but I am going to do it again in light of our conversation today. Do you remember or do you know the only man in the Bible to whom our Lord would not even speak? I want you to hold John chapter 6, but turn back in your Bibles to the book of Luke, chapter 23, and I will tell you exactly why our Lord would not speak unto this man. The man to whom our Lord would not even speak was King Herod. Look in Luke 23, and begin reading with verse 5.

The Bible says, "And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad:" Why was he so happy to see Jesus? Here is why: "for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing." All Herod wanted to do was see a miracle.

Our Lord would not even speak to the man because it was a very carnal and very fleshly motive, and our Lord simply ignored him. The Lord did not answer him in many words or give him the miracle he desired; He answered him nothing.

Now, when you go back to John chapter 6, and when you get to verses 25 and 26, you will find that these people are worse than the miracle seekers. So, if you look in John 6 and verse 25, the Bible says, "And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" Look at our Lord's answer.

Jesus' Rebuke and Admonition

“Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.” These people were worse than miracle seekers. Our Lord had fed the five thousand, and they had received a free meal. When He crossed the sea, they wondered where He had gone and finally found Him. He told them plainly that they had not sought Him because of His miracles, but because they had eaten a free meal and wanted another.

John 6:14–15 says, “Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.” They thought that if He could provide food once, He could do so repeatedly, and they would make Him king. Therefore, He crossed the sea to escape them, but they followed Him. That was when He said, “You're seeking me not because of the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled.”

Here is a truth we need to learn: the Lord knows our hearts, motives, desires, fleshliness, and carnality. He knows what is honorable and dishonorable in our lives. He is not honored by carnal, fleshly motives; rather, He is dishonored. Our Lord has told us that He will not answer or regard a dishonorable, fleshly, carnal prayer. James 4:3 says, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” God will not answer a prayer that is totally carnal and fleshly.

In John 6:27, our Lord admonished the people: “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.” He was telling them not to waste their time on bread and fish. You do have to eat to live, and our Lord understood that; nevertheless, their pursuit was governed by fleshly motives.

You should be concerned not with where your next physical meal is coming from, but with filling yourself with the bread of life and the

water of life. So He says, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth.” You could have the most expensive and probably the best meal you could ever enjoy today, and the best and most expensive drink you could ever enjoy today. Tomorrow, you will be thirsty and hungry all over again.

But once our Lord gives you the water of life and the bread of life, it will satisfy you, not just in time, but also in eternity. The truth of the matter is this: our Lord is indeed the true bread of life, and He is also the true water of life.

Here is the thing that amazes me. Our Lord basically rebuked these people in verse 27. He admonished them: “You’re not even concerned with the miracles; you’re concerned with food. You just want to eat. You want it free. You don’t have to work.” He says, “Don’t labor for that. You labor for this bread that does not ever deteriorate and make you hungry again.”

The Question: 'What Shall We Do?'

And look at verse 28: “Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” It is astounding to me how many people can become pious and sanctimonious after a good, solid rebuke. Maybe they are trying to throw attention away from themselves. It is like the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4. When our Lord asked for a drink of water, she said, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” Our Lord said, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” You would never thirst again; you would never have to come to that well to draw.

The Samaritan woman said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." How did she change the subject? Why did she change the subject? Our Lord gave her the truth and the answer. Then she said, "Lord, I think I want this water." He said, "Go call thy husband." She said, "I have no husband." He answered, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou

truly." She had just changed the subject. These people seemingly were doing the same thing, just changing the subject, so to speak.

Make sure that you understand this truth: there are a lot of people who will change once they have been rebuked. "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" There is nothing wrong with that question if it is asked in sincerity and truth. What is important is that which motivates the question. It could be asked as a cover, or it could be asked in sincerity.

When they asked, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" they could have been asking, "What could we do more than obedience to the law of Moses which he's given to us?" If that was the implication, they were basically claiming to be like the Pharisees, who thought they kept the law of God.

On the other hand, they could have been very truthful and genuine, asking, "Where do we need to change? How do we need to turn our lives around that we might work the works of God?" Have you noticed that almost everyone wants to do something either to earn salvation or to earn the blessings of God? Remember the rich young ruler in Mark chapter 10. He came running to Jesus Christ, knelt, and said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He wanted to do something.

Albert Barnes, in his commentary, makes this simple statement: “The idea of doing something to merit salvation is one of the last things that a sinner ever surrenders.” I would say it like this: it is also the last idea that a real Christian ever surrenders when he is looking for and seeking the blessings of God. I know of people who have tried to bargain with God: “Lord, if you will do this for me—something that I want especially—I’ll do this for you.” No. The Bible tells us that all the blessings we have are stored up in the Lord Jesus Christ in Ephesians chapter 1. Everything is in Him now.

When I say that the motivation behind this question, “What must we do, that we might work the works of God?” determines whether it was a legitimate question or a cover question trying to distract from the rebuke and admonition Christ gave them in verse 27, I mean that its context matters.

There are good questions to ask at times. In Luke chapter 3, John the Baptist was preaching repentance. The people came to him—the tax collectors and the soldiers—and each group asked, “What must we do?” John answered them, giving different answers to each group.

You have to interpret that question in light of the context. John was preaching, “You must repent.” Thus the people asked, “What must we do?” In other words, “What must we do to demonstrate our repentance?” The predominant sin among the people was covetousness, so John said, “Let him that hath two coats impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.” The tax collectors asked, “What must we do?” “Exact no more than that which is appointed you.” That was your predominant sin, your things. Then the soldiers asked, “What must we do?” He said, “Be content with your wages. Do not do violence to any man, neither accuse any falsely.” Those were legitimate questions, and they had a right motive behind them. Whether or not in John chapter 6 and verse 28 there was a right motive or not,

John Gill speaks well concerning our Lord's answer. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Here is a surprising answer: "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." They ask, "What must we do that we might work the works of God?" Our Lord totally ignored that question, unless you consider this answer to be the answer to it. What He was saying is that it is impossible for you to do any works of God unless God does a work in you.

