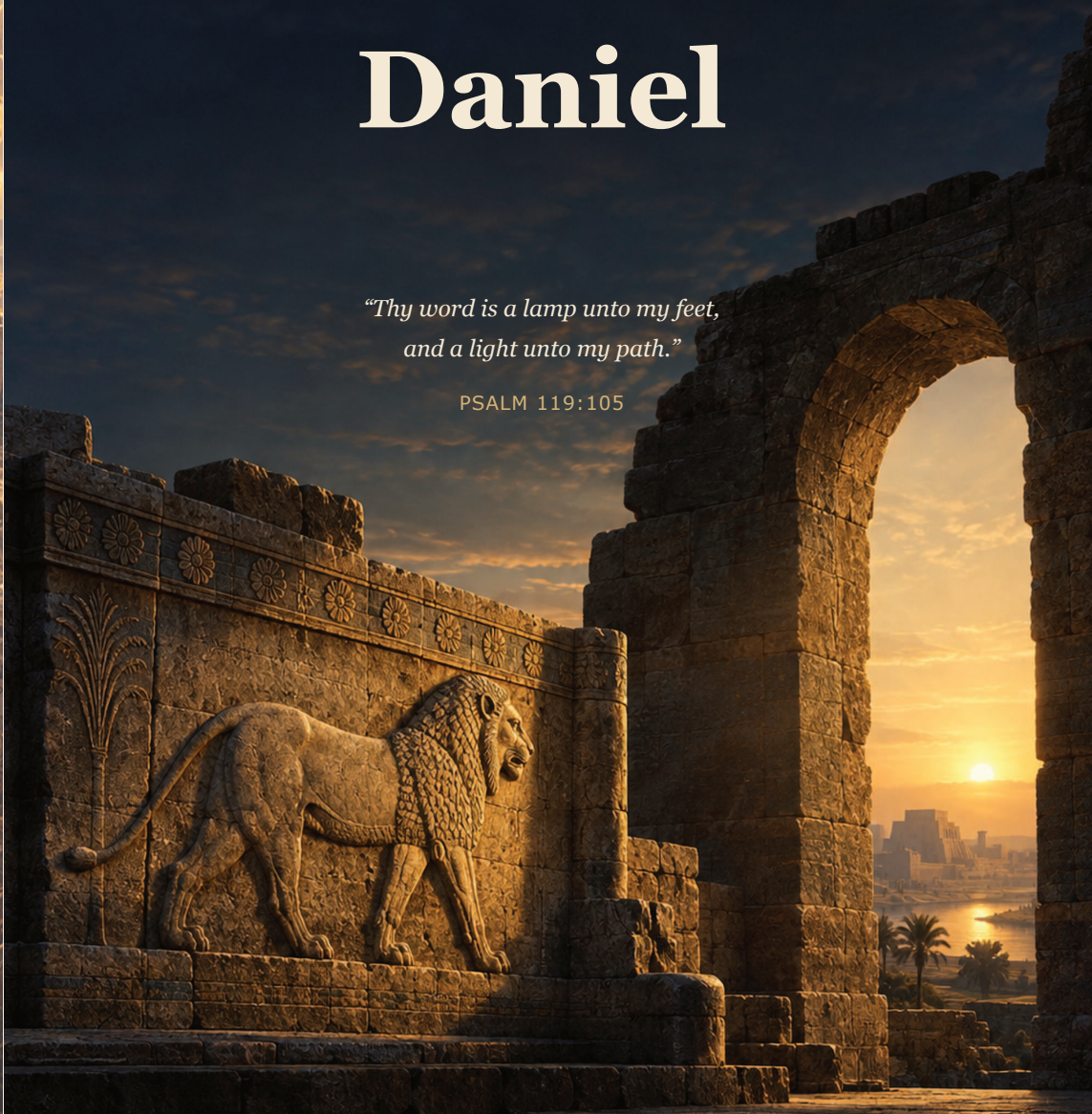
WEAVER BOOKS

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Daniel

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

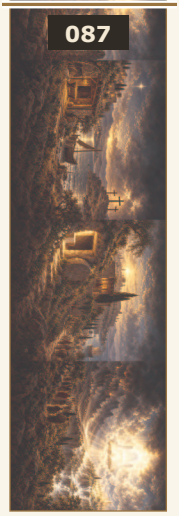
PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE





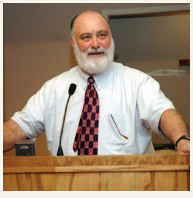
The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.

DANIEL 11:32, EXCERPT

Faithfulness is tested where human power challenges the sovereignty of God. John Weaver considers themes associated with Daniel, including courage, humility, the guarding of thought, and the refusal to yield ultimate allegiance to earthly rulers. This collection brings those questions into conversation with the duties and trials of Christian life.

“No matter how desperate the situation, God will never leave Himself without witness.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

BOOK 087

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

weaverbiblecollege.com

WEAVER BOOKS

Daniel

Old Testament Studies

John Weaver

Weaver Bible College

LIBRARY BOOK 087

Daniel

John Weaver

Weaver Books
Weaver Bible College

Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Corrected review edition - October 4, 2026. Repeated full sermons have been consolidated; chapter numbers, contents, indexes, and study-guide reading ranges follow this corrected edition. Original transcript variants remain preserved in the editorial archive. Final editorial and publisher approval is still required.

Contents

Chapter 1: Keeping the Heart 11

Introduction: The Importance of Keeping the Heart 11

A Clear Command: 'Keep Thy Heart with All Diligence' 12

Defining the Heart as the Mind 13

The Battle for the Mind 17

Personal Responsibility to Keep the Heart 19

Keeping Out Evil and Keeping In Good 21

God's Work and Man's Agency 22

The Danger of an Evil Heart of Unbelief 24

Ruling One's Own Spirit 26

The Explanatory Reason: 'For Out of It Are the Issues of Life' 26

Applications: Requirements and Evidences 29

The Third Application 30

Prayer and the Opening of Hearts 31

Chapter 2: The Reason for Wars 33

Introduction: War as Advancement of Politics and Religion 33

The Reason for Wars 34

The Irreducible Minimum: Rebellion Toward God and His Law 36

Biblical Principle: God Raises Adversaries When Ways Displease Him 37

The Wickedness of King Ahaz as a Case Study 39

The Wickedness of Civil Rulers 40

First Reason for War: Wickedness of Civil Rulers 40

Second Reason for War: Wickedness of the Common People 46

Applications: Consequences of Forsaking God 49

Conclusion: True Peace Only Through the Prince of Peace 51

Chapter 3: Jefferson Davis Revisited 53

Introduction and Personal Anecdote 53

Jefferson Davis: A Christian Statesman 54

Parallels Between 1861 and 2008 56
The Old Paths and Biblical Principles 57
The Nature of Lawful Resistance 58
Secession as a Right, Not Rebellion 59
Modern Federal Coercion and the Loss of Fighting Spirit 61
The Necessity of a Virtuous People 63
The Constitution as a Flaunting Lie 65
Conclusion: Revisiting Davis and Reclaiming Principles 66
Chapter 4: Trembling at the Word of God 69
Introduction and Text 69
Implications of God's Transcendence (Isaiah 66:1) 70
God's Disregard for Temples and Buildings 73
The Man to Whom God Looks 76
The Contrite Spirit Defined 78
What It Means to Tremble at God's Word 79
Obedience as the Evidence of Trembling 82
Applications and Conclusion 84
Chapter 5: The Excommunication of Christ 87
Introduction: The Concept of Excommunication 87
Christ Excommunicated by His Professing People 89
Rejecting Sound Doctrine Rejects Christ 90
Christ's Position: Outside the Gate and Without the Camp 91
Old Testament Parallels: Empty Rituals and Rejection of God 92
The Tabernacle Without the Camp: A Type of Christ 94
Why Christ Suffered Without the Gate 95
The Plea: Go Forth to Christ Outside the Camp 98
The Person: Coming to Christ, Not a System 99
Outside the Camp 100
The Place: Without the Camp—Separation from the World 100
The Performance: Bearing His Reproach 102

Applications: Fellowship with the Excommunicated Christ 104
Bearing Christ's Reproach 104
Chapter 6: Keeping Your Heart 107
Keeping the Heart 107
Introduction: The Difficulty of First and Last Sermons 107
The Clear Command: Keep Thy Heart 107
What Is the Heart? 109
The Heart as Mind and Conscience 111
The Blueprint Analogy 112
Personal Responsibility: You Keep Your Heart 113
Controlling Thoughts 114
Out of the Heart Proceed Actions 115
Ability and Responsibility 116
Blame-Shifting and Self-Control 118
The Explanatory Reason: Issues of Life 120
Applications: Heart-Keeping for Obedience, Evidence, Worship, and Dependence on God 123
Chapter 7: Turning Love Into Hate 127
Introduction and Scripture Reading 127
The Love Story of David and Michal 128
Saul's Deception and Attempts to Kill David 129
Michal's Love and Protection of David 133
David's Exile and Michal's Forced Marriage 135
Michal's Contempt for David 138
The Biblical Meaning of the Heart 139
God's Design for Marriage 141
The Danger of Building a Case in the Mind 143
Michal's Pride and David's Rebuke 143
Practical Applications for Marriage 145
Chapter 8: Has The Lord Spoken To You? 149

Introduction: The Question of God Speaking 149
God's Full and Final Revelation in Christ and Scripture 150
The Danger of Adding to God's Word 151
Manasseh's Wickedness and God's Speech 152
The Still Small Voice vs. Spectacular Expectations 153
God Speaks Through His Prophets and Preachers 155
The Bible as God's Voice 158
God's Compassion in Sending Preachers 160
New Testament Ambassadors in Christ's Stead 163
Applications: Hearing God's Voice Today 165
Chapter 9: Keeping the Heart 169
Introduction: The Difficulty and Necessity of Keeping the Heart 169
A Clear Command: 'Keep Thy Heart with All Diligence' 170
The Heart Defined as the Mind and Understanding 171
New Testament Emphasis on the Mind 174
A Personal Responsibility: You Keep Your Heart 176
Keeping Certain Things Out and In 177
Ability and Responsibility: God's Work and Man's Agency 179
Taking Responsibility for Reactions 181
An Explanatory Reason: 'For Out of It Are the Issues of Life' 184
Applications: Obedience, Sincerity, and Duty 186
Conclusion: The Blessing of a Kept Heart 188
Chapter 10: Lessons Learned From The Omnipotence Of God 191
Introduction: The Omnipotence of God Defined 191
God's Omnipotent Acts in 1 Samuel 2 193
God Is Able to Abase Those Who Walk in Pride 194
Lesson 1: He Is Able to Abase Those That Walk in Pride 194
Lesson 2: He Is Able to Deliver in Unique Ways 198
God Upholds His Failing Servants 200
Lesson 3: He Is Able to Uphold His Failing and Faltering Servants 200

Lesson 4: He Is Able to Succor Those That Are Tempted 202
Lesson 5: He Is Able to Save to the Uttermost 203
Lesson 6: He Is Able to Subdue All Things to Himself 204
Application: Trusting and Asking According to His Power 207
Chapter 11: Why You Are Still Alive 209
Introduction: The Unrecognized Danger of Sin 209
Taking God's Mercies for Granted 210
Jeremiah's Suffering and Hope 211
The Meaning of 'Mercies' and 'Compassions' 213
Suffering Can Be God's Mercy, Not Judgment 214
Looking Beyond Circumstances 216
God Can Withdraw Mercy 218
Applications: Daily Thanksgiving for Mercies 223
Chapter 12: Are You Praising The Wrong God? 227
Introduction: The Obligation to Praise the True God 227
The Danger of Worshiping a God of Imagination 229
Idolatry as Walking After One's Own Imagination 230
Disregarding the Examples of History 232
Belshazzar's Failure to Learn from History 232
The Sin of Pride and Lifting Oneself Against God 238
The Certainty of Divine Judgment 241
Application: Praising the True God Daily 243
Conclusion: Make Your Praise Count for the True God 244
Chapter 13: The Rise And Fall Of A Tyrant 245
Introduction and Definition of Tyranny 245
Constitutional and Biblical Basis for Lawful Authority 246
Quotes on Despotism and COVID-19 Tyranny 247
Biblical Definition: Ruling Without God 248
The Fury of a Tyrant: Herod's Persecution 250
Principles of Persecution and the Head of the Church 252

The Failure of a Tyrant: Peter's Miraculous Escape 254
God's Sovereignty Over Life and Death 257
The Fall of a Tyrant: Herod's Death 258
Applications: God Humbles the Proud and His Word Prevails 259
Chapter 14: It's The Mind, Stupid 263
Introduction: The Importance of the Mind 263
Ezekiel's Vision of Idolatry in the Chambers of Imagery 263
The Imagination Precedes the Image 267
Idolatry Begins with Wrong Thoughts About God 269
The Heart Is the Mind 270
The Imagination of the Evil Heart in Jeremiah 272
Everything Begins in the Mind 274
Controlling the Mind and Thinking on What Is Good 277
Applications and Warnings 278
Chapter 15: One More Time 281
Introduction: Teaching the Same Truths Again 281
The Heart Is the Mind 282
Keeping the Heart 285
Psychological Operations (PSYOPs) 289
Cognitive Warfare: The New Threat 289
God's Escape Route 293
The Mind of Christ and Spiritual Warfare 295
Practical Applications and Warnings 296
Chapter 16: The Cure For The Sin Of Pride 301
Introduction: Pride as a Root Sin 302
Pride Originates in the Heart 302
Definition and Manifestations of Pride 304
Biblical Warnings Against Pride 305
God Resists the Proud 306
Pride Produces Envy and Other Sins 307

The Cure: John the Baptist's Humility 309
Everything We Have Is a Gift from God 311
Rejoicing in Others' Successes 314
He Must Increase, I Must Decrease 317
Applications: Thankfulness and Reliance on Grace 318
Chapter 17: The Earthly Comprehensiveness of Christ's Prayer 321
Introduction and Context 321
Observations on Christ's Prayer Life 322
The Need to Be Taught to Pray 324
The Depth of the Lord's Prayer 325
First Petition: 'Our Father' and Hallowing God's Name 326
Second and Third Petitions: Kingdom and Will 328
Obedience as Evidence of God's Kingdom 329
The Will of God and His Law 332
Heaven's Standard and Our Response 334
Comprehensiveness and Application 335
Conclusion and Prayer 338
Chapter 18: The Power Of The Mind 339
Introduction: The Problem of Marital Breakdown 340
The Mind as the Battleground 341
Perception vs. Facts 342
Biblical Evidence: Heart and Mind Interchangeable 342
Michal's Despisement of David 345
Michal's Wrong Perception and Its Consequences 348
Biblical Roles and Particular Sins in Marriage 350
Resolving Conflict and Avoiding Bitterness 351
The Power of the Mind to Transform Relationships 352
Applications 352
Practical Applications 352
Chapter 19: Pride - The Particular Sin of Rulers 355

Pride: The Particular Sin of Rulers 356
Introduction: Pride as a Root Sin 356
Pride Produces Other Sins 357
Pride Deceives and Hardens 358
Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Daniel's Counsel 362
The Fulfillment of Judgment on Nebuchadnezzar 364
God's Sovereignty Over Rulers 364
Belshazzar's Pride and Fall 367
The Hard Lesson of Pride 369
God's Purpose to Stain Pride 370
Christ's Humility as the Antidote 371
Applications: Replace Pride with Humility 372
Conclusion: Warning and Prayer 373
Chapter 20: Do You Need to Eat Grass? 375
Introduction: The Question of Eating Grass 375
Literal Grass and Its Nutritional Value 375
Human Life Likened to Grass in Scripture 377
The Worthlessness of the Flesh 378
Nebuchadnezzar's Pride and Humbling 380
The Sin of Pride in All People 381
God's Hatred and War Against Pride 383
God Resists the Proud 388
Walking Humbly with God 390
Topical Index 395
Scripture Index 403
Study Guide Link 417

CHAPTER 1

Keeping the Heart

October 1, 2000

Introduction: The Importance of Keeping the Heart

Proverbs chapter 4, beginning with verse 23, says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.”

“Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet. Let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left. Remove thy foot from evil.”

The message is simply entitled, “Keeping the Heart,” for God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” The most needful and yet the most difficult exercise is that of keeping the heart.

I believe this message is one of the most fundamental, foundational messages that you will ever hear. I preach this message innumerable times. I preach this message myself over and over. In fact, I preach it almost to myself on a daily basis. If you do not grasp

these principles, you will never, ever be successful in your Christian life.

Someone has appropriately said that our hearts are like water. They are very easy to keep, or very difficult to keep, and very easy to run out of bounds, because our hearts, like water, will always follow the course of least resistance. In fact, if you will turn in your Bibles very quickly to 2 Chronicles 16 and look at verse 9, let me show you how few people really, genuinely keep their hearts. The Word of God says, “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.” Now listen to that: “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.” Why? “To show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.”

So God is looking for individuals who keep their heart, that God might show Himself strong through those individuals. How few really keep their hearts if God must search the earth to find one that will be true to Him.

The doctrine that I want to emphasize today is this: the keeping and the right managing of the heart under every circumstance and every situation is the great business of the Christian’s life. The great difficulty in conversion is winning the heart. The great difficulty after conversion is keeping the heart.

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." There are three simple points: first, a clear command, "Keep thine heart with all diligence"; secondly, a personal responsibility—you keep your heart with all diligence; and thirdly, an explanatory reason: "For out of it are the issues of life."

A Clear Command: 'Keep Thy Heart with All Diligence'

God says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." Every one of us understands that God commands us to keep our heart. In fact, the Hebrew is very emphatic. It is literally "keep with all keeping my heart," or "set double guards around your heart," or "keep your heart above or before anything else." In other words, the prime duty is keeping the heart.

Defining the Heart as the Mind

Before we can keep our hearts, we have to know what the heart really is. When God says, "Keep our heart with all diligence," He is not referring to the physical organ in our chest. I am thankful that our hearts are an involuntary muscle. It pumps and beats whether we think about it or not. I do not have to lie awake at night saying, "Beat, heart, beat. Pump, heart, beat, pump." It just keeps doing it, and I never think about it. One of these days that heart will stop, and there is nothing I can do about that; I cannot make it beat again.

So when God says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," He is not talking about the physical organ in our chest. What, then, is He talking about? I have asked people down through the years, "What is the heart?" They respond, "It is the innermost being of man." Then, "What is the innermost being of man?" "The conscience." "What is the conscience?" "The soul." "What is the soul?" "The innermost being of man." We keep going round and round, and no one ever finds out what the heart is.

How in the world can you keep your heart if you don't know what the heart is? I want to show you five or six passages that should spell it out for you very plainly. Turn to Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5. This is the very first time the word "heart" is mentioned in the Bible. This is known in hermeneutics as the law of first mention, and usually, the first time something is mentioned in the Bible, that's the way it's going to be used throughout the entire Bible, unless the context indicates otherwise.

Genesis 6:5 says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Whatever the heart is, it can think, it can imagine, for God saw the imagination and God saw the thoughts of the heart.

Now look at Genesis 27 and verse 1. You know how Jacob has taken not only the blessing from Esau, but, of course, he also got the birthright. Jacob deceived his father, pretended to be Esau, and went in and got Esau's blessing. Actually, it was still Jacob's blessing, because the blessing went with the birthright. Verse 38 says, "And

Esau said to his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, my father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept."

I think his father answered and said of him, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth and of the dew of heaven from above. And by thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shalt serve thy brother. It shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."

Now watch: "And Esau hated Jacob because the blessing wherewith his father blessed him. And Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand;"

Whatever the heart is, according to Genesis 6:5, it can think and it can imagine. Whatever the heart is, according to Genesis 27:41, it can speak. For Esau said in his heart, “Then will I slay my brother Jacob.” If you look in Proverbs chapter 5 and verse 12, notice what the heart says: “And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?” So according to Proverbs 5:12, the heart is either capable of receiving instruction or despising it. The heart can think, it can imagine, it can speak, and it can either receive or despise instruction.

Our Lord said it like this in Matthew 5:27-28: “Ye have heard it said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say to you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Notice what He said: “Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart.” In other words, there is a connection between the eyes and the heart. Our Lord said, “Whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already.”

The Bible says the heart is capable of thinking and imagining. The heart is capable of speaking. The heart is capable of receiving or despising instruction, and somehow the heart is intimately connected with the eyes. If you have not figured out what it is, turn to the book of Daniel, chapter 4, and Scripture will show you what the heart really is.

Nebuchadnezzar was a proud, arrogant, haughty monarch, and God decreed to bring him down a notch or two. Daniel 4:16 says

concerning Nebuchadnezzar, “Let his heart be changed from man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him and let seven times pass over him.” Seven times is just the Chaldean way of saying seven years.

“This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.” Look again at exactly what God says concerning Nebuchadnezzar: “Let his heart be changed from man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him.”

Look in verse 28 of Daniel chapter 4. The Bible says, "All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar, and at the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken. The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And they shall make thee eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from men, ate grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws.

God had said, "Let his heart be changed from a man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him." For seven years, Nebuchadnezzar was driven insane. It is a condition known as boanthropy. His hair grew like bird's feathers, his fingernails like bird's claws, and he ate grass like an ox. What did God say? "Let his heart be changed from a man's and to a beast."

Now look in verse 34: "And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine what? Understanding returned unto me." I thought it was his heart that was changed. It was, because the heart is the understanding. In verse 36 he says it another way: "At the same time, my reason returned

unto me." So what is the heart? The heart is the mind, the understanding, and the reasoning ability. When God says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," He is saying, "Keep your mind, keep your understanding, keep your reasoning ability."

In Proverbs 4:23, the word "heart" in the Hebrew is "leb," L-E-B. It is translated in our Bibles "mind" 11 times and "understanding" 20 times. Throughout the Bible, the mind is the understanding. In fact, turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts chapter 24.

Paul makes this clear in Acts 24:16: “And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.” Paul exercised himself to ensure that he had a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men. What is the conscience, and how can it be void of offense?

The Greek word for conscience is “syneidesis.” “Syn” is a preposition meaning “with,” and “eidesis” means “to know.” Your conscience is that which you know with. The English word carries the same idea: “con” means “with,” and “science” means “to know.” Your conscience is that which you know with.

What is your conscience? It is your mind; it is your understanding. Someone may say, “I know what the conscience is. The conscience is that little thing that, when you do something wrong, says, ‘You shouldn’t do that.’” Why? Because you know better. You have understanding. It is your mind. I could take you all through the Bible and show you the same thing.

For instance, look in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 9. The Word of God says, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” Literally, it says, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the mind or the understanding of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” God says you cannot see it, hear it, or comprehend it in your finite mind. So the heart is the mind.

When God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence,” He is saying, “Keep your mind; keep your understanding. Do not let these things

run wild. You are to guard them, set double guards around them, and bring them into conformity to the word of God."

You can take the Word of God and run down the word "mind," and you would be amazed at what the Bible says about the mind. The Bible says in 1 Peter 4:1 that we are to arm ourselves with the mind of Jesus Christ. It says in Ephesians 4:23, "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind."

Romans 12:1-2 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your body as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." And, "Be not conformed to this world." The word "conformed" means to be pressed into a mold. "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed" by the renewing of your mind. Our English word "transformed" is from this Greek word; it literally means "be metamorphosized," to go through changes just like a butterfly. Do not be pressed into the mold of this world. How do we stay out of its mold? By renewing our minds.

The Battle for the Mind

The Bible says in Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus." In 2 Corinthians 10:4, the Apostle Paul says, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

I have heard Christians take this verse and say, "See, Christians are not supposed to own weapons; they are not supposed to own guns." That is ridiculous. The Apostle Paul is using a military illustration. He is saying that physical weapons, such as guns and knives, are insufficient for the war we are waging and the battle we are fighting in this context. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

What is your stronghold? Your stronghold is your place of defense. If someone came through that door with a .357 Magnum pistol and started shooting, I would dive behind this pulpit. That is not much cover, but it is better than standing exposed. This pulpit would be my place of defense, my stronghold. Yet Paul says, "For the

weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

"Casting down imaginations." What is our stronghold? It is our mind. Paul continues, "Casting down imaginations and every high thing or every high thought that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Jesus Christ." How many unbiblical thoughts are you and I allowed? None.

Is it not amazing that we always like our suggestions and ideas better than anyone else's? You can tell someone what the Bible says, and they respond, "But I think," "In my opinion," or "The way I see it." They are hiding behind their stronghold. They do not want to submit to the Word of God. Literally, Paul says, "Casting down imaginations," and bringing "every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Why are there so many passages in the Bible concerning the mind? The answer is simple: whoever controls the mind controls the body. What do you think all the television advertising, subliminal messages, and politically correct propaganda are about? Whoever controls the mind controls the body.

When the Apostle Paul says that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, do you realize that someone could put a 9mm to my temple and say, "Now, Brother Weaver, you think this way or else"? How would he know how I am thinking? That weapon cannot make me think the way he wants me to think. It is absolutely useless and worthless. We must learn, says our Lord, to submit our minds to the Word of God.

You go in the average church, and there are fights, fussing, and division. I do not want to just stop and praise the Lord, but we have not had any of that in this assembly. You say, "Well, there's not enough of us to fight." I've got news for you: two's enough. Sometimes I even disagree with myself. But it is almost unbelievable that we have been here nearly fifteen years and never had a fight. Isn't that amazing?

Let me show you how important it is to submit our minds to the Word of God. Suppose we agree that we are going to build a new

building to meet in. I say, “All right, men, you be out here tomorrow morning at seven o’clock. Bring your materials and work tools. We’ll build us a building.” Roy comes with bricks. Tony comes with concrete blocks. Doc comes with pine siding. Maybe George comes with just scrap wood. We all get out there and start building, each doing his own thing. Doc is working on one part, and Loretta says, “I think a bay window would look good right here.” He says, “Well, bless God, I’ll just put it in.” It does not matter. George says, “I think we ought to have a portal over there.” “Well, I’ll put that in, too.”

Now, if the building ever got built, what kind of building would we have? A monstrosity. But if we had a foundation laid and an architect draw up plans, I could give everyone a copy. Everybody could start on a different corner or area, and if they worked according to the plan, guess what? It would meet perfectly.

Do you realize that God has given us a plan for our lives? He has given us a blueprint. As long as we submit to the Word of God, we are not going to have problems. I do not care whether we are talking about abortion, sodomy, politically correct speech, government, marriage, family, or discipline. If we submit to the Word of God, we are going to come up with exactly the same thing. We are not going to be different. The reason most of us are different is that we do not study the Word of God. Instead, we come up with our own stronghold: “I think,” “In my opinion,” “I believe,” or “Let me show you,” rather than the truth of God. So when God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence,” He is literally saying, “You keep your mind; you keep your thoughts.”

Personal Responsibility to Keep the Heart

God says, “Keep your heart with all diligence.” The second point is a personal responsibility: you keep your heart. If your heart is your understanding, your thoughts, and your reasoning ability, then you are the one responsible to keep it. There is no pastor who can keep your mind. There is no deacon who can keep your mind. There is no committee that can keep your understanding. God has given you your understanding. He has given you your mind, and you are responsible to keep it.

To demonstrate your responsibility in keeping your mind, may I point out again that there is no such thing as a sudden sin? Stop and think about that. You think about everything before you do it. I have had men tell me, "Well, Brother Weaver, I didn't mean to run off with that woman; it just happened." That is a bunch of hogwash, folks. He thought about it, and she thought about it, a long time before they ever did it. "Well, I didn't mean to steal; the money was just there." No, you thought about it before you ever did it.

There is no such thing as a sudden sin. When God says, "Keep your mind," and "Keep your heart," He is saying that our thoughts and our minds are to be brought into conformity to the Word of God. Thoughts can go through your mind as quickly as lightning can flash. It is not a sin for a thought to go through your mind. You have no control over that. The sin comes when you back the thought up and say, "Yes, I would like that," and dwell upon it.

You have heard the old saying, "You can't stop birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from building a nest in your hair." The devil, the flesh, and the world can throw thoughts into your mind just as quickly as anything. I do not care whether they are blasphemous thoughts, lustful thoughts, or wicked thoughts. They may be there, but the sin is not in their passing through. It is when you stop.

When I was a boy, you had to pay to go to a burlesque show. Today, all you have to do is stop at a red light.

You do not have control over what enters your mind or over your thoughts. The mind can have a thought instantaneously. But you must say, "Lord, I refuse that in the name of Jesus Christ. I will not have that in my mind. I will not think about that. I will not hold it in my mind."

Let me show you how important this is. Someone tell me what I have in my hand. What is that? A pocket knife. What color is it? Black or brown. Now, tell me what you see and what color it is. While you were thinking about the pocket knife, you were not thinking about the Bible. When you were thinking about the Bible, you were not thinking about the pocket knife. No matter how hard you try, you cannot think about two things at the same time—just one thing.

So when an evil and wicked thought comes through your mind, say, “Lord, I refuse it. I am not going to think about it.” Then purposefully and deliberately put your mind upon Christ or Scripture, or, as the Apostle Paul says, “Whatsoever things are lovely, honest, virtuous, praiseworthy, think on these things.” If the thought comes back five minutes later, do it again. If it comes back three minutes later, do it again. Then you will understand Isaiah 26, where God says, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.” You can learn to have the mind of Christ.

Keeping Out Evil and Keeping In Good

Jesus says in Matthew 15:16, “Are you also yet without understanding? Do not you yet understand that whatsoever enters into the mouth, goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught?” But “those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart and they defile the man.” What is the first thing that comes forth from the heart? “Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.” Every one of these things are mental sins first. Even our Lord is telling us that our heart is our mind. Therefore, God is telling us that there are certain things we are to keep out of our minds.

That is why you should never watch anything pornographic. That is why you should never watch the soap operas, which teach nothing but adultery, infidelity, and everything else. Every one of them does so. I had the news on not so long ago—and that is about all I watch on television—and there was an advertisement for a soap opera. Two men and a woman were shown, and they wanted everybody to vote on who was going to be the daddy of the baby. I thought, “Who gives a royal flip?”

I know men are as bad as women, but some of them sit there and watch that trash over and over and over. We are responsible to keep certain things out of our minds. Keep your heart with all diligence; keep your mind.

I want you to turn in your Bible to the book of Jude. I want you to see that you are responsible to keep certain things in your mind. Notice verse 20: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your

most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." Now look at verse 21: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Keep yourselves in the love of God.

How do you do that? If the love of God is some little abstract thing floating around somewhere in the universe, we are in trouble. How do you keep yourself in some abstract thing floating around somewhere? But if you will turn back in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 5, I want to show you what the love of God really is, so you can understand how to keep yourself in the love of God. First John 5:2 says, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Watch: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." What is the love of God? Keeping his commandments. How do I keep myself in the love of God? I keep myself under obedience to his Word. I keep myself in obedience to his law.

The devil, the flesh, or the world could throw a thought into my mind: "Well, that's a beautiful woman over there. You ought to go over there and see if you could hit on her." But I must say, "I'm not going to do that. That's wicked. That's a violation of the law of God. God says, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' God said, 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, or his daughter, or his child, or his manservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is my neighbor's.'"

God's Work and Man's Agency

What have I got to do? I have to put the wicked thought out of my mind and keep God's law in my mind. That is my responsibility, and it is your responsibility.

Now I want you to turn to two passages. I want to try to clear this up for you. Consider Proverbs 16 and Hosea 10. Proverbs 16:1 says, "The preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." Notice what the word of God says. I only want to deal with half that verse: "The preparations of the heart in man is from the Lord." Do you realize that if your heart is ever prepared to pray, God prepared it? If your heart is ever prepared to study, God prepared it. If your heart is ever prepared to come to Christ, God

prepared it. The preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord. That is a biblical fact.

Now look at Hosea 10:12. Look at what the scripture says. Here God admonishes us: “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord till he come and rain righteousness upon you.”

Now you say, "Wait a minute, Brother Weaver, there's a contradiction. Proverbs 16:1 says the preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord. And now God tells me to sow to myself in mercy that I might reap in mercy and break up my fallow ground. It's time to seek the Lord." There is no contradiction. Now, listen carefully. Proverbs 16:1 talks about ability. Hosea 10:12 talks about responsibility. God only has the ability to prepare our hearts, but we have the responsibility to seek Him to prepare our hearts. Now, look in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs, chapter 23. Let me show you how beautifully the Proverbs puts it for you. Proverbs, chapter 23. And let's begin reading there with verse 12. Proverbs 23:12. Notice what the Word of God says. Proverbs 23:12, "Apply thine heart unto instruction and thine ears unto the words of knowledge." Now, let me use the word "govern."

You'll see why in just a moment. Verse 12 literally says, "Govern thine heart unto instruction and thine ears to the words of knowledge." Now look in verse 19. "Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way." So now God has told you to govern your heart and to guide your heart. How do you govern it? How do you guide it? Look down, if you would, verse 26. He says, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." The only way we can govern and guide our hearts is by giving them to Christ and seeking Him to prepare our hearts so that we will serve Him effectively and effectually.

It is God's work, but man's agency. In other words, our obedience is His instrumentality.

Now, let's go in our Bibles to the book of Hebrews 3. I'm just showing you now our responsibility to keep our hearts. Look in Hebrews 3:12. Hebrews chapter 3, notice, if you would please, verse 12. You talk about a powerful verse. And the author of the book of

Hebrews says, "Take heed, brethren." So he's writing believers, he's writing Christians. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

The Danger of an Evil Heart of Unbelief

Now, boy, there's a sermon. How can there be an evil heart of unbelief in a Christian that would enable him to depart from the living God? The answer is very simple: a failure to keep the heart. Every departure does not mean a total departure, but it certainly could be a partial departure. It can be a departure from the law of God, the will of God, or the Word of God. It is still a departure.

He said, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." The reason I read this verse is to show you that if we depart from the Word of God, the law of God, or God, it is our sin and our responsibility.

But do you know what we have developed to a fine art in this country, and in Christendom particularly? We have developed what is commonly known as blame shifting. Do you remember when Adam and Eve had sinned? God said, "Adam, what hast thou done?" Adam answered, "It is the wife whom thou gavest to be with me. It's her fault, Lord." Eve was then asked, "What have you done?" She answered, "Oh, it was the serpent. He beguiled me, and I didn't even know it. It's not my fault, Lord. It's the serpent."

Here is what really happened. Adam said, "Lord, it's not my fault. It's Eve's. Indirectly, Lord, it's your fault. For had you not given me the woman, it would not have happened." Eve said, "Oh, Lord, it was the serpent. It's not really my fault, but, Lord, indirectly, it's your fault, for had you not created the serpent."

Isn't it amazing? When our children do wrong, it is always the crowd they hang around with that is at fault. It is never the depraved, wicked heart of our own children. When something goes wrong in our lives or in our homes, it is always someone else's fault. The three hardest words for anyone to say are these: "I am wrong," or, "I have sinned."

We want to blame shift. Now, let me try to demonstrate the responsibility to keep our heart. Let's suppose Dr. Holmes stood up

and cussed me out today. Every one of you hearing is my witness. He cussed me up one side and down the other, publicly and openly. Now, here's my question: Because he has sinned and because he has done wrong,

Does that give me the right to cuss him back? In other words, I have to do right even if he does wrong. Or he could lie about me. Does that mean I have the right to lie about him? No. I have to do what is right even if he does what is wrong.

Isn't it amazing? I have been in church after church, and I have had people who would never come back because they got mad, upset, or angry with someone in the church. Let me tell you something, folks: if you ever leave angry, upset, and mad, it is your sin. It is your sin, because you have a responsibility to keep your heart regardless of what anyone else does. You cannot blame it on anyone else.

I had a man come to church in Jessup. Those who will be there next Sunday will see what I am talking about. The church building is unique. When you walk in the entrance, there is a little hall, with little cubbyholes on the other side of the entranceway and pews back there.

One time, as I was preaching, a man came in late. I had just started preaching. He went around into that little cubbyhole and sat in the last pew in the corner. After I finished preaching and dismissed, everyone was shaking hands and talking, but that man still sat in the corner. He never got up. Everybody went out except him. I watched him, so I was the last one out and went back there.

He said, "Brother Weaver, I just want you to know that I'm never coming back to this church again." I said, "Would you mind telling me why?" He said, "Because the people here are unfriendly. No one shook my hand."

I said, "Sir, I want to tell you something. I saw you come in late. No one else saw you come in because service had already started. Secondly, you sat in that corner and hid; no one saw you. Thirdly, the Bible says he who has friends must show himself friendly. Did you offer to shake anybody's hand? Did you offer to speak to anybody?" He said no. He stayed in that corner. I told him, "If the only reason you came was to shake somebody's hand, come back

next Sunday, and I'll pin a mule tail to that wall out there, and you can stand there and shake it the whole time I preach! Sir, the sin does not belong to this church; it belongs to you."

Ruling One's Own Spirit

“And you're not going to put a guilt trip on me. If you never come back, that's your problem, not mine.” Isn't that the truth? Well, of course, it is the truth. You are responsible to keep your heart.

Proverbs 25:28 says, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls.” This is a very important verse; memorize it, underline it, and make sure you know where it is. Why in the world did a city have walls? To protect itself. Why in the world should you be able to control your spirit, your mind, and your understanding? To protect yourself. If a city has no walls, you can walk in, get what you want, and walk out. If you have no control over your spirit, anyone can manipulate you and control you. Understand this very important truth.

I cannot make you mad unless you allow me to make you mad. I cannot upset you unless you allow me to upset you. I cannot make you bitter, envious, or jealous unless you allow me to do that. If you can control your spirit, there is nothing I can do to you. You can come up and spit in my face and cuss me out, but as long as I have control over my spirit, you cannot make me do anything wrong and wicked. You are responsible to keep your heart.

Proverbs 16:32 says, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” God said the man who can control himself is more powerful than the greatest warrior on earth. You are responsible to keep your heart. You are responsible to keep out that which is wicked and wrong, and you are responsible to keep in that which is right and holy and godly.

The Explanatory Reason: 'For Out of It Are the Issues of Life'

“Keep thy heart with all diligence.” Why? “For out of it are the issues of life.” This is the explanatory reason. Here is why God tells you that you must keep your heart: “For out of it are the issues of life.” The

word “issues” is the word “totsa’oth” in the Hebrew. It is translated in our Bibles “going forth” one time, “going out” eleven times, “issue” two times, and “outgoing” seven times. Literally, it says, “For out of it is the going forth or the going out of the heart.”

Proverbs 23:7 says, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” You are ultimately going to be and do what you think.

Without knowledge, we are helpless. Hosea 4:6 says, “My people perish for lack of knowledge.” In John 8:32, our Lord said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” If you do not know the truth, what are you? Slaves. Only the truth will set you free.

If you do not believe that without knowledge man is helpless, let me put you in a helicopter and drop you right in the middle of Okefenokee Swamp, and let me see you get out without knowledge. You might jump over a few rattlesnakes, moccasins, and alligators if the bears do not get you—or the quicksand. But if you do not know how to survive, you are gone.

A problem is not a problem if you know what to do. You only have problems when you do not know what to do. A lack of knowledge causes us to perish. You do what you do because you think the way you think. You act the way you act because you think the way you think.

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Why do people take dope? I do not even want an aspirin in my body. Why would people shoot dope in their arms or wherever they shoot it? Because they think that all those who died of an overdose before them were stupid. All those who became vegetables were stupid. They did not know how to do it, but I want to do it right. I am going to have this grand and glorious experience.

The reason people do what they do is because they think the way they think. I am going to have to be mighty bad off before I take anything, because I do not want anything in my body that is not supposed to be there. Why am I like that? Because I think the way I think.

Look in Proverbs 4:23: God says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." If you keep your heart, you will put away from you a froward mouth, and perverse lips you

will put far from you. Your eyes will look right on, and your eyelids will look straight before you. You will ponder the path of your feet and let all your ways be established. You will turn not to the right hand nor to the left; you will remove your foot from evil. If you do not keep your heart, it is just the opposite.

I can tell you what is in your heart. I can read your heart. You may say, "Brother Weaver, do not say that. You know, that is not right." Yes, it is right. You may say, "The Bible says only God knows the heart." No, the Bible does not say that. The Bible does say that God looketh upon the heart, but man looketh upon the outward appearance. I will confess that only God knows the heart perfectly, but that does not mean that only God can know the heart. I am going to show you a passage where someone read another man's heart. Look at Acts chapter 8, beginning there in verse 17. Here was a man by the name of Simon the sorcerer.

He made a profession of faith, but he was never a genuine convert. He was never genuinely saved. He even got baptized and joined with the disciples, but he was not saved.

Look in verse 17: "Then laid they their hands on them," that is, the apostles. They came down from Jerusalem. "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

"Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."

Peter said, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." Oh, Peter, how can you say that? Only God knows the heart. How can you tell that man's heart is not right? Peter said, "Don't hand me that trash. I know his heart is not right by what he said and what he tried to do."

In fact, when Peter says, "Thy money perish with thee," I want to give you a good South Georgia interpretation. The Greek word is a very, very strong word. Here's literally what it means: "Your money go to hell with you, Simon. That's exactly where you're going. And you can take your money with you." He says, "Because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

Now watch verse 21: "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter," that is, in Christianity, "for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." How can I tell you what's in your heart? By listening to you, watching you, and talking to you? For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Have you ever noticed in the Bible that whenever a good king died, you would always find this comment: "For his heart was right with God, as was David his father's." How did they know the king's heart was right with God?

When a wicked king dies, you always find this: “For his heart was not right with God, as was David his father’s.” How do they know his heart was not right? By the way he lived and ruled. When God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence,” He is essentially saying, You better keep it, for out of it are the issues of life.

You actually become and do what you think and believe. If you think biblically, you will act biblically. If you think humanistically and wickedly, you will act humanistically and wickedly. It is that simple.

Applications: Requirements and Evidences

Keeping the heart is an absolute requirement for learning more truth. I am not going to take time to go over Mark 4:24–25; you can do that later. But God is not going to give us more truth until we are obedient to the truth He has already given us.

Keeping the heart is also one of the great evidences that we are genuine Christians, and not Pharisees or hypocrites. What is a hypocrite interested in? What is the Pharisee interested in? You remember what our Lord said about them: “Woe unto you, Pharisees, hypocrites.” He said, “You’re like unto whited sepulchers, but on the inside, you’re full of dead men’s bones.” A hypocrite and a

Pharisee will put on a front, beautiful on the outside but rotten on the inside.

The true child of God wants to be holy, pure, and godly even when no one else is around. I cannot say, “I am not going to look at pretty women when my wife is next to me, but if she is not next to me, I am going to get my eyes full.” Whether she is next to me or not is immaterial. I want to do what is right and be holy and godly because God is always here.

The Third Application

Unless we keep our hearts, we will never be able to discharge even the most fundamental duties of the Christian life. While I do not agree with Dwight L. Moody on a lot of things, I do agree with him on one thing. He had written in the flyleaf of his Bible, "Either this book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book."

When you are not right with God, you do not want to read the Bible or come to hear preaching, because you know it will condemn you. You know you are wrong. You will not study or attend the preaching of the Word of God if your heart is not right with God. You will not even pray.

What did David say in Psalm 66:18? "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." What did he say in 1 John 3? "Beloved, if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things."

How could I go to the Lord with a special request asking for blessing if I know that I have stolen from Brother Ernie and refused to make restitution? How could I ask God's blessing if I know that Tony and I have had a knock-down, drag-out argument, and I will not speak to him and he will not speak to me? Our Lord said in Matthew 5, "You go first to be reconciled to your brother, and then you come back and offer the gift."

If you do not keep your heart, you cannot perform the most fundamental requirements of the Christian life. You will not pray, study, attend church, or witness. When you begin telling someone how Christ delivers from sin, your conscience says, "Look what's been in your mind for the last six months. Look what you've been

keeping and dwelling on." You cannot perform the fundamental duties of the Christian life unless you learn to keep your heart.

Prayer and the Opening of Hearts

One of the greatest helps and one of the greatest acts of evangelism is prayer. You can turn to Acts 16 and read it later. You remember Lydia, the seller of purple of Thyatira, who was down by the women's prayer meeting at the river. The Apostle Paul came by, and they asked him to preach. The Bible says, speaking of Lydia, “whose heart the Lord opened,” with the result that she attended to the things that were spoken by Paul.

Why did she listen to what Paul was saying? Because God opened her heart. What did God open? Her mind, her understanding. God converted Lydia. If the heart is the mind, if it is the understanding, only God can open it. What does the Bible say in 1 Corinthians 2:14? “For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them.” Why? Because they are spiritually discerned.

I could preach my voice gone to a bunch of lost folks, but if God does not open their hearts, not one would ever be converted. If you have family and friends that you want converted, you had better learn to pray, “Lord, open their hearts. Let them see. Let them understand. Let them know your truth.” “Keep thy heart with all diligence.” Why? “For out of it are the issues of life.”

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask Your blessing and Your help. Lord, make us holy. Make us godly. The first foundational step is knowing how to keep our hearts. I ask, Father, that You would enable us to renew our minds on a daily basis, sometimes an hourly basis, and many times even minute by minute. May we refuse to have unholy and ungodly things in our mind and our understanding, and keep Your Word, Your principles, Your law there, and thus keep ourselves in the love of God. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

The Reason for Wars

January 28, 2007

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 28:1-6, 16-25 (KJV)

Introduction: War as Advancement of Politics and Religion

> Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. But he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. Moreover, he burned incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. He sacrificed also, and burned incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.
>
> Wherefore, the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was delivered also into the hand of the king of Syria, who smote him with a great slaughter.

> For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.
>
> At that time did King Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him. For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives. The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho, with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, and Gimzo also with the villages thereof, and they dwelt there. For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord. And Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the Lord, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it to the king of Assyria, but he helped him not.
>
> And at the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord, that is, that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him, and said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, therefore will I sacrifice to them that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and all Israel. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord.

The Reason for Wars

"And he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers. Now the rest of his acts and all of his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel."

It was Prussian officer Karl von Clausewitz who made the statement years ago that war is simply the advancement of politics by other means.

There are a number of illustrations that illustrate that point very well. Some of you will remember from your history lessons that President McKinley told the American people that the USS Maine had been sunk in the harbor of Havana by a mine. Thus, he encouraged the Americans to enter what was known as the Spanish-American War. Later, the captain at that time said that a mine did not sink his ship, but that a boiler had exploded. After the Americans had entered the war, it was proven that the USS Maine was sunk not by a mine, but by an explosion of the boiler. Nevertheless, the war had already taken place, and we were involved in it.

Hitler used the same principle of lying to his own people to initiate an invasion. He told the people of Germany that Poland had attacked first, and they believed him; thus they followed him to war against Poland, which initiated World War II.

Some of you will remember that Franklin Delano Roosevelt claimed that Pearl Harbor was a surprise attack. He wanted to get in war with Germany, and he saw war with Japan as a means of that. It had to appear that Japan struck first. But Roosevelt certainly lied to the American people.

He was following an eight-step plan devised by the Office of Naval Intelligence. Contrary to propaganda, messages were sent by radio, even from the Japanese; those messages were recorded and decoded, and we knew well in advance that the Japanese were on their way to attack Pearl Harbor. The attack was therefore basically a lie in the sense that it was called a surprise attack, when in reality it was not. Of course, America marched off to war again.

Some of you will remember that President Johnson lied about torpedoes being in the Gulf of Tonkin, which then put more and more troops into the Vietnam War. LBJ had taken advantage of an inexperienced sonar man and that man's report when he knew full well that there were no torpedoes in the Gulf of Tonkin. I do not have to remind you that President Bush lied about Afghanistan and Iraq. There were no nuclear weapons there, no biological weapons there, and no connection with Al Qaeda.

The truth is that President Bush lied, just as McKinley lied, Hitler lied, FDR lied, and Johnson lied. So we must ask: Why did they lie? The answer is, for the advancement of their political agenda and political objectives. Do you realize that the New World Order today has an objective? That objective is perpetual commerce through perpetual war.

We first destroy, and then we rebuild. The reason is that this keeps paper money in circulation and allows the elite to steal from those countries real money—silver, gold, diamonds, whatever—and real property, while defrauding the people of those countries.

War is not simply the advancement of politics by other means; it is also the advancement of religion by other means. One's religion, his theological stance, determines his politics. Thus, while you are advancing your politics, you are also advancing your religion. This will become exceedingly clear in 2 Chronicles chapter 28.

If we were to analyze the multitudinous reasons for war, we could be here a long time. We could suggest greed, covetousness, theft, hatred, ill will, control, pagan dominion, desire for empire, and a multitude of other reasons why people go to war. But I want to reduce it to what I will call an irreducible minimum.

The Irreducible Minimum: Rebellion Toward God and His Law

Here is the basic reason why there are wars: it is rebellion toward God and toward His law. If everyone acted biblically, there would be no war. If only a few acted unbiblically, most wars would simply be defensive wars, because we would be fighting those who were acting unbiblically. If we were biblical in a defensive war, we would eradicate and destroy those who began the war, and thus that would end wars as well. You remember when the children of Israel marched in the land, what were their marching orders from God? Kill them all. Destroy them all.

In other words, if they were not going to submit, if they were not going to bow to God, they would be destroyed. War basically exists because of man's rebellion to God. Man does not want the one true

and living God to reign over him. He is not interested in God's kingdom; he is interested in his kingdom.

This philosophy of fallen man was true back in Genesis 11, and it is true today. After God had commanded the people to be scattered abroad, they said, "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth." God told them to be scattered abroad, but they said, "No, we're not going to do that. We're going to build us a city. We're going to build us a tower whose top may be like unto the heavens, and let us make us a name. We're going to look out for number one, lest we be scattered. We don't want to do that. We're going to stay together."

Biblical Principle: God Raises Adversaries When Ways Displease Him

A fallen man is always more interested in his name, his agenda, his program, and his kingdom than he is in God's kingdom. There is a verse in Scripture which all of us should really memorize, Proverbs 16:7: "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Think about that. When a man's ways please the Lord, what does God do? God makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. But the opposite is also true: when man's ways displease the Lord, God raises up enemies against him.

Consider King Solomon in 1 Kings 11. Most of us would call Solomon a good and godly man. He certainly had great wisdom, but unhappily he forsook that wisdom. He sinned against God, married all these strange women, and built altars and idols for them. The Bible says, “And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods, but he kept not that which the Lord commanded.”

“Wherefore, the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it unto thy servant. Notwithstanding, in thy days I

will not do it for David thy father's sake, but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son."

"However, I will not rend away all the kingdom, but will give one tribe to the son of David for my servant's sake, for Jerusalem's sake, which I have chosen." The Lord "stirred him up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom." The Bible specifically says that the Lord stirred up this adversary. Then, in verse 23, we read, "And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon, the son of Eliada, who fled from his lord Hadadezer, king of Zobah. And he gathered men unto him, and became captain over a band, when David slew them of Zobah."

"And they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus. And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad did, and he abhorred or hated Israel and reigned over Syria." The Bible is telling us that God raised up these adversaries because Solomon's ways displeased the Lord.

Isaiah 9:8 says, "The Lord sent a word unto Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel." God sent the word, and it just kind of fell over all Israel. Verse 9 says, "And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones." "The sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars."

In other words, a little setback does not bother us. If the bricks fall down, we will have hewn stones; that is better. If the sycamores are cut down, that is fine. We will put cedars in it. We will do better. But look at verse 11: "Therefore, the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together, the Syrians before and the Philistines behind, and they shall devour Israel with open mouth."

"For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." Is that not amazing? God is raising up all of these adversaries. All you have to do is read the book of Judges. What happened when Israel sinned? God delivered them over into the hands of their enemies, into the hands of their adversaries.

King Ahaz, in one sense of the word, is an enigma. He is indeed a puzzle. It is hard to figure out, in one sense of the word, how he turned out to be so wicked and so vile. I can assure you that all men by nature are sinners, and all men by nature are rebellious.

The Wickedness of King Ahaz as a Case Study

But when you consider Ahaz's parentage and his education, you have to scratch your head and say, how did he turn out like this? Ahaz's grandfather was King Uzziah. King Uzziah was basically a godly man. He reigned for fifty-two years and did that which was good in the sight of the Lord. Ahaz's father was Jotham. In 2 Chronicles 27 and verse 2, the Bible says of Jotham, "And he, that is Jotham, did that which was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Uzziah did." So Jotham and Uzziah did that which was right. Jotham and Uzziah both did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.

Then, in verse 6, the Bible says of Jotham, "So Jotham became mighty, why? Because he prepared his way before the Lord his God." Jotham is given to us in this example. Jotham became mighty because he prepared his way before the Lord his God. Why did Jotham become mighty? Because he prepared his way before the Lord his God. Thus Ahaz had a godly father and a godly grandfather.

Let me make this exceedingly clear. We may give our children good examples, a good education, and a good inheritance, but we cannot give them grace. Only God can give them grace. If He does not save them, they will never be saved. We have to besiege Him for His mercy and grace for our children. There is absolutely nothing we can do to make God save our children.

Here is the real kicker: as godly as Jotham was, his son Ahaz was wicked, ungodly, and idolatrous. As wicked as Ahaz was, such a reprobate and so ungodly, his son Hezekiah turned out to be one of the godliest kings that ever lived.

Just as we cannot make God save our children, we cannot stop God from saving them either. Truly, as Jonah said in Jonah 2 and verse 9, salvation is of the Lord. There was godly Uzziah, godly Jotham, wicked Ahaz, and then godly Hezekiah.

The Wickedness of Civil Rulers

The basic reason for wars is, first of all, that God plunged the nation into war because of the wickedness of the civil rulers. God plunged the nation into war because of the wickedness of the civil rulers. Look in verse 1: “And Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.” But he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father.

First Reason for War: Wickedness of Civil Rulers

Here is the first charge that God delineates against him. Ahaz was so wicked that he turned to all of those idolatries for which God had driven the previous inhabitants out of the land. Now God lists charges against Ahaz, and the first charge is found in verse 2: “For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel.”

The kings of Israel were notorious for their apostasy. There was not one good king in the northern kingdom. There was not one godly king in the northern kingdom. Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the very first king, broke away under Rehoboam the son of Solomon. If you read 1 Kings chapter 12, you find that he set up his own state religion, which he began out of his own heart. He fashioned it like the true worship of God, but made it such that he had absolute, total control over that religion.

Later, when Amos was preaching against Jeroboam II, God had sent him to prophesy against Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, and against Jeroboam II. The account appears in Amos chapter 7, including verse 13. Amaziah was the state preacher, the court preacher, so to speak. Amos 7:12 says, “Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there.” Can you read between the lines? What did he tell him? If you do not go back home instead of our business, we are going to kill you. This was the response of the state preacher when God's prophet preached against the king and the state religion.

That's basically what he said: If you want to eat bread, go back home. Get out of here. Don't mess with us. And look in verse 13 at what Amaziah the state preacher said: "But prophesy not again any

more at Bethel, for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court." What does that tell you? Religion and government had become one. The king was in control, not only of the government, but of religion.

All of this, by the way, is contrary to the Bible. If you were to read Amos, you would find that there was indeed a king's chapel, a king's court, king's priests, king's preachers, king's feasts, and the king's religion. Whenever God wanted to cast reproach upon a king of Judah in the southern kingdom, he would always say, "and he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel as did the house of Ahab." So the very first charge God gives against Ahaz is that he was walking and acting just like a king of Israel.

Now note secondly what God charges him with. He said in verse 2, "He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and made also molten images for Baalim." He charges him with worshipping Baal. Baal, the very word Baal, means Lord. Baal was the supreme male deity of the Canaanites. Every time you find Baalism, you will also find Molech worship. In fact, that is recorded in the very next verse, because Molech worship was and is an aspect of Baal worship.

Whenever you hear about Baal worship or Molech worship, both involve the concept of divine kingship: the king as God, and God as the king, with the king as the divine link between heaven and earth. Whenever the ancients wanted to depict man ascending into godhood, they would make a pyramid. When they wanted to picture the gods descending to men, it would be an inverted pyramid. When the inverted pyramid came down and touched the one going up, at the point between those two sharp points would sit the king, the god-man. He was the representative between heaven and earth and therefore classified himself as God. Whether you talk about Egyptian religion, Assyrian religion, or Babylonian religion, it was all one and the same.

This shows the continuity between heaven and earth. It is philosophically known as monism, M-O-N-I-S-M. Monism means one and only one. Monism teaches that everybody and everything is made of one stuff, whatever we are made of. The difference is that some have more stuff than others—not goods.

Consider a pyramid with layers. On the bottom layer is dirt, then plants, then trees, then servants, then women, then men, then spirit beings, and right at the top is King. What, they say, is the difference between a plant, an animal, and us? We just have more stuff than they do. The higher up you are on the pyramid, the more stuff you have. What does that teach? The divine right of kings. In other words, kings have a right to rule because they are made of more stuff than the rest of us.

Baalism, or Baal worship, is nothing more than humanism. It is a political religion involving a man, men, a group of men, or an elite who are on a higher scale than the rest of us. According to their thinking, they therefore have the right to rule over us because they have more stuff. They are gods.

Remember that Plato, in his Republic, taught that we should be ruled by a group of philosopher kings who were fuller of wisdom than the average man. Politically speaking, we call this humanism, Baalism, Illuminism, Bilderbergerism, CFRism, Trilateral Commissionism, or New World Orderism. It is all one and the same. Religiously speaking, we call it Romanism. That is why the Pope is up there: he has more stuff than the rest of them. Economically speaking, we call it the Federal Reserve. Biblically speaking, it is just plain old idolatry, however you cut it. But it is Baalism.

It does not matter whether you consider Baalism or Molech worship politically, religiously, economically, or biblically. All of it is a violation of the sixth commandment: “Thou shalt not kill.” When one destroys the distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, and between the one true and living God and false gods, it is to murder society. Society in America has been murdered under the Baalism of American culture. What happened to our money, our silver and gold? It has been murdered. What happened to our Constitution? It has been murdered. What has happened to freedom of religion? It has been murdered. Under Baalism, you are going to see that when Ahaz served Baal, he not only destroyed himself, but his kingdom, his nation, and his people.

Look back in 2 Chronicles 28 and verse 3. God not only charged Ahaz with acting like the king of Israel and worshiping Baal; He also charged him with sacrificing his children to Molech: “Moreover, he

burned incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom and burned his children in the fire after the abomination of the heathen whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel." Ahaz was so concerned with himself that he was willing to sacrifice his children to a false god. Consider what God did in righteous judgment. Ahaz would save one child, one male child, because he wanted a successor. Look in verse 7: "And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah, the king's son, and Azrikam, the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king." Since Ahaz wanted to sacrifice his children to a false god, God, in His righteous judgment during the war, took from Ahaz the son he had spared. He also took his governor and his best friend.

The Bible says that Ahaz sacrificed his children to Molech. Do you realize the average Christian is doing exactly the same thing, and that America does this every day? What do you think abortion is? It is sacrificing our children. What is public education, basically? It is sacrificing them to the false god of humanism and teaching our children to be good little statists. The average graduate today—I know there are exceptions—knows nothing of the Bible, Christ, morals, ethics, principles, or right and wrong. They are simply good little statists. That is exactly what Ahaz was doing: giving his children up to a false god.

He is charged with promoting idolatry in general. Verse 4 says, "He sacrificed also and burned incense in the high places and on the hills and under every green tree." Let me give you a motto of Ahaz: "Anything but truth." That was his motto—anything but truth. He would worship any and all false gods, but would never bow to the one true and the living God.

Someone has to be blind today not to see the exact same thing happening in America. Our government today will sponsor and support any cult, any group, any idolatry, but it will never support biblical Christianity. All you have to do is look at some of these great religious convocations when a disaster or some type of epic event takes place. What do you have? You have a conglomeration of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, and far-out left-liberal professing Christians. You never find a biblical Christian there. Come to think

of it, I do not know any biblical Christian who would want to associate with a group like that anyhow.

But you see the point I am making. When was the last time they said, "What we really need now, since this great catastrophe has taken place, is someone to tell us why it happened and why the hand of God is against us. Let us have the Bible"?

Has anybody ever asked for that? Why would we not do that? “Preacher, you’ve got to understand, you might offend someone.” Telling the truth is offensive. Is telling a lie offensive to God? Why is it that we are more concerned about offending some people and are not concerned about offending God? To the politician’s way of thinking, God doesn’t vote, so God doesn’t count: “I don’t care about God. I don’t care about the Bible.”

Do you know what the outcome of Ahaz’s philosophy was? War. It was the result of his idolatry, his perversions, his rebellion, and his disobedience. As you read through this chapter, you will find that God not only had a vote; He had more than a vote. He had total control. Verse 5 gives the conclusion: “Wherefore, the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus, and he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.” God did have a vote. God did have a say-so. God did deliver him over.

Now, a question ought to arise in your mind. If verse 5 says, “Wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria,” how can God be called the Lord his God when he worshipped every false god in the world and never worshipped the one true living God? Here is how the Lord God could be called his God. First, He was indeed the Lord God of Ahaz by right, because He is the sovereign, omnipotent God of heaven and earth. God had dominion over Ahaz, and Ahaz should have worshipped Him, but did not. Secondly, there was a covenant between God and the people and nation, and God was still that covenant God.

The truth of the matter is this: God is in control of every king, every president, every congressman, every person, every family, every nation, and every entity that exists anywhere and everywhere,

because God is God. Listen to what the Bible says in Psalm 145:13: “His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.” There is not one individual over which God does not have total and absolute sovereign control.

You remember that passage, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." Daniel said in Daniel 4 and verse 3, "How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation." There was one king who was brought to his knees by God, whose name was Nebuchadnezzar. When God got through driving him insane and making him eat grass like an ox for seven years, in Daniel 4, verses 34 and 35, Nebuchadnezzar confessed this:

"And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever and ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

Nebuchadnezzar said, I butted heads with God. I butted heads with God, and I was the only one that got hurt. Because God is God.

Now, look back in verse 5 of 2 Chronicles 28. What did the sovereign God of heaven and earth do for Ahaz? Because of his rebellion, he delivered him over into the hand of the king of Syria. And they smote him. Then he also delivered him into the hand of the king of Israel. God delivered him over. What does that mean? There was war. And it was not just war. He was defeated. One hundred twenty thousand men in one day were lost. Why? Because of his rebellion.

Look at Psalm 2, holding 2 Chronicles. This is one of the most powerful passages. Psalm 2 is really a psalm for kings and civil rulers. In verse 1 and 2: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Verse 2 continues: "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." What do the kings and the rulers of the earth want to do? They want to throw off God's restraining hand.

They do not like God ruling over them or telling them what to do, and so they rebel against Him. Of course, God laughs at their foolishness. But notice the admonition He gives them: “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” Then He says, “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” The Bible says that you had better learn to submit if you want to live; otherwise, you will be destroyed.

Modern-day rulers like Ahaz will soon discover that God is still on His throne and that He shall deal with them in His wrath, just as He dealt with Ahaz. Why did God deliver the nation into war? First, because of the wickedness and rebellion of the civil rulers.

Second Reason for War: Wickedness of the Common People

But there was a second reason: the wickedness of the common people. In 2 Chronicles 28:6 we read, “For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men.” Why? “Because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.” It was not merely the king who was wicked; the people were wicked as well.

Here is an unhappy truth: wicked rulers beget wicked citizens. People tend to follow their rulers, whether those rulers are good or bad. It is often true that God gives a people wicked rulers as a form of punishment. In Hosea 4:17, God says, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone. Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love, Give ye.” God says, in effect, “You have joined yourself to idols, so I will let you alone. I will give you your wicked rulers; that is what you want.” Sometimes God does give wicked rulers as a judgment.

However, it is equally true that a wicked people not only choose but desire wicked rulers. In Hosea 8:4, God complains against the people because they are choosing those rulers: “They, that is the people, have set up kings, but not by me.”

"They have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off." God says they have set up kings, but not by Him. In other words, they never consulted God. They never chose a ruler who would fit biblical guidelines. He says, "They have made princes, and I knew it not"—not that God is not omniscient. He is omniscient. But He says they did it without His blessing. They chose these wicked rulers. And guess what? It brought judgment upon them.

In Hosea 5:10, we read, "The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound." The princes of Judah were like those who removed the bound. You remember back in Psalm 2: What did the kings of the earth say? "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." We do not want that. God has set boundaries for civil government. The princes did not like those boundaries, and so they said, We will remove the boundaries. We will not follow what God says.

What does God say concerning princes who do that? "Therefore," says God, "I will pour out my wrath upon them like water." How does water pour? Freely, easily, readily, willingly. God said that all those civil rulers who removed His boundaries would receive His wrath poured upon them like water.

Then the next verse says, "Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment." Why? "Because he willingly walked after the commandment." In other words, he willingly obeyed wicked rulers. God said He would judge them exactly as He judged the wicked rulers.

Isaiah 9:16 gives another verse that you should memorize: "For the leaders of this people cause them to err." We are talking about wicked rulers and a wicked people. People tend to follow their rulers, whether those rulers are good or bad. Who is leading the people astray? The leaders, the rulers. "And they that are led of them are destroyed." What happened to the people who followed wicked

rulers? They were destroyed—war, judgment. One of God's judgments is indeed war.

We cannot sacrifice the law of God for the law of man. Let us think through 2 Kings 17 and see why God sent the children of Israel into captivity. Verse 7 says, “For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods.” God brought them up out of Egypt. He is the one true and living God. He said, “You are going to worship me, and I am going to be your God, and you are going to be my people.” They agreed, but when they got into the land, the Bible says they feared other gods.

How do we know they feared other gods? You might say they were bound down to those idols. No, you do not have to have an idol to fear other gods. What is the evidence? The latter part of verse 7 continues: “and walked in the statutes,” or the laws, “of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.”

What were the people doing? They were following the statutes, the laws, of their wicked rulers, who were issuing wicked laws. And what did God do? He sent them into captivity. He turned them over to war because of their rebellion against Him. Why do we say they feared other gods? Because they were not obeying God or following God's law; they were following man's law. God sent them into captivity because they obeyed man before they obeyed God.

The same thing happened to Judah. The northern kingdom went into captivity in Assyria, and the southern kingdom into Babylonia. Verse 18 says, “Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel, which they made.”

They were trading God's law for man's law, walking in their statutes. God says that is idolatry, fearing other gods. I am going to tell you, the American people—and I am afraid most professing Christian people—have made a god out of civil government. They do not understand that God and His law is to be first. Look in your

Bibles to Micah, chapter 6, one of the minor prophets, and look at verse 16. “For the statutes of Omri are kept.” Now, wait a minute. You know, a statute is a law. Do you know who Omri was?

Omri happened to be the father of Ahab. Ahab is called the most wicked, vile king in Israel, in the northern kingdom. Micah said, “For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.”

God said, You want to be judged? You want war? Fine. Walk in the laws of Omri and Ahab. Keep their counsel. Do not listen to me, and I will give you all the war you want. The attitude of the early disciples in the New Testament was expressed in Acts 5:29: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” That is the New Testament application. Why did Israel get thrown into war over and over? Because she disobeyed God.

Applications: Consequences of Forsaking God

Now consider the first application concerning a reason for war. When God’s hand is turned against a people, coalitions, pacts, treaties, and agreements are useless and will come to nothing. In 2 Chronicles 28:16, King Ahaz sent to the kings of Assyria to help him. He took money and treasures from the temple, from his own house, and from the princes, and sent them to the king of Assyria. Yet verses 20 and 21 say, “And Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the Lord, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not.” The most powerful king in the region could not do one thing for him when God’s hand was turned against him.

There is no help for a people who have forsaken God except repentance. All our coalitions, pacts, and treaties are useless. We have allies, but Ahaz had an ally too, and it did not help him. The second application is this: when God’s hand is turned against a people, even small, insignificant countries, nations, and peoples will arise against them to execute vengeance.

In verses 17 and 18, what an embarrassment: "And again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives. The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, and Gimzo with all the villages thereof: and they dwelt there."

Notice these little, weak countries taking over. God does not have to use China or Russia to bring us to our knees. Cuba is sufficient. When we forsake God, those little, insignificant, weak countries are quite capable of taking over huge militaristic peoples. Why? Because the Lord is our refuge, and when he turns his hand against us, we're gone.

Here is a third application: oftentimes, when God's judgments are against a nation, the civil rulers and the people will do even more wickedly, deserving greater punishment. In verses 22 through 25: "And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel." He stole everything out of the house of God and shut up the doors of the temple. He would not worship there, nor allow anyone else to worship there, until he was destroyed. Many times, when God's hand is upon a people for evil, they will do worse and worse until they basically destroy themselves.