Jesus' Answer: The Work of God is Faith

John Gill said, "The main and principal one work, and which is well pleasing in his sight, and which is impossible to please him, and without which no work, whatever is a good work, and this is the operation of God, which he himself works in men, it is not of themselves, it is the pure gift of God." In other words, no one can do any works of God until God works in them.

He goes on to say, "That ye believe on him whom he hath sent. There are other works which are well pleasing to God when rightly

performed, but faith is the chief work, and others are only acceptable when done in faith in Christ. This as a principle is purely God's work. It is His act. It is exercised under the influence of divine grace. It is only man's act that you believe. The object of it is Christ, as sent by the Father, as the mediator between God and man, as appointed by him to be the Saviour, Redeemer. And believing in Christ is believing in God that sent him."

This is the work of God: that you believe. It is God who enables us to believe and gives us faith. Man actually believes; God does not believe for you. Yet you would never believe unless God creates faith in you, gives you grace, and gives you faith.

Matthew Poole also said it like this: “Our Lord calls them to a work that they never thought of. That of owning and acknowledging him, Jesus Christ, to be the true Messiah, the embracing and receiving him as such, and trusting him with all the concerns of their souls, which was necessary, notwithstanding all their acts of obedience to the law, though most certainly productive also of that obedience, and inseparable from it.”

That is a mouthful, so I want to explain what he just said. The first part is very easy. Our Lord calls them to a work they never thought of. That work is owning and acknowledging Jesus Christ as the Messiah. It is trusting only in Jesus Christ, leaning only in Jesus Christ, and receiving him as God has ordained. And then Poole says, “Notwithstanding all their acts of obedience to the law, though most certainly productive also of that obedience and inseparable from it.”

What in the world does Matthew Poole mean when he is talking about “notwithstanding all their acts of obedience to the law, though most certainly productive also of that obedience and inseparable from it”? Is he being confusing? The answer is no. These men certainly knew the law of God. They may have known only what the Pharisees thought, but at least they had some idea about the law of God.

The Law and Faith

Consider what Jesus says in Matthew 23:23: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and

cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

This is a verse that we oftentimes overlook, and I preached a message on this one verse many years ago. He commends them for their consistency in paying their tithes. They were willing to tithe down to the smallest herb. But he says, "You have omitted the weightier matters of the law." What are the weightier matters of the law? Judgment, mercy, and faith. Isn't that interesting? The law taught faith. That is what he said. How in the world could the law teach faith?

Do you not remember Galatians 3:24, where the Apostle Paul said, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith"? How could the law do that? Because the law showed you that you could not save yourself. It showed you that you were a sinner and could not redeem yourself. If you were ever saved, you had to be saved on the merits of someone else. So Jesus said, "You've omitted the weightier matters of the law."

This is why Jesus Christ came. He was made under the law, made of a woman, to redeem us that were under the law. Clearly, Jesus Christ is the only one who has ever kept the law personally, perfectly, and perpetually. He worked out absolute, perfect obedience to that law. That is why Romans 10:4 says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Why is He the end of the law for righteousness? Because He is the only one who kept it. He perfected it and accomplished it. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we believe in the perfect fulfillment of that law. This is what Poole is talking about. If they really understood the law, then the law would lead them to Jesus Christ. If they did not understand the law, it would not lead them to Jesus Christ.

Go to John 6:29 again, because this verse is absolutely plain: "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." When you believe savingly on Jesus Christ, it is only because of the work of God in you. Believing on Jesus Christ as the Messiah, trusting in His finished atonement,

and leaning upon Him completely for salvation is the work of God in us. We cannot perform that work. This is an act of God, a work of God. Look back at verse 29 once more.

Monergism vs. Synergism

"Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Verse 29 is a plain statement of what is known as monergism. Mono means one or alone, and ergo is the Greek word for "I work." Monergism means that God works alone in salvation.

Most professing Christians do not understand verse 29 of John chapter 6. What they hold is an error known as synergism. Syn means together, and ergo means "I work." Synergism teaches that the sinner, or man, works with God to accomplish his own salvation. Have you ever heard people say, "If you take the first step, God will do the rest"? That is synergism. Man has to do something in order for God to save him.

I have heard it said, "Your part is to believe; it's God's part to save." That sounds good because man does indeed believe. Someone else said, "It's mine to be willing; it's God's to do the saving." The clearest statement to me, and absolutely blasphemous, is still on the sign of the church I pass every Sunday morning: "I did my best and God did the rest." That is synergism.

Now let me ask you a question. Remember Isaiah 42:8, where God says, "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." God will not share his glory with another. Who is insane enough to think that, when they get to heaven and enter the presence of God, they will stand there bragging, "Oh, God, I'm here, but I'm only here because I did my part. You don't get all the glory; I get part of this glory"?