Here is the fourth application: do not think that we as a people will escape God's righteous judgment just because it is our civil rulers who do wickedly. No, we have a responsibility to stop them. In 2 Chronicles 28:19: "For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord." They would not stop him; they simply followed him. God judged the people with the ruler.

If I were to ask you who the most wicked king in Israel was, I would expect you to say Ahab, for he was. If I were to ask you who the most wicked king in the southern kingdom was, I would expect you to say Manasseh, for he was. In Jeremiah 15:4, God said, "And I

will cause them," that is, the people, "I will cause them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem."

Why was God going to remove the people for what Manasseh did? Because Manasseh was their ruler, and they had a responsibility to stop him. They would not stop him. They followed him and enjoyed all the benefits of his wickedness. So God said, "I'll judge you when I judge him." God is immutable. He does not change. If God judged wicked civil rulers and wicked people in times past, He will do it today as well.

Conclusion: True Peace Only Through the Prince of Peace

When in the world will all this stop? We will not have world peace, contrary to what the United Nations says and George Bush. We will not have world peace until the Prince of Peace returns and fully establishes His kingdom. His kingdom has come. His kingdom is here now, but His kingdom is coming in its fullness.

Isaiah 2, beginning with verse 1, says, "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house," that is, the kingdom of the Lord, "shall be established in the top of the mountains," that is, over the kingdoms of men, "and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord," that is, to His kingdom, "to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people."

“And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” Why? Because the Prince of Peace will have come. His kingdom will be fully established, and we will be obeying His law. Why are there wars?

Basically, because of man's rebellion against God, until our Lord returns. But we must learn this.

God does judge wicked rulers and a wicked nation. One of His sore judgments listed in the book of Ezekiel is the sword, or war. One way that we can avoid war is for each one to determine, by the grace of God, to be as godly, obedient, and holy as he can be, and to live righteously. You say, how is that going to help? Remember, if God had only found ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, He would have saved those cities. And there's more than ten right here. We need to determine that we're going to be holy, godly, and obedient, doing that which is right and honorable in the eyes of the Lord.

Father, we do thank You now. We acknowledge the supremacy of Your Word, the truth of it, and its impact and importance. Guide us, direct us, and enable us to bring our lives into conformity to it. Build us up in the most holy faith. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Jefferson Davis Revisited

June 29, 2008

Introduction and Personal Anecdote

Leviticus 19:32: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord." You're going to see the significance of this verse in just a few moments, but I want to bring a message today which I've entitled "Jefferson Davis Revisited." Years ago, we had in our hometown a man by the name of General Bush.

Actually, he was a private, but he was the last surviving Confederate veteran in Fitzgerald, Georgia. And of course, everyone, just out of respect, referred to him as General Bush. In fact, we have pictures of him in some of the old Confederate reunions. Sometime after Alice and I were married many years back, Granny Doris was having some surgery in Tifton, Georgia. She came through the surgery fine, and so Alice's father and I, and Alice, went out to dinner while she was in the recovery room.

And Pop and I got to talking about the War of Northern Aggression. And he said, "Now when I talked to those soldiers, they

told me..." I said, "What? Would you repeat that?" He said, "Yes, when I talked to those soldiers." And it just dawned on me, here was someone—and Pop didn't die until he was 89—here was someone who hobnobbed and fraternized with innumerable Confederate soldiers who had survived well into the 1900s.

Jefferson Davis: A Christian Statesman

And I thought about everything that we could learn from the hoary heads, from the old men. This year is supposed to be the year of Jefferson Davis. In fact, this year we would be celebrating his 200th birthday. So Davis would have been 200 this year. He was born in Christian County, now Todd County, Kentucky, on June the 3rd, 1808. And he died in New Orleans, Louisiana, December the 5th, 1889. His father, Samuel Davis, not only served in the Georgia cavalry during the Revolution, but also Jefferson Davis came from good stock and he carried a worthy name. Jefferson Davis was the only president of the Confederacy.

And I can assure you that if he were alive, I would vote for him again today. You know, the current bumper sticker that you see from time to time says, "Don't blame me for the mess that we're in. I voted for Jeff Davis." I've got news for you folks. I'd much rather write in the name of Jefferson Davis than I had to vote for any of the living candidates today. In my estimation, a dead statesman is a whole lot more worthy than a living politician. Davis was not only a decorated war veteran, he was a statesman.

He graduated from West Point in 1828. He married the daughter of Zachary Taylor in 1835, but shortly thereafter, she died of malaria. In 1845, Jeff Davis married Varina Howell, who was the daughter of a Mississippi aristocrat and plantation owner. He successfully ran for the House of Representatives, only to resign in 1846 to accompany his former father-in-law to Texas preparing for the Mexican-American War. He was a United States Senator. He was Secretary of War.

He was a man of wisdom. He was a man of common sense. But above all, he was a Christian. I want to just take a moment and read to you part of a testimony that J. William Jones gave of Jefferson Davis. J. William Jones was not only a preacher and a chaplain and

an author and a theologian, but he was indeed alive during that period. He knew Jefferson Davis. He knew Robert E. Lee. He knew all of these men. And so after Davis had died, here is part of the testimony that J. William Jones gave concerning Jefferson Davis.

He said, and I'm quoting, "Those who were willing to sacrifice self for the cause, who were willing to bear trials for its success, who were willing to reap sorrow and poverty, that victory might be won, will ever cherish the name of Jefferson Davis, for to all such he was a glorious peer and a most worthy leader. I would be ashamed of my own unworthiness if I did not venerate Lee. I would scorn my own nature if I did not love Davis. I would question my own integrity and patriotism if I did not honor and admire them both. There are some who affect to praise Lee and condemn Davis, but of all such, Lee himself would be ashamed.

No two leaders ever leaned on each other in such beautiful trust and absolute confidence. Hand in hand and heart to heart, they moved in front of the dire struggle of their people for independence, a noble pair of brothers. And if fidelity to right, endurance to trials, and sacrifice of self for others can win a place, can win title to a place with the good and the great hereafter, then Davis and Lee will meet where wars are not waged, and slanders are not heard, and as heart to heart, and as wing to wing they fly through the courts of heaven, admiring angels will say, 'What a noble pair of brothers.'"

But it was especially in his private life and in his home that his Christian character shone most clearly. A diligent student of God's Word, a man of prayer, and a believer in prayer, a regular attendant on church services, fond of conversation on religious topics and of a consistent Christian walk, I had in my intimate personal intercourse with him the most abundant evidence that he took Christ as his personal Savior, that he rested in a childlike trust in the grand old doctrine of salvation by grace, justification by faith, and that he rejoiced in the sweet comforts and precious hope of the gospel. Grand old hero of mighty conflicts, ever true to God, to country, to duty.

Thou hast fought thy last battle. Thou hast left behind a stainless name. Thou hast won thy last great victory. Thou hast joined Lee and Jackson and Stuart and host of men who wore the gray and were

soldiers of the cross as well as soldiers of their country. Thou dost now rest from thy labors and wear thy fadeless crown.

Now let me just tell you, I am not going to give you a biographical sketch of Jefferson Davis today. What I want to convey to you is his passion, his conviction, his courage, and his fighting spirit. I want to convey the principles that he embraced. You know, Robert E. Lee said, "History is not about battles and generals, it is about principles." We have to understand as we look around in our day and time in 2008, listen carefully, that the exact same problems that we are facing today were exactly the same set of problems that our forefathers faced in 1861 through 1865.

Parallels Between 1861 and 2008

If you will study that time of history, you will find that the southern people were frustrated and oppressed because of high taxes, loss of personal rights, increased bureaucracy, governmental control, decline of states' rights, the usurpation of the federal government in Washington, D.C., and the threat of northern dominance. That's exactly where we are today. The same principles exist. In fact, Jefferson Davis said this: "The principle for which we contend is bound to reassert itself, though it be at another time in another form." So it is another time, it is another form, yet it is the same principle that we're fighting today. Do you realize there still abides in the bosom of most southern individuals a desire to be free? Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could just wake up one day and realize you are now being left alone by the government?

You have the right to live your life under God as you please. Wouldn't that be absolutely phenomenal? That you could awake and say, "Hey, there's no governmental interference, there's no governmental domination, there's no governmental confiscation. No, no, I've got real liberty and I've got real freedom." That's what Jefferson Davis spoke about and fought for. In fact, Jefferson Davis addressed the Mississippi legislature in 1881 and he said this, listen carefully: "The contest is not over.

The strife is not ended. It is only entered upon a new and enlarged arena." The contest is not over, folks. The strife is not ended. Why is it that the contest is not over and the strife is not ended? Let me tell

you why. Because principles do not die. Principles do not have funerals. They will not die and they cannot die. All of us have seen the bumper sticker

with a picture of the old Confederate soldier there holding the flag and underneath it says, "Hell no, I ain't forgetting." And I think that bumper sticker is very appropriate today. It's not just the war and the rape and the pillage and the plunder that we're not forgetting. No, no. It's the principles for which the South stood and for which the South fought. We have biblical principles as well as constitutional principles and we need to revisit those principles.

The Old Paths and Biblical Principles

That's why I read in Leviticus 19:32, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord." There are things that we need to learn from the hoary heads that have taught us down through the ages. It's high time we learn to revisit the old paths. You remember Jeremiah 6:16 says, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls." Now listen, God said, you ask for the old paths, you stand in those ways, and you walk therein, and you'll find rest for your souls.

But you know what the Israelites said in answer to that? "We will not walk therein." We don't want the old ways. We don't want the right paths. So the question has to be asked, are we going to be like those apostate Israelites who refuse to walk in the old paths? Do you think that there can be any improvement upon the gospel that you just heard preached? Do you think there can be any improvement upon righteousness and liberty and freedom and character and common sense? Ask yourself. Are the principles of liberty and freedom and independence out of date?

We have become a society not only of governmentally dominated people and governmentally controlled, we have become a people who are governmentally supplied. We have become the welfare generation and we want the government to give us everything. It is so unbelievable how people have fallen for the welfare trap. And yet, President Davis has a few words for individuals who want

government to take care of them from the cradle to the grave, from the womb to the tomb.

The Nature of Lawful Resistance

He said this: "Those who submit to such consequences without resistance are not worthy of the liberties and rights to which they were born and deserve to be made slaves. Such must be the verdict of mankind." He said, if you want the feds to take care of you, you deserve to be a slave. In the same vein, Jefferson Davis said, "Let not men ask what the law requires, but give whatever freedom demands." We have forgotten the demands of freedom and the fact that we're obligated to continue to fight for liberty and freedom. We have also forgotten, listen carefully, that oftentimes the law, quote unquote, can be contrary to liberty and freedom.

Let me tell you what I'm talking about. Do you remember in 1776, the American colonists broke the law? They refused to pay the stamp tax. They refused to pay the tea tax. They threw the tea into the ocean. Now, what law were they breaking? Were they breaking the law of the land? Were they breaking God's law? Were they breaking constitutional law? I'm going to tell you the answer is no. They were breaking the law of a tyrant. They were breaking a usurped law because each of the colonies had their own constitution, had their own charters, and here Parliament came along making laws when none of the colonies were ever under Parliament. They had their own legislatures. And so the laws they broke were laws that were unconstitutional. They were usurped. They were laws of a tyrant. That is why the American colonists wrote the Declaration of Independence.

Let me read you just a paragraph: "That to secure these rights, the right to life, liberty, and property, that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it and institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world." And then they begin to list some of these facts. "He has refused his assent to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. He has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be attained. And when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend them. He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in their legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only."

Now, let me just tell you, you can take the secession doctrines of each state and you'll be amazed. In those secession documents, you will find basically the same language. I have just a page from the Georgia Declaration of Causes of Secession. It is basically six pages long. But it begins like this: "The people of Georgia, having dissolved their political connection with the government of the United States of America, present to their Confederates and the world the causes which have led to the separation.

Past January the 29th, 1861. They, that is the federal government, they have endeavored to weaken our security, disturb our domestic peace and tranquility, and persistently refuse to comply with their express constitutional obligations to us in reference to that property and by use of their power in the federal government have striven to deprive us of an equal enjoyment of the common territories of the republic. The hostile policy of our Confederates have been pursued with every circumstance of aggravation, which could arouse the passions and excite the hatred of our people.

Secession as a Right, Not Rebellion

They go on and on. And it is amazing. When you read these secession documents, it's like almost reading the Declaration of Independence. You see, George III labeled the American colonists as rebels, and his ilk referred to the war as the Great Rebellion. I've told you repeatedly that rebellion can only be against the lawful authority. Where there

is no lawful authority, it's resistance. But listen to what Jeff Davis said when Lincoln and his ilk referred to it as the Great Rebellion. Jeff Davis said, "If it were indeed a rebellion in which we were engaged, we might find ample vindication for the course we have adopted in the scenes which are now being enacted in the United States.

Let me paraphrase that for you. Jeff Davis said, you want to say that we're in rebellion? Well, if you look around, Mr. Lincoln, you'll find out why we're in rebellion. You'll find out about your tyranny and your wickedness and your ungodliness. Further, Jefferson Davis goes on to say this: "When certain sovereign and independent states form a union, with limited powers for some general purpose, and any one or more of them in the progress of time suffer unjust and oppressive grievances for which there is no redress but in a withdrawal from the association, is such a withdrawal an insurrection? If so, then of what advantage is the compact of the union to the states? Within the union are impressions and grievances. The attempt to go out brings war and subjugation.

The ambitious and aggressive states obtain possessions of the central authority, which having grown strong in the lapse of time, asserts its entire sovereignty over the states." Listen to what he said. If we go out, you're saying we're rebellious and you begin a war of subjugation. If we stay in, the more powerful and dominant states dominate us anyhow. What difference does it make? In his inaugural address, President Davis said it was necessity and not choice that led to the secession of the southern states.

It was indeed the true policy of the South, since it was an agricultural economy, that that policy was peace. And when the South seceded, according to Jefferson Davis, we kept the constituent parts but not the system of the federal government. Simply stated, what Davis is saying is this: We kept the Constitution because the Constitution of the United States is in reality embodied in the Confederate Constitution. In fact, the Confederate Constitution was designed to preserve the principles of the United States Constitution. President Davis said, "I love the Union and the Constitution. But I had rather leave the Union with the Constitution than to stay in the Union without the Constitution."

He further explained the situation when he said, "Our situation illustrates the American idea that government rests upon the consent of the governed and that it is the right of the people to alter or abolish them whenever they become destructive of the ends for which they are established." And he says this: "I worked day and night for 12 years to prevent the war, but I could not. The North was mad and blind and would not let us govern ourselves, so the war came." Wow.

Did you hear what he said? They would not let us govern ourselves. He didn't say they would not let us keep our slaves. They would not let us govern ourselves. The war was not over slavery, it was over independence. And may I remind you, the South did not invade the North, the North invaded the South. Has it ever occurred to you that basically speaking, there are only two ways to resolve conflicts?

The first way is through reason. I mean, you know, I can try to reason with you and get you to do what I would like you to do. But now if you can see through my reasoning or if my reasoning is false, you could say, "Look, there are loopholes in that reasoning and your reasoning is wrong and I'm not going to do it." Well, if I can't reason you into doing what I want you to do, if I'm bigger than you are and stronger than you are, then I can force you.

Do you realize that's why Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers for three months? The South was not buying the reasoning of the North. And so Lincoln said, "Look, since I can't reason with you, I will force you." Do you realize that is exactly the same that is happening today in this land? Our government, our present-day government, tries to issue laws and regulations and bureaucracies and all this kind of thing just to get us to do what they want us to do. But if we don't abide by their reasoning or by their regulations or their rules or their laws, then they use force. Now, don't just think that this is applied to individuals.

Modern Federal Coercion and the Loss of Fighting Spirit

It applies equally to the states. I suppose that everyone in this room has heard about mandates from the federal government, even

unfunded mandates. What does that mean? It means the federal government issues a mandate and it tells the state, "You will do this and you will pay for it." Do you realize Jefferson Davis in his days, Congress basically blackmailed the states with their own monies? In other words, if you wanted internal improvements in your state, then you must literally pay the piper and dance to his tune. You must support the northern states. You must dig their canals. You must protect their manufacturing. You must provide high tariffs for their goods. You must basically redistribute the wealth from the south to the north.

I find it absolutely amazing that one of the threats that exists today from Washington, D.C. to the states is this: If you don't do what we say, if you do not do what we ask, we will cut off your federal funding. Would to God that I could be a state governor for one day. And you know what my response would be? Fine. You keep your money to yourself. By the way, we will keep our money in the state. We will not send you any money. And since we will not send you any money, we won't need your money. We'll have sufficient for our own state, and you won't have to steal from other states to give to us.

We have forgotten, "Thou shalt not steal" applies not only to individuals, but to governments as well. But the problem we have in this day and time is we've lost the fighting spirit of our forefathers. Jefferson Davis never lost that fighting spirit. In his first days around the new Capitol, he spent those first days reviewing troops and making speeches. He exhorted his men with these words, he said, that they were to remember the dignity of the contest and to smite the smiter with manly arms as our fathers did before us.

So what is he saying? You fight the way our forefathers fought for independence. And then he declared his own willingness to lay down his civil office and take command of the army should the extremity of the cause ever warrant such an action. Can you believe that? Here is the president saying, "I want you to smite the smiter with manly arms, I want you to remember the spirit of our forefathers, and I'll tell you, if push comes to shove, if necessity is laid upon me, I will resign the office of president, I will take up the sword of a soldier, and I personally

will lead you in battle." I would most hardly rejoice to see any of our modern day politicians say and do the same. I've often said one of the best ways to head off war was to make it an irrevocable law that those who initiated the war, those who voted for the war, had to be first on the battlefield with their families. Our bureaucrats are willing to send our children to die, but they're not willing to send their children to die.

When I'm talking about a fighting spirit, I'm referring to a spirit of resistance to wickedness, to tyranny, to despotism, and to any and everything that is wicked and wrong and contrary to that which is right and holy. Have you ever wondered what has happened to America? How in the world can we be so apathetic and so lethargic as a people? How can we be so dumb? So stupid.

The Necessity of a Virtuous People

How could we be so uncaring? Let me tell you, Jefferson Davis had the answer to those questions. Here's what Jefferson Davis said: "Obstacles may retard, but they cannot long prevent the progress of a movement sanctified by its justice and sustained by a virtuous people."

Now listen to what he said. Obstacles may retard. In other words, there's going to be things that will come up to hinder us. But those obstacles cannot long prevent the progress of a movement sanctified by its justice and sustained by a virtuous people.

Now, whether President Davis knew it or not, he was quoting a principle from Deuteronomy chapter 20. Because God in a war, not only declares the necessity for a holy or righteous cause, He also declares the necessity for a holy and righteous people. And what Jefferson Davis is saying, look, that this movement not only has to be sanctified by justice, it has to be sustained by a virtuous and holy people.

Now you say, "Wait a minute, Brother Weaver, that's a pretty big jump, isn't it? To jump from justice to holiness." No, no. It's not a big jump. Because you must understand that the Hebrew word for justice and the Hebrew word for righteousness are one and the same word. If something is right, it is just. If something is just, then it is

right. If it is righteous, it is just. If it is righteous, it is holy. Justice and righteousness are exactly the same thing.

Listen, if you would, to Webster's 1828 Dictionary as to the definition of virtuous. Here it is: morally good, acting in conformity to the moral law, practicing the moral duties and abstaining from vice as a virtuous man, being in conformity to the moral or divine law as a virtuous action or virtuous life.

Now, what did Davis say? Davis said, we must have a movement that is just. And it must be sustained by virtuous people. That is, it must be sustained by people who are holy and are living in agreement with the law of God.

Now, I don't know about you, but I tend to believe that liberty, freedom, and the right of self-government, limited government as ordained by God, self-defense—I believe that these are righteous and holy causes. But not only must the cause be just, it must be sustained by a virtuous people. The problem is not with the movement. The problem is with the people in the movement.

We are hindering it because of our lack of virtue, our lack of holiness, our lack of righteousness. If you'll visit the water tower here in Waycross, Georgia, you'll see one of my favorite characters drawn on that water tower: Pogo Possum. One of Pogo Possum's favorite sayings was this: "We have met the enemy and he is us." We have met the enemy and he is us. That's the truth, folks.

You know what the Bible says in Daniel 11:32? "The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits." We don't have the knowledge of God. And I'm not just talking about the intellectual knowledge. I'm talking about the kind of knowledge that Brother Sprinkle preached about. We don't have the knowledge of God. We don't have the knowledge of His truth. We don't have it burning in our souls.

Therefore we're weak and we're anemic and we're apathetic. We have to learn that to be strong in the Word is a very valuable truth. You know what history is? History is nothing more than the outworking in time of God's eternal decree. History is what God has ordained before the foundation of the world coming to pass. History and truth go together because history is truth. It is God's truth.

And the reason that most people laugh at us today and they think, "Well, boy, you think we're facing the same problems today that our forefathers faced back in 1861. Man, you've got to be crazy." Oh no, I'm not crazy. And the reason people think you're crazy for saying that is, number one, they don't know the Scripture, and number two, they do not know history. We have a generation of people who are not only ignorant of the Word of God, but they're ignorant of history as well.

The Constitution as a Flaunting Lie

Now let me ask you a question. Maybe it'll help you think through this. Very simple question. You answer it. Is the Constitution of the United States today honored and obeyed by the powers that be, or is it ignored, dishonored, and for all practical purposes trashed by those who took an oath to uphold it? What's the answer? Trashed. What did Lincoln do to the Constitution? Trash it, violate it over and over and over. I want you to listen very carefully to this. President Davis explained the answer. You want to know why our inalienable rights are lost. You want to know why Congress, why the judicial system, why the executive office ignores the Ninth and Tenth Amendments. You want to know why the Declaration of Independence has been trashed. Let Mr. Davis answer those questions for you. Here's what he said: "Whichever of them," talking about the northern states and the northern Congress, "whichever of them denies it," that is the principles ordained in the Constitution, "whichever of them denies it and seeks to retire," that is the states, "is declared to be guilty of insurrection and its citizens are stigmatized as rebels as if they

revolted against a master and a war of subjugation has begun. If this action is once tolerated, where will it end? Where is the constitutional liberty? What strength is there in bills of right? In limitation of power? What new hope for mankind is to be found in written constitutions? What remedy which did not exist under kings or emperors? If the doctrines thus announced by the government of the United States are conceded and then look through either end of the political telescope, one sees only an empire and the once famous Declaration of Independence trodden in the dust as a glittering

generality and the compact of the Constitution, the Union, denounced as a flaunting lie."

Now, listen to what he said. If you look through either end of the political telescope, he said, if the federal government under Abraham Lincoln, if those radical Republicans have their way, then what is going to end up in this country is an empire, not a republic, not a constitutional republic, but an empire. And the Declaration of Independence will be trodden in the dust as a glittering generality and the compact of the Union, the Constitution, will be announced as a flaunting lie.

President Davis told us what the outcome would be if we ever lost our cause, our courage, our character, and our Christianity. What has the Declaration of Independence become today? A glittering generality. It's something pretty. It's something that you go to look at encased in glass. You can see it. You can't touch it. And nobody pays any attention to it. What about the Constitution? It becomes a flaunting lie.

We are not a constitutional republic. Nobody pays any attention to it, especially our leaders. And you know what we're taught? Listen carefully. We're taught that the issues for which the South fought are now dead issues. Let me repeat something I said earlier. Principles do not die. Principles do not have funerals. The principles for which the South fought in 1861, for which our forefathers fought in 1776—if they were true in 1776, they're true in 1861, and they're also true in 2008.

Conclusion: Revisiting Davis and Reclaiming Principles

We are still fighting the war. We're still fighting for truth, for liberty, for freedom. You say, "Are you still fighting the war?" Of course I am, and I hope you are too. And I trust many more will help us, because principles do not die. It's time to revisit Jefferson Davis. It's time to come back and say, "Let's see what he had to say. Let's see if it's applicable." Listen to what he did say. Jefferson Davis said, "Our cause was so just, so sacred, that had I known all that has come to pass, had I known all that was to be inflicted upon me"—and he was

in prison for a number of years, three I think—"had I known all that was to be inflicted upon me,

all that my country was to suffer, and all that our posterity was to endure, I would do it all over again." What did he say? Our cause was so just, so sacred. Had I known everything that was going to happen to me, and happen to the South, I would have done it all over again, exactly as I did it before. Why? He had no other choice. He had to stand for principle and truth.

Earlier, Davis had written to a fellow Southerner and he said this: "Nothing fills me with deeper sadness than to see a Southern man apologizing for the defense we made of our inheritance and denying the great truths on which all of our institutions were founded. To be crushed by superior force, to be robbed and insulted were great misfortunes, but these could be born while there still remained manhood to assert the truth and a proud consciousness in the rectitude of our course. When I find myself reviled by southern papers as one renewing dead issues, the pain is not caused by the attack upon myself, but by its desecration of the memories of our fathers and those and their descendants who staked in defense of their rights, their lives, their property, and their sacred honor.

To deny the justice of their cause, to apologize for its defense, and to denounce it as a dead issue, is to take the last of their stakes, that for which they were willing to surrender the other." In other words, you take the props out from under our forefathers when you begin to apologize. Let me say it again, the South did not believe themselves to be right in 1861 to 1865. They were right! And it's still right today.

The problem is, we've lost our manhood. We've lost our courage. We've lost our character. We've lost our Christianity. We don't understand what it means to quit you like men and be strong. We don't understand what it means to fight the good fight of faith. But I'll tell you one thing we do know. We do know to forsake the old paths. We do know to go our way and fail to listen to God. We do know to not listen to the hoary heads and not rise up for the old men who have some truth and some understanding and some knowledge. We know how to do wrong. But we don't know how to do right. And I'm going to tell you, if we ever get out of the mess that we're in in this country, we're going to have to come back to the same principles

that our forefathers held, to the same foundation on which they stood, and develop the same conduct and the same courage.

Do you realize I hear men all the time say, "Ah, Stonewall Jackson. Robert E. Lee, Jeb Stuart, oh, great men, great, yes!" But what made them great? It was their Christianity. They believed the Word of God and they stood on it. If we ever get back our history and our heritage and our culture and our country, it's going to be obedience to the Word of God. Let's pray.

Father, we do ask You, in the name of Jesus Christ, that You would indeed build us up in the most holy faith. Thank You, Father, for the message that went before on the plain, clear exposition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Lord, it is not only You who saves us, but Lord, it is You who must revive us. It's not only the Lord You who shines in our hearts, it's You who strengthens our hearts.

and gives us courage to stand for Thy Word and Thy truth. We ask Thee, Father, to help us to be biblical and godly. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Trembling at the Word of God

August 24, 2008

Introduction and Text

Notice Isaiah 66, beginning with verse 1: “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man.”

“He that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear.”

“But they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not. Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.”

All of us have heard the word of God at times with great reverence, respect, love, and admiration. There have been times when we wept openly when we heard it, and times when we rejoiced and laughed when we heard it. But the question that you have to ask yourself is this: Have you ever trembled at the word of God?

If God has respect unto a man that is poor and of a contrite heart and trembleth at his word, would it not be wise to desire to be one of those who do indeed tremble at his word? What does it mean to tremble at the word of God?

Before trying to answer that question, consider the implications of verse 1: “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.”

Implications of God's Transcendence (Isaiah 66:1)

"Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" First and most obvious in verse one is the implication that God is. That is, God most certainly does exist. Verse one is a declaration of the existence of God. Nowhere in the Bible does the Bible try to prove the existence of God. It assumes it. It is a presuppositional fact. That is why the Bible begins, "In the beginning, God." Nowhere will you find an argument in the Bible attempting to prove the existence of God. The very first implication in verse one is that God is.

The second implication is that God has spoken. God has revealed Himself, not only in His creation, but also in His special revelation, the Word of God. So, "Thus saith the Lord." God not only is, but God has spoken.

Thirdly, very clearly, God is greater than His creation. The theological term is that God is transcendent. He is above His creation. It is true that God may be seen in His creation, but He is

over, above, and beyond it. He is not bound up in His creation or mixed up in it.

If you understand God's transcendence, then you also understand the error, heresy, and wickedness of pantheism, which teaches that God is somehow bound up in creation, that everything you see is God. A pantheist would hit this pulpit and say, "This pulpit is God." He would touch that tree outside and say, "That tree is God." He would touch the ground and say, "The ground is God." The pantheist does not merely see God in creation; he believes God is mixed up in creation, that God and creation are one and the same.

That is where you get Mother Earth, "be kind to your mother," and the tree-hugging mentality. It all comes from the error and heresy of pantheism. There is a fourth implication here: we see, or at least we should see, the supremacy and sovereignty of God.

If heaven is God's throne and earth is His footstool, then obviously He is over all. He is supreme, sovereign, and in control. Psalm 115:3 says, "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." God does only as He pleases and always as He pleases. None can stop Him, thwart Him, or hinder Him. Daniel 4:35 says, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" God is obviously sovereign. If the earth is God's footstool, it means that He treads upon it.

It is at His disposal. He may do with it as He pleases. He is sovereign, and whatever He does is right, not only in relation to heaven, but also in relation to the earth.

The fifth implication of verse one is this: You must see the omnipresence of God. He said, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." The omnipresence of God simply means that God is everywhere at one time in the totality of His person. He asks, "Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" In other words, there is no house, building, tabernacle, or temple that can contain God. God is omnipresent. He did manifest Himself in the tabernacle and in the temple in a very peculiar and

special way, yet neither contained God. When Solomon dedicated the temple, he said in 1 Kings 8:27, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" Even Solomon knew that the heavens could not contain God. God is greater than His creation.

David acknowledged the omniscience and the omnipresence of God in Psalm 139:1–12. God is not only all-knowing; He is everywhere present at one time in the totality of His being. David says, “O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.” He continues, “Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.”

Then David asks, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” If he ascends into heaven, God is there; if he makes his bed in hell, God is there. If he takes the wings of the morning and dwells in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall God’s hand lead him, and His right hand shall hold him. If he says, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,” even the night shall be light about him. “Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.” David confesses and acknowledges not only God’s omniscience—He knows all—but also His omnipresence, that God is everywhere at one time in the totality of His being.

There is also in verse 1 a declaration of God’s absolute ownership of all things. “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? Where is the place of my rest?” He continues, “For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord.”

What in the world can you give unto the Lord? The answer, in reality, is nothing. Why? Because God is the Creator and the owner of all things. Everything that is, God made; it really and truly belongs

to Him. You may be a steward over it, and you may possess some of it, but the only reason you have it is that God originally created it and gave it to you.

Listen to what the Bible says. Psalm 24 and verse 1: “The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” You know what God said in Psalm 50 and verse 12? God said, “If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.” Why would God need anything? God created everything that exists. And God said, “If I needed it, I would take it, because it's mine anyhow.” Then in Psalm 89, verse 11, the Word of God says, “The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.”

God's Disregard for Temples and Buildings

Now, what I want you to do is put these last three points together. I want you to think about the supremacy, the sovereignty of God, the omnipresence of God, and God's absolute declaration to be the owner of all things. Look what He says in verse one: “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.” Now look at the question: “Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?” I want you to stop and think just a moment. Here is my question: what was the temple in relation to God? I could ask, what was the temple in comparison to God? Do you realize that it does not matter how magnificent the temple was? It does not matter how beautiful, how great, or how excellent it was. What is the comparison of that temple to the one true and living God? Let me ask the question another way: how can anyone place the emphasis upon the temple, or anything that is material, for God is greater than His creation?

Everything that went into the temple, no matter how beautiful or excellent it was, everything that went into the temple was made by God. There is no house, there is no building, there is no temple that man could build that would adequately express God's glory. There is no external worship that would be suitable to declare His majesty. Why? Because God is greater than His creation.

Now, it is true, as you read through the Bible, that the Lord said of the temple in Psalm 132 and verse 14, “This is my rest for ever: here

will I dwell." It is also true that in 2 Chronicles 6 and verse 41, the Bible says, "Enter into thy rest, O Lord." But when He spoke about the temple like that, He was speaking about the fact that in the temple was a peculiar and special manifestation of His glory.

It was merely a token of His presence. It certainly did not contain God. It could not contain God. It was merely a demonstration of His power and presence. God did not command men to build so that they might look at the temple or building and, according to their own fancy, worship the building more than the Creator.

That is exactly what they did in the Old Testament. That was also the attitude in the New Testament. The temple was built so that men might look at it and say that God is more excellent and more glorious than any building man can make. God is over and above and beyond His creation. If you were to take all of creation and put it in one building, God is still greater than that building. Do you know one of the sins God charged Israel with?

Hosea chapter 8 and verse 14 says, "Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples." Has not Christianity fallen into the same trap? Do you realize that we build elaborate buildings—multi-million-dollar buildings, so expensive and expansive that you and I cannot even practically conceive of them? Those great, expensive and expansive buildings are used three to five hours a week.

We sit back and say, "Look at our architectural work. Look at our carpet, our padded pews, and our stained-glass windows. Listen to that deep-throated organ and that expensive Steinway piano." Do you realize that modern-day Christians usually attend church for fellowship, socializing, and entertainment? The worship of God is the farthest thing from their thoughts.

Ministry to the saints does not even enter their minds. The duty, responsibility, and privilege of worshiping God are unknown to their thinking. The philosophy of modern-day church builders—and I am using the word church in terms of buildings—is this: "You build it and they will come." The more expensive, elaborate, and beautiful the building, and the more programs you have, the more people you have. Why? Because they are interested in socialization,

entertainment, and fellowship. They are not interested in worshiping God.

I said all that to show you this: if you understand Isaiah 66, verses 1 and 2, you will understand that God does not think nearly as highly of our buildings as we do. He not only slights them, but at times He holds them in absolute contempt. The disciples in our Lord's day endeavored to impress upon Him the beauty and magnificence of the temple.

Look in your Bibles, if you would please, to Matthew 24, verses 1 and 2, and see our Lord's response when they spoke of how great, magnificent, and beautiful that temple was. This was Herod's temple, not even the temple Solomon built; that temple had been destroyed. And, by the way, if you read the Minor Prophets, you will find that the old men who were alive when they saw the rebuilding of the temple after the return from captivity wept, because even then that building was not comparable to Solomon's. Here we have Herod's temple, certainly a great, magnificent, and beautiful building. The Bible says in Matthew 24:1, "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple." He had walked out of the temple doors, "and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple." In other words, "Look how magnificent, look how beautiful, Lord, these are."

"Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." What did our Lord say? You better get your eyes off the building. You better get your eyes off material things. Everything here is about to be destroyed.

The Jews in Isaiah's time and afterward, in Christ's time, gloried much in the temple and promised themselves great things from it. In order to humble them and shake their confidence in vain things, both the prophets and Christ foretold the ruin of the temple and that God would soon leave it absolutely desolate. That temple was destroyed by the Chaldeans, but it was rebuilt. The ceremonial services were restored. But when the Romans got through with the temple, it was not rebuilt, nor were the ceremonial services restored. God was simply demonstrating in the destruction of that temple what little regard He had for buildings.

The Man to Whom God Looks

If God has very little regard for our expensive, expansive buildings, if He had so little regard for the temple that He thoroughly and totally destroyed it and left it desolate, then what does God have regard unto? Isaiah 66:1 gives the answer: "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but"—contrast this with a beautiful, magnificent temple, with the most beautiful, expensive buildings we have today—"But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word."

God will ignore all the most beautiful, expensive buildings and regard them with absolute and total contempt, but He will look with favor upon a humble, repentant, and gracious soul that trembles at His Word. It is not the beauty, greatness, vastness, or expense of buildings that God looks at, but those who tremble at His Word.

Have you ever stopped to think about this? God did not need the temple. God does not need a temple or any temple. Heaven is a throne of His government, and He sits there, infinitely exalted in the highest dignity and dominion, above all blessing and praise. The earth is His footstool, on which He stands, overruling everything in the earth and doing according to His will. If God has a throne so large, so bright, and so glorious, and if God has a footstool like the earth, what in the world can a building be unto God? How can any building be the residence of His glory, or the praise of His glory? What satisfaction could the eternal, sovereign God of heaven and earth take in a building made with the hands of men? Does God need a building? The answer is no.

The Bible says that He neither faints, nor sleeps, nor is weary. God does not need a place of rest. God is never tired. God is not like us. According to Psalm 50, if God did need something like that, He would not tell us, because everything He made is His. God says concerning the earth and all of creation, "all those things have been," that is, they have had their being and their beginning in the power and will of God. God was happy in eternity past in and of Himself before the world was ever created. He could still be the eternally

happy, transcendent God without any earth and without any beings today, if He so chose. God is God. If God required a house, He would build it. If He required a house, He would have built it when He created the world. It would not need repair or anything that man could do. God had absolutely no need of a temple made with hands.

So God does not give heed to great and beautiful buildings. What God does give heed to is a humble, penitent, gracious heart. Heaven is His making; earth is His making. God says, "I will overlook heaven and earth. I will overlook temples and buildings. And I will look to this man who is humble, serious, self-abasing, self-denying, who has a heart that is truly contrite for sin, one who is repentant for his sin, one who is broken for his sin, and one who trembles at my word." Such a heart is a living temple of God.

God says, "For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." To this man He is going to look, even to him that is poor. The word "poor" does not have reference to a lack of money or to poverty. The Hebrew word refers to one who is afflicted, humble, wretched, needy, and lowly.

You should think of James 4:6: "Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." You should also think of 1 Peter 5:5: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

What is the poor man to whom God looks? He is one who has seen his sin, wickedness, and rebellion; one who recognizes his wretchedness, need, and poverty. He realizes that he is a man in need of divine help. He cannot save himself or help himself. He has come to the realization that if God does not help him, he is lost. That is a poor man—a man who has nothing in himself. Absolutely nothing. No hope! No help! He is powerless.

Then God says He is going to look to a man who is of a contrite spirit. The word "contrite" refers to one who is smitten and stricken.

A contrite person is one who is truly sorry for his sin, truly repentant, and humbled because of his sins.

The Contrite Spirit Defined

There are really two kinds of sorrow that the Bible talks about. The Apostle Paul himself pointed this out: there is a sorrow of the world, and there is godly sorrow that worketh repentance, needeth not to be repented of.

Suppose a man is a thief, a family man, and a church man, but is caught stealing from his own company or from the man for which he works. His first thought is, "Oh my, I'm caught. I'm so embarrassed. Now the world is going to know that I'm a thief, and my family and children are going to be embarrassed." That is worldly sorrow. In one sense, we really should be embarrassed because of our sins. But godly sorrow is far more than embarrassment. It means that we are genuinely grieved because we have sinned against God, violated His law, broken His Word, and insulted His majesty. We have disdained His honor. We are wicked.

A man of a contrite heart has no pride, arrogance, or haughtiness. No. He is a broken man, stricken, smitten, and afflicted. He understands that if he got really and truly what he deserved, he would be doomed and damned. Let me show you. I want you to follow me to Isaiah 66, please, but go back in your Bibles to Psalm 34 to begin with.

Psalm 34. Look at verse 18. Psalm 34, verse 18. Watch carefully. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Who does God save? Those who are of a contrite spirit. What's contrite mean? Someone who has been stricken and smitten, someone truly sorrowful and repentant for his sins. There is no arrogance or haughtiness in this fellow.

Look at Psalm 51 and verse 17. Psalm 51, verse 17. Again, the psalmist says this: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Is God going to despise someone who is truly, genuinely repentant? No. And if you would look in your Bibles to Isaiah 57, on your way back to Isaiah 66, Isaiah 57, and look, if you would please, at verse 15.

Remember all those beautiful buildings that we have today, and think of how gorgeous, exquisite, and excellent the tabernacle and the temple were. But look what God says in Isaiah 57:15: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

Now, how many beautiful buildings does God dwell in? None. He said, “I dwell in eternity, in the high and holy place, and with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.” If you go back to Isaiah 66, there is a word I want to deal with. God says He not only looks to the man who is poor and of a contrite spirit, but also to the man who trembles at His Word. Isaiah 66:5 says, “Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word.”

What It Means to Tremble at God's Word

Do you tremble at the Word of God? What does it really mean to tremble? The word is used in one sense in 1 Samuel 13. Saul was going to fight the Philistines, choosing three thousand men of Israel. The Bible says, “And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.” What does that mean? They were afraid.

They were about to go into battle. There were three thousand of them and thousands of the Philistines, so they were trembling. In 1 Samuel 14:15, the same word appears: “And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.” Very obviously, when you see the word “tremble” here, it refers to fear.

All of us have trembled at times. Sometimes we have trembled out of fear, sometimes out of anger, and sometimes out of excitement. Let us clarify this word "tremble" even further. James 2:19 shows us that there are different kinds of trembling, and there is some trembling that you and I are not to engage in. The Word of God says, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." Someone says, "I believe in God." God says,

"All right, fine. Yeah, that's good. But let me point something out." The demons also believe, but they do more than believe: they tremble.

The trembling that the devils do certainly is not the kind that is acceptable with God. The Greek word for "tremble" here is "phrisso." It literally means to tremble, but it also means to bristle, to stiffen up, to stand up, to shudder, to be struck with extreme fear, and to be horrified. Does God regard the trembling of demons? No. Does that kind of trembling please God? Again, the answer is no. God does not want people who stiffen up against Him, rebel against Him, and are horrified at His Word. The devil and his demons may tremble, but their trembling is not a reverential submission to the Word of God. Their trembling is out of rebellion and anger and knowledge of their certain and sure judgment.

Let me point out also that when God says He is going to look at the man who trembles at His Word, it is not just human fear and human trembling that pleases God. In Acts 24, you find that old Felix trembled at the preaching of Paul. Acts 24:24 says, "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ." Then, as Paul reasoned "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time."

“When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Paul was preaching, and Felix was so affected that he was trembling. He could not contain himself. But this was not the kind of trembling we ought to desire at the Word of God. Felix’s trembling drove him to get rid of the preacher and escape his message. “Go away. Get out of here. I don’t want to hear any more of this. When I have a convenient season, I’ll call for you. I don’t want to hear you right now. Don’t bother. Don’t upset me.”

Was Felix trembling? Oh yes, he was trembling. But his kind of trembling made him angry at the preacher. In fact, the Greek word is “emphobos.” It means literally to be thrown into fear, to be terrified, to be frightened. What Paul was saying frightened Felix. He did not want to think about it, hear it, or allow it to enter his mind. His

trembling drove him to get rid of the preacher and to get out from under the preaching of the Word of God.

Now, what does it mean to tremble at God's Word? I want to give you a quote from John Calvin. I believe he is absolutely correct, and he said it beautifully: "So far as it relates to trembling, it might be thought strange at first sight that God demands that in believers, since nothing is more sweet or gentle than the word of the Lord and nothing is more opposite to it than to excite terror. I reply," says Calvin, "there are two kinds of trembling: one by which they are terrified, who hate and flee from God, and another, or the second, which affects the heart and promotes the obedience of those who reverence and fear God.

"This clause, I am aware, is viewed by others as relating to the law, which threatens and terrifies and proclaims the dreadful judgment of God. But I take it in a more general acceptation, for even believers tremble at His promises when they embrace them with reverence. Hence infer that true godliness consists in having our senses brought into a state of obedience to God and in making no boastful or wicked claims for ourselves. The nature of faith is to yield obedience to God and to listen to Him attentively and patiently when He speaks. But when we are puffed up and carried away by vain confidence in ourselves, we have no piety or fear of God, for we cannot make even the smallest claim for ourselves without despising God."

Calvin said there are two kinds of trembling. One is when you tremble out of anger and fear and want nothing to do with God. The other trembling is out of reverential respect, submission, and obedience to God. Calvin correctly relates trembling with obedience.

The people had come back into the land and had intermarried with the heathen, which God had strictly forbidden. Ezra rebuked them because they had married these strange wives and had these strange children. Ezra 10:1-3 says, "Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there

is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law."

Did that mean that when Ezra reminded them what the law of God said about not intermarrying with the heathen, they necessarily literally trembled? Some may have when they understood the implications. But what he said was this: We are willing to listen. We are willing to repent. We are willing to turn from our sins. We are willing to do whatever God says is necessary, and we will obey the commandment of God.

Who are those that tremble at the Lord? Who are those who tremble at His word? Those who obey Him, and who bring their lives into conformity to His word.

Since we live in such an adulterous and wicked age, why do you not do what the majority does and run out and fornicate and become adulterers? Why would you not do that? You say, "I would not do it because it is sin. It is a violation of God's law. And I fear God." Wouldn't you say that?

Obedience as the Evidence of Trembling

What if I said, "Why don't we go out and loot and steal like everybody else is doing in the land—even the government?" You say, "I would not do that because it is a sin, a violation of God's law, and I fear God." You know what you are doing? You are trembling at God's Word. You are saying, "Not me. I am not going to do those things. I have respect for God. I have respect for His Word. I am not going to do that."

Think about this. If you believe that God's Word is the holy, powerful, authoritative, inspired, infallible Word of God, and that it originates from the sovereign God of heaven and earth, do you not have respect for that Word? If you stopped and thought who gave that Word, who issued that Word, and what His position is, that should be enough to make you tremble. He is the sovereign God of

heaven and earth, to whom you will answer and give an account for every thought and every deed.

Jeremiah 5:22 asks, “Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence? Which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?”

Now look what He is asking: “Will ye not fear me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?” Look what I have done. I have not only created the world; I have said to the sea, “Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further.” And the sea obeys Me. Everything obeys Me. Will you not tremble at My Word? As great, mighty, and powerful as the sea is, it cannot break the bounds that God has placed upon it. But look what He says in verses 23 and 24.

“But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.” Note what they said. God asked, “Will you not fear me, will you not tremble?” They said, “No, God, we are not going to tremble, because we have a revolting and rebellious heart. We do not want to hear you, we have nothing to do with you, and we do not fear you.”

Only those who obey tremble at God’s word. Those who disobey despise God. In Psalm 2:11, God commanded the kings and the people, “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” What does it mean to rejoice with trembling? You rejoice with obedience. In Daniel 10:11, Daniel said, “And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.” Why? He knew it was a word from God and understood the source of the message.

God said this concerning Ephraim in Hosea 13:1: “When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.” When Ephraim feared God, trembled at his word, and obeyed God, God exalted him. But when he offended in Baal, he died. In other words, he ceased fearing God, ceased trembling at God’s word, and turned to a false idol.

Remember how Paul and Silas had been thrown into jail? At midnight they prayed and sang praises to God, and God sent a great earthquake. Acts 16:29 says, “Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Philippians 2:12 says, “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.” With fear and obedience is what he is talking about. Yet many people boast today that they have great reverence and great fear of God.

But at the same time, they disregard and despise his word and, in reality, show that they are great despisers of God. The reverence we owe to God must be paid to his Word, in which he wishes us not only to obey, but to recognize it as the authoritative command from the one true and living God, who is the source of that Word. Obviously, those who hate and despise the Word of God do not tremble at it.

Jeremiah 6:10 says, “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.” Those who do not tremble at God's Word find it a reproach; they have no delight in it.

Applications and Conclusion

If we recognize and reverence God, we will tremble at His Word. We will be reverentially fearful of disobeying and dishonoring Him. The problem we have today is exactly the same problem that Paul addressed in his day when, in Romans 3, he was listing the wickedness, vileness, and rebellion of the people. Finally, he said in verse 18, “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” They do not care anything about God. They do not regard His Word. They do not tremble before Him, bow to Him, or pay any respect to Him.

What is wrong with our nation? There is no fear of God. What is wrong with our government? There is no fear of God. What is wrong with our churches, our families, and individuals? There is no fear of God. If you fear God, you will tremble at His Word. In other words, you will say, “I must obey Him. I will not dishonor and disrespect God.”

Here is the last application. Look, if you would, to Psalm 138. I want to show you how vital and important the Word of God really is. So many people disdain it, despise it, and think lightly concerning it. God's Word does not contain empty threats or empty promises. The authority and power of the sovereign God of heaven and earth are behind His Word. In Psalm 138, David said, “I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”

If God ever allows His Word to fail, He will cease being God. Do you think His threats are empty? Do you think His promises are vain? Do you think God will ever cease being God? The very fact that He is God means He cannot change. If God has magnified His Word above His name, you can mark it down: you had better learn to tremble. He will not change. His threats are real, and His promises are real. God says, “Here’s the man to whom I’m going to look: a man that is of a poor and contrite heart, and the man that trembles at my word.” It is that man with whom I will dwell.

I will overlook the most beautiful buildings. I do not care about their expense or expansiveness. I care nothing about the buildings. What I want is a gracious, humble, repentant heart to dwell in. Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.”

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, teach us to tremble at Your Word, obey Thy Word, and recognize that its authority comes from Thee, O Lord. Help us see that we must fear and obey Thee, submit our lives to Thee, and conform them to Your Word. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 5

The Excommunication of Christ

August 14, 2011

Introduction: The Concept of Excommunication

Some time ago, Brother Ron and Sister Linda were reading in, I think, Rushdoony's book, and they hit this thought. Ron told me, "Will you ever preach someday on the excommunication of Christ?" And I said, "Well, I will." And so I got around to it.

Hebrews 13:11-13 says, "For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

When we hear the word excommunication, it sounds strange to our ears simply because we immediately know that it is a strong word, speaking of sin, suffering, and estrangement. We think of it in reference to saints that have sinned and have refused to repent, and

consequently, church discipline has been exercised upon them. We immediately think of a passage like 2 Thessalonians 3:6, where the Apostle Paul commanded, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourself from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which you received of us."

Hold Hebrews chapter 13, but look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 5, because I want to show you a passage where one individual was indeed disciplined or, as some would say, excommunicated. Paul is reproaching the Corinthians and rebuking them, for he writes, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife."

So here was a son—not necessarily his mother, but maybe a stepmother—committing fornication with his stepmother. Paul says, "And you were puffed up, and have not rather mourned that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Notice that evidently the church discipline exercised for his sin had a desirable effect. You say, "How can you say that?" Paul speaks concerning the same individual in 2 Corinthians 2: "But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part, that I may not overcharge you all." Then he says, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many."

"So that contrariwise," now that he has repented, "you ought rather to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore, I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him." Here is an individual who had committed sin. He was disciplined by the church, put out from among them, excommunicated, as we would say. Evidently he repented, and Paul is saying that, in light of these verses, they need to bring him back.

Christ Excommunicated by His Professing People

How can we speak of the excommunication of Christ? We know, acknowledge, confess, and believe that Jesus Christ was and is the sinless Son of God. We know that in Him is no sin. The word excommunication not only speaks of censure, but also means to exclude from fellowship, to cast to one side, or to put out. In many instances, Christ has been censured by His professing people, in that He has been set aside or excluded from fellowship because of the strictness of His doctrine and His demands for a holy, obedient life.

This is much like the incident in John chapter 6, where our Lord gave His message on the bread of life. He proclaimed that He was indeed the bread of life sent down from heaven, and that He alone could provide life and nourishment. Many of His disciples at that point forsook Him.

It was not necessarily an official censure from a religious body, but by forsaking Him they certainly excluded Him from any future teaching or fellowship. In one sense, their actions cast Him out, and their refusal to believe and submit to His teaching and doctrine was a censure against what He taught. Now consider John chapter 6, beginning with verse 32, and watch how this develops.

Then Jesus said to them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world." Then said they unto him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." And Jesus said unto them, "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Jesus continued, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whosoever eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life. And I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is

drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."

Our Lord was not necessarily talking literally and physically. He was speaking metaphorically and spiritually. But look what happens: "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" 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, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Christ has been essentially excommunicated from His own church by those who profess religion but do not possess Christ. John 6 is very emphatic: when you walk away from the doctrine and teaching of Christ, you walk away from Christ. When you exclude His Word, you exclude Christ. Listen to what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4, verses 2 and 3. Paul told Timothy, "Preach the word."

Rejecting Sound Doctrine Rejects Christ

"Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." What will they do? They will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. In other words, they want someone to scratch their ears. They want someone to teach what they want taught. They want someone to say what they want said.

They are not interested in truth. They are not interested in doctrine. They are interested only in what they want.

The interesting thing here is this: when one rejects the sound doctrine of Christ, he will always turn to others that will give him that which he wants to hear. At the same time, when he turns to others, he has also rejected Christ and His Word, and he has effectively cut Him off and cast Him out. In other words, he has excommunicated Christ from his life.

Look back to the book of Hebrews, chapter 13, and look at verse 12. I am mainly going to deal with verse 12 and verse 13. I read verse 11 so that you could see in the context exactly what was happening. He says, "For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp." "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."

Christ's Position: Outside the Gate and Without the Camp

Now, let's ask a question: Where is Christ? We confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is in the heaven of heavens. He is in the most holy place, seated at the right hand of God the Father. This was prophesied in the Old Testament, and it is confirmed in the New Testament. Psalm 110 and verse 1 says, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." This is the most frequently quoted verse in the Old Testament. It is quoted more in the New Testament than any other verse. So the Lord said to my Lord, "Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Now you will see how it is applied to Christ. Look in Acts, chapter 2, and verse 25: "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved."

Verse 33 says, “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.” Verse 34 says, “For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand.” We know where our Lord is theologically and positionally. But do we know where He is metaphorically and morally?

Let me give you a clue. He is not anywhere around established religion. Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, and all the other isms are without Jesus Christ. Moreover, all those professing Christian churches that are more interested in entertainment, programs, buildings, ecumenism, compromise, seeker-friendly atmospheres, and building a name for themselves are without Christ. He is nowhere near them. His word is not there.

He is not there. Where is He? He is outside the gate and without the camp.

Look in Hosea chapter 8. Modern-day Christendom—or, let me say it this way, the religious establishment—has basically fallen into the same trap as ancient Israel. In Hosea 8, beginning at verse 12, God says concerning Israel, “I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.”

Old Testament Parallels: Empty Rituals and Rejection of God

“They were counted as a strange thing.” The word strange does not simply refer to something funny-sounding or something we have never heard before. Remember, the word refers to a prostitute as a strange woman. Here it means an alien thing to him: “I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange” thing.

Now watch what happens when you reject the word of God. Verse 13 says, “They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth them not.” “Now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.” Here it is: “For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples.” He has forgotten God and builds temples. He is making a profession of worshipping God and building magnificent buildings, but the worship of God is not there. God is not there. It is all external; it is all hypocritical. In other words, we have basically forgotten Christ—His word, repentance, faith, and obedience. And this is what modern-day Christendom is doing.

We major on the minors, somehow thinking that structures, rituals, ceremonies, pageants, and programs can please the sovereign God of heaven and earth. We have forgotten that empty ceremonies and heartless rituals are absolutely despised by God. In Amos chapter 5, beginning at verse 21, notice God's attitude toward these empty ceremonies and heartless rituals. Look at what God says to Israel there.

"I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your

meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." Did not God appoint those feast days, sacrifices, solemn assemblies, music, musicians, and songs? Why does God look at Israel and say, "I hate and despise all of your rituals and all of your ceremonies"? Because they had turned away from God's judgment, God's word, and God's justice. Their ceremonies and rituals were absolutely empty, meaningless, and heartless.

We have forgotten the simple question Samuel asks in 1 Samuel 15:22: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." God would rather have our obedience than all the sacrifices, rituals, and ceremonies we can perform. That is why, in Micah 6:8, God says, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

What does God require of us? To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. I have thought about this verse even this morning. I probably need to come back and preach on it one day—to describe justice and mercy, and what it means to walk humbly with our God.

Remember Luke 18, where the Pharisee and the publican went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men. I thank thee that I am not as this publican. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess." But the publican would not even lift his eyes toward heaven. He smote his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Our Lord said, "Verily, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." What was he doing? He was walking humbly.

He acknowledged what he was. He acknowledged that he deserved nothing. God has showed us what He demands of us. 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;

that saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion."

So here's what he's done: He's built a big, beautiful mansion. But look at the question God asked in verse 15: "Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him?" He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: "was not this to know me? saith the Lord."

What good is a big, beautiful building without truth and righteousness and holiness and justice? I don't know if you've ever been through Atlanta on I-75, but as you get on the outskirts of the city, there's this huge church building. I mean, huge. I've often said, how would you like to have one Federal Reserve note for each brick in that building? I don't know how many bricks are in it. It is humongous.

But the question is this: We can do all of those things. What good is a building without obedience and without holiness, without righteousness? The context of Hebrews chapter 13 is consistent with that which was foreshadowed and typified in the Old Testament. We need not look for Christ in fine buildings, in great works, in rituals, or in ceremonies. Why? Because He is not there.

The pattern was foreshadowed and typified in the Old Testament, and Exodus 33:7 will show it. "Now Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation."

The Tabernacle Without the Camp: A Type of Christ

Exodus 33, verse 7: "And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp."

Exodus chapter 32 deals with the golden calf incident. Aaron collected the golden earrings, fashioned the molten calf, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land

of Egypt." The people had disobeyed God, rebelled, and refused to obey His law. Incidentally, they broke all ten commandments at one time. Because of their sin and rebellion, God refused to walk among them. In Exodus 33, verses 2 and 3, He says: "And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way."

So what did Moses do? In verse 7, look at it again. "And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp." Moses took the tabernacle, which in all of its parts, as well as the ceremonies, was pictures, symbols, and types of Christ, and pitched it without the camp. Everyone that sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.

The whole point is this: the Israelites that really wanted to seek the Lord had to separate themselves from their wickedness and go forth unto Christ. Christ cannot and will not abide compromise, complacency, or iniquity. Hebrews 13:12 says, "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." That is, He suffered without the gate at Jerusalem, as the sin offering was consumed without the camp, when the tabernacle abode in the wilderness.

Why Christ Suffered Without the Gate

Why did Christ suffer without the gate of Jerusalem? Someone may say, "To fulfill prophecy." That is true. Prophecy was fulfilled; that is what Hebrews 13 is telling us based upon Exodus 33:7. But that is not the practical answer. Christ suffered without the gate of Jerusalem because the religious leaders, along with the political leaders, despised, hated, refused, and crucified Him.

They did not desire Him, His word, His rule, or His law. They wanted no part of Christ. They cast Him out; they excommunicated Him. If you think for one moment that the political and religious

leaders of this world have any interest in Christ and His kingdom at heart, you need to think again. If you believe that the political and religious establishments genuinely want Christ and His law, then I believe you are deceived.

I have had many well-meaning Christians come to me after I preached a particular sermon and say, “If only our leaders could hear this. If only you could preach this before Congress, or at the White House.” Do you think for one minute that Congress or those in the White House would listen or hear? It would make absolutely no impression upon them at all. Why? They do not want the truth.

It is true that they will use Christ and His followers. Have you noticed that every politician professes to be religious, and many profess to be Christians? They say one thing and then do the opposite. It is a total, absolute charade to them. They know how to talk the talk, and they know that talking the talk is sufficient for most professing Christians. Why? Because we are so dull, so dead, and so deformed, spiritually speaking, that we cannot even discern their hypocrisy.

What did our Lord say? “It is by their fruits ye shall know them,” not by their words. It does not matter what a politician says, and it does not matter what an established religious leader says; look at his life. The interesting thing is that most nationally known black and white religious leaders are adulterers, whoremongers, fornicators, and thieves. They will talk the talk, but they certainly do not want the walk. And those who profess to be Christians

To get your vote, when they get in office, they will vote for and pass anti-biblical and anti-Christian laws without even wincing. They think nothing about it. The only kingdom they are interested in is their own kingdom, much like Nebuchadnezzar, when he said in Daniel 4:30, "Then the king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

They are not interested in Christ. They are not interested in His law. They are interested in their kingdom. You may look in all the political places that you would like, but you will not find Christ there. You may look in all the established religious places that you like, but

you will not find Christ there. Christ is not in religion. Christ is not in the politically correct crowd. He has been shut out, kicked out, excommunicated, and shunned.

Those who think that Christ is still in the establishment have never read the Scriptures and have no understanding of how governments and religious establishments really work. In Hosea 5:6, He says, "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them." Why? "They have dealt treacherously against the Lord: for they have begotten strange children." They go to seek the Lord, yet they are not going to find Him. Why? He has withdrawn Himself from them.

In the Song of Solomon, chapter 5 and verse 6, the bride is so concerned with herself. The groom is knocking at the door, and she says, "How can I arise? You know, I've perfumed myself. You know what? How can I get up now and go to him?" When she finally goes, she says, "I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. My soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." What did she say? "I went to open the door, but he had withdrawn himself."

In the book of Micah, chapter 3 and verse 4, I tell you what, just go ahead and turn to Revelation because we are going there next. Revelation 3, but let me just quote Micah 3 and verse 4. Listen carefully.

The Scripture says, “Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.” What did he say? He will not hear them. Why? He will even hide his face from them at that time, because they behaved themselves ill in their doings.

In Revelation chapter 3, beginning with verse 14, our Lord speaks to the church of the Laodiceans: “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.” Isn’t it interesting?

He is saying, “I would rather you be either out and out for Me or out and out against Me.” Watch verse 16: “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

If we put these Scriptures together, Christ spits out, hides His face, and withdraws Himself from those who hate Him, despise Him, and disobey Him. How can Christ be in any place that rejects Him and His Word? In light of these truths, the question must be asked: What must we do? We cannot support anything that is unbiblical and unchristian. If we wish to be pleasing to our Lord, we must be where He is.

Listen to John 12:26: “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” Wherever He is, there will His servant also be.

Now let us go back to Hebrews chapter 13, verse 13: “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” Christ has been kicked out; Christ has been excommunicated. What are we to do? Here is the plea: “Let us go forth.”

The Plea: Go Forth to Christ Outside the Camp

In other words, now is not the time to sit still. We know where Christ is metaphysically and morally, so let us arise and go forth. In its context, verse 13 is a plea for the early believers to leave the temple worship, with all its rituals and ceremonies, and go to Christ. Why? Because the tabernacle and the temple, with all those rituals and ceremonies, were nothing but types, emblems, and shadows.

They are now useless since the reality has come. Christ has fulfilled every type and every shadow. He is not in the tabernacle, the temple, the ceremonies, or the rituals. He is here, and He is outside the camp. He is not going to be there in the established, politically correct religion. Look in Hebrews chapter 10, beginning with verse 9. Look at what the Scripture says.

Here is why the apostle pleads, “Let us go forth.” Hebrews 10:9 says, “Then said he,” that is Christ, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the

which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Watch: "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man," Jesus Christ, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Why in the world would we leave the tabernacle? Why would we leave the temple? Because Christ is not there. The rituals are empty, and the ceremonies are worthless. They were pictures, types, emblems, and shadows; now we have the real thing. Therefore, the plea is, let us arise and go forth to Christ in the fullness of His sacrifice, His work, His obedience, and His worship. Let us leave sin and the world and its pleasures, as well as our own works and righteousness, and go to Him. That is the plea.

Secondly, look at the person. He says in verse 13, "Let us go forth therefore unto him." The plea is not to go forth to a system, religion, or establishment. It is for you and me to go forth to a person, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is a living person. You remember what He said: "Where I am, there will my servant also be." Do you not remember His invitation in Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me"?

The Person: Coming to Christ, Not a System

"All ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The invitation was to come to Christ. In Mark 8:34, He said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." John chapter 6, as we read earlier, is on the bread of life. John chapter 7 is on the water of life. Jesus Christ isn't only the bread of life; He's the water of life. And in John 7:37, He said this: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

There's a huge difference between coming down an aisle and coming to Christ. There's a huge difference between joining a church and being joined to Christ. There's a huge difference between being associated with a religion and being a partaker of Jesus Christ. The

gospel is not about Christ. The gospel is not facts about Christ. Christ is the gospel.

We must be in Him. He's a living person, and we must partake of Him. He that would be saved must come to Christ. There is no church that can save you. There is no act that can save you. There is no religious establishment that can save you. He that would be holy must come to Christ.

Alice and I get tickled many times at the names of churches that we see. Many probably have seen that one around Nahunta, the Philadelphia Sawgrass Wesleyan Methodist Church. Philadelphia Sawgrass. We've seen a Weeping Mary Baptist Church. And I suppose the truest sign of all we saw in Tennessee was Compromise Baptist Church. I'm serious; I've got a picture of it. Compromise Baptist Church, and they had an arrow going that way. I said, "Well, that's probably the most truthful church sign I've ever seen in my life."

But you can join every church in the world and it will not save you. Only Christ will save you. Only Christ will make you holy. We've seen the Holy Church of God in Christ sign, and you wonder if the people are really genuinely holy. You will never be holy by joining a church. You will only become holy in Christ. You will never become obedient by joining a church. You will only become obedient by submitting to Jesus Christ. So the plea is, let us go forth. The person is unto Him.

Outside the Camp

The Place: Without the Camp—Separation from the World

Thirdly, look in Hebrews 13:13: “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp.” Arthur W. Pink, dealing with this phrase, writes: “It is that particular point, the Jews casting out of Christ, anathematizing him, condemning him to a malefactor's death, which must guide us when seeking to identify the modern counterpart of the camp.”

“There is really no exact replica on earth today of that Judaism which crucified the Lord Jesus. Certainly neither Romanism,

blasphemous and horrible as are many of its doctrines and practices, nor the most degenerate branches of Protestantism, rotten as some of them are in doctrine and works, can rightly be designated the present-day camp. No, as we pointed out previously, that which most closely resembles it, that which in principle is essentially like thereto, is the secular profane world."

Although he equates the camp with the world, I believe the profane religious establishments, as well as the profane governments, would also be applicable. In Revelation, we read not only about a spiritual Babylon, but an economic Babylon as well. Pink continues: "It is unregenerate, and its unregenerate and godly members do not profess to love Christ. The very mention of him is hateful to them. They desire to banish him entirely from their schemes and thoughts, except when they take his holy name in vain."

"Next, we sought to show in what sense the Lord requires his people to go forth outside the camp, that is, separate themselves from the ungodly, from those who hate and revile Christ. This, as we saw, is not to be understood literally or physically, but metaphorically or morally. It is not a local withdrawal from the world, but a religious and spiritual one. In other words, God does not bid his people be fanatics and lead the lives of hermits."

"Taking refuge in monasteries and convents is the devil's perversion of this important practical truth. No, the Christian is still left in the world, but he must not be of the world. Its policy and maxims must not regulate him. Its pleasures and attractions must not capture his heart. Its friendship must not be sought. Its politics are no concern of his. In heart and soul interest, he is a stranger here, and he is to conduct himself as a pilgrim, passing through this scene, using this world, but not abusing it."

To go forth unto Christ without the camp means, for the believer, to make a complete break with his former manner of life, to renounce everything opposed to Christ, and to relinquish whatever would hinder communion with him. In a word, this exhortation is another way of presenting the declaration of the Lord: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Sin must be mortified, the flesh with its affections and

lusts crucified, the world forsaken, and Christ's example diligently followed.

Going forth unto him outside the camp is not a single act done once for all at conversion, but a habitual thing, a constant attitude of life. The cross must be taken up by the Christian daily. It is an attitude, a lifestyle, a perspective, and a worldview. We, like all the other men of faith in Hebrews 11, verse 13, and like our forefathers, must confess and acknowledge that we are strangers and pilgrims on this earth. As the Apostle Paul said, we must learn to die daily.

Theologically and positionally, Christ is at the right hand of God. Metaphorically and morally, He has been cast out of this world, cast out of religious establishments, and cast out of politically correct governments. Martin Luther said it like this: "I had rather be in hell with Christ than in heaven without Christ." Truly, heaven without Christ would be hell, and hell with Christ would be heaven. So we must go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp.

The Performance: Bearing His Reproach

Here is the performance: "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." Are we willing to bear His reproach? Do you perform very well under pressure—criticism and complaints? Are you able to drink of His cup? Are you ready, willing, and able to bear the reproach that will be cast upon you, and to suffer for His sake? Christ was willing to bear the reproach of the Father. What do you mean, the reproach of the Father? When people provoked God and sinned against God, they reproached God.

Anytime you deny God's law, you're saying, in essence, God's not right. His law is not perfect. I can be my own God. You are thus reproaching God. Psalm 69:9 says, "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." He was speaking about the Messiah. Romans 15:3 says, "For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." Christ bore all the reproaches that wicked and rebellious people had placed upon God. If we identify ourselves with the reproached and excommunicated Christ, we shall be reproached and

excommunicated ourselves. We shall also be excommunicated by the religious and politically correct establishment.

We will be labeled and counted as zealots, dogmatists, right-wing nuts, survivalists, cultists, hate groups, terrorists, and narrow-minded bigots. We'll probably also be referred to as a compound or a militia group. Have you ever noticed that every home invaded by the federal government has been designated as a compound? I wonder what's the difference between a compound and a home? The world may hate us, but their hatred, accusations, and ill will will not deter us.

Our Lord said in Luke 6:22, "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake." Blessed are you when men reproach us for Christ's sake. The Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 4:10 said, "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God."

Moses, of course, forsook the headship and all the treasures of Egypt. Do you know why? Hebrews 11:24 says, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." How much do you treasure the reproach of Christ? What is your estimation of the reproach of Jesus Christ? How do you value it?

Moses turned down the headship of Egypt, the pharaohship of Egypt, and all the wealth of Egypt, because he believed the reproach of Christ was greater than all the riches of Egypt. In that light and with that understanding, we can clearly understand what Paul meant in 2 Corinthians 12:10: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." He said, "I take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches for Christ's sake."

Applications: Fellowship with the Excommunicated Christ

The plea is, let us go forth; the person is unto him; the place is without the camp; the performance is bearing his reproach. Let me make two applications. First, the world, religion, and political correctness have not only condemned and crucified Christ; they have excommunicated Him. He has been officially censured and cast out by the world. He was officially censured and cast out by His own. The Scripture says, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

Our Lord said in John 15:18, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." What does the world do? It hates Him. It has cast Him out. Personally, I would rather have fellowship with the excommunicated Christ than be excommunicated by Christ. I would rather have fellowship with Christ, whom the world despises, than fellowship with the world and be despised by Christ. If we stand for Christ, His righteousness, His truth, and His Word, the world will hate and despise us. We have been warned by our Lord in Luke 6:26: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." There is something dreadfully wrong with professing Christendom when those who hate Christ and His law speak well and approvingly of Christians.

Bearing Christ's Reproach

The second application is this: We need to bear the reproach of our Lord willingly, cheerfully, courageously, and patiently. Did He not suffer in our stead? Did He not bear our shame and reproach? We must understand that He bore our reproach; we should be willing to bear His.

The Apostle Paul said this in Philippians chapter 3, beginning with verse 8: “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his

sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Now watch: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection," and the fellowship of his sufferings. What did he say? "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings."

In this day and time, when the powers that be and the religious establishments are anti-Christian, anti-Bible, anti-God, and anti-family, we need to come to this one conclusion: It is an honor to be reproached for Christ's sake. It is an honor to be condemned with Christ. It is an honor to be excommunicated with Christ. We need not fear the reproach or the reviling of men. Our goal should be to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, that we may be with Him without the gate.

I had rather be with Christ without the gate than to be inside the gate without Christ.

Father, help us, I pray. Prepare our hearts, prepare our minds. May we love Thee and serve Thee, and give us grace that we would be willing to cheerfully and gladly suffer with Thee and for Thee, and to be reproached for Thy honor and Thy name's sake. Help us; deliver us, we pray, in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Keeping Your Heart

December 11, 2013

Keeping the Heart

Introduction: The Difficulty of First and Last Sermons

The very first time you preach in a church is sometimes a very difficult time, only because you do not know where to begin. Out of all the churches I have ever preached in, the two most difficult messages are the first one and the last one. In the first one, you do not know where to start. By the time you get to the last one, you have so much you want to preach, and you only have one shot left.

The Clear Command: Keep Thy Heart

Today we are going to start in Proverbs chapter 4. I want you to look at this text with me, because I am going to be dealing with what I will call one of the most elementary and fundamental subjects that every child of God should know. That is keeping the heart. Look in Proverbs 4 and verse 23. The Word of God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.”

The following verses say, “Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left. Remove thy foot from evil.”

Now go back to verse 23, where he says very plainly, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” The most difficult and yet the most needful exercise is that of keeping the heart. Someone has said that our hearts are like water. They always follow the course of least resistance, and they very quickly run out of bounds. How few indeed really and truly keep their hearts based upon the truth of the Word of God.

Hold Proverbs 4:23 and look in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles 16:9. Note this statement. The Bible declares, “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.” Note carefully that the eyes of the Lord are running to and fro through the whole earth to show Himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. It is as if God is looking for individuals who have a good heart that He might show Himself strong in them.

The doctrine I want to teach is simply this: The keeping and right managing of the heart under every situation and every circumstance is the greatest business of the Christian's life. The greatest difficulty in conversion is winning the heart; the greatest difficulty after conversion is keeping the heart.

Let me give you a broad overview. I want you to see three things. First, a clear command: “Keep thy heart. Keep thy heart with all diligence.” Secondly, a personal responsibility: You keep your heart. And thirdly, an explanatory reason: “for out of it are the issues of life.” So let us consider this clear command. God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence.” Anyone who can read would agree that the Word of God is very plain when God commands us to keep our hearts. Literally, the emphasis in the Hebrew is simply this: Keep with all keeping thy heart, or set double guards about your heart.

What Is the Heart?

In other words, keep your heart above and before all things. So God very clearly commands us to keep our hearts. The only problem is this: Before we can keep them, we have to know exactly what our heart really is. I have asked people through the years, "What is your heart?" Very obviously, it does not refer to the physical organ in our chest. I am thankful that it is an involuntary muscle. I do not have to lie awake at night saying, "Beat, heart, beat. Pump, heart, pump." No, it just does it. It keeps doing it. One day it will stop, and very obviously there is nothing I can do about it.

So when God says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," He is not talking about the physical muscle inside your chest. What is the heart? I have had that question asked many times, and I have asked people, "What is the heart?" Someone says, "The heart is the soul." Well, what is the soul? "It is the innermost being of man." What is the innermost being of man? "It is the heart." You just keep going around and around in circles, and no one ever really tells you what your heart is. How in the world can you keep your heart if you do not know what it is?

I want you to see what the Bible says, and I hope that by the time we get to the last one, you will be able to deduce from Scripture what your heart really is.

Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5 gives us the law of first mention. This is the very first time the word "heart" is even mentioned in the Bible. It is found in Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5. The Bible simply says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Note carefully what God saw: every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. So whatever the heart is, it can think and it can imagine, because God saw the thoughts and He saw the imaginations of the heart.

In Genesis chapter 27 and verse 41, here is another Scripture. Everybody knows the story of Jacob and Esau and how Esau was planning to murder his brother Jacob. But notice this passage: "And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him. And Esau said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for

my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.'" Notice what the Bible says: Esau said in his heart. Not only can the heart think and imagine, according to Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5; the heart can speak, for Esau said in his heart.

If you look in Proverbs chapter 5 and verse 12, notice what the Bible says concerning the heart: "And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof."

The heart can think and imagine, speak, and either receive or despise reproof, correction, and instruction. There is also an intimate connection between the eyes and the heart. Our Lord said, "Thou hast heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Not only can the heart imagine and think, speak, and receive or despise correction; the eyes and the heart are intimately connected. If you look upon a woman to lust after her, you have committed adultery already in your heart.

If you have not put two and two together yet and found out what the heart really is, turn to Daniel, chapter 4, and let us begin to look at it and tie this together. Notice verse 16, concerning Nebuchadnezzar. Note very specifically what God says when He was going to judge wicked Nebuchadnezzar: "Let his heart be changed from a man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him, and let seven times pass over him." Seven times is simply the Chaldean way of saying seven years. What God was going to do was drive Nebuchadnezzar insane for seven years. For seven years he would eat grass like an ox, and his fingernails and hair would grow. In other words, he would be literally insane.

The condition is called boanthropy. God said this would last seven years. Notice again that in verse 16 He said, "Let his heart be changed from a man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him." Now skip down to verse 28. Daniel chapter 4, verse 28: "All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar." That was everything God had decreed. At the end of twelve months, he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spoke and said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" While the word

was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken.

The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: he was driven from men, did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

Do you remember what God said in verse 16? “Let his heart be changed from a man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him.” If you want to know what the heart is, look at verse 34: “At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me.” He blessed the Most High, praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and whose kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou? “And at the same time my reason returned unto me.”

I thought it was his heart that was changed. Well, it was. But the heart, according to Scripture, is the understanding. It is the mind, the reasoning faculty of our being. In Proverbs 4:23, when God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence,” the Hebrew word for heart is leb. That word, translated heart in Proverbs 4:23, is translated mind eleven times in our Bibles and understanding twenty times. You can go all through the Bible and find that the heart is the mind. It is the understanding.

The Heart as Mind and Conscience

The Apostle Paul said this in Acts chapter 24 and verse 16: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." What in the world is your conscience? The conscience is when you start to do something wrong

and it says, “You better not do that”; or when you do it, you know you are doing wrong.

The Greek word for conscience is “suneidesis.” “Sun” is a preposition which means “with,” and “eidesis” means “to know.” The word conscience means that which you know with. Look at your English word “conscience”: “con” is a preposition meaning “with,” and “science” means “to know.” Your conscience is that which you know with. So your conscience basically is your understanding; it is your mind. When God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence,” what He is commanding you to do is to keep your mind, your thoughts, and your understanding.

As you read through the Word of God, there are so many verses dealing with the mind. The Bible tells you in 1 Peter 4, verse 1, that you are to arm yourselves with the mind of Jesus Christ. In Philippians 2, verse 5, it says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." It says, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." In 2 Corinthians 10, verse 5, we are to bring every thought and every imagination into subjection and captivity to Jesus Christ.

What is He telling us? When He commands us to keep our hearts, He is telling us to keep our minds and our understanding. That is why, in Proverbs chapter 4, He talks about the mouth, the lips, the eyes, and the feet. All of these things simply work together. God has laid down everything for us in His Word, and we have an obligation, a duty, and a responsibility to bring our minds into conformity to the Word of God.

The Blueprint Analogy

It is like this: Suppose we are going to build a new building in which to meet. We have the money, and we begin by saying, “Let us meet here at eight o’clock in the morning and start laying the foundation.” Everybody comes, bringing different tools, but there is no plan and no blueprint. Everyone simply does what he wants to do.

As they begin to erect some type of edifice, one person says, “I think we ought to have a log building.” Someone else says, “I like

brick." Another says, "I do not see anything wrong with concrete," while another prefers concrete blocks. Someone else says, "I just like pine wood." So they start building anywhere, in any way, with whatever materials they choose. Finally, someone's wife says, "I would like a big window right there." Her husband replies, "All right, honey, I will put one in. It does not matter." If everybody is building with his own materials and doing his own thing, what would you have if the building were ever finished?

An absolute monstrosity.

It is the same way in the church—exactly the same way. The Apostle Paul says, "Be all of one mind." How can you be of one mind? The answer is simple: Submit your mind to the Word of God. Bring every thought and every imagination into captivity to Jesus Christ.

If we took a blueprint, laid a foundation, and had men begin building on various parts of it, the building would match perfectly if everyone followed the blueprint. It would be exactly the way it should be. God has laid it out for us. He commands us to keep our hearts with all diligence. We are to bring every thought and every imagination into captivity to Jesus Christ.

Personal Responsibility: You Keep Your Heart

Now you know what your heart is. Notice, secondly, this personal responsibility. When He says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," literally, He is saying, You, keep your heart with all diligence. It is your responsibility. God gave you your mind. He gave you your understanding and your reasoning faculties. In fact, you are the only one who can keep it under God. Your pastor cannot keep your mind. No priest can keep your mind; no committee or deacon can keep your mind. God gave it to you, and you are responsible to keep it. So He says, keep your heart, or keep your mind and your understanding, with all diligence.

If you perceive and comprehend that the heart is the mind, the understanding, then you have to come to this realization: There are no such things as sudden sins. I have had people tell me through the years, "Brother Weaver, I didn't mean to run off with that woman. It

just happened." That is not true. It did not just happen. You thought about it, desired it, wanted it, and planned it. "Well, I didn't mean to steal that money. It was just there." No, no, no, no. You thought about it before you ever did it. There is no such thing as a sudden sin.

When God commands you to keep your mind, He is telling you that it is your personal responsibility and that you must keep it in conformity to the Word of God. One of our problems is that we have old sayings. Down in South Georgia, we say, "You can't keep a bird from flying over your head, but you can stop him from building a nest in your hair."

Controlling Thoughts

What does that mean? You cannot stop a thought from entering your mind. A thought can enter your mind as quickly as lightning can flash. The problem is not necessarily a thought entering your mind. The problem is when you back that thought up and say, "Yes, wait a minute, let me think about this." When you see things you ought not to see, hear things you ought not to hear, or things simply pop into your mind, you cannot control what pops into your mind. But you can control what stays in your mind. This is so simple, yet we make things so complex.

If I were to ask you, "What do I have in my hand?" everyone would say, "Well, it's a tube of chapstick." You see this tube of chapstick. Now I want you to tell me what you see. You say, "I see the Bible."

When you were thinking about this chapstick, you were not thinking about the Bible. When you were thinking about the Bible, you were not thinking about the chapstick. Do you realize that, no matter how hard you try, you cannot think of more than one thing at a time? That's all—one thing at a time. Therefore, when an ungodly thought comes into your mind, or something contrary to Scripture, you have a responsibility to say, "Lord, I refuse to think that thought. That's wicked. That's ungodly. That's contrary to Scripture." Then purposely and deliberately put your mind upon God, His Word, or His promise. In other words, put the wicked thing out and put that which is holy and righteous in. That is why the Apostle Paul said,

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." You have a responsibility to keep your heart, your mind, and your thoughts, and to make sure that they are biblical and godly.

Out of the Heart Proceed Actions

In Matthew 15, our Lord had been teaching, and this shows how all of this works out. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 15, and begin reading with verse 16. His disciples came and asked Him, "Declare unto us this parable." Jesus said, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" He was asking whether they understood what He was teaching. Then He explained, "Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?" Then He said, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man."

I want you to note what comes out first. Note what He says comes out of the heart: “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.” The very first thing is evil thoughts. What do you think in your mind, in your understanding, in your reasoning faculties? That is when you begin to think murders and fornications and evil thoughts and idolatries and blasphemies, and all of these things. Our Lord says they come out of the heart.

You have a personal responsibility to keep things out of your mind and out of your understanding. I absolutely, totally refuse to watch anything that is contrary to Scripture. I do not care if TV says, “This is the story of Jesus.” I got news for you: TV cannot teach anything about Jesus Christ. At least they cannot teach it correctly. They cannot teach it biblically. I am not going to sit there and watch some movie or story about sodomites, and I am not going to do it. I am not going to sit there and watch something about fornication and adultery. I am not going to do it. The truth is, we do not even have TV, so I cannot watch it, and I do not want to watch it. I am simply

saying that I am not going to have those things in my mind. We have a responsibility to keep those things out of our minds.

You not only have a certain responsibility to keep things out of your mind; you also have a responsibility to keep certain things in your mind. I want you to look in the book of Jude, right before the book of Revelation, at verses 20 and 21. “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.” You, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost. “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Do you realize that you have a responsibility to keep yourself in the love of God?

You see, the problem is this: most people think the love of God is some little ethereal thing floating around somewhere, or some kind of feeling, emotion, or sentimentality. No. What is the love of God? He tells you in 1 John 5:3, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.” So how do you keep yourselves in the love of God?

You just refuse any and everything that's contrary to God and His Word. And you keep and preserve in your life everything that is in conformity to the Word of God. So obviously, you have a responsibility.

Ability and Responsibility

Now, I want you to look at two passages. I want you to turn to Proverbs, chapter 16, and at the same time, I want you to turn to the book of Hosea, chapter 10. I want you to see two concepts here: the concept of ability and the concept of responsibility. So in Proverbs, chapter 16 and verse 1, the Bible says this: "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." Now, let me just stop with the first half of this. The preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord. Do you realize that if your heart is ever prepared, God prepared it? If you're ever prepared to pray, God prepared you to pray. If you're ever prepared to preach, God prepared you to preach. If you're ever prepared to study, God prepared you to study. All the preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord. It is His ability.

Now, look in the book of Hosea, chapter 10, and notice verse 12. He says it like this: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you."

Now, wait a minute. If the preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord, how can He say, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you"?

Well, we have a responsibility, but His is the ability. We have a responsibility to seek His ability to keep our hearts and prepare our hearts. I want you to go back to the book of Proverbs, chapter 23, and see how this is kind of fleshed out for us in this passage. I want you to note, first of all, verse 12, and then we'll go to verse 19. Proverbs, chapter 23 and verse 12. He says this:

"Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge." Let us take the word "apply" and change it momentarily to "govern." He says, "Govern thine heart unto instruction."

In verse 19, he says, "Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way." He just told me to govern my heart. Now He tells me to guide my heart. If the preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord, how am I to govern my heart? How am I to guide my heart?

In verse 26, He says, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." The only way I can govern and guide my heart is by giving it to Him and seeking His ability to enable me to fulfill my responsibility. So the preparation of the heart in man is God's work.

It is man's agency, and our obedience is His instrumentality. I want you to look in Hebrews, chapter 3 and verse 12, because I am trying to explain this simple concept of keeping the heart and your responsibility in keeping the heart. The apostle spells it out plainly: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” He is talking to believers. He says we are to exhort one another daily, but notice that he speaks of an evil heart of unbelief and departing from the living God. Let me explain something to you.

Blame-Shifting and Self-Control

We have a unique ability. I do not care if you are young or old; each one of us has this ability. It is called blame-shifting. You remember when God came to the garden and said, "What hast thou done?" Adam said, "It's the woman which Thou gavest to be with me." And she said, "It's the serpent. He beguiled me, and I did eat." Have you ever noticed that, whatever happens, no one is responsible for it?

It is so amazing to me. I have seen this many times throughout my ministry. I have heard of people leaving churches, and here is their excuse: "Well, you would have left, too, if they had said about you what they said about me." Oh, really?

You have a personal responsibility to keep your heart. I know this is not going to happen; I am only using it for an illustration. Suppose your pastor jumped up from where he was sitting and cussed me out—not cursed me out, but cussed me out. That is a good old-fashioned South Georgia term. Every one of you heard him. He was not only ugly and rude to me; he cussed me. Here is my question: Just because he stood up and cussed me, does that give me the right to cuss him back? No. Just because he is ugly, rude, and mean, does that mean I have a right to be ugly, rude, and mean? No. I have to keep my heart, whether he keeps his heart or not. It is immaterial.

People always say, "So-and-so happened, and it is their fault because this happened and that happened." No. We have to learn to assume responsibility for ourselves and for our actions. We are responsible for every thought that goes through our minds, for what we retain in our minds, and for what we do.

We used to be in a church building where, when you came in the doors, there were two little cubbyholes on the side that went back, with about two pews each. One man came in late to the service. I had just stood up to preach, and the singing was over. He went back into one of the cubbyholes in the corner, where no one could see him but me. When I finished preaching and the church was dismissed, he remained in that same spot, hiding in the corner. None of our people even knew he was there. Everyone left, and he finally came out. He

was a preacher, and he told me, “I just want to tell you, I will not be back to your church.”

I asked, “Oh, and why is that?” He said, “Because this is an unfriendly church. No one spoke to me, and no one shook my hand.”

I said, “Sir, let me tell you something. First, I saw you come in late and sit in that corner and hide yourself. You know as well as I do that none of our people even knew you were there. You never came out when the service was over; you purposely waited until everyone left. Secondly, the Bible says, ‘He that hath friends must show himself friendly.’ Did you offer to speak to anyone? Did you offer to shake anyone’s hand? No, you did not, because I observed you. I saw you.

“Thirdly, let me tell you this: You do not come to church to shake people’s hands or to greet people. You come here to worship the one true and living God who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. If the only thing you are interested in is shaking hands, come back next week. I will pin a mule tail on that wall, and you can stand back there and shake it the whole time I am preaching.”

It was not everybody else's fault because he never got spoken to. It was his fault. Our sins are our own. Just because someone else does wrong, gossips about us, or spreads a rumor about us does not give us the right to get upset and go running off and doing the same thing.

Proverbs 25:28 says, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." If you have no rule over your own spirit, you are like a city broken down without walls. A city without walls can be entered freely; someone can walk in, get what he wants, and walk out.

I cannot make you angry unless you allow me to make you angry. I cannot make you jealous unless you allow me to make you jealous. I cannot make you vindictive unless you allow me to make you vindictive. If you have no control over your own spirit, if you cannot control yourself, God says you are like a city broken down without walls.

Proverbs 16:32 says, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that rules his

spirit is better than he that takes a city. If you can control yourself, keep your heart, and keep your mind and understanding, you are better than the most powerful warrior.

You have a responsibility to keep your heart. If you ever get mad, leave mad, get angry, or get upset, the sin is yours because you did not control your heart; you did not keep your heart. I do not care what I do or what I say. If you can control your heart, there is no way in the world I can upset you. But if you ever get upset, angry, or mad, mark it down: it is your sin because you failed to keep your heart. You have a personal responsibility. Now, let me tell you why. Here is the explanatory reason.

The Explanatory Reason: Issues of Life

Back in Proverbs 4:23, he said it like this: "Keep thy heart with all diligence." Why? "For out of it are the issues of life." Out of your heart are the issues of life. This Hebrew word is translated "going forth" one time, "going out" eleven times, "issue" two times, and "outgoing" seven times.

Everything about us comes out of our hearts, just as our Lord said in Matthew 15, "For out of the heart proceed." Everything that we are and everything that we do comes out of our heart. Without knowledge, a man is absolutely helpless. The Bible says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Our Lord said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." If you do not know the truth, you are not free. If you do not have knowledge, very obviously, you are destroyed.

Here is a simple illustration. I am not a mechanic, nor am I mechanically inclined. If my car breaks down beside the road, I know enough to lift the hood and check whether the spark plug wires are on. Back when cars had distributor caps, I remember popping them off and wiping the moisture out. That was it. Since I know nothing about mechanics, if my car breaks down, I sit beside the road waiting and praying. But let a mechanic have the same thing happen to his car. He pulls over, lifts the hood, fixes it, gets in, and goes on his way.

What was a problem to me was not a problem to him. Why? He knew the answer. He knew what to do. You do not have problems if you know the answer; you only have problems when you do not know the answer.

Do you realize that you do what you do because you think the way you think? You do what you do because you understand the way you understand. Look at the young people and adults who are on drugs. Why would anybody in his right mind induce things into his body that ought not to be there, when we know they will mess up the mind or the body?

Why would they do that? The answer is because they do not think the way we think. They think they will be the exception to the rule, that they will have a great experience, and that they can handle this. Other people may be ensnared and become addicts, but not them.

I will never forget when I was in the university. During the four or five years I was there, there were eleven bank robberies. Not one robber ever got out of the city limits; they caught every one before he escaped. Why were there eleven bank robbers? Because all the other thieves thought the ones before them were stupid and got caught, but they themselves were the exception and would never be caught. The truth of the matter is, folks, we do what we do because we think the way we think.

Look back in Proverbs 4. In verse 23 he says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." If you are keeping your heart, what will you do? Verse 24 says you will put away from you a froward mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. In verse 25, you will not let your eyes look to the right, but will let your eyes look right on, with your eyelids looking straight before you. You will ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. In verse 27, you will turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, but remove your foot from evil. All I am trying to show you is this: your actions are a manifestation of your heart.

I want you to turn to Acts chapter 8 because I am going to make a statement, and I know that you are probably going to take exception with what I say. I can tell you what is in your heart. You say, “Oh, come on, Brother Weaver, you can’t tell me what’s in my heart.” Yes,

I can. You say, “The Bible says that nobody knows what’s in the heart of man but God.” No, the Bible does not say that. The Bible does say that the Lord knows the heart, and He is the only one who knows it perfectly. But I can tell you what is in your heart, and you can tell me what is in my heart. How? Let me show you an illustration.

Acts chapter 8, beginning with verse 12: “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”

“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.” Watch carefully: “For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.”

Oh, Peter, how can you say that? Nobody knows the heart but God. Nobody can judge.

Peter asked, “How can you say your heart is not right with God?” He told him, “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” Then he said, “For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” Peter also said, “Thy money perish with thee.” The word “perish” in the Greek is a very strong word. In plain South Georgia language, Peter was saying, “Your money go to hell with you, because that’s exactly where you’re going.” He said, “For thy heart is not right in this matter. Your heart is not right in the sight of God.”

How did Peter know that Simon's heart was not right in the sight of God? Because of what he said, what he did, his attitude, and his actions. I can tell you what is in your heart. All I have to do is watch you, listen to you, and observe you. Out of the heart the mouth speaks. Out of the heart, the feet and the hands move. Our actions and attitudes are manifestations of our hearts.

Throughout the Bible, concerning every good king who ruled in Judah, you find that his heart was right with God, as was David his father's. How did they know? By the way he ruled, lived, and acted. Concerning every wicked king, you find this statement: "But his heart was not right with God, as was David his father's." How did they know? By the way he ruled, lived, and acted.

The truth is that our hearts are manifested in our lives. God says, "You better keep your heart." For as a man thinketh in his heart—so is he. You actually live out what is in your heart, what is in your mind, and what is in your understanding.

Applications: Heart-Keeping for Obedience, Evidence, Worship, and Dependence on God

Keeping the heart is an absolute requirement for obedience to God and for understanding the things of God. In Mark 4:24, He says, "Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given." "For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath."

Do you know why most Christians never grow in grace and never grow in knowledge? The answer is because they do not obey the truth of God. Why would God give you any more truth if you are not going to obey that which He has already given you?

If you cannot do this one fundamental, elementary exercise—keep your heart day in, day out—if you are failing to keep your heart, why would God give you anything else? If you want to be an obedient child of God, your most fundamental exercise is learning to keep your heart in every situation and in every circumstance.

Here is the second application: keeping the heart supplies one of the best evidences of our genuineness in salvation. What am I

talking about? Do you remember what our Lord said about the Pharisees? He says, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” He says, “Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.” “Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones.” You see, a Pharisee wants to show, “Look at me”; he wants everyone’s approval. But the real child of God really could care less about everyone’s approval. He is more concerned about being right with God internally, when people cannot see him and cannot understand him. See, I have known teenagers.

They're perfect around their pastor and their parents. They get away from their parents and they're devils; they get back around their parents or pastor, and they're perfect little angels. Let me tell you something: if you're a genuine child of God, I don't care if you're around your parents, your pastor, or whoever you're around, you're responsible and accountable. You really desire to be true and holy on the inside as well as on the outside. Keeping your heart supplies one of the greatest evidences that we're genuine children of God, because we want holiness.

Thirdly, understand that it is only as we keep our heart that we're enabled to discharge our spiritual duties as we ought. You cannot even worship if you don't keep your heart. I know of husbands and wives who fuss and fight on the way to church, and then, when they get out of the car, enter the church building, and sit down, somehow think they're automatically going to worship God. No, they're not.

I never will forget preaching in South Carolina one time and being asked to visit a home. I parked my car on the street, on the curb, a good 25 yards from the house. By the time I got out of the car, I could hear the man and woman screaming, hollering, fussing, and fighting at each other. I mean, 25 feet outside their own home—or 25 yards outside, I could hear it. I walked straight up to the door and rang the doorbell. They both came to the door: “Oh, hello, Pastor. How are you today? It’s so good.” What? I knew they had been screaming and hollering; I heard them. Is it strange that people can control their anger when someone is around whom they don't want

to know how they really are, yet won't control it around someone they have to live with?

I've got news for you. I'd rather be at odds with your pastor than at odds with my wife. I've got to live with her; I don't have to live with him. We can't worship. I don't necessarily agree with Dwight L. Moody, but I do agree with one thing he wrote in the flyleaf of his Bible: “Either this book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book.” You can't function, worship, study, or pray if you don't keep your heart. David said in Psalm 66:18, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” You cannot even fulfill the most fundamental duties if you don't keep your heart.

Fourthly, notice the fallacy, the error, and the theological misrepresentation when people say, “What you need to do is just open your heart to the Lord.” You know what the Scripture says? Remember Lydia in Acts chapter 16, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, whose heart the Lord opened, with the result that she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul. Why did she listen to Paul? God opened her heart.

Do you remember those two on the Emmaus road? “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” Then, in verse 45, “Then opened he their understanding,” or their heart, “that they might understand the scriptures.” If God does not open the heart and the understanding, it is never going to be open. The best thing you can do if you have lost loved ones is pray that God would have mercy upon them, open their heart, open their eyes, and open their understanding.

But you have a responsibility to keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. If you believe right, you will act right; if you believe wrongly, you will act wrongly. If you believe right, you will keep your heart and want to honor and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ and the so great salvation that He has given to us.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we are thankful for Your love, Your grace, Your mercy, and Your truth. We are thankful for life and so great salvation. Enable us, Father, to keep our hearts and to live holy, godly lives in Thy name, we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

Turning Love Into Hate

July 7, 2015

Introduction and Scripture Reading

The message is entitled, "Turning Love Into Hate."

"And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord. And she despised him in her heart. And they brought in the ark of the Lord and set it in his place in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. And as soon as David had made an end of offerings, of burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts.

"And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to everyone a cake of bread and a good piece of flesh and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed everyone to his house. Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David and said, 'How glorious was the king of Israel today, who

uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!' And David said unto Michal, 'It was before the Lord which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord over Israel. Therefore will I play before the Lord.'

"And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight. And of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor." Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child until the day of her death."

That was 2 Samuel 6, verses 16 through 23. The subject is turning love into hate. Everyone enjoys a good love story, including men, especially if there's a little fighting or action and adventure involved. In the movies, it seems that there is a correlation between the greatness of the love and the greatness of the action that is needed and necessary to win one's sweetheart. If we were to take that principle and apply it to the Bible, one of the greatest love stories of all time would be the love story between David and Michal. If you're interested in suspense, intrigue, deception, action, adventure, and fighting, then you need to read the story of David and Michal.

The Love Story of David and Michal

There is absolutely nothing on television or in the movies that can parallel the difficulties and troubles they encountered. Their love story almost did not happen. To understand why, we must look at the Scriptures and lay a foundation before returning to 2 Samuel chapter 6.

In 1 Samuel chapter 18, David had become a part of Saul’s household. He was not only a military leader but also Saul’s personal musician. Jonathan had already entered into a covenant with David, and David was well-liked and respected by the nation. First Samuel 18:16 says, “But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.”

Verses 5–11 say: “And David went out, and whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely. And Saul set him over the

men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants."

Saul's Deception and Attempts to Kill David

"And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played and said, 'Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.' And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him. And he said, 'They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands.' What can he have more but the kingdom?"

"And Saul eyed David from that day and forward. And it came to pass on the morrow that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house. And David played with his hand, as at other times. And there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the javelin, for he said, 'I will smite David even to the wall with it.' And David avoided out of his presence twice." David was there in the house with Saul.

He is not only the mighty military leader; he is also the personal musician. Three key verses in this chapter show Saul's fear of David. Verse 12 says, "And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him and was departed from Saul." Verse 16 says, "And all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them." Verse 15 adds, "Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him." Finally, verse 29 says, "And Saul was yet the more afraid of David, and Saul became David's enemy continually."

The truth is, Saul greatly feared David. He knew that someday David would have the kingdom. That is why, in verse 8, he asks, "What can he have more but the kingdom?" If David received the kingdom, Jonathan, Saul's son, would not be king. Moreover, Saul knew there would then be an end not only to his line but to his royal lineage as well.

According to Saul's way of thinking, David must therefore be exterminated. Saul had already tried to kill David, but he was unable to kill him himself. Since he wanted David dead and could not accomplish it personally, another plan had to be initiated. Saul determined to trap David with his daughter Merab.

Saul said to David, “Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give to thee to wife. Only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles.” Saul explained, “Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.” David answered, “Who am I? And what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to a king?”

What Saul wanted was for the Philistines to kill David. He promised, “David, if you will be valiant and fight the Lord's battles for me, then I am going to give you Merab for a wife.”

Notice how deceptive, duplicitous, and full of intrigue Saul was. He hid his murderous intentions behind a wall of spirituality. What he was saying was, “All I want is for you to avenge the Lord of his enemies. All I want you to be is a good, godly warrior. I want you to take care of God’s battles. That’s what I want.” Saul did not care one thing about David winning battles. All he wanted was David dead. He wanted him killed at the hands of the Philistines.

As you think about this, you cannot help but have another thought enter your mind. One must wonder if David learned this little deception from Saul when he had Uriah the Hittite killed in 2 Samuel chapter 11. The only difference was that, where Saul failed, David succeeded.

Evidently, David fought very well and won those battles, yet he was not given Merab to wife. Look in verse 18: “And David said to Saul, ‘Who am I?’” “And what is my life? Or my father’s family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?” In other words, David said, “My family is small and poor. I probably do not need to be a king’s son-in-law anyhow.”

David displayed a great deal of humility. He said, “It is a great thing to be a king’s son-in-law. My family is small and poor. Who am I to be the son-in-law of a king?” But when the time came for David to have Merab, Saul, true to his own form and deceitful attitude, did

not keep his word. Instead, he gave Merab to another man, Adriel the Meholathite.

There is no way to avoid the fact that what Saul did was an insult and a slight to David. David had risked his life and done everything Saul asked, yet Saul's daughter was given to another man. Instead of becoming angry and vindictive, David simply overlooked the provocation. Perhaps he did not really want Merab for a wife. Perhaps he realized that Saul was her father and the king, and could choose a husband for Merab as he pleased. Or perhaps David said, "It is just not worth getting upset and fighting over." His humility brought him through this great provocation and insult. But when Saul's plan to have David killed by the Philistines through Merab failed, another door of hope opened for Saul.

Look at verse 20: "And Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him." Michal was Saul's younger daughter, and she loved David. When Saul heard this, the thing pleased him. Consider what this man was willing to do: Saul was willing to use his own daughters as bait, break their hearts, crush their hopes and desires, and sacrifice their happiness to accomplish his own desires.

Can you imagine a father using his children in such a wicked manner? The Bible explicitly says in verse 21: "And Saul said, 'I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.' Wherefore Saul said to David, 'Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in the one of the twain.'" Saul's purpose was to destroy David. He was going to use Michal as bait.

Evidently, Michal had loved David from the beginning, but she was willing to remain quiet while Merab was promised to David. When Merab was given to Adriel, Michal made her love known. With her older sister out of the way, she thought, "Now I can make my love known for David," and she did so. Saul then saw another way to entrap and destroy David. Now look at what Saul does. Skip down to verse 22: "And Saul commanded his servants, saying, 'Commune with David secretly and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee.'"