Because had I not been willing, had I not taken the first step, had I not done my best, you could not have saved me. That is absolutely insane. And yet I can hear people objecting and say, "But you don't understand. I came to Christ." The truth is, yes, you did come to Christ. But then you have to ask yourself this question: Why did you come to Christ? You said, "But when I came to Jesus Christ, I was

willing to come to Jesus Christ." Yes. But why were you willing to come to Jesus Christ when for many years you were quite unwilling to come to Jesus Christ? I can hear another objection: "But I repented." Yes, but who gave you the gift of repentance? "But I believe," yes, but who gave you the gift of faith? Our Lord said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

I remind you of the three illustrations of salvation in the Bible—three in the New Testament. They all show that salvation is the work of God alone. The first one is that of birth, John chapter 4. No man births himself. The second one is that of creation, 2 Corinthians 4, as God spoke the world into existence. So God hath shined in our hearts, in the face of Jesus Christ. When God said that there be light, there was light. So there is light in our hearts only because Jesus Christ shined in them. The third one is resurrection.

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." No one can resurrect himself. A dead man does not resurrect himself.

Earlier I quoted Matthew 11, verse 27, and told you I was going to come back to that verse. Consider Matthew 11, verse 27: Jesus Christ is speaking. He says, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Although I am going over this verse, I have another message prepared in which I will come back to this entire section and deal with this verse in its context. For now, consider, first of all, the word "know." He said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

Divine Revelation Necessary for Faith

The word "knoweth" happens to be the word epiginosko, which means full knowledge, or to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly, and to know accurately. No one can know the Father thoroughly or accurately apart from the Son, and no one can know the Son thoroughly or accurately apart from the Father.

Our Lord is talking about an intimate, personal knowing of the Father. In Matthew 11:27, He says, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” The Greek word for “reveal” is apokalypto. It literally means to uncover, to lay open; to lay open that which has been veiled or covered up. It means to disclose, to make bare, to make known, to make manifest, and to disclose whatever has previously been covered.

Apokalypto means to unveil. In Revelation 1:1, we read, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him.” The Revelation of Jesus Christ—the apokalypsis, the uncovering, the unveiling of Jesus Christ. Thus, in Matthew 11:27, He is saying that no one can know the Father unless the Son reveals Him, and no one can know the Son except the Father reveals Him as well.

When we come to John 1:18, we read, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” The only way that we can know the Father is through the revelation and declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is impossible to know the Father intimately without the revelation of the Son, and impossible to know the Son intimately without the revelation of the Father.

Matthew 16:13 records Jesus Christ asking His disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” They answered, “Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” Jesus said, “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Our Lord answered, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

How did Peter know that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, that He was the Son of God? The answer is that the Father in heaven revealed it unto him. No man can know the Son without the revelation of the Father, and no one can know the Father without the revelation and declaration of the Son. Very clearly, then, salvation has to be a work of God. In Matthew 11:27, our Lord said, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son,

but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." A saving, intimate, personal knowledge of Jesus Christ is an act of God alone, because it is the Father who reveals the Son.

This same truth is stated in Luke 10:22, only a little differently: "All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." It is the same truth, worded differently.

It should be clear that believing on Jesus Christ is a work of God, because only God can unveil the Lord Jesus Christ. Man by nature does not see the beauty of Jesus Christ. That is why Isaiah 53 says, "There is no beauty that we should desire him." Only God can open our eyes and let us see the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Believer's Work of Faith

I want to point out something so there is no confusion. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3, the Apostle Paul writes to the Thessalonian Christians, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." I have been telling you that salvation is a work of God, yet Paul speaks of their work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope, while also affirming their election of God.

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing."

"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith." How is the Apostle Paul talking to these Thessalonian Christians about their work of faith when only God can unveil Jesus Christ, and only Jesus

Christ can unveil the Father? Is it God's work of faith, or is it man's work of faith?

The Bible answers this in Philippians 2:12-13: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Is Paul telling them to save themselves? Is Paul telling them to earn their salvation? Of course not. You cannot work it out unless God works it in. The command is not teaching that salvation originates in man. It is your faith only because God gave it to you and you exercise the gift of God. So it is called your faith, or your work of faith, but it is God who gave it to you, and you would never have it apart from Him.

It is impossible to work it out if God has not worked it in. It is impossible to believe on Jesus Christ if God has not given us faith. It is impossible to have a personal relationship with God the Father unless God the Son has revealed Him. Therefore, what is called their work of faith is still dependent wholly upon the work of God in them, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

The word “worketh” in verse 13 is exactly the same word used in John 6:29. It is the noun there; in Philippians 2:13, it is the verb. So the work of repentance is a work of God. Although we repent, God gives us the gift. The work of faith is God’s gift, except that we actually do the believing. God does not believe for us.

Applications and Warnings

First of all, the unsaved believe that salvation is in their hands. I have heard people say, “I can repent whenever I want to. I can believe whenever I want to.” That is a lie. You cannot repent whenever you want to. You cannot believe whenever you want to. Our Lord Himself said, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in faith, believing, ye shall receive.”

Force yourself to believe that God is fixing to give you a million bucks. You cannot do that. You cannot make yourself believe. Faith is the gift of God. You may say, “I believe some things. I sat down in

this chair. I believed that this chair would hold me up. That is why I sat down in it."

But that kind of faith is far different from spiritual faith; it is far different from biblical faith. I can have faith that Steve might loan me ten dollars. But if I try to work up enough faith to believe that Steve is going to give me a million bucks, which he does not even have, I will be wasting my time, and I cannot work it up anyhow. You cannot work up faith. You cannot make yourself believe. The same thing is true of repentance. I have heard people say, "I am going to repent and believe right before I die. Until then, I am going to live my life to the fullest." But you might plan on dying at midnight and die at 11:30 without even knowing it. When you think you can repent on your own, you are mistaken.

When you think you can believe on your own, you are mistaken. There is a vast difference between biblical faith and fleshly faith, and between a biblical turning from sin and someone simply saying, "I do not want to do it anymore right now." What does the Bible say in 1 Corinthians 2:14? "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Neither can he see. In other words, there is nothing in his mind that enables him to receive and accept the truth. It is foolishness to him unless God opens his eyes. No amount of teaching or education can replace the work of God.