"Now therefore, be the king's son-in-law." Saul sets the trap to catch David, and the bait, of course, is his own daughter, Michal. But note what he does. He endeavors to stay in the background, as though he has nothing to do with this, and tells his servants, "You commune with David secretly. You tell David that I have a delight in him," which was an absolute lie. He did not delight in David; he wanted David dead. "But you tell him that I delight in him, and you tell him that I want him to be the king's son-in-law." It could be that Saul had already lost his credibility with David. David probably would not have believed anything he said because he did not give him Merab as he had promised. Saul understood that he needed some help, so he enticed his servants to try to get David to be the king's son-in-law.

David still maintains a humble attitude. "And Saul's servants spake these words in the ears of David. And David said, 'Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I'm a poor man and lightly esteemed?'" David understood, first, that it was a great honor to be a king's son-in-law. Second, he said, "You've got to understand I'm a poor man. My family could never come up with a dowry for a king's daughter."

The servants told Saul what David had said. "And Saul said, 'Thus shall you say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies.' But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law. And the days were not expired. Wherefore David arose, went he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men. Then David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him Michal, his daughter, to wife."

When Saul heard David's objection that he could never raise enough money to give the king a dowry for Michal, Saul said, "Oh, look, don't worry about that, all I want is a hundred foreskins of the Philistines that I may be avenged of mine enemies."

Michal's Love and Protection of David

In other words, all David had to do was kill a hundred male warriors and bring Saul evidence that he had killed them. David was tickled pink to hear that. Instead of killing a hundred, he killed two hundred and delivered the evidence in full tale to Saul. The latter part of verse 27 says, "And Saul gave him Michal, his daughter, to wife." I can assure you that Saul was grieved and upset that he had to do so—that David had escaped the Philistines, conquered them, and was still alive. Not only was the Lord with David, but verse 28 says, "And Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal Saul's daughter loved him." This is twice in one chapter that we are told Michal loved David. Yet David's escape from the Philistines did not mean Saul had given up wanting him dead.

Saul still wanted David dead. However, now he ordered not only his son Jonathan, but all his servants, to kill David. In chapter 19, verse 1, we read, "And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David." Saul said, in effect, "I want him dead. Jonathan, you kill him. All my other servants, you kill him."

What happened? Jonathan interceded with David and with his father Saul concerning David. "But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David. And Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee." Jonathan warned David to take heed until morning, abide in a secret place, and hide himself. He would stand before his father in the field where David was, speak with Saul about him, and report what he saw. Jonathan then spoke well of David to Saul: "Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good. For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel. Thou sawest it, and didst rejoice. Wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?" Saul hearkened to Jonathan's voice and swore, "As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain." Jonathan called David, showed him all those things, and brought him to Saul; and David was in Saul's presence as in times past.

At this point, evidently, Saul comes to his senses. Jonathan said, "Dad, why are you going to kill him? All he's ever done to you is good. You know the great salvation that he wrought when he killed Goliath. You saw it. You rejoiced in it. David hasn't harmed you." Saul answered, "You're right, son. I'm not going to kill him. I'm going to let him live. That's just all there is to it." He said, "He shall not be slain."

But Saul was a liar and deceitful. "And there was war again, and David went out and fought with the Philistines and slew them with a great slaughter, and they fled from him. And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, and he sat in his house with a javelin in his hand, and David played with his hand. And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin in the wall, and David fled and escaped that night." Once again, Saul tried to smite David to the wall with the javelin after giving his word to Jonathan that David would not be slain.

This is a real demonstration of the love that Michal had for David. After David escaped from Saul's presence, Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him and slay him in the morning. "And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, 'If thou save not thy life tonight, tomorrow thou shalt be slain.' So Michal let David down through a window, and he went and fled and escaped. And Michal took an image and laid it in the bed and put a pillow of goat's hair for his bolster and covered it with a cloth. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, 'He is sick.' And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, 'Bring him up to me in the bed that I may slay him.'"

"And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed with a pillow of goat's hair for a bolster. And Saul said unto Michal, 'Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped?' And Michal answered Saul, 'He said unto me, Let me go, why should I kill thee?' So David fled and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah."

Here is a clear picture of Michal's love for David. She was the one that was actively engaged and seeking to save his life. She was the one that said, "If you do not escape tonight, tomorrow you're going

to be dead." It was Michal who convinced him to flee even though it meant separation for her and David. It was Michal who let him down through the window. It was Michal who put the image in bed and pretended it was David. It was Michal who lied to the servant and said, "He's sick. He can't come." And when King Saul was so angry, he said, "Bring him to me in the bed. I'll kill him while he's in the bed." When they came back, they found it was just an image. Then it was Michal who lied to her own insane father and said, "I had to let him go because he threatened to kill me." What was Michal doing? She was protecting her husband. She loved him, and she engineered his escape from Saul.

David's Exile and Michal's Forced Marriage

David was not killed by Saul nor by his servants. However, without us reading a lot of scripture, David was forced to be on the run; he was forced to flee and, basically speaking, he became an outlaw. His life for the next number of years was literally on the run, while Saul was seeking to kill David wherever he might find him. While David was on the run, Saul committed another grievous sin against David.

What is it? Look in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 25 and verse 44. 1 Samuel 25, verse 44. Look what King Saul does: "But Saul had given Michal, his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim." David was on the run. What does Saul do? Saul takes his daughter and gives her to another man, knowing that she was married to David, knowing that she loved David. Why in the world would Saul be willing to do such a thing? Let me ask you another question. Why in the world would Palti be willing to take another man's wife? One thing is certain: he knew that she was married to David.

Had I been alive back then, and Saul had tried to give me Michal, knowing that everybody was singing, “Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands,” I think I would have thought twice before trying to upset David. But why would Palti be willing to take her, knowing that she was another man’s wife? You say, “Well, Brother Weaver, what I want to know is why would Michal go to another man if she really loved David?” The truth of the matter is this: in all probability, she did not have any choice in the matter.

Not only was her father her father, but her father was the king. Saul was once again pulling the strings and manipulating his own children, in this case Michal, destroying her home and her happiness in order that he might simply get back at David. You cannot fathom the wickedness of man. But all that Saul did did not quench Michal's love for David, nor did it quench David's love for Michal.

Now here is what happens. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Samuel chapter 3. After Saul and Jonathan were killed, there was one son left by the name of Ish-bosheth. Ish-bosheth was a very weak ruler, and Abner was the captain of the host of Israel. When Ish-bosheth accused Abner of going into one of Saul's concubines, Abner became angry and said, "I am going to turn the kingdom over to David."

Look at 2 Samuel chapter 3, beginning with verse 6: "And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul"—that is, Ish-bosheth, whose son was on the throne—"and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul. And Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. And Ish-bosheth said to Abner, 'Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?' Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ish-bosheth, and said, 'Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do show kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me today with a fault concerning this woman? So do God to Abner, and more also, except as the Lord hath sworn to David, even so I do to him, to translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah from Dan even to Beersheba.'" Ish-bosheth could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him.

Now watch what he said: "You've accused me of a sin with this woman." I don't know. Maybe he was guilty. Maybe he was not guilty; in all probability, he was not guilty, since he got so angry. And he said, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to take the kingdom away from you. I'm going to give it to David. God has already promised David. I'm going to take it away from you and give it to David."

Watch verse 12: "And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, 'Whose is the land?' Saying also, 'Make thy league

with me, and behold, my hand shall be with thee to bring about all Israel unto thee.'" David said, "Well, I will make a league with thee, but one thing I require of thee: thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face." And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Deliver me my wife, Michal, which I espoused to me for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines."

"And Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband, even from Paltiel the son of Laish. And her husband went with her along, weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, 'Go, return.' And he returned."

David's demand was righteous, and it was reasonable that he should be vindicated from the great slur Saul had cast upon him when he gave Michal to another man. Undoubtedly, David had different motivations in asking for Michal. First, there was a personal motivation. He loved her and wanted her. Secondly, there was probably a political motivation. The very fact that she was the daughter of a king would help him to submit any relationships in the future with the house of Saul, especially with the tribe of Benjamin, which was in Judah, from which David was from, Judah as well.

There was also probably a spiritual motivation: it would demonstrate David's forgiveness toward Michal and all that she had been through. There were probably a number of motivations in David wanting his wife, but David demanded, and he got his wife back.

Now look, if you would please, at verses 15 and 16: "And Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband, even from Paltiel the son of Laish. And her husband went with her along, weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, 'Go, return.' And he returned." One cannot help but feel sorry for Paltiel. Evidently, he loved Michal as well. As Michal was being taken to David, he followed her, weeping, until Abner said, "Go, return." Let me put it very bluntly: What Abner said was, "If you do not get out of here, I am going to kill you." So Paltiel didn't have a choice. He had to leave.

Had Paltiel acted honorably and with integrity to begin with and refused to be involved in another man's wife, he would never have

found himself in such a position. Connections which are formed in sin must sooner or later end in suffering. Had he not gotten himself in that position to begin with, he would not be suffering now. The truth is, no one can sin against God and get away with it.

Michal's Contempt for David

David loved Michal, and Michal loved David. However, something happened to Michal: Michal's love was turned to hate. The amazing thing is that it really did not take that long to do so. David reigned seven years and six months over Judah. Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, reigned only two years.

I do not know exactly when David sent and got Michal. Perhaps he had her a year before this incident; I do not really know. But while she was away, and when she got there, things began to take a different turn. Absence does not always make the heart grow fonder. Sometimes it alienates. Michal had returned to David and was probably with him for some time.

Look in 2 Samuel chapter 6 at verse 16. The Bible says, “And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart.” Michal was the one who turned.

She had suffered so many tests and trials, yet when it seemingly appeared that she was about to be set for life, something happened. When we say set for life, remember that David reigned another thirty-three years, basically over all Israel. But what happened? She allowed her love to be turned into hate.

How did that happen? Second Samuel 6 and verse 16 tells us, in the latter part, “and she despised him in her heart.” The very first thing to see is her attitude, and her attitude is revealed in the word “despised.” The Hebrew word is “bazah.” It literally means to despise, to treat someone as contemptible, to treat someone as a vile person, and to scorn them. In other words, her attitude toward David became one that regarded David as a despicable, vile, worthless person. Her love then was replaced with what you and I

would call contempt, disdain, and despicableness. She despised him. Verse 16 says, “and she despised him in her heart.”

When the Bible says that she despised him in her heart, it is not referring to the physical organ in our chest. What does it mean? Consider at least five passages.

The Biblical Meaning of the Heart

The first is Genesis 6:5, the very first time the word “heart” is mentioned in the Bible. This is called the law of first mention. Usually, the first time something is mentioned in the Bible, that is the way it will be used throughout the entire Bible, unless the context proves something different. Genesis 6:5 says, “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Notice what the Bible says: God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Whatever the heart is, it can think and imagine, because God saw the imagination and the thoughts of the heart.

Look at Genesis 27:41. You remember when Jacob had taken the birthright? Actually, he did not steal it; he claimed it, because the birthright was part of that which Esau had sold him for a mess of pottage. Jacob took the blessing. When old Esau found out that Jacob had received the blessing, the Bible says, “And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him. And Esau said in his heart, ‘The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.’” Note that the Bible says Esau said in his heart. Whatever the heart is, it can speak. It can not only think and imagine; it can speak, for Esau said in his heart.

Look at Proverbs 5:12. Let me show you something else the heart is capable of: “And say, ‘How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?’” Whatever the heart is, it is capable either of receiving instruction or of despising instruction.

So the heart can think and imagine. The heart can speak. The heart can either receive or despise instruction. If you look in Matthew 5, verse 28, you find that somehow the heart is intimately

connected with the eyes. Our Lord is doing some teaching, and He says this. In fact, we will read verse 27: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Somehow there is an intimate connection between the eyes and the heart, because when you look upon a woman to lust after her, you have committed adultery in the heart. There is, then, a correlation between the eyes and the heart.

Now, if you have not figured out what the heart is, turn back to Daniel chapter 4, because we are going to see it stated very explicitly in the Bible. Look in Daniel chapter 4, at verse 16. Here is God's judgment against Nebuchadnezzar, and here is the charge, or the curse, that God places upon him: "Let his heart be changed from a man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him, and let seven times pass over him." The phrase "seven times" simply is the Chaldean way of saying seven years. So God says, "Let his heart be changed from a man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him," and this is going to last for seven years.

Now skip down to Daniel 4:28. All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months, he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon and said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven: “O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.” The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from men, ate grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.

For seven years, Nebuchadnezzar had the heart of a beast. He was out there eating grass like an ox. His fingernails grew like birds’ claws, and his hair was like birds’ feathers. He was literally insane,

crazy. The condition is known as boanthropy, but it was a man living like an animal for seven years.

What did God say in verse 16? “Let his heart be changed from a man to a heart of a beast.” If you want to know what the heart is, look in verse 34. After seven years, “I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and my reason or my understanding returned unto me.” He blessed the most High, praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and whose kingdom is from generation to generation. Verse 36 says, “At the same time my reason returned unto me.”

So what is your heart? Your heart is your mind. It is your understanding. The Hebrew word for heart is leb, translated in our Bibles “mind” twelve times and “understanding” ten times. Thus, when God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence,” He is telling us to keep our mind and our understanding.

What in the world happened? Michal despised David in her heart—in her mind, understanding, and reasoning. Instead of dwelling upon David’s character, David’s office, and David’s love, she built up a case against him in her mind. She disagreed with him and certainly did not like the way he acted in regard to the Ark.

God's Design for Marriage

Now, ladies and gentlemen, please listen to me carefully, especially the ladies at this point. God commands you to honor your husbands. Do you realize David was not only Michal's king, he was also her head and her husband. And she literally despised him in all three positions.

Now I want you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Let me show you. Very plainly stated in the scripture. 1 Corinthians 11, beginning there with verse 3. Look what the Apostle Paul writes. 1 Corinthians 11, verse 3. Here's something that he would have you to know. Alright? 1 Corinthians 11, verse 3: "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 says here is His ordained hierarchical system. There is God, Christ, man, and woman. The head of man is Christ. The head

of Christ is the Father. Now, does the woman have a head? Yes, the woman's head is her husband. That's what he's saying. If you'll turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 5, verse 23, I'll show it to you right out of Scripture, Ephesians 5, verse 23. Look at it. Ephesians 5, verse 23, the Bible says, "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."

By the way, the Greek word for head is the word "kephale." It literally means to be supreme, to be chief, to be prominent. It is used in connection of a husband's relationship to his wife or the Lord's relationship to the church. When the Bible says He is the head of the church, what does it mean? It means He's the prominent one. He's the supreme one. He's the head of it. Now, when the Bible says that the wife is to reverence her husband, I'm going to show you that in just a moment. It means that she is to recognize his position that God has placed him in as her head.

Now, look at Ephesians 5 and verse 33. Here it is: "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." You know, the interesting thing is the word for "reverence" here is the word "phobeo," which is the Greek word for fear. And it literally means to be struck with fear.

That does not mean that women should go around being fearful for their lives or fearful that their husbands can beat them up. There is another way that word “fear” is used in the Bible. It literally means to have a reverence for, to venerate, to respect, or to treat with deference. The wives are to reverence their husbands; that is, they are to hold them up to the office and headship that God has appointed them.

The wife is required to love her husband and submit to him. But the husband is also required to love his wife, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. In Colossians 3:19, the Bible also says, “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” What does that mean? First of all, the wife has to make sure that she keeps her heart toward her husband, and the husband has to make sure that he keeps his heart toward his wife. Both husband and wife have an obligation, a duty, and a responsibility to keep their thoughts, understanding, and reasoning abilities toward each other.

The Danger of Building a Case in the Mind

Have you ever wondered how couples who have been married fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years end up getting divorced? Sometimes there are biblical reasons, but most divorces today really have no biblical reasons behind them. They simply get tired of each other. How can someone married for fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years end up divorced? They had to love each other to begin with, and they had to love each other for a while, or they would not have stayed together so long. But here is the answer. Here is what happens.

Michal despised David in her mind. She failed to honor him, reverence him, and esteem him. The problem with most husbands and wives is that, instead of keeping their heart toward each other, they become critical of each other, emphasize each other's faults, accentuate the negatives, and build up a case in their minds. It does not matter whether the accusations in their minds are really true or not. Those accusations are true according to their way of thinking.

There is a vast difference between the facts and my interpretation of the facts. Each person puts his own interpretation of the facts in his mind and believes it to be true. People do not simply wake up one morning and say, "Wow, what a beautiful day. It's a good day to get a divorce. Let's run down and get one." It does not work like that. They slowly and surely build up a case in their minds against their mate, against their spouse, and then justify that case based upon their interpretation of the facts.

Look back in your Bibles to 2 Samuel chapter 6 and verse 16, because there is an interesting truth here: "And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal," what are the next two words? "Saul's daughter." Not Michal, David's wife, but Michal, Saul's daughter. Why would she be called Saul's daughter here? The answer is that she was displaying the pride, arrogance, and rebellion of Saul, her father.

Michal's Pride and David's Rebuke

Undoubtedly, Michal had been boiling against David for some time. I do not know the answer or the reason why, but undoubtedly she

had. When she looked out the window and saw him leaping and dancing around, uncovering himself—that does not mean that he was naked; it means he did not have on his royal robes—and acting like a commoner, that was the straw that broke the camel's back. She despised him in her heart. She said, "This is it. I can't take any more of it. I'm not going to put up with it anymore."

Michal took offense at David's humility and his pious enthusiasm. Moreover, she did not want him acting like a commoner. After all, he was king. Look in verse 14: "And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod." All he had on was a linen garment. Why would David lay aside his royal robes?

The Ark was being brought into Jerusalem. Why would David lay aside his royal robes? Because he was saying before God, “I’m just like anyone else. I’m just a sinner. It doesn’t matter whether I’m a king, a president, or a congressman. I am a sinner standing before God, and I am equal to others who are sinners before God.”

There may have been more to this, because the priests and the Levites also wore linen garments. Michal’s contemptuous remark concerning David’s dress and his dancing before the Lord may also have been a slap in the face of the priests and the Levites. She was revealing her attitude toward spiritual things. Verse 20 says, “Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David”—and listen to the sarcasm: “How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!”

Were God’s priests and Levites, dressed in linen garments, vile and shameless? What was Michal doing? She was ridiculing, belittling, and berating David and holding him in contempt instead of treating him with reverence and honor. Undoubtedly, she had been doing it for some time. This was just the straw that broke the camel’s back.

Do you realize there are multitudes of husbands and wives who constantly belittle and berate each other, holding each other in contempt? It is wicked. It is wrong. It is a method of turning love into hate.

Now consider David's stinging rebuke to Michal. In verse 21 he said, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord." In other words: "You better remember something. God rejected your father and your family, and God chose me in their place. Your father was proud, arrogant, rebellious, and disobedient. And what you're doing, Michal, is acting just like your father." Then he said, "And I will yet be more vile than thus."

"And I will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour." David said, "You haven't seen anything yet. I'll be as humble as I can before God. I realize I am what I am only by the grace of God, and those people you despise will hold me in honor." What a stinging rebuke.

Look, if you would please, at God's judgment against Michal: "Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death." I know that was God's judgment against Michal. But I cannot help but wonder whether, along with God's judgment, David ceased treating Michal as a wife. How in the world could one be intimate with a woman with such a contemptuous and hateful attitude and disposition? Who would even want to be around her? It could be that David avoided her as well.

Practical Applications for Marriage

Now, let me make some applications. First, God commands husbands to love their wives, but the command is equally applicable to wives. Love is an act of the will. Thankfully, emotions are connected with love, but the truth is that you will to love your mate. People who do not love their husbands or wives actually will not to love them, building up a contemptuous attitude. They justify their failure to love by some action or actions and their interpretation of those actions in their own minds, thinking they are therefore just in not loving their mate. Since love is commanded in the Bible, it has to be an act of the will. You cannot command feelings or emotions, but you can command an act of the will, an act of the mind. When we refuse to love our spouses, we are in rebellion against God. It is plain and simple.

You cannot get away from it. God says, "Husbands, love your wives." Likewise, wives are to love their husbands. Second, we must learn to be thankful for our spouses and think upon and dwell upon their good points, not their faults. The Bible says in 1 Peter 4 that love covers a multitude of sins. We must understand this simple truth: there is no such thing as a perfect husband or a perfect wife.

Those creatures do not exist. No matter how beautiful your neighbor's wife is, she is full of sin and faults. No matter how handsome your neighbor's husband is, he is full of sin and faults. When he sweats, he stinks like everybody else. You may say, "My wife is just not as slim and trim as she used to be when we got married," but neither are you. "My wife is not as pretty as she used to be." Neither are you. Be honest: there is no such thing as a perfect wife or a perfect husband.

God has given us our mates, and He demands that we love them. When you start thinking the grass is greener on the other side, you've just messed up.

I remember when I was in school, we were seated alphabetically, and I was seated by a girl. When I looked at her, I thought she was the ugliest girl I'd ever seen in my life. I thought, "Why in the world did I have to be seated by this girl?" Although she had a beautiful figure, she kind of had a hawk nose. I thought, "Oh my, that nose just messes up everything."

But I got to know that girl. She became one of our best friends. She was engaged to a boy, and we had him over to our house. I said, "Sarah, I want to tell you something. If I were not already married, your fiancé would have a run for his money, because I'd do everything I could to take you away from him and marry you myself." The girl I had thought was so ugly became so beautiful because of her disposition, her attitude, and her godliness.

On the other hand, I was preaching at another church. I knew the pastor, but I'd never met his wife. He picked me up at the motel to take me to supper. His wife was in the back seat, and when I saw her, the first thing that hit my mind was, "My, what a beautiful woman. I've never seen a woman so beautiful." I wasn't in that car five

minutes before I was saying, "Thank God I'm not married to that woman."

The truth of the matter is that we need to learn to be thankful for whom God has given us. Whenever you're tempted to think of your spouse's faults, become upset, or begin to criticize, stop and reflect upon one simple truth: it is only by the providence of God that you have a mate at all. God could remove your husband or wife; He could even remove you. We need to dwell upon the good points of our mates. They all have good points, something for which we can admire and respect them, and that is what we need to emphasize.

Fourthly, you must refuse to become bitter and resentful toward your spouses. Do you know where most bitterness and resentment come from? They come because our mates do not fit and fulfill our expectations. We want them to be a certain way, but we cannot make them that way. We become frustrated, and then we become bitter and resentful. Listen, you are not going to change the personality or the way God created your mate.

I've been married to Alice for 42 years, and she hasn't speeded up yet. I don't guess she ever will, but I haven't slowed down yet either. God made us with different personalities; He made us differently. Although there are things I might not like about my wife, and things she might not like about me, there are a multitude of things I do like and love about her. I'm not going to waste my time thinking about the little things that would tend to upset me. Why should I? Why should I?

Someone says, "Well, pastor, are you having trouble in your church?" "Yeah." "What you need to do is resign that church and go to another one." The pastor does that, and when he gets to the new church, he finds that he did not have the problems he had in the old church, but there is a different set of problems. You say, "I'm going to divorce my wife and marry this beautiful woman over here." You are going to find out there will be a whole different set of problems over there. Why leave one set of problems that you already know about and can handle for a new set that you do not know about and cannot possibly handle?

We need to understand that we cannot, and we must not, become bitter and resentful toward our spouses. We cannot change the way God made them, so we must simply accept them the way they are and live with them. And then fifthly, we must refuse to act unbiblically, keep our hearts, and treat each other with love, respect, honor, and admiration. If we don't,

We will do exactly what Michal did: turn love into hate, and destroy ourselves, our homes, and our families. She despised him in her mind. Keep your heart and your mind with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Father, we are so thankful that Thou art the sovereign God of heaven and earth, and that Your word is truth. Teach us, Lord, not to turn our love into hate or build up cases in our minds against each other, but always to love, respect, admire, and reverence each other as Your word demands. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

Has The Lord Spoken To You?

November 21, 2018

Introduction: The Question of God Speaking

And the Lord spake to Manasseh and to his people, but they would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns and bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon.

Has the Lord spoken to you? I ask that question in sincerity. If so, when and how did He speak to you? This question also poses another very pertinent question: Why should the Lord speak to you?

Many people claim that the Lord speaks to them regularly, gives them information, and instructs them. Yet everything in their life and everything they do is basically contrary to the Word of God. We have to remember that God is not the author of confusion, as He said in 1 Corinthians 14:33. So many people who claim that God has spoken to them directly have lives that are absolutely in shambles, and they do that which is contrary to the Word of God.

I remember when Alice and I were in Greenville, South Carolina, a multitude of years ago. One woman was on trial for murdering her husband. He was asleep on the couch with his feet on the couch, and she came up, put a bullet in his head, and said the Lord told her to do it. First of all, God says, "Thou shalt not murder." But since then, whenever Alice tells me not to put my feet on the couch, I do not do it.

God's Full and Final Revelation in Christ and Scripture

You have to ask yourself this question and stop and think about it: Why would God nullify His full and final revelation in Jesus Christ? Stop and think about that.

In Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 through 5, the Bible says: "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners"—that simply means different ways—"spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets." Verse 2 says: "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath

By inheritance, He obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee”? And again, “I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son”? But note that the Bible says in verse 1 that God spoke in times past in different ways to the fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.

Jesus Christ is God, and the Bible tells us that He is now seated at the right hand of God. In fact, God has declared Him to be God. According to Hebrews, chapter 1 and verse 1, before the Bible was completed and before Jesus Christ had come and accomplished His work, God spoke in different ways in the Old Testament and also in the New Testament. Oftentimes, there were trances and dreams. There was the Urim and the Thummim, and, of course, there were always the prophets.

However, you have to remember this: Jesus Christ is the living Word of God, and the Bible is the written Word of God. These are the full and final revelation of God. When God gave us His Word, He gave it to us fully and finally. When He gave us His Son, He gave Him unto us fully and finally. Therefore, when someone claims to have information, a voice, or a word from God over and above and beyond Jesus Christ and the Bible, it is a denial that Jesus Christ and the Bible are the full and final revelation of God. In one sense, it is not only a form of pride, but also a form of foolish pride, to think that God singles us out and speaks to us in a unique and special way, giving us information and knowledge over and above and beyond the Word of God.

The Danger of Adding to God's Word

When we stop and think about the Bible, we must remember that it is not only the Word of God; it is the revealed will of God for our lives. Everyone knows the verses that say, “Thou shalt not add to, nor diminish from, the words of this law,” and the passage in Revelation declaring that if we add to or take from it, we are under the curse of God. We understand that. But we must understand this: when God gave us His Word and when God gave us His Son, that was the full and final revelation of God. He may give us insight, understanding, enlightenment, and illumination in His Word through His Spirit, but that is not giving us information above and beyond His Word.

There is a wonderful passage in Deuteronomy 29:29. I would encourage everyone to memorize this passage. It is very important. The Bible simply says, “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.” The secret things belong to the Lord, but the things which He revealed belong to us forever, that we may do them.

There are two basic presuppositions of Scripture. The first is that God is, and the second is that God has spoken. The truth is that God has spoken, and God still speaks. So the questions are: How does God speak? How do you hear God? How do you know when you are

hearing God? If He speaks—and you know that He speaks—why do you not obey Him?

In 2 Chronicles 33:10, our text says, “And the Lord spake to Manasseh and to his people, but they would not hearken.” I am going to quote this passage several times because I want you to see its implication. The word “spake” there is the Hebrew word dabar. It is translated “speak” 840 times in our Bibles, “command” four times, and “say” 118 times. God spoke to Manasseh. God spoke to the Judeans, and yet they would not listen. God only spoke to the people. The Bible tells us very pointedly that God spoke to Manasseh. It is difficult to believe—not difficult to believe, but difficult to comprehend.

Manasseh's Wickedness and God's Speech

Did you know that wicked, evil, ungodly, reprobate Manasseh was a son of godly, obedient King Hezekiah? One of the greatest acts of revival and one of the greatest acts of restoration of the true worship of God took place under King Hezekiah in the Old Testament. Manasseh was his son. He saw it firsthand. It was also under King Hezekiah that God sent and slew in one night 185,000 Assyrians who had attacked Jerusalem or were about to attack Jerusalem. Manasseh knew this firsthand.

In contradiction to his good education and the good example of his father, Manasseh abandoned himself to all impiety. He embraced all the abominations of the heathen. He ruined the true worship of God, unraveled all that his father had done in reforming the people, and profaned the house of God with idols. He dedicated his children to Moloch and burned them in the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom. He listened to witches and enchanters and communicated with an evil spirit. He even built houses for sodomites in the temple and beside the temple of God. He had an Asherah, which was a sex goddess, and put her in the house of God as well. He had another idol that he put in the house of God. He profaned the temple, debauched the people, and seduced them. He made them worse than the people that God drove out of the land because of their sins.

And yet God spoke to Manasseh. I have heard people say that they were too wicked to be saved. The truth is, no one is too wicked to be

saved. Jesus Christ came to save sinners. Luke 19:10 tells us that our Lord Himself said, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." God's salvation is only for lost people and sinners. There are some men who are exceedingly vile and wicked, but you would have to go the extra mile, do the extra work, and be extra depraved to surpass Manasseh in his wickedness and rebellion. And yet God spoke to Manasseh. How did God speak to Manasseh? How did God speak to the people?

Did they hear an audible voice? Did they receive a dream? Or were they in a trance? Usually, when we think about God speaking, we think about something exotic, exciting, and exhilarating. We tend to think that there must be something great and marvelous happening when God speaks. Most of us have never really learned to think in terms of God speaking as He did to Elijah.

The Still Small Voice vs. Spectacular Expectations

You know the story: Elijah has defeated the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Jezebel has threatened to kill him, cut off his head, and so he runs. God sustains him, feeds him, and sends him to a mountain so that He can speak to him. In 1 Kings 19, God says, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by: "And a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?'"

So God was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire. It was the still small voice that came to Elijah. The truth is, most people want to concentrate on the externals, on that which they believe is phenomenal. They want something exceptional, and they refuse to hear the still small voice.

What we suffer from in this day and time is what I am going to call the Naaman complex. Naaman was a Syrian, a very valiant man and evidently a very decent man. In one of his raids, he had captured a

little Israelite maiden. But Naaman was a leper. The little Israelite maiden said, "Would to God that my master were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy."

The king of Syria sent a large amount of money to the king of Israel and sent Naaman, saying, “Here's my servant, cure him from his leprosy.” The king of Israel said, “What does he think I am? Who does he think I am? I'm not God. I can't cure the man. He's trying to provoke a war with me.” While he was so upset, Elisha sent word to the king of Israel: “Send him down to me. And he'll know that there's a prophet in the land of Israel.” So Naaman came to Elisha to be healed.

In 2 Kings chapter 5, beginning with verse 9: “So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.” “And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying”—Elisha did not even come out; he simply sent a messenger—“Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.”

“But Naaman was wroth, and went away,” saying, “Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?” So he went away in a rage. His servants said, “My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?”

"How much rather then, when he saith to thee, 'Wash, and be clean'?" Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Why was Naaman wroth? Why was he in such a rage? He turned around and left. Here's the answer: Naaman was expecting something spectacular. He was expecting something extraordinary. He had a preconceived idea as to how Elisha was going to come out and heal him. When it didn't happen the way he thought it should happen, he fled in a rage. Five of the men with him said, "If he had bid you to do some great thing, you'd have broken your neck to do it.

How much simpler is it just to go dip seven times in the Jordan and be clean?"

Do you realize that is exactly where most Christians are today? They want something unusual. They want something spectacular. Most Christians tend to think that if God speaks, lightning is going to strike, thunder is going to roll, the hair of the head is going to stand up, and goose bumps are going to run up and down their spine. If it doesn't happen like that, then God hasn't spoken, because they have a preconceived idea of what it is like when God speaks. When you have a preconceived idea of what you think God ought to do, and He does something contrary to what you think, you refuse it. You will not have it.

If you look back in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 33 and verse 10, the Scripture says, "And the Lord spake to Manasseh and to his people, but they would not hearken." The word "hearken" is from the Hebrew word qashab, which means to hearken, to heed, to hear, to regard, to incline, and to pay attention.

So let's read it like this: "And the Lord spake to Manasseh and to the people, but they paid him no attention. They refused to listen to him. They did not incline their ears to his word." So here's my question: We know that God spoke to Manasseh and to the people, for the Scripture says so. Why then would they not hear? Why would they not listen?

God Speaks Through His Prophets and Preachers

Why would they not obey? Let me answer that. Turn back in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 21. This passage also deals with Manasseh. I am not going to read all of it, but enough to show why Manasseh would not hearken and why the people would not hearken. Verse 1 tells us that Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, that he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem, and that his mother's name was Hephzibah. You may read the category of wicked things that he did. Now look at verse 9:

“But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel. And the Lord spake by his servants the prophets,

saying, ‘Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria’—that is, He'll destroy them—‘and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.’”

Verse 16 says: “Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.”

The Bible tells us that Manasseh would not listen. The people would not listen. Why? And here is the answer: Because God spoke the way He usually and normally spoke. It is true that occasionally there were dreams, occasionally there were trances, but those were few and far between. God usually spoke through His prophets, through His preachers. So, if you look back at verse 10, you will see the answer: "And the Lord spake by his servants the prophets, saying..."

It is amazing to me that most people always want something astounding and extraordinary just for them. They want their pride exalted, they want their feelings elevated, they want their desires fulfilled, so that they may think they are special, that somehow God singles them out and uniquely speaks to them and gives them information that no one else possesses. And these same people will never study their Bible. They will never read their Bible. Very seldom will they come to the preaching of the Word of God and hear the Word of God explained and expounded and applied. No, no, no, no. They are waiting on something extraordinary and special just for them.

It is true that God spoke in different ways, but the normal, most usual, and ordinary way that God spoke was through the prophets. This is not an isolated statement; Scripture shows it repeatedly. Look at 2 Kings 17:23: "Until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day." Note the words, "as he had said by all his servants the prophets."

Now look at 2 Kings 21:10: "And the Lord spake by his servants the prophets, saying..." Then 2 Kings 24:2 says: "And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servants the prophets."

If you would turn over to the book of Jeremiah chapter 25. Jeremiah 25 and look at verse 4. Jeremiah 25 verse 4, watch carefully. Jeremiah 25 verse 4: "And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear." Note: "The Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, but ye would not listen." Look in your Bibles, if you would please, to the book of Jeremiah chapter 35 and verse 15. Jeremiah 35 verse 15. Here it is again, and I could multiply these passages. Jeremiah 35 and verse 15: "I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, 'Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers': but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me." In the book of Daniel, you don't have to turn there, but in Daniel 9 in verse 10, Daniel was confessing his sins and the sins of the nation, and he says this: "Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our

God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets." In other words, His servants the prophets told us what to do, but we wouldn't hear. I'm sure that you're aware of the passage in Amos 3 and verse 7 where the Bible says, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." So the usual way that God spoke in the Old Testament and in the New Testament was through the preaching and teaching

of the Word of God. Let me tell you something: here's the absolute truth. If you will not hear God's voice through His Word and through the exposition, explanation, and application of His Word, then you will not hear God. If you will not listen to the Scriptures, if you will not listen to the Scriptures explained and applied, you will not hear God's voice. Turning away from the reading of Scripture and turning away from the preaching of the Scripture is turning away from God. It's refusing to hear Him.

Refusing God is refusing His voice. Consider 1 Samuel 12:14: “If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the Lord your God.” Look at that carefully. “If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice.” How do you hear God? How did He speak? The verse says, “And not rebel against the commandment of the Lord.” In other words, God spoke through His commandment.

God spoke through His Word. In 2 Kings 18:12 we read: “Because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them.” In each of these verses, we read about the commandment, and we read about the covenant. We also read about the voice of God. God spoke. But how did He speak? It was in His covenant, in His commandments, and through the preachers who gave those words to the people. God spoke through the words He had given.

The Bible is the revelation of God. It is God’s law. It is God’s covenant. It is God’s commands. It is God’s warnings. It is God’s promises. It is God’s sanctions, which are both positive and negative. Let me say it plainly: it is God’s voice. When we speak of hearing God, we are speaking of hearing what He has revealed in His Word, through His covenant and commandments.

The Bible as God's Voice

Second Timothy 3:16–17 says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” The Bible says all

Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The word “inspiration” is a very unique Greek word, theopneustos. It actually means “God-breathed” or “God-exhaled.” Therefore, when Scripture is said to be given by inspiration, it is saying that all Scripture is breathed out of the mouth of God.

It is my breath that carries my voice. God's Word is His voice. Inspiration is the act of the Holy Spirit of God whereby He moved upon the men to write the Scriptures. The words that they wrote, and, if they prophesied, the words they spoke, were and are indeed the very words of God Himself. The men were nothing more than the vessels. They were the amanuenses; they were the secretaries.

They took dictation, so to speak. In one sense, they did. The words were God's. God used the men, and they may have spoken what God said not only in their language but in the vernacular of that day; it was still the very words of God. We have to understand that the Bible is the voice of God. In 2 Peter 1:21 we read: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” It was not just someone who sat down and said, “Well, I think I'll write the Bible.” Number one, it would be impossible for one man to write the Bible. Number two, the Bible was written by over 40 different authors over a period of 1,600 years. Each of these men was inspired to write, and all the prophecy fits together like a hand in a glove.

This is because it is inspired of God. There are passages in the Bible that speak very clearly and distinctly concerning the fact that the Holy Ghost inspired the men to say or write what they said or wrote. For instance, look in your Bibles to Mark chapter 12, and let us begin reading with verse 36: “For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.’” That verse is taken right out of Psalm 110. David wrote most of the Psalms, though not all of them. Moses wrote Psalm 90, and Asaph wrote Psalm 73, but David wrote most of them. David wrote Psalm 110, and note the words: “For David himself said by the Holy Ghost.” David may have said it and may have written it, but it was inspired by

The Holy Spirit—that is what the Bible is claiming. Look in the book of Acts, chapter 1, and notice verse 16. Peter says, “Men and

brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus." Here is another quotation from David out of the book of Psalms, but notice: "which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake." David may have said it, but it was the Holy Ghost who moved upon him to speak and to write those words.

Look in Acts chapter 28, beginning with verse 25, through verse 27: "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, 'Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.'"

Go back and look at verse 25: "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, 'Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers.'" What Isaiah said, Isaiah wrote, but it was the Holy Ghost who inspired it. That is what he is saying. This is not just the words of David. This is not just the words of Isaiah. This is not just the words of Paul. These are the words of God. God spoke it. It is the voice of God. It is breathed out of His mouth. It is God-exhaled.

Now I want you to turn to two passages. Look first at the book of Judges, chapter 6, and then we are going to 2 Chronicles 36—just three chapters past our text. In Judges chapter 6, the Midianites have come into the land. They are devouring the land. They are destroying the land.

God's Compassion in Sending Preachers

The truth of the matter is that things are pretty bad. I am not going to read all of Judges chapter 6, but the Midianites came in with such devastation and oppression that many Israelites fled to the mountains, hid in caves, and dug holes to avoid them. They were under great persecution and oppression. Judges 6:6 says, "And

Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord."

Here was a people being impoverished, persecuted, raped, looted, and killed. So they cried to the Lord. Verse 7 says, "And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; and I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.'"

"Ye have not obeyed my voice." God had said it through Moses. That is what Moses told them, and what God told Moses to tell them.

Here is an application for today. These people were oppressed, persecuted, devastated, and destroyed. They had no military help or power, and they cried to the Lord. What did God do? He did not send them a great military leader. He sent them a preacher. Through that preacher, God said, "Here is where you are in trouble. I told you not to do this, and you have done it anyhow. I told you. You just would not listen."

Now, 2 Chronicles 36:15: "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers"—his prophets, his preachers—"rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place."

Many years ago, I preached a message entitled "The Mercy of God Revealed." Have you ever noticed this in the Bible? Anytime God has compassion upon a people, anytime God is going to do something special for them, He always sends a preacher. That is what this verse says: "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on them." Jeremiah said, "I'll give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." When God wants to bless the people, He sends them His preachers.

The opposite is also true. When God wants to curse the people, He either removes their preachers or shuts their mouths. Remember the passage concerning Elijah in 1 Kings chapters 17 and 18. Ahab and Jezebel are on the throne. Because of the sins of the people, God is going to send a three-and-a-half-year drought, and He sends Elijah out of the land to Zarephath, to a widow woman's house. The drought for three and a half years was a physical picture of a spiritual reality. The nation was under the curse of God because the prophet of God, the man of God, the preacher of God, was not in the land. So God sent him out.

Jeremiah, on the other hand, stayed in the land. Yet when you read Jeremiah 7, 11, and 14, God tells Jeremiah, "You're in the land, but pray not for this people for their good." God refused to allow him to pray for the people. Finally, in chapter 14, Jeremiah wanted to pray for them so badly that God said, "All right, I'm going to let you pray for them. But you pray that I will destroy them, because that's exactly what I'm going to do." In Elijah's time, He moved Elijah out of the land. In Jeremiah's time, He shut his mouth.

The Lord God of their fathers sent His messengers because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy.

“Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand.”

Verse 15 tells us that God sent His messengers because He had compassion on them. But what did the people do? What did Manasseh do? “But they mocked the messengers of God.” Note that “messengers” is plural. There was more than one messenger. God sent many prophets, many preachers. “But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised”—what is the next word? “His.” They despised His words; that is, they despised God’s words. The messengers were simply carrying God’s words. So they mocked the messengers of God, despised God’s words, and misused His prophets.

That is why they beat them and killed them: because they despised God's word. "Until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." In other words, God said, "I'm sending you my prophets. I'm speaking to you. You're going to hear my voice through the messengers that I send."

Unless you are like Naaman, turning away in a rage and saying, "I don't believe that. I'm not going to have that. I don't want the still small voice; I want the thunderclap, the lightning, the goosebumps. I want something special, something extraordinary." You can want all you like, but God says, "I've spoken through my messengers who carried my word."

New Testament Ambassadors in Christ's Stead

Now turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 18 through 20: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Now look what Paul says concerning himself and anyone else whom God calls: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Now verse 20 is very important. Paul says we are ambassadors for Christ. Notice this phrase: "as though God did beseech you by us." God is doing the beseeching, but it is through the preaching of His Word. "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

The word "stead" is the little Greek word huper, which means "in behalf of," "for the sake of," and "in the place of." So literally, he says, "We pray you in the place of Christ, in behalf of Christ, in the stead of Christ, be ye reconciled unto God." Paul is saying that we preachers, pastors, and ambassadors are here in His place.

This same word is used in the book of Philemon. Onesimus was the runaway slave who was thrown into a dungeon in Rome, in the same dungeon with the Apostle Paul, and was converted. Paul was sending Onesimus back to Philemon, who was his friend. In verse 13,

Paul says: “Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel.”

Philemon had been accustomed to ministering to Paul. If it had been possible, Paul would have kept Onesimus so that he could have ministered to him in Philemon’s place, standing in his stead. But Paul would do nothing without Philemon’s consent, so he sent Onesimus back. Now look at Romans, chapter 5 and verse 8.

Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." What is surprising is the little word “for.” The Greek word is huper. Literally, he says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died in our stead. Christ died in our place.” It is the same word.

Now look at 2 Corinthians 5:20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us"—by the preachers—"we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Where is Jesus Christ? He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. He is no longer on the earth. So Paul is saying, “We ambassadors, we pastors, we preachers are here in His place, and we are beseeching you, Be ye reconciled unto God.”

How did God speak in the Old Testament? Through His prophets. How is God speaking in the New Testament? Through His preachers as they expound, explain, and apply the Word of God. But lest you think that makes preachers really something special, turn to 2 Corinthians 4:5–7. Preachers are no more than vessels. Paul says, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." We are servants first of all. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Then he says, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels."

“That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” What is he saying? We are flesh and blood. We are of this earth. We are worthless in and of ourselves. Therefore, any blessing that you receive through the preaching of the Word of God, God gets all the honor and all the glory.

Here you are perishing. You need water, but you have nothing to scoop it up with. So you find some mud, fashion a cup out of it, and let it dry. Then you dip that cup of mud into the water, bring it up, and drink the water, and you are saved. Would it not be absolutely foolish to say, “This mud saved my life”? The mud was nothing. It was merely a vessel. It was the water that saved your life.

This is what the Apostle Paul is saying. Preachers are nothing in and of themselves. It is the power of God that works in and through the earthen vessel, and so God gets all the honor and all the glory. The earthen vessel is nothing but the message boy, the message carrier. That is it. It is God who makes the message effectual. It is God who empowers the truth. That is why Jesus Christ said in John 6:63, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” The flesh profiteth nothing.

I have preached some messages which, humanly speaking, and even in my own mind, I would think, “Boy, that’s a great message,” and they would fall just as flat as a flitter, if a flitter can be flat. I have preached messages which were so simple and childish, and yet God blessed them so greatly. Why? It proves that it is not the vessel. I do not care how great an oratory man is, how great his illustrations, or how great a preacher he is. If God does not empower him, anoint him, and make the message effectual, it is nothing. The vessel is nothing. It is God who gets all the honor and all the glory. Now, let me make a couple of applications.

Applications: Hearing God's Voice Today

The most important aspect of preaching is to hear the Word of God. You actually hear the voice of God in the preaching of His Word. When the Word of God is expounded, explained, and applied, that is God speaking. God speaks in commands, warnings, promises, admonitions, and counsel. It is His Holy Spirit that makes the Word of God effectual in our lives. If God does not make it effectual, nothing is going to happen.

Years ago, I preached a message, and the power of God was there that day. One man, right in the middle of my sermon, screamed out

loud. The church building was packed; it was Sunday morning. He screamed, "Oh God, I'm lost! I'm lost! I'm lost!"

He got up from the pew, ran to the pulpit, and threw his arms around my feet, sobbing, crying, and screaming, "I'm lost! I'm lost! I'm lost!" I looked at the pastor and said, "Could you and some of the men take this fella in this room over here and pray with him and talk to him and tell him about Jesus Christ?" And they did.

I finished my message. When it was over, a number of people, I believe, God really saved. But this man came out smiling from ear to ear and said, "God saved me. God saved me. I'm so thankful God saved me."

I was just a young preacher, so I said, "I'd like to ask you a question. What was it that I said that got you under such conviction?" I was thinking that if it worked one time, it might work again; I might say the same thing again. How foolish. But that is what I asked him.

He looked at me and said, "Preacher, you want me to tell you the truth or you want me to lie to you?" I said, "I want you to tell me the truth." He said, "To be honest with you, I really didn't hear too much of what you said."

He said, "You got short-circuited. God was speaking to me. I heard Him." The vessel is nothing.

The second application is this: If you expect God to do something extraordinarily phenomenal for you, over and above the Word of God, beyond Jesus Christ, or beyond the preaching and teaching of His Word, you will be highly disappointed. God is not going to pamper your pride, satiate your fleshly desires, or please your pompous attitudes. He has spoken, and He does speak in and through His Word. It is His voice; it is the breath of God.

Jeremiah said, "Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel." Hear the Word of the Lord. Let me give you one last passage. Jeremiah asked, "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear?" That is an interesting question. He continued, "Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken. Behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it."

If you do not value the Word of God, if it is a reproach to you and you have no delight in it, God is not going to speak to you, because God speaks in and through His Word. Hear ye the Word of the Lord. Has God spoken to you? He speaks in and through His Word.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word. Lord, help us not to have the Naaman complex. Help us, Lord, to be like Elijah and listen for the still, small voice. Help us, Lord, to understand Your Word is Your voice and You speak to us. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

Keeping the Heart

December 5, 2018

Introduction: The Difficulty and Necessity of Keeping the Heart

Now that we have the tech taken care of, that's great. It's good to be here again. Good to see each one of you. Last time I was here, I really got sick. Allergies, sinus, something. If I get sick this time, I'm going to blame it on Brother Samuel. He told me he was sick right before I got here. So if it's communicable, I'll probably catch it. But anyhow, let's open our Bibles tonight, if you would please, to the book of Proverbs. Proverbs chapter four, and we're going to be reading verses 23 through 27. I want to preach a message tonight that I'm going to call absolutely elementary fundamental. If you've heard this message before by listening to sermon audio, well, that's fine. This is a message I preach to myself practically every day. So I want you to look at it.

The title of it is basically Keeping the Heart. Notice Proverbs 4, verse 23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids

look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left. Remove thy foot from evil." Do you understand that the most difficult thing and yet the most needful exercise for the child of God is that of keeping our hearts? Our hearts are like water. They're not easy to keep, and oftentimes they run out of bounds.

They always follow the course of least resistance. When you consider the heart and when you consider the Bible, very few people really genuinely keep their heart. I'm going to tell you based upon 2 Chronicles chapter 16 and verse 9, and let me just read it for you. The Bible says, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." So it's almost as if God is looking for individuals who are keeping their heart. And once he finds someone's heart who is perfect toward him, he uses those individuals. So the point I'm going to make tonight is just simply this. The doctrine is very clear. It is the keeping and the right managing of the heart under every condition and every situation and every circumstance is the great business of the Christian's life. Because only as we keep our hearts can we honor our Lord and obey our Lord. It's just simply that simple. The greatest difficulty in conversion is winning the heart.

The greatest difficulty after conversion is keeping the heart. So I just want to give you three things tonight. I want you to see, first of all, a broad overview, because here's a clear command: "Keep thy heart with all diligence."

A Clear Command: 'Keep Thy Heart with All Diligence'

Secondly, implied in this is a personal responsibility: you keep your heart with all diligence. Thirdly, there is an explanatory reason: “for out of it are the issues of life.”

Let me begin with the first point, a clear command: “Keep thy heart.” Proverbs 4:23 says very clearly, “Keep thine heart with all diligence.” If you look at the Bible, read the Bible, and believe the Bible, you can understand that this is the command you and I must indeed obey: we must keep our hearts. Actually, in the Hebrew, it is

"keep above all keeping," or "set double guards around your heart." In other words, your heart has to be kept first and foremost.

But before you can keep your heart, you have to know what your heart is. Obviously, when God says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," He is not referring to the physical organ in our chest. I am thankful that this physical organ is an involuntary muscle. It keeps pumping and pumping, and I do not have to stay awake at night saying, "Pump, heart, pump." It simply pumps. One day it will stop pumping, and there is not one thing I can do about it.

So when God says, "Keep my heart with all diligence," very obviously He is not talking about the physical organ in your chest. I have often asked people, "What in the world is a heart?" People respond in many different ways. Usually it goes something like this: "What is your heart?" "Well, you know, it is the innermost being of man." "Wonderful. What is the innermost being of man?" "Well, you know, it is your soul." "Really? What is your soul?" "Well, you know, it is the innermost being of man."

When God commands us to keep our hearts, it would pay for you and me to understand what we are to keep. I want to give you some Scriptures. If you cannot put two and two together, by the time we get to the last one, I will be showing you what the heart really is. In Genesis 6:5, you find the very first time the word "heart" is mentioned in the Bible. This is known as the law of first mention. Usually, according to that law in hermeneutics, the way something is used in the Bible the first time is the way it will be used throughout the Bible, unless the context makes otherwise known.

The Heart Defined as the Mind and Understanding

Genesis 6:5 says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth," and "that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." God saw every imagination of the thoughts of the heart. Whatever the heart is, it can think and imagine, because God saw the thoughts and God saw the imagination.

In Genesis 27:41, you remember how Jacob had stolen the blessing from Esau. Actually, that blessing went with the birthright,

but he had taken it by deception. The Bible says, “And Esau hated Jacob, because the blessing wherewith his father blessed him.” Then it says, “And Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.” Whatever the heart is, it can speak, for Esau said it in his heart. The heart can think, the heart can imagine, and the heart can speak.

Proverbs 5:12 says, “And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof.” The heart, then, can not only think and imagine, and it can not only speak; it can either receive reproof and instruction, or it can despise them. The heart can receive instruction, or it can refuse instruction. It can receive reproof, or it can despise reproof.

Matthew 5:27-28 says, “You have heard that it has been said of them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Somehow, then, the heart is intimately connected with the eyes, because whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already in his heart. The heart can speak. The heart can imagine. The heart can think. The heart can either receive or refuse instruction, and somehow the heart is intimately connected with the eyes.

In Daniel chapter 4, we read about Nebuchadnezzar, a very proud, arrogant, haughty monarch. God decided to teach Nebuchadnezzar a lesson and show him who was really in charge of this world. In Daniel 4:16, God issues this command concerning him: "Let his heart be changed from a man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him, and let seven times, or seven years, pass over him." Here is the decree from God: "Let his heart be changed from a man's heart, and let a beast's heart be given unto him."

Later in the same chapter, Daniel speaks to the king: "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility."

"All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months, he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and the king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for

the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" Pride and arrogance. "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee," and "they shall drive thee from man."

"And thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee eat grass as oxen, and seven times, or seven years, shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it whomsoever he will." The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men, ate grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws.

For seven years Nebuchadnezzar was literally insane. It is a condition known as boanthropy: a man crawling around on hands and knees, eating grass like an ox, with fingernails growing and hair growing like bird's feathers. He was a nutcase for seven years.

What did God say in verse 16? "Let his heart be changed from a man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him."

Based upon Genesis 6:5, the heart can think and imagine. In Genesis 27, it can speak. In Proverbs 5, it can receive or despise instruction. Matthew 5 shows that it is somehow connected with the eyes. Consider Daniel 4, beginning with verse 34:

"Now, at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me. And I have blessed the Most High, and I have praised and honored Him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. And He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

Isn't it interesting that in verse 34 he said, "Mine understanding returned unto me"? It was the heart that was changed; therefore, the heart is the understanding. In verse 36 he says the same thing a little differently: "At the same time, my reason returned unto me." The

heart is your understanding, your reasoning ability, and your thinking ability.

When God says in Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thine heart with all diligence," the Hebrew word for heart is lev, L-E-B. In our Bibles, it is translated "mind" eleven times and "understanding" twenty times. The same word translated as heart is translated mind and understanding because your mind is your understanding.

Another word we need to distinguish is conscience. You have heard the adage, "Let your conscience be your guide." Of course, that is not true; the Word of God should be your guide. In Acts 24:16, the Apostle Paul said, "And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man." A conscience void of offense toward God and toward man.

What is your conscience? Some people say, “That little thing that, when you start to do something wrong, says, ‘You better not do that.’” That is probably true, but let me explain it. The word conscience comes from the Greek word “suneidesis.” “Sun” is a preposition meaning “with,” and “eidesis” means “to know.” Conscience means that which you know with. In our English word conscience, “con” is a preposition meaning “with,” and “science” means “to know.” Your conscience is that which you know with. What is your conscience? It is your mind; it is your understanding. When you start to do something wrong, your mind says, “I don’t do that,” because you understand that it is wrong. You know that it is wicked.

So when God tells you to keep your heart with all diligence, actually, He is telling you to keep your mind, your thoughts, your reasoning ability, your imaginations, and your understanding. Do not let them run wild. Do not let thoughts enter your mind that should not be in your mind.

New Testament Emphasis on the Mind

Have you ever noticed, as you read through the New Testament, all the emphasis that is placed upon the mind? For instance, 1 Peter 4:1 says, “Arm yourselves with the mind of Christ.” Did you know that Philippians 2:5 says, “Let this mind be in you, which also was in

Christ Jesus"? What does the Bible say in Romans 12:1-2? "Wherefore, my brethren, I beseech you, I beseech you, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world." The word "conformed" literally means to be pressed into a mold. He says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed." The word for "transformed" in the Greek is where we get our English word "metamorphosis." It literally means to go through changes. How are we transformed? "By the renewing of your mind." Ephesians 4:23 says, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind."

Consider this in relation to your mind and your understanding. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, the Apostle Paul says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Paul is not condemning carnal weapons. He is saying that carnal weapons are of no use in the warfare that you and I are waging in our minds. Your pastor could come up, put a pistol to my head, and say, "Now, Brother Weaver, I want you to think this and this." I might say, "Yes, sir," but I would not be thinking that. How would he know? Carnal weapons are no good.

Now look carefully at verse 4: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." What is a stronghold? It is your place of defense, where you think you are safe. If someone came through that back door shooting a .357 Magnum, I would drop down behind this pulpit. This pulpit would be my place of defense; it would be my stronghold.

You say, "That's not much." No, but it is better than what you have done right now. If you fell down under the pew, that would be your stronghold. You want to see what man's stronghold is? Look in verse 4: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations and every high thing..." Literally, every high thought that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Unbiblical, ungodly, fleshly, carnal, sensual thoughts—are you allowed to have? None. Every thought is to be brought into captivity to the Lord Jesus

Christ. So when God says, “Keep your hearts with all diligence,” He is telling you that you had better keep your mind.

A Personal Responsibility: You Keep Your Heart

You not only had better keep your mind; you had better make sure that your thinking and understanding are biblical, basing them upon the Word of God. Here is this clear command: “Keep thy heart with all diligence.” Here is the second point: a personal responsibility. You keep your heart with all diligence. Obviously, if your heart is your mind, if it is your understanding, you are the only one who can really have the responsibility to keep it. It is not your pastor’s responsibility, a deacon’s responsibility, or a church board’s responsibility to keep your mind. It is your responsibility. God gave you your mind and your reasoning ability. You are responsible to keep it, and no one else can keep it for you. I cannot make you think rightly, biblically, or morally. That is your responsibility. If you understand this, you will understand another important precept from the Word of God.

Do you realize there is no such thing as a sudden sin? I have preached for nearly 54 years, and men have told me, “Brother Weaver, I didn’t mean to run off with that woman. It just happened.” That is hogwash. You thought about it before you ever did it. You planned it. You wanted it. “I didn’t mean to steal. The money was just there.” No, you thought about it before you ever did it. There is no such thing as a sudden sin.

You cannot act without thinking. You may not be thinking rightly, and you may not be thinking for a long period of time, but whatever you do, you have to think about it first. If I am going to pick up that paper, I have to think about picking it up before I pick it up. There is no such thing as a sudden sin. So do not tell me, your pastor, or your elder, “Well, it just happened.” No, it did not just happen.

Let me show you something else. This has been an amazing discovery for me. No matter how hard you try, you cannot think about one thing at a time. For instance, if I were to reach into my pocket, pull out this tube of Chapstick, and ask you what it is, you would say, “That is a tube of Chapstick.” If I asked you what color it was, you would say it was black and white.

Now, if I asked you what you see and what I am holding in my hand, you would say, “The Bible.” If I asked what color the cover was, you would say red. While you were thinking about the Chapstick, you were not thinking about the Bible. You cannot think of one thing at a time, no matter how hard you try. Therefore, when an ungodly or wicked thought enters your mind, you have to reject it. You have to say, “I am not going to think like that. I am not going to let that be in my mind. That is wicked. That is wrong. That is a violation of God’s law. I am going to think about that which is biblical, right, holy, and godly,” and purposely put your mind on the truth of God.

We have an old saying down in South Georgia: “You cannot stop a bird from flying over your head, but you can stop him from building a nest in your hair.” The world, the flesh, and the devil can throw thoughts into your mind quicker than lightning can flash. It is not necessarily a sin for that thought to enter your mind. The sin comes when you stop, back up, and say, “Yes, let me think about this.” I tell people—and it is the absolute truth—that when I was a boy, you had to pay to go to a burlesque show.

I've never been to one, but some of my relatives and friends did, and they had to pay to get in. Today, all you got to do is stop at a red light. It doesn't matter where you are. Ungodly, unholy, unbiblical thoughts can thumb in your mind just like that. What you have to do is say, "I'm not going to think on that. I reject that. I refuse that." You have to purposely put your mind upon Jesus Christ or upon His Word.

Keeping Certain Things Out and In

Look in your Bibles to Matthew 15. Our Lord has just given a parable. "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand that whatsoever entereth into the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?" Now look what He says.

He's trying to teach that it is not eating with unwashen hands that defiles you. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man." Notice the first thing

that comes out from the heart: "For out of the heart proceedeth evil thoughts." The heart can think. "Murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

If it comes out of the heart, He says that is what defiles the man. The very first thing that comes out of the heart happens to be evil thoughts. You cannot commit evil without thinking evil. God is telling us that we are responsible to keep certain things out of our heart, out of our mind, out of our reasoning ability, out of our understanding, and out of our imagination. You say, "I never have anything bad enter my mind." If you can tell me that truthfully, all I can say is you've never prayed.

You have never prayed because your flesh still hates prayer. Your flesh hates you in that sense of the word. But you are not only responsible to keep certain things out of your mind; you are also responsible to keep certain things in your mind.

I usually tell people, based on that old Alka-Seltzer commercial, “For fast, fast, fast relief, turn off the TV set.” And that is true. I know not everybody has a TV set, but most of the stuff on that TV set is not worth watching. To be absolutely honest, I refuse to watch anything that contains wickedness or violence. I am just not going to watch it. You cannot watch anything today without encountering that. You say, “Well, you must not watch much TV.”

No, I probably have not had a TV in the house for fifteen or twenty years. I had a phone call from the telephone people, and they said, “Now, Mr. Weaver, you have been a loyal customer for thirty years. We can save you money.” I said, “You can? I am interested in that. How are you going to save me money?” She said, “We can bundle everything up and give you your phone, your Internet, and your TV all for one price.” I said, “I do not think you can beat my TV price.”

She asked, “How much do you pay?” I said, “I do not pay anything.” She said, “You must have an antenna.” I said, “No, I do not have an antenna.” She asked how I got it without paying anything. I said, “I do not have a TV.” She said, “What do you do?” I said, “Have you ever heard of reading? We read. That is how we

learn. We read." Listen, you are responsible to keep certain things out, but you are responsible to keep certain things in.

Look in the book of Jude at verses 20 and 21, right before the book of Revelation. Here is an amazing and astounding passage. The Bible says, "But you, beloved..." He is talking to Christians: "But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith." You are responsible to build yourself up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost. You are responsible to pray in the Holy Ghost.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." God holds you accountable to keep yourselves in the love of God. Now, here is the question: How are you going to keep yourself in the love of God?

Most people equate love with feelings and emotions and things like that. That is not love according to the Word of God. Most people think love is some kind of abstract thing or some ethereal thing floating out in the atmosphere somewhere. That is not love. God requires you to keep yourself in the love of God.

You say, "Well, what is the love of God?" Remember, God requires you to keep yourself in the love of God. First John 5:3 answers: "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." And His commandments are not grievous. So here is what it is: the love of God is keeping His commandments.

So how do I keep myself in the love of God? Well, here is how I do it. When this ungodly thought comes into my mind, I say, "Oh, Lord, I cannot have that. I refuse that. I reject that. Thou hast said thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou hast said thou shalt not covet. Thou hast said thou shalt not steal." Then I begin thinking about what God has commanded me to do. Keeping myself in the love of God means I am keeping myself in His law. I am keeping myself in His Word.

Ability and Responsibility: God's Work and Man's Agency

Now, I want you to turn to two passages just so I can compare them for you. I want you to turn to Proverbs 16 and the book of Hosea chapter 10. Look in Proverbs chapter 16 first, then we're going to go to Hosea chapter 10. So notice Proverbs chapter 16 and verse one,

and really I only need just a part of that verse. So notice, if you would, Proverbs chapter 16 and verse one. Look what the Bible says. Proverbs 16 verse one.

"The preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." The preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord. Your heart is ever prepared to pray, God prepared it. If your heart is ever prepared to study, God prepared it. If your heart is ever prepared to come to Jesus Christ, God prepared it. If your heart is ever prepared to do anything holy, godly, God prepared it. The preparation of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.

Now, look if you would please, Hosea chapter 10 and verse 12. Look what God says. Hosea 10 and verse 12. He says, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." Now, wait a minute. Proverbs 16, verse one says the preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord. Now, Hosea 10 and verse 12, we have to sow to ourselves in righteousness. We have to reap in mercy. We have to break up our fallow ground. That's a contradiction. No, that's not a contradiction. You see what Proverbs chapter 16 in verse one is talking about is ability—the preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord. What Hosea 10 in verse 12 is talking about is responsibility. We have a responsibility to keep our hearts, we have a responsibility to make sure that our fallow ground is broken up. We have a responsibility to make sure that we sow in righteousness. But the ability is God's.

It is God's work, but it is man's agency, and our obedience is His instrumentality. Look in Proverbs, chapter 23. Here are three verses that will put it together for you. Verse 12 says, "Apply thine heart unto instruction and thine ears unto the word of knowledge." I am going to take the word "apply" and put another word in its place to help you remember it: "Govern thine heart unto instruction and thine ears unto the words of knowledge." God requires you to govern your heart.

Now skip down to verse 19. After saying, "Govern your heart," he says, "Hear thou my son and be wise and guide thine heart in the way." So you ask, "How do I govern my heart, and how do I guide my

heart?" The answer is in verse 26: "My son, give me thine heart and let thine eyes observe my ways." We have ability, and we have responsibility.

Now turn in your Bibles to Hebrews, chapter 3. I am still trying to tie this together so that you understand where I am coming from. The apostle is writing to Hebrew believers, and in verse 12 he says, "Take heed, brethren. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." A brother must take heed, lest there be in him an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Then verse 13 tells us to exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of us be hardened through deceitfulness of sin.

How can we have an evil heart if we are children of God, if we are Christians? The answer is by neglecting our heart. And what is our heart? It is our mind. It is our understanding. It is our imagination.

The heart is our reasoning ability. Here is where we are today: practically no one wants to take responsibility for his actions. We learned from our father Adam quite well. When God asked, “Adam, what have you done?” Adam answered, “It wasn't me, Lord. It was the woman that You gave to be with me. She gave me of the fruit and I did eat.” Eve said, “No, no, no, Lord. It wasn't me. It was the serpent. He beguiled me and I did eat.” So it is not Adam's fault, nor Eve's fault, but the serpent's. Who made the serpent? God did. Therefore, God is at fault: if He had not made him, it would not have happened.

Taking Responsibility for Reactions

“Preacher, my boy is a good boy. It's those other boys that drew him away and influenced him.” Really? How did they draw him away and influence him? Because of his own wicked heart.

I was a principal and teacher in our Christian school for many years. When a child came to our school, the parents had to sign a paper giving us the right to use corporal punishment—that is, we could whip their child if needed. Usually, I would call the parent and say, “I'm going to whip your child. He's done such and such. If you'd like to come down here and watch me, I'll wait on you.” I would

much rather talk to Daddy than Mama. Do you know why? Mama would start crying: “My baby, he wouldn't do that.” I would tell Daddy what his son had done, and he would say, “Whip his butt, preacher, and when he gets home, I'll whip him too.”

Have you ever noticed that when people leave a church, it is always somebody else's fault? People used to sit on the front row, then move to the middle, then the back. Next they miss Wednesday, then Sunday night, then Sunday morning, and finally they are gone.

Think with me now. If you ever leave mad, that is your sin and your fault. I cannot make you mad unless you allow me to make you mad. If you keep your heart, I cannot make you mad, jealous, envious, or upset.

I never will forget, years ago, in our church building. You came in the back door, and as you opened the doors, there was a little recess on each side that held two pews, while all the other pews were forward. I stood up ready to preach, and I saw one man come in the door, go back in the corner, and sit. He did not get in for the song service; he just slipped in. After the service, everybody was going home, but he tarried. When everybody had left, he came to me and said, "Preacher, I just want you to know, I won't be coming back to this church." It was the first time I had ever really seen him.

I said, "Why is that?" He said, "Well, because your people are unfriendly. Nobody spoke to me, nobody shook my hand." He should not have said that. I told him, "Sir, I saw you come in late. I saw you sit in that corner, where no one could see you. Our people did not even know you were there. Did you offer to shake somebody's hand?" He said, "No." I said, "I know you didn't, because you stayed in that corner until everybody was gone. Did you know the Bible said, he that hath friends must show himself friendly? You never showed yourself friendly."

I said, "If the only reason you came to this church was to get your hand shaken, you come back next Sunday, and I'll have a mule's tail lathered out there to the best of you, and you can stand out there and shake it all during the service, all you like. Let me tell you, you don't come to shake hands. You come to worship God, and if you're not

interested in worshiping God, you're wasting your time and mine anyhow. It'd probably be best if you didn't come back."

I have had so many people tell me, "Oh, brother so-and-so made me mad," or, "Sister so-and-so said something and it just upset me." That's your sin. You didn't keep your heart.

Here it is very plainly stated. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” God said that if you can control your spirit, you are better than a warrior who can take a city. Again, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls.” What is a city without walls like? You can walk in, get what you want, and walk out.

My father, who is now dead, used to box, and he boxed professionally for a while. He was good and was left-handed. He had only been knocked out one time in his life. He was fighting another left-handed man, and they both hit each other at the same time and knocked each other out. My dad taught me how to box, and I never will forget what he said: “Now, son, listen to me. If you ever need to hurt a man, first, make him mad.”