You can only go to Christian schools and colleges. You can be in church all your life, hear biblical, right sermons every Sunday, and quote Scripture. But unless God opens your eyes and works in you, it is nothing.

Matthew 15, verses 7 and 8, shows where most people are. Our Lord said to these Jews, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." He went on to say, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

That is it. You have been taught by your fathers. I can teach you and give you truth after truth from the Word of God. But unless God

opens your eyes, unless God turns the light on, it is nothing. You are not going to hear, repent, or believe. Our Lord says, “But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

The truth of the matter is this. John said in John 6 and verse 45, “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” Who comes savingly to Jesus Christ? Only those who have been taught of the Father. If you have not been taught of the Father, you are not coming savingly to Jesus Christ.

He said in First Thessalonians chapter 4 and verse 9, “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.” God does teach. In Job 36 and verse 22, the Bible says, “Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?” No one can teach as God teaches.

If all we have is what men have taught us, we are lost in our sins. What we must have is the revelation of God the Father and the revelation of God the Son, producing an intimate, personal relationship with the Father and with the Son. Do you have the work of God in your life, or simply the work of man?

The Work of God

"This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." All they've been taught, he said, is the doctrines of man. I can teach biblical truth, but it's God who must open our eyes. And our Lord said it. They asked, "What must we do that we might work the works of God?" And he responded, "This is the work of God." This is the specific, particular work of God: that you believe on him who has sent. So those of us who actually believe savingly in Jesus Christ, it's because of the work of God in us. And when we get in the presence of God, he will receive all the honor and all the glory, because it was his work and not ours. The truth of the matter is this.

Conclusion and Prayer

The only thing you and I can do is furnish the sinner. And that's it. The rest of it is the work of God. This is the work of God, that you believe on him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. We just ask, Lord, that you would indeed open our eyes. Teach us, build us up in the most holy faith. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

The only thing you and I can do is furnish the sinner. And that's it. The rest of it is the work of God. This is the work of God, that you believe on him. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. We just ask, Lord, that you would indeed open our eyes. Teach us, build us up in the most holy faith. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

Make America Great Again

SCRIPTURE READING - Isaiah 30:1-15 (KJV)

Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me, and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin, that walk to go down into Egypt and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.

For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. The burden of the beasts of the south: into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them. For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.

> Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces.
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> He shall not spare, so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit. For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.

Introduction: Defining Greatness

The title of the message today is “Make America Great Again.” Everyone has heard that phrase; in fact, all one has to do is use the letters MAGA, and everyone understands it. But have you ever pondered the word “great”—how it is used, what the emphasis is, and what it means? One dictionary defines “great” as the quality or state of being great, as in size, skill, achievement, or power. It should be obvious, then, that the word will have a different emphasis, and perhaps even a different meaning, depending upon how it is used.

For instance, greatness for a wealthy man is his riches and his ability to accumulate more riches. For the power-hungry man, greatness is the ability to control situations and other people. For the military-minded man, it is winning battles and conquering nations. For the scholar, it is the accumulation of books and knowledge. For the sickly man, greatness is the ability to overcome sickness and maintain his health.

When you think about the statement “Make America Great Again,” there are three basic questions. First, what was the original greatness of America? Second, when and how did we lose that greatness, if we must make America great again? Third, how would we restore America to greatness once we understood that the greatness was lost?

America's Original Greatness: A Christian Foundation

When America was first founded, its greatness lay in the way it was founded and established. Most of the individuals who came to America came with a biblical worldview. The Bible says in Psalm 33 and verse 12, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.” When the pilgrims came here—the Puritans and the Scots-Irish—they settled America based upon their faith and their Christian worldview. In times past, I have pointed out that all the original charters and constitutions of the colonies, and later of the states, were definitively Christian.

The original charters and constitutions stated this very plainly. I have copies of all of them, but I want to point out the fact that this was indeed a Christian nation based upon biblical law.

For instance, John Jay happened to be the very first Supreme Court Justice, appointed by George Washington. I want to give you two quotes by John Jay. Here is the first one: "Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and their customs." When we came here, we were just one people. We had the same ancestors, spoke the same language, and had the same religion.

Jay also wrote: "Almost all nations have peace or war at the will and pleasure of rulers whom they do not elect, and who are not always wise and virtuous. Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation, to select and prefer Christians for their rulers."

That was the very first Supreme Court Justice. Benjamin Rush was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was talking about using the Bible as a textbook, teaching children to read by means of the Bible. He gave five points and then a paragraph. He said: "Before I state my argument in favor of teaching children to read by means of the Bible—I shall assume the five following propositions: number one, that Christianity is the only true and perfect religion, and that in proportion as mankind adopt its principles and obey its precepts, they will be wise and happy. Number two, that a better knowledge of this religion, or Christianity, is to be acquired by reading the Bible than in any other way. Number three, that the Bible contains more knowledge necessary to man in his present state than any other book in the world. Number four, that knowledge is most durable, and religious instruction most useful, when imparted early in life. And number five, that the Bible, when not read in schools, is seldom read in any subsequent period of life."

In contemplating the political institutions of the United States, if the Bible was removed from the classroom, I lament that we waste so much time and money in punishing crimes and take so little time and pains to prevent them. We profess to be Republicans"—now this is not the Republican Party, but a republican form of government, a government by law. He says, "We profess to be Republicans, and yet we neglect the only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government, that is, the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by the means of the Bible."

"For this divine book, above all, favors that equality among men, and respect for just laws, and those sober and frugal virtues which constitute the soul of republicanism." Here is Benjamin Rush, the signer of the Declaration, saying that we ought to be teaching our young people to read based upon the Bible and instilling these principles while they are young. We are taking great pains to punish criminals, and taking no pains to prevent criminals from being around.

The first one is Article 1 of the Constitution of Connecticut in 1639: "Hold forth a perfect rule for the direction and government of all men in all duties which they are to perform to God and men, as

well in families and in commonwealths"—that is, government—"as in matters of the church."

The New Haven colony charter, on April 3, 1644, adopted these rules for the courts of the New Haven colony: "The judicial laws of God, as they were delivered by Moses, are to be a rule to all the courts in this jurisdiction." So the Bible was the biblical law book. The Constitution of the state of Tennessee in 1796, Article 8, Section 2, stated: "No person who denies the being of God or a future state of rewards and punishment shall hold any office in the civil department of this state." These constitutions and charters basically said the same thing. Some went further, requiring confession of faith in both the Old and the New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, as well as in Jesus Christ, the Mediator and the Redeemer. Over and over, they stated plainly that Christianity was the rule and the law of God was the standard.

The Fall: Turning from God to Humanism

What happened, and why did we fall? Using scriptural language, I will tell you: we fell because we turned our backs upon God and refused to listen to Him and His Word. Instead of being a Scripture-loving people, we began to listen to what was known as rationalism, transcendentalism, and humanistic enlightenment, or what I would simply refer to as pure humanism. It transpired first in the North, where the people embraced rationalism and humanism.

That is why you had the Unitarians, the enlightened rationalists, and the abolitionists there as well. Of course, the South at that time was holding tenaciously to the Word of God. But when you came to the war from 1861 to 1865, sometimes referred to as the War of Northern Aggression, many viewed it as a religious war in which the North was seeking to force rationalism upon the South. When you read some of the Southern theologians, you find that they did indeed view it as a religious war. I do not care which scholar you read when it comes to the true history of what happened.

Every one of them is going to say this: we went into that war as what you and I would call independent states in a constitutional republic, and we came out of that war as an American empire, and we have been going downhill ever since. It was Lincoln who

destroyed the Constitution to save the Constitution. He was going to deny the Constitution, he said, to save the Union.

An aggressive, growing, and multiplying economy does not necessarily make a great nation. A mighty military does not necessarily make a great nation. A proud, independent, arrogant, haughty, and self-elevating people do not make a great nation. Treaties with foreign countries do not necessarily make a great nation either. Man's abilities to build, make, guard, produce, and protect are worthless. We have forgotten the truth of Psalm 127:1: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

Now mighty nations have fallen and sunk into absolute nothingness. Israel did, the northern kingdom. So did Judah and Jerusalem, the southern kingdom. But that does not even count what you and I would call the heathen nations that have disappeared.

In Isaiah chapter 30 and verse 1, God says: "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin." Note, if you would, that He says, "Woe to the rebellious children." This is the word of God concerning His own children.

Isaiah began his ministry here by declaring the same truth. Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 1 says: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

Then he says, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." In Isaiah chapter 30 and verse 1, there are three charges laid against Israel—the Northern Kingdom as well as the Southern Kingdom, and particularly the Southern Kingdom. For in verse 1 he says, "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord."

Charge 1: Taking Counsel but Not of God

Here is the first charge: “that take counsel, but not of me.” Here is the second charge: “that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit.” And here is the third charge: “that they may add sin to sin.”

Consider the first charge: “Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me.” They are charged with seeking what you and I would call alien counsel. They sought counsel, but it was not God’s counsel. Every counsel, and any and all counsel that is not God’s counsel for God’s people, is alien counsel. Here is an important truth to remember: Any counsel that is not of God, from God, or through the application of God’s law is against God. It is alien counsel.

Since the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom would not listen to God, and God knew that they would not listen, it was prophesied in Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 28: “For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them.” They were a nation void of counsel.

After God had led them through the wilderness and established them many, many times and for many years, He said in Psalm 81, beginning with verse 10: “I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” But in verse 11 He said, “But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels.”

They refused God’s counsel, but they walked in their own counsel, which is alien counsel, because man’s counsel cannot in any degree compare to God’s counsel at all.

Consider an illustration of this in Joshua chapter 9. The Amorites came to deceive the children of Israel and get them to enter into a covenant with them. What did they do? They put on old, rotten clothes and shoes that were falling apart, and they brought molded bread and old wine bottles. Then they came to Joshua and the elders and said, “We want you to make a covenant with us.”

"Well, where are you from?" "Oh, we be from a far country. And we've heard the greatness in the name of God. And we want to

worship him and we want to be in covenant with you." The Bible says in Joshua 9:14, "And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." So they looked at the rotted clothes and shoes, the molded bread, and the old wine bottle. They thought, "Man, these folks have traveled a long, long way." They ended up making a covenant and found out that these people were their neighbors next door.

Why in the world did they do that? They knew they were going to be destroyed and did not want to be destroyed. I can understand that. But they were deceived because they did not ask counsel of the Lord. When men refuse, reject, and despise the counsel of God given to us in His Word, it will always be to their destruction and devastation.

The same thing is true of societies, families, churches, or nations. Humanistic wisdom and humanistic counsel are always against God and His Word. Psalm 33:10–11 says, "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought. He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

Note that "the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever." What does He do about wicked counsel? He brings it to nought and makes the devices of the people of none effect. When you follow your own counsel or the counsel of the wicked, you are asking for destruction and devastation. Proverbs 21:30 says, "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord." None of the counsel anyone can give that is contrary to Scripture and contrary to God is going to stand. It cannot stand because it is against God.

Think about our government today, and think about our government for the last four years. It is absolutely astounding and amazing to me that our political leaders will listen to anyone and everyone and anything except those who are teaching them the Word of God and the truth of God. They listen to all the people who are teaching diversity, equity, and inclusion. They listen to all the LGBTQ people. They listen to anyone and everyone. They listen to all of those who will give the wrong directions on the economy and what money really truly is. They listen to anybody and everybody except God and except His Word.

It is just that simple, when at the same time it is God who can either raise a nation or destroy a nation. It is God who can either make a ruler or destroy a ruler. Look back in your Bibles to the book of Job, right before the book of Psalms. Job chapter 12, beginning with verse 16. Note what the Bible says specifically concerning God and the nations:

"With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man."

Note verse 24: "He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth"—that is, the rulers, the political leaders—"and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man."

No wonder the political leaders have no sense. No wonder they have no common sense. No wonder they have no biblical sense. No wonder we cannot be put on a straight and narrow way, because they are staggering around like an absolute drunken man.

So if we really and truly wish America to be great again, then we must return to God and His law. Like Israel of old, we have to become a separate nation. When I say Israel was a separate nation, I mean that God forbade them to follow the heathen—their laws, rules, ordinances, and culture. They were to be a peculiar people, separated unto God. They were peculiar in the sense that they belonged to God, He belonged to them, and they were to obey Him.

Strangers and foreigners could certainly come into the land and live there, but when they came, they had to abide by the law of God. They did not bring their idolatry or separate laws with them. They had to abide under God's law because it was the covenant He had with His people. So Israel, in the Old Testament, was not a multicultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic people. They were one people.

If we want to make America great, we are not going to have a multi-religious nation; we are going to have a Christian nation. We are not going to have multiculturalism; we are going to have one culture, and that is the Christian culture. We are not going to have multi-ethics; we are going to have one ethic, and that is the biblical ethic. We will have one religion, and that is the Christian religion.

So inclusion is not our strength; it is our destruction. The truth of the matter is this: inclusion brings the judgment of God. You cannot include people into a nation that is going to destroy it. Look at the criminals who have been included in this nation, the gang members included in the nation, the young women who have been raped and murdered, and the businesses that have been destroyed.

I am simply pointing out that it is not our greatness; it is our destruction, because everyone who turns from God and His law is not an asset but a liability. They try to destroy anything and everything, and they want to make America like the country that they left. So God charges these people in Isaiah chapter 30. Watch it. Here is what He said.

Charge 2: Covering with a Covering but Not of God's Spirit

"Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me." They would listen to anybody else, but not God. Here is the second charge. In verse 1, he says, "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me, and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit." When he says they cover with a covering, he is saying that they are seeking protection. They are seeking to preserve themselves and to use the arm of the flesh.

What Judah and Jerusalem were doing in this passage was appealing to Egypt and making a treaty with Egypt so that Egypt would protect them from the Assyrians. Isaiah 30:1-3 says, "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion."

God said, You have gone down there to get Egypt to help and protect you, but what you are doing is trusting in the arm of the flesh. You are looking to man for protection instead of to God for protection.

Jeremiah 17 places a definitive curse upon anyone who relies upon the flesh: "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." What is the result of trusting in man and trusting in the flesh? It is there in verse 5: "whose heart departeth from the Lord." In other words, if you are not going to trust in the Lord, you are going to trust in man. If you are going to trust in man, you are not trusting in the Lord.

Your heart departs from the Lord. “For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.” “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” So on the one hand, the man that trusts in the flesh is cursed, and the man that trusts in the Lord is blessed.

Man is nothing and can do nothing, and the nations that hate God are nothing and can do nothing. God is saying that it is absolutely foolish, absolutely vain, to trust in man and in the arm of the flesh.

Judah and Jerusalem were trusting in Egypt. In doing so, they were covering and wrapping themselves and their nation in the arm of the flesh, relying upon Pharaoh, his army, and his military might to protect them from the Assyrians. At the same time, they were trying to hide their betrayal of God, as if they could fool Him, as if God were not omniscient.

They sought a cover, shelter, and protection from the enemy, but they did not seek it from God. They did not seek the Spirit of the Lord to cover or help them. They did not seek God's Word or God's prophets.

I have often thought about Hezekiah. When the ambassadors from Babylon came to see him, he showed them everything in his kingdom—all his great treasures and everything he had. Then Isaiah came and said, "What have they seen?" Hezekiah answered, "They've seen everything." He did not show them Isaiah; he did not show them the man of God. He was trusting in everything he had. Isaiah said, "You're going to lose it all. It's all going to Babylon. It's all going to be gone." Why? Because Hezekiah was glorying in what he had in the flesh instead of glorying in the God of Scripture.

They were seeking a covering from Egypt. Isaiah 28:20 says, "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." We have an antique bed in a certain bedroom, and Alice is very careful about who sleeps on it because a footrest rises about that high at the end. A long, tall, lean individual would not fit on it. The bed is too short, and the covering is too narrow for a man to wrap himself in it.

Years ago, I saw a cartoon that I really liked. It showed a man and a woman archaeologist who had just uncovered skeletons in a tomb. One was lying flat on his back, looking up; the other was on one side, with the knees bowed up and a rotting blanket over the skeleton. The man said, "Undoubtedly, they were married. That was a man and a wife. And the woman had stolen all the blanket." I understand that.

Well, that is what God said. When you trust in the flesh, it is insufficient; it is not going to work. In Isaiah 29:15, God says, "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who

knoweth us?" It is as though God were not omniscient, as though God could not see. John Trapp, the old Puritan, said it like this: "God will make the strongest sinew in the arm of the flesh to crack and the fierce blossoms of human policies to wither." And He will.

In all probability, Isaiah 30, in its context, is dealing with the immediate, if not short-future, invasion of Assyria. Sennacherib had already conquered many of the defense cities of Judah, and now he was around Jerusalem. Judah and Jerusalem were therefore turning to Egypt. Isaiah 30:3-7 says, "Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach." Egypt did not do a thing.

"The burden of the beasts of the south: into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them." Pay them all you want; it will do no good. "For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still."

Sennacherib did come. Some of the people still fled into Egypt. If you will turn to Jeremiah chapter 42, beginning with verse 15, you will see exactly what God said would happen to those who escaped into Egypt while fleeing from the Assyrians: "Now therefore hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there; then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die. So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there; they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them."

They were running from the Assyrians, and they ran down into Egypt. Then God sent the Assyrians to conquer Egypt. They ran into the very thing from which they were trying to escape.

There was nothing wrong with being militarily prepared, as long as you do not trust in your preparation or your military. We might have more bombers than China, or China may have more bombers than we have. Who knows? Just because you build a great and strong military will not necessarily make you a great nation. It might make you think that you are a great nation. Military preparation in and of itself is insufficient.

Pharaoh, with his chariots and horsemen, who were chasing a disarmed people, Israel, had a distinct advantage. Yet they all drowned, and all the Israelites escaped. They had a mighty military. There is nothing wrong with being trained, knowing the art of self-defense, and knowing why, when, where, and how to defend yourself. But if I had forty AR-15s, twenty Gatling guns, and a hundred bazookas around me, the truth is that if God did not protect me, none of that would help me at all. Our trust is in the Lord. Even though He gives us means and we learn how to use those means, we cannot trust in those means.

Let me give you a good illustration from 2 Chronicles, chapter 13. There was a war between Samaria, the northern kingdom, and Judah and Jerusalem, the southern kingdom. Jeroboam happened to be the king of the northern kingdom, and Abijah happened to be the king of the southern kingdom. Jeroboam came to fight against Abijah with 800,000 men, while Abijah came toward him with 400,000 men. Abijah was outnumbered two to one. Of course, Jeroboam had already set up the golden calves. They had kicked out the priests and the Levites. Abijah told Jeroboam not to fight against Judah because he told him very plainly, “Our God is with us. Our God is with us. We have his trumpets. We have been sacrificing to him, and do not fight against us.”

While Abijah was giving this lesson to Jeroboam and his people, Jeroboam caused an ambush to be set behind Abijah. Remember, he was already outnumbered two to one. The Scripture says, “But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so

they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them. And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle was before and behind."

"And they cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men. Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers."

Note this: 400,000 defeated 800,000 by killing 500,000 in battle. The reason the Bible said they gained the victory was because they relied upon the Lord their God. They cried unto the Lord, the priests sounded with the trumpets, and the men of Judah gave a shout. Thus the children of Judah prevailed. All the military might of Jeroboam and all the military might of Samaria was absolutely useless.

Charge 3: Adding Sin to Sin

Isaiah chapter 30 gives the third charge that God brings against them: "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin."

We have covered the first two. Here is the last charge: they add sin to sin. Sin never stands alone. One sin always leads to another sin. Every lie has to be backed up with more lies. God is saying that they had already had enough sin that merited and deserved His judgment and punishment. However, they were now adding sin to sin because they were refusing to listen, refusing to repent, and refusing to turn. They were adding newer and fresher sins that would deserve far more judgment. They added to the sin of rebelling against God the forming of a wicked and an unbiblical alliance with Egypt. Of course, God had forbidden that as well. Sins do not usually stand alone. When one individual commits a sin, it is usually necessary to carry out other sins as well, or to carry out the plan already contemplated in the mind.

John Gill said, “The sins of consulting others, and of putting confidence in a creature,” were added to their other sins of rebellion and apostasy. Wicked men, who are enemies in their minds by wicked works to God, and commit acts of hostility against Him, or thereby endanger themselves to eternal ruin, do not consult the Word and the ministers of the gospel, but flesh and blood, carnal sense and reason. They seek to cover themselves with the rags of their own righteousness, and not with the robe of Christ’s righteousness and His garments of salvation, which the Spirit of God reveals and brings near. And so there are other sins they add: that of trusting to their own righteousness and not submitting to the righteousness of Christ.

Deuteronomy chapter 29 and verse 19 says, “And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.” So he is adding sin to sin. In Job chapter 34, they accused Job of adding rebellion to his sin.

The situation, then, is that Judah and Jerusalem are not only sinning against God, but are trusting in the arm of the flesh. They are trusting in Egypt. The summation of trusting in the flesh in any and every area of life—economically, militarily, governmentally, politically, religiously, and familially—is given to us in Isaiah 30:8–11.

God says this is going to happen. This happened to Judah and Jerusalem, so it happened to Israel, and it will happen to every nation like this. He says, "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever." Here is what you write: "That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the"

The Consequences of Rebellion

“Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.” Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, “Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: therefore

this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit."

So God says, Here is what is happening: they are saying to the seers, "Don't see anything biblical; don't see anything right." To the prophets, "Prophesy not unto us right things. Don't tell us what God demands. Don't tell us what we are supposed to be doing. What we want you to do is prophesy unto us smooth things. Prophesy deceits. Let us know how good we are. Let us know how blessed we are, but don't tell us about our sins. Don't tell us about our wickedness."

I enjoy studying, history, and preparing messages, but I have often thought how difficult it must be for a preacher who presents himself as preaching the Bible while making absolutely sure he does not upset anyone, hurt anybody's feelings, or say anything that will run somebody off. It must be a strain on his nerves, instead of simply coming out and saying, "Here's what God says."

That is what these people are saying. This is why you have mega churches that are full and running over, while you have smaller churches where truth is being preached, because people do not want to hear what God says. Their attitude is, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from us."

God says, Here is what is going to happen: because you trust in oppression and perverseness, and because you despise His word, this will be like a huge wall ready to burst and fall. I do not know if some of you saw the little video. It is still on YouTube. There was a huge stone wall, with trees all over it. It had been raining and raining, and cars were parked all along that wall. The wall started to crack, and one woman heard it.

She ran to her car, jumped in, and drove off. Just as she did, the whole wall came down and crushed all the cars. Then the trees and mud came down. That was a wall ready to burst. This is exactly what God is saying: it is going to happen suddenly and quickly, and you will not be able to recover from it, because it will be like bursting a

potter's vessel. When you break that little clay pot into zillions of pieces, you will not even find a piece with which to get a little water or remove ashes from the fireplace. It will be totally and absolutely destroyed.

That is true of an individual, a family, a church, a society, and a nation. Although we may not say the exact words, “Don't preach the Word of God to us; don't tell us what God says; don't tell us what God demands,” our attitudes and actions may express exactly that. It is the attitude of the heart. Man by nature does not desire God, the law of God, or obedience to God. He wishes to fulfill the lust of his flesh.

We will never make America great again until we repent, come back to God, and return to biblical truth, biblical law, and biblical justice. If you have not come to that position, continue dreaming your own humanistic dream. Your humanistic utopia will never come to pass, because God determines reality, not man. God says, “Here is how a nation is blessed.”

The Path to Restoration: Returning and Resting in God

I have shown you where we came from, from where we fell, and why. Now I want to show you how to return. This is my first application. Look in verse 15: “For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.” God said, “All you have to do is return and rest in me, and you'll be saved.” It is just that simple. “In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.” I will take care of you if you will just trust in me.

“And ye would not.” Here is the statement I want you to think about: If America is destroyed—perhaps I should say it another way, when America is destroyed—do not blame God. God has told us how to save our nation: by returning to Him in submission and obedience. The fault is not in God; the fault is ours. God has said, “I’ve told you how, but you would not.” You would not listen. You would not return. You would not listen to me.

If God likens the destruction of a nation to a bowing wall and a tottering fence, to a dam ready to burst, and to a clay pot that has burst into a zillion pieces, do not be surprised when destruction breaks out. Do not be surprised when it happens instantaneously, because God has said, "I've told you, I've told you, I've told you."

Look again at Isaiah 30:7: "For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still." Judah and Jerusalem were trusting in Egypt. Nothing of the arm of the flesh is going to save us. No party is going to save us. No one man is going to save us. No piece of paper is going to save us. No treaty is going to save us. Only God can save us.

Remember Psalm 33:12: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." God is our protector, our preserver, and our victory. We need Him alone. We return to Him by listening to His counsel instead of the counsel of men, covering ourselves with His protection, asking His protection, submitting to Him, obeying Him, and not adding sin to sin. God has told us how to do it: "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not."

The fault is ours if we are destroyed; it is certainly not God's. A question then arose: Would Israel have been justified in slaying with the sword those who had deceived them into making the covenant? No, because they had considered that matter.

They had given their word, and God says that once you give your word, you cannot go back on it. Instead of slaying them with the sword, Joshua made them servants: "You will draw water and you'll cut firewood for the house of our God." In other words, they were to do all of that work.

When the other Amorites found out that these Amorites—who were actually Gibeonites from Gibeah—had made peace with Israel, they attacked them. The Gibeonites sent word to Joshua, saying, "We are incompetent. You make haste to get up here and help us because these other kings are attacking us." Joshua came, defeated the other kings, and saved the Gibeonites. They had given their word, and God made them keep it.

Their sin was failing to seek counsel from God to begin with. Had they sought God's counsel, He would have shown them the deviousness, fraud, and trickery, but they did not seek His counsel.

There is an application of that for us. How many times do we get hoodwinked by our political leaders, by every hook and crook of every man, because we do not ask the Lord? We do not seek a biblical answer; we simply trust in the flesh and get hooked. I understand that it was by deceit, but they had given their word, and God made them hold it.

I was listening to one of the confirmation hearings concerning people Trump is trying to appoint, such as Kennedy Jr. They said, "We want to know your world views." The left was trying to trip one woman up, and she said, "Obviously my world views are completely different than yours." There are some people trying to buck all of this. Kennedy said, "We need to stop trying to cure diseases and spend time how to prevent them." That is a fact. But without repentance and spiritual revival, Trump was even talking about an external tax.

The forefathers wanted to support the government through duties, imports, and excise. So he is on the right track there, but without repentance and revival, this thing is not going to succeed. They have, in a sense, got the cart before the horse. They are trying to implement some of the forefathers' principles externally. We were in the black when we were running the country on duties and post-excise, but it is still a little like the cart before the horse, in my opinion.

The truth of the matter is that our worldview is entirely different from their worldview. That is a fact. Father, thank You again today for the Lord Jesus Christ and for His grace and mercy to us. We pray that You would help us and grant us repentance, that we may always listen to Thy counsel, trust in Thee, and cover with Thy divine covering. May we be submissive and obedient and not add sin to sin. May we bow before Thee and work and walk before Thee in truth, holiness, and righteousness. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

Source Notes

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Chapter 2: How to Learn Biblical Truth
JW00728 | SermonAudio

Chapter 3: The Loss of Life, Liberty, and Property
JW01273 | YouTube

Chapter 4: Sam Chapman
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