Why? Because when a man gets mad, he does not think; he reacts. When you are a boxer and a man draws back to do a haymaker, you step in and hit him three or four times, and he will never hit you. Make him mad first, because when you get mad, you have lost control—control of your own spirit, your own mind, and your own body.

The truth of the matter is that we need to learn to take responsibility for what we think, what we say, what we do, and how we act. If Brother Ashwood comes up and makes me angry, that is my sin, not his, because I have not controlled my spirit. If Brother Barber stood up and cussed me out, even if everybody in this room heard him, does that give me the right to cuss him back? No. I have to do right even if he does not do right.

You have a responsibility to keep your heart, your thoughts, your mind, and your imagination. You have a responsibility to think and act biblically, no matter where you are, what you are doing, or what

the situation is. “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.”

An Explanatory Reason: 'For Out of It Are the Issues of Life'

"Keep thy heart with all diligence." That is the clear command. The personal responsibility is that you keep your heart. The explanatory reason is, "For out of it are the issues of life." The little word "issues" is "totsaoth" in the Hebrew. It is translated in our Bibles "going forth" one time, "going out" eleven times, "issue" two times, and "outgoing" seven times. In other words, out of the heart are the issues. Everything comes from the heart. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

Have you ever noticed that God said in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"? We do not really understand how ignorant we are until we get into an emergency situation and need to know something that we do not know. How do you handle certain things? I am not a mechanic; I am not mechanically inclined at all. On the old trucks, if my truck quit and I drifted over to the side of the road, I knew enough to open the hood and check the wires. Back then you had a coil. You could open it, see if there was moisture there, and put it back on. Today, you cannot do anything like that. You have to have a computer. So if my truck pulls over and will not run, I am in trouble. The only thing I can do is pray, try to call somebody, or wait on somebody because I am not a mechanic. But let the same thing happen to a mechanic.

It is no problem to him because he knows what the problem is, and he probably has the tools with him to fix it. Have you ever noticed that you do not have a problem if you know what to do? It is only when we do not know what to do that we have problems.

Have you ever thought about this? You do what you do because you think the way you think. If you act unbiblically, it is because you are thinking unbiblically. If you act ungodly, it is because you are thinking ungodly. If you act biblically, it is because you are thinking biblically.

Look back in Proverbs 4:23: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” If you are keeping your heart, verse 24 says you will put away from you a froward mouth and perverse lips. If you keep your heart, verse 25 says you will let your eyes look right on, and your eyelids look straight before you. Verse 26 says you will ponder the path of your feet, and all your ways will be established. Verse 27 says you will not turn to the right hand or to the left, but will remove your foot from evil.

In other words, if you keep your heart, your conduct is going to follow. Your life is going to follow.

Now turn to Acts chapter 8. As you are turning there, I want you to think about this statement, and I do not want you to call me a heretic, because I am going to show it to you from Scripture: I can tell you what is in your heart.

“Come on, Brother Weaver. Nobody but God knows the heart.” No, that is not what the Bible says. It is true that no one but God knows the heart perfectly. But the Bible says, “God looketh upon the heart.” God does not look as man looks. I am going to show you a passage where one man read another man’s heart. I can read your heart, and you can read my heart, if you understand what I am going to tell you. So look in Acts chapter 8.

There had been a great revival. The disciples had come down, laid their hands upon the converts, and they had received the Holy Ghost. Here was a man named Simon, a sorcerer. Acts 8:13 says, "Then Simon himself believed also, and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." Simon believed, was baptized, and wondered at the miracles.

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John. They prayed for the converts, "that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For as yet he was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

When Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me

also this power, that on whosoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." But Peter said unto him, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thine heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."

Peter told this man that his heart was not right with God. How could he say that? Only God knows the heart. That's hogwash. Peter said, "Thy money perish with thee." Do you know what the word "perish" means? Look it up in your Strong's Concordance. "Your money go to hell with you," because that's exactly where you're going. He said, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." In other words, you're not a Christian.

You may have made a profession and you may have been baptized, but you are not saved, sir. Your heart is not right in the sight of God, and you better repent. How did Peter know that Simon's heart was not right with God? By what Simon said and what Simon did. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

If you read through the Old Testament, any time there was a good king, you will find this upon his death: "And his heart was right with God as was David his father's." When there was an evil king, you will find this upon his death: "And his heart was not right with God, as was David's heart." How did they know the king's heart was either right or not right? By the way he lived, by the way he ruled, and by what he did.

All I have to do is watch you and listen to you, and I can tell you what is in your heart. All you have to do is watch me and listen to me, and you can tell me what is in my heart. Your heart is your understanding; it is your mind. Out of the heart, the mouth speaketh. Proceeding from the heart are the evil thoughts and all this other stuff that trashes us and reveals us.

Applications: Obedience, Sincerity, and Duty

Keeping the heart is an absolute requirement for obedience to the Word of God and an understanding of the things of God. If we want

more truth, we must obey the truth that God has already given us. Our Lord said, "To he that hears shall more be given." Why should God give you any more truth if you will not obey the truth that He has already given you? God is not going to give us more truth until we learn to obey that which He has already given.

There is a story going around down south, about the old black preacher who went to the church, and his first sermon was, "Thou shalt not steal." His second sermon was, "Thou shalt not steal." His third and fourth sermons were, "Thou shalt not steal."

Finally, after about two months, one of the deacons asked him, “When are you going to preach something else?” His response was, “When you start obeying what I'm already preaching.” God's not going to give us more truth, folks, until we learn to obey. It is absolutely fundamental that we learn to keep our thoughts, our minds, and our imaginations. Keeping the heart supplies one of the best evidences of our sincerity and the reality of our faith. You can't see my heart. You might know what's in it after you listen to me and watch me, but you can't see it. You don't know what I'm thinking or what's going on in my mind. But God does.

May I remind you that the Pharisees made the platter clean? They always cleaned up the outside. Our Lord said they're like whited sepulchers: beautiful and painted on the outside, but on the inside full of dead men's bones. One of the greatest proofs that you're not a Pharisee or a hypocrite is that you are trying to keep your heart right when no one else sees or knows but God alone. One of the greatest proofs is what we allow ourselves to think and imagine when we are by ourselves.

It is only as we keep our hearts that we are enabled to discharge our duties as we should. If you don't keep your heart, you can't worship God. What did David say? In Psalm 66:18, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” The mere regarding of it causes God not to hear. You can't pray if you're regarding iniquity in your heart, if you're thinking about it. You're certainly not going to witness to anyone if you're regarding iniquity in your heart.

Can you imagine a man contemplating and thinking adultery, thievery, or murder? It's just in his mind, and he tries to witness to

someone. The next thing he knows, his conscience says, “How are you to tell him how Jesus Christ delivers from sin? Look what you've got in your mind.” You cannot fulfill the most basic Christian duties—praying, studying, and being a testimony—unless you learn to keep your heart.

If you understand that the heart is the mind and the understanding, you will see the fallacy of the Arminians who ask people to open their heart to Jesus. When you get to Acts 16, as the Apostle Paul preached by the riverside to Lydia, the Bible says, “And the Lord opened her heart,” with the result that she attended to the things spoken by Paul. The Lord opened her heart. In Luke 24, it was the Lord who opened the understanding of His disciples so that they might understand the Word of God. The Apostle Paul told Timothy, “Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding.” If we are going to pray for our lost loved ones, we had better learn to pray, “Lord, You open their heart. You open their eyes. You open their understanding.”

Conclusion: The Blessing of a Kept Heart

Because You are the only One who can do so, “The preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord.” You have a duty, a responsibility, and an obligation to keep your heart. If everyone in this congregation kept his heart, can you imagine the unity, the unison, and the blessedness that would exist?

I preached in a church in South Carolina where the pastor was relatively new. He told me that when he tried to broach a subject and asked the people what they thought, no one said anything. Finally, he asked, “Is someone going to say something?” One man replied, “Let one of them on that side say something.” The pastor asked what he meant. They had argued over the color of the carpet in the church: those who wanted one color sat on one side, and those who wanted the other color sat on the other side.

They were still at each other’s throats. The pastor said, “I’m not pastoring two churches in one building. You better get your heart right and repent, or else I will not be here. You can’t live like this. Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” Father, help us, give us grace, teach us, and build us up in the most

holy faith. We ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 10

Lessons Learned From The Omnipotence Of God

January 6, 2019

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 2:1-10 (KJV)

Introduction: The Omnipotence of God Defined

> And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoices in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none beside thee, neither is there any rock like our God.
>
> Talk no more so exceedingly proudly. Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth. For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumble are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread, and they that were hungry ceased, so that the barren hath born seven, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

> The Lord killeth, and maketh alive. He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich. He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar out of the dunghill, to set them among princes, to make them inherit the throne of his glory. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he has set the world upon them.
>
> He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces. Out of heaven shall he thunder upon them. The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth. He shall give strength unto his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.
>
> God is omnipotent. He is all-powerful. He cannot be hindered. He cannot be thwarted. He cannot be defeated. He cannot be stopped.

Power and ability go hand in hand, and usually it is power that enables ability. Since God is all-powerful, since He is omnipotent—and that is what the word omnipotent means—God then does as He pleases, only as He pleases, in all ways as He pleases. He overcomes all of His enemies, and He brings to pass His purpose and His counsel and His will. He accomplishes all of His pleasure.

Job 42:2 says, "I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." So God can do everything, and no thought can be withholden from Him. Daniel 4:35 says, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and He doeth according to His will in the armies of Heaven and in the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest thou?" Stop and think about that. None can stay His hand or say unto Him, "What doest thou?"

Isaiah 46:10 says, "Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times, the things that are yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure." None can stop God, and God is going to bring to pass His purpose. No one can defeat Him, hinder Him, or thwart Him.

A.W. Pink said it like this: "We cannot have a right conception of God unless we think of Him as all-powerful, as well as all-wise. He who cannot do what he will and perform all his pleasure cannot be God. As God hath a will to resolve what he deems good, so he has power to execute that will." God necessarily has to be omnipotent in order to be God.

Stephen Charnock, one of the old Puritans, gave this definition of the power of God: "The power of God is that ability and strength whereby he can bring to pass whatever he pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of His will may resolve. As holiness is the beauty of all of God's attributes, so power is that which gives life and action to all the perfections of the divine nature. How vain would be the eternal counsels if power did not step in to execute them. Without power, His mercy would be but feeble pity, His promises an empty sound, His threatenings a mere scarecrow. God's power is like Himself: infinite, eternal, incomprehensible."

It can neither be checked, restrained, nor frustrated by the creature.” God is omnipotent. One last quote is from Charles Haddon Spurgeon: “God’s power is like himself, self-existent, self-sustained. The mightiest men cannot add so much as a shadow of increased power to the omnipotent one. He sits on no buttressed throne and leans on no assisting arm. His court is not maintained by his courtiers, nor does it borrow its splendor from its creatures. He is himself the great central source and originator of all power.” When you talk about God’s omnipotence, you are talking about God’s power.

As Psalm 62:11 says, “Once have I heard this; yea, twice: God hath spoken; power belongeth unto God.” Certainly, God is indeed all-powerful. Notice in 1 Samuel chapter 2, beginning at verse 6, some of the things that God does in His omnipotence:

God's Omnipotent Acts in 1 Samuel 2

“The Lord killeth and maketh alive. He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich. He bringeth low and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust and lifteth the beggar from the dunghill to set them among princes,

to make them inherit the throne of glory. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints. And the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces. Out of heaven shall he thunder upon them. The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth. He shall give strength unto his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."

In this passage, the Bible says that God is able to kill and make alive, wound and heal, bring down and lift up. He is able to preserve and protect as well as to destroy and devastate. In fact, there is absolutely nothing that God cannot do; whatever He wills, He does, for He is omnipotent.

God Is Able to Abase Those Who Walk in Pride

Lesson 1: He Is Able to Abase Those That Walk in Pride

It is not my intention today to expound 1 Samuel chapter 2. It is my intention, however, to take the Word of God and show you the application throughout Scripture of the things Hannah mentioned in her prayer, and to show you how the omnipotence of God should affect our lives and make us think and meditate more upon His omnipotence.

Whatever God does is holy, just, and right. There is no unrighteousness in God. There is no unholiness in God, if there could be such a thing, because God is infinitely holy as well as infinitely powerful. The Bible says very plainly that God brings down and makes low. He is able to abase those that walk in pride.

Before considering this Scripture, understand that God hates sin. God hates all sin, but there are some sins that the Bible says He specifically hates. One of those sins is pride. Proverbs 6:16–19 says, "There are six things that the Lord hates, yea, seven are an abomination to Him." The very first is "a proud look." It continues: "a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth

discord among the brethren." The very first thing mentioned is indeed a proud look.

Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth do I hate." The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, and the very first evil mentioned is pride. Proverbs 16:5 says, "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination unto the Lord, and though hand be joined in hand, he shall not go unpunished." Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.

When one lifts himself up and becomes proud, arrogant, haughty, heady, or high-minded, he is treading on very dangerous ground. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Just as quickly as we are lifted up in pride, we will be put down. We think too flippantly concerning pride.

I never will forget, years ago, I saw a cartoon. It showed two monks walking side by side with their arms up their sleeves. One looked at the other and said, "You know, it kind of makes you proud that we're so humble, doesn't it?" Well, you know, that's the way we are. What God hates.

Let me give you a very clear illustration of the fact that God is able to abase those that walk in pride. Turn in your Bibles to Daniel chapter 4. Here we have a very clear illustration in Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, and the dream was interpreted for him by Daniel. Daniel not only warned Nebuchadnezzar and told him everything that God was going to do to him, but he also admonished him to repent.

Look in Daniel chapter 4, beginning with verse 19: "Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him."

The king spake and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation thereof trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. The tree that thou sawest, which grew and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth, whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all, under which the beasts of the field

dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the air had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong, for thy greatness is grown and reacheth unto the heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. And whereas the king saw a watcher, an holy one, coming down from heaven, saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it, yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the

"Dew of heaven, and let its portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times, or seven years, pass over him." This is the interpretation, O King, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my Lord, the King: that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beast of the field, and they shall make thee eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whosoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots, thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

"Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility." Daniel says, "Look, Nebuchadnezzar, here's what's going to happen to you. You're going to be driven insane for seven years, and for seven years you're going to live like an animal. So, here's my counsel: repent. Break off your transgressions. Do that which is right and do that which is holy."

Did Nebuchadnezzar listen? Did Nebuchadnezzar repent? The answer is no. Proud, arrogant, haughty, heady, high-minded people will not listen. They will not receive instruction, and they will not repent.

"All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon." Here is the pride: "The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? While the word was in the king's

mouth there fell a voice from heaven saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken."

"The kingdom is departed from thee, and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beast of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from men, ate grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws. For seven years Nebuchadnezzar suffered from a condition known as boanthropy, a psychological disorder in which the sufferer believes that he is either a cow or an ox. He was insane.

He was a proud, haughty, arrogant monarch who thought, "Well, this is what I have done, and this is my glory." God said, "I'm going to show you. I'm going to demonstrate that I am God. You are nothing, and you're walking in arrogancy and you're walking in pride and you're stealing my glory." After seven years, his reason returned. Look at his confession in verse 37: "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride, he is able to abase." God has the ability. There is divine ability and divine omnipotence. All those who walk in pride, he is able to abase.

The leftists, the liberals, the sociopaths, and the wicked men who hate God and walk in pride and rebellion—He is able to abase them, humble them, and bring them to their senses. He is able to do so because He is omnipotent. He is all-powerful. None can stay His hand. None can hinder Him. None can thwart Him. None can stop Him. God is not only able to abase those who walk in pride; He will. That is the lesson Nebuchadnezzar had to learn, and it is a lesson we need to learn. When you consider God's divine omnipotence, learn this lesson: those who walk in pride, He is able to abase.

He is also able to deliver in unique ways. God not only has the ability to deliver; He does deliver, and He delivers in ways that He chooses.

Lesson 2: He Is Able to Deliver in Unique Ways

David prayed in Psalm 31:15, “My times are in thine hand. Deliver me from mine enemies and from them that persecute me.” My times are in thine hands. Deliver me from those that hate me and those that persecute me. That is a good prayer. In Psalm 43:1, David prayed, “Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation. O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.”

It is just about time we start praying that prayer ourselves: “Deliver me from an ungodly nation and deliver me from a deceitful and unjust man.” David also prayed in Psalm 82:4, “Deliver the poor and needy and rid them out of the hand of the wicked.” In Daniel chapter 6, Daniel was ridded out of the hand of the wicked. Daniel was the chief president whom Darius had made over all the other presidents and princes. They lied against Daniel, plotted against him, and set him up to be destroyed because they were envious of him.

His integrity was firm, his faithfulness well known, and his spirituality unequaled. Daniel 6:3 says, “Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.” He was to be number one. Verse 4 continues, “Then the presidents and the princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find none occasion or fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.”

“Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live forever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, and the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or any man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.”

There was a lie, certainly. The Bible says, “All the presidents of the kingdom.” No, Daniel was the chief president. He was not involved

in this and did not give consent. They lied and got the decree passed. When Daniel knew that this writing was signed, what did he do?

He prayed as he normally did. Look in verse 10: “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house and his windows being open in his chambers toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication unto his God.”

Two things here. First, the way to pray effectually when you get into trouble is to be used to praying before you get into trouble. Daniel simply kept doing what he was doing. The Bible says that he prayed in his chamber with his windows open toward Jerusalem. Why did Daniel not close his windows? In 1 Kings chapter 8, when Solomon was dedicating the temple, he spoke about all those who prayed toward that temple. Daniel was following Scripture based on 1 Kings chapter 8. When they found Daniel, they found him praying.

Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. Beginning with verse 14: “Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself.” Darius would never have done this on his own to Daniel; he had been deceived as well. “And he set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men assembled unto the king and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake, and said unto Daniel, Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.”

Then the king went to his palace and passed the night fasting. Neither were instruments of music brought before him, and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste into the den of lions. When he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel, asking, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?” Daniel answered, “O king, live forever.

My God hath sent his angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me. Forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me, and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

I marvel at Daniel, and I marvel at Joseph. Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers, lied against by Potiphar's wife, imprisoned wrongly, and betrayed several times. Yet through all his experience, when his brothers came back, he treated them graciously, kindly, and mercifully. Here is Daniel, wrongly judged and thrown into a den of lions. It could not have been a pleasant situation. He spent the night there, and the king came asking, "O Daniel, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee?"

Had that been me in the lion's den, I would probably have said, "Yes, you dirty reprobate. You had no business throwing me in here to begin with." But Daniel did not respond that way. All Daniel said was, "O king, live forever. My God has sent his angel and stopped the mouths of the lions." There was no bitterness and no resentment.

So here is what I am trying to tell you: God is able. God is omnipotent. He can deliver from the fire, the sword, famine, pestilence, lions, death, and anything from which He chooses to deliver, because He is omnipotent. Therefore, we should never despair, never be discouraged, never give in, and never give up.

I am reminded of the old black preacher whose favorite passage was not a whole verse, but a few words from one verse: "Now it came to pass." It did not come to stay; it came to pass. Whatever we go through, God can deliver us. It comes to pass. We must understand that God can abase those who walk in pride. God can deliver, and He will deliver.

God Upholds His Failing Servants

Lesson 3: He Is Able to Uphold His Failing and Faltering Servants

God is able also to uphold His failing and faltering servants. Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 14. This is a lesson learned from divine omnipotence.

Have you ever considered how frail, weak, and anemic we are in and of ourselves? Have you considered how we faint under persecution? Have you thought about how often we groan, whine, complain, and bellyache when things do not go our way or simply do not please us? Have you considered the fact that our flesh actually despises spiritual things and tries to be satisfied? The question is this: How is it that any Christian is able to stand today?

If you look around, if you read, even if you search the news on the Internet, you find preachers falling like flies, and Christians as well. With all the world and all the temptations, how is it that anyone stands? Look in Romans 14, verse 4. Note this lesson learned from omnipotence: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand."

Do you realize that the only reason you and I have not pitched in the towel, and the only reason we have not fallen into trespass, sin, and iniquity, is because God in His grace and mercy has enabled us to stand? He has enabled us to persevere in faith and repentance. Do you remember Galatians 6:1? "If a brother be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." You had better be thankful.

It wasn't you. It could have been you. I want you to see two of my favorite verses. Turn to the book of Jude, right before the book of Revelation. These are two verses that I took years ago as kind of life verses, and I am so thankful that I did because they are so powerful. Notice Jude 24 and 25: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior be glory and majesty and dominion and power both now and forever. Amen."

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling. The only reason we have not fallen is because of His divine power—His omnipotence. He upholds us. He sustains us. He preserves us. He is God.

Let me give you a fourth thing. According to the Scripture, He is able to succor those that are tempted. Here is a good question. I

already know the answer, but have you ever been tempted? The answer is yes. Do you ever wonder where that temptation comes from? It could come from the world, the flesh, the devil, or many sources. Well, listen to this one.

Lesson 4: He Is Able to Succor Those That Are Tempted

James 1:13-15 says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. For God cannot be tempted with evil. Neither tempteth he any man." Listen carefully: "But every man is tempted when he's drawn away of his own lusts and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin and sin when it's finished bringeth forth death."

Every man is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. I get so tickled that a lot of people say, as Flip Wilson made it funny, "The devil made me do it." That is hogwash. It's your flesh. All you have to do is read Galatians chapter 5. It's your flesh.

The truth of the matter is that we have been tempted. The problem is that when we are in a weakened condition, both physically and spiritually, we are far more vulnerable. We often plan and scheme, and we work our fingers to the bone. We try to work things out, and it seems like nothing works out. Everything falls apart. There's always a failure. We do not prosper.

Then we sometimes lose our loved ones. We have financial reverses and property losses. We have all kinds of things, and we get down, discouraged, and disheartened. Where do most people turn? In this day and time, they'll turn to the bottle or to a pill.

Here is something we need to learn from divine omnipotence. Hebrews 2:17 says, "Wherefore in all things it behooved him"—we're talking about Jesus Christ—"to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."

He is able. The word "succor" means to give comfort, to give solace, to console. Hebrews 4:14 says, "Seeing then that we have a

great high priest that is passed into the heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin."

“Let us therefore come boldly into the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need.” The Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ was tempted in all aspects as we are, yet without sin. He hungered, thirsted, and was tired. He was rejected, hated, and despised. He has gone through everything that we go through. Therefore, He and He alone is able to succor. What does that mean?

It means that we can throw away the pill bottle, the liquor bottle, the cigarettes, and the anxiety medications, and learn to come to the throne of grace. Jesus Christ is our great high priest, and He has divine ability. He has omnipotence to console us. He understands. He went through everything that we go through, sin excepted. So He is able.

Lesson 5: He Is Able to Save to the Uttermost

Here is another one, number five: He is able to save to the uttermost. Before showing you the Scripture, a pastor friend of mine used to say concerning Jesus Christ, “He is able to save from the guttermost to the uttermost.” That certainly is true. It is not only a truth; it is a biblical truth as well. He came to save sinners. There is no sinner too wicked, too vile, or too depraved for Him to save. The only qualification the Bible really lists in salvation is that you happen to be lost and undone.

Jesus Christ did not come to seek and to save the hypocrite, the religious person, the self-righteous person, or the Pharisee. No. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Luke chapter 19 and verse 10 says, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Now look in Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25. Here it is spelled out in black and white. In fact, let us read verse 24 in light of it: “But this man, Jesus Christ, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore”—that is, in light of this

unchangeable priesthood—"he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Note, if you would, "he is able to save them to the uttermost." The Greek word for "uttermost" here is panteles, and it literally means perfectly, completely, utterly, and uttermost. We can rest assured that we have the most perfect and complete salvation in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us. His sacrifice was perfect. His obedience was perfect.

His acceptance with the Father is perfect. He is seated perfectly at the right hand of God. He is the perfect Judge of all the earth. Moreover, He now lives to make intercession for us, which means He is able to save us to the uttermost. There is a passage in Philippians 1 and verse 6 that I like. It says this: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." If God has begun a good work in us, He is going to perform it in the day of Jesus Christ. Let me put it another way: if God started it, He is going to finish it. That is why Hebrews 12:2 says that He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is able to save us to the uttermost.

Now understand this in light of God's divine omnipotence. Second Timothy 1:12 says, "For the which cause also suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Look what Paul says: He is able. How is He able? Because He is omnipotent; He is all-powerful. Paul said, "I trust Him because He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

That is why He can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. He is also able to subdue all things to Himself.

Lesson 6: He Is Able to Subdue All Things to Himself

When we look around us and see the wickedness, the rebellion, the lawlessness, and the disobedience, we have to ask ourselves, Will it ever end? We get discouraged with our political leaders, and rightly so. We get discouraged with our religious leaders, and rightly so. It seems that everybody has an answer, but nobody has the right

answer. Nobody has the biblical answer. You see corruption in Washington. You see corruption in your judicial system. You see corruption in your state capitals. You see corruption in your county councils. You see corruption in the city council. You see corruption everywhere, and you ask, When will this end?

All of it will end. It will come to an end because of the absolute omnipotence of God. Philippians 3:20–21 says, “For our conversation”—or our conduct—“is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

The truth is, yes, we will be resurrected. Yes, we will be glorified. Yes, we will be given a glorious heavenly body. But that is only part of it. The Scripture says that He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. His enemies shall become His footstool. Mark 12:36, quoted from Psalm 110, says, “For David himself saith by the Holy Ghost, The Lord”—that is, the Father—“said unto my Lord”—the Lord Jesus Christ—“Sit thou at my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool.” This is one of the most frequently quoted verses in the New Testament. If I have you under my feet, you are subdued; you have been dominated. That is exactly what the Scripture is saying.

So we can be content. We may not see it in our time, but we do know that He is going to subdue all things to Himself in His time.

Psalm 21:8–9 says, “Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies. Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger. The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.” Note the words, “Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies.” There are a lot of enemies that God has who parade themselves as His friends. They may deceive us, but they cannot deceive Him. He shall find them out, and He shall destroy them.

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 37:7-15, 34-35 (KJV)

Deuteronomy 32 and verse 35 says, "To me belong vengeance and recompense. Their foot shall slide in due time, for the day

of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." Vengeance and recompense belong unto me. Their foot shall slide in due time. Remember that passage in Psalm 73, where Asaph said, "I set them in slippery places."

Psalm 37:7: "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him. Fret not thyself because of him that prospereth in his way, because of the man that bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger and forsake wrath. Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. Why? For evildoers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be. Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword and have bent their bow to cast down the poor and needy and to slay such as be of an upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart and their bows shall be broken."

Psalm 37 verse 34: "Wait on the Lord and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land." When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. "I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not. I sought him, but he could not be found." And the reason he cannot be found is because our Lord is able to subdue all things to Himself. His hand shall find out His enemies and everything ultimately will be brought to His footstool. For He is God of gods and King of kings and Lord of lords.

Now, I have one application and one other passage to consider: Ephesians chapter 3. I will not tell you the verse just yet, but be ready for it. When I show you this verse, find it and hold it. Here is what I believe we should learn from the message today. The reason I said "lessons learned from divine omnipotence" is that we need to learn that God is able indeed to abase those that walk in pride. We need to learn that God is able to deliver. We need to learn that God is able to succor. We need to learn that God is able to cause us to stand.

We need to learn that God is able to save to the uttermost. We need to learn that God is able to subdue all things to Himself.

Application: Trusting and Asking According to His Power

Therefore, we need to have confidence in Him. We need to trust Him. We need to submit to Him. We need to lean upon Him. And we need to understand how His divine ability influences and affects our lives.

One of the problems that we have as Christians is, like Israel of old, we want to limit Him by our unbelief. When we talk about God's omnipotence, that means He is all-powerful. And yet you get to Psalm 78, what were those Israelites saying? "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" They were questioning God. They had seen Him deliver them mightily and powerfully, provide water, and provide food. Now they asked, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" God judged them because of their unbelief. When we understand that God is sovereign, that God is omnipotent, and that God can do as He wills, nothing can hinder Him, nothing can stop Him, nothing can thwart Him, and nothing can overthrow Him.

It should encourage us to call upon Him more and trust Him more. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, amen." Do you realize God is so powerful, so omnipotent, that you and I cannot even conceive of the least minuteness of His power? If we really believed that God was omnipotent, would we not ask Him for greater things? Would we not ask Him to overthrow abortion, sodomy, wickedness, and corruption? Would we not ask Him to defeat His enemies and give us victory in time and history?

If we genuinely believe that He is omnipotent, we would ask Him to do that which is according to His word and His will. These are some lessons we need to learn from divine omnipotence. God is God. He is able. He is omnipotent. We need to seek Him more, trust Him more, and ask Him to display that mighty power in bringing everything into subjection to His word and His will.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word, your truth, and your mighty power. We are thankful that thou art not only the holy God and the sovereign God, but thou art the omnipotent God. Help us, Lord, to cry to thee and to trust thee, and help us, Lord, to ask thee to do mighty things, great things, powerful things for your glory and our good. We ask these in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

Why You Are Still Alive

January 23, 2020

Jeremiah wrote Lamentations right after the book of Jeremiah. In Lamentations 3:22–23, he writes: “It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.”

Introduction: The Unrecognized Danger of Sin

I suppose that many have never really been bothered by their sins. I read a quote many years ago that I have never forgotten: “Most folks have a peace of mind that comes from their own forgetfulness.” That is usually true, because we tend to forget and overlook our sins. Unless a sin is particularly huge or horrific, we tend to forget. We even tend to forget and overlook what you and I would call little sins.

But have you ever really considered that one sin, and one sin alone, is enough to condemn us? There is enough sin in our prayers to damn us. There is enough sin in our good deeds to destroy us. There is enough sin in our own righteousness to devastate us. Moreover, when most people live through their days, they never really think of death, destruction, or God's justice. We never

meditate on that which we truly deserve. When we think of death and God's justice, we are disturbed, and rightly so. We know that if we got that which we truly deserved, it would not be pleasant.

Instead of dealing with what we believe we might really deserve, we concentrate on our desires, needs, hopes, and blessings. The interesting thing is that I have hardly ever found anyone who did not believe that he truly deserved to have all his needs met, all his wants met, and all his desires met. They do not even believe that they deserve to have everything that they wanted met. They believe they deserve to have it right now, because they simply are not going to wait.

Hardly anyone follows Jacob's example. Hardly anyone confesses what he confessed in Genesis 32:10, when he said to God, "I'm not worthy of the least of thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou showed thy servant." Note what he said: "I'm not worthy of the least of thy mercies." Certainly God had been merciful to him. The truth is, we take life for granted.

Taking God's Mercies for Granted

We take health for granted. We take family for granted. We take food and water for granted. And the truth is, we have been so blessed in so many areas that we really fail to thank God for His multitudinous mercies and blessings.

When is the last time that you thanked God for a hot bath? When you stop and think, a lot of people in other countries bathe in rivers—dirty rivers, I might add. When's the last time you thanked God for a good bed? When is the last time that you thanked God for warm clothes, or cool clothes, or friends? When is the last time that you have really acknowledged before God that the only reason that you are now alive is because of His grace and His mercy?

Unhappily, we only begin to acknowledge God's gracious mercies, His loving kindnesses, and compassions after we have suffered greatly. Usually, only after all our sufferings do we really begin to grasp how merciful, how gracious, how compassionate, how loving and kind God has been unto us.

The Book of Lamentations was written upon the destruction of Jerusalem. It contains five chapters, each a poem viewing that destruction from a different perspective. Remember that Jeremiah was the weeping prophet. He was not only alive; he witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem. He also had a very difficult ministry, to say the least.

Jeremiah's Suffering and Hope

He suffered greatly at the hands of wicked, ungodly men. He was mocked, ridiculed, imprisoned, threatened, resisted, and rejected, and attempts were made upon his life. He was trying to minister to people who hated him, despised him, would not listen, and did not want to listen. In Lamentations chapter 3, beginning with verse 1, he describes his ministry and his life: “I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.”

Since Jeremiah was in Judah and Jerusalem, he suffered along with the people. He says, “I have seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He has led me and brought me into darkness, but not into light.” In other words, there was no light at the end of the tunnel. “Surely against me he has turned. He turned his hand against me all the day.”

"My flesh and my skin hath he made old. He hath broken my bones. He hath built it against me and compassed me with gall and travail. He has set me in dark places as they that be dead of old. He has hedged me about and I cannot get out. He has made my chain heavy. Also, when I cry and shout, he shut it out by prayer." You have to remember in Jeremiah 7 and Jeremiah 11, God told Jeremiah not to pray for these people. When you get to Jeremiah 14, he wanted to pray so much for them. God said, "All right, I'm going to let you pray. But you pray that I'm going to destroy them, because that's what I'm going to do." So if he tried to pray for the people, God shut him out. Watch verse 9.

"He has enclosed my ways with hewn stone. He had made my paths crooked. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, as a lion in secret places. He hath turned aside my ways and pulled me in pieces like that barren lion. He hath made me desolate. He hath bent his

bow and set me as a mark for the arrow. He had caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins."

"I was a derision to all my people, and their song all the day." When he says he was their song, they were mocking him and making fun of him, just as in Psalm 69, where he speaks of the Messiah: "I was a song of drunkards." In other words, they were ribald and mocking songs. So he says in verse 15, "You fill me with bitterness, and you've made me drunken with wormwood"—and wormwood is a very bitter herb. He says in verse 16, "He has also broken my teeth with gravel stones. He had covered me with ashes."

I want you to stop and think about this: "He has also broken my teeth with gravel stones." Would you like to be hit in the mouth with a bag full of gravel? These pictures show the grief, horror, and suffering of Jeremiah.

Years ago, I watched a self-defense video in which a man discussed using bottles for self-defense. If the only thing you could get your hands on was a Coca-Cola bottle, liquor bottle, or something like that, most people would take it and hit someone over the head, thinking that would take care of it. He said, "No." Most of these bottles will break very easily, and you probably would not even stun someone by hitting him over the head. If you hurt him, it would usually be because of the glue on the sticker on the bottle that held a piece of glass that raked maybe as forward as you hit him.

“Don’t ever do that,” he says. “If you want to stop him, take the bottle and hit him in the teeth.” When he said that, I winced. Can you imagine being hit in the teeth with a Coca-Cola bottle at full force? Jeremiah says, “He has broken my teeth with gravel stones.” It is like taking a big stone and hitting Jeremiah in the mouth. Look at verse 17: “Thou has removed my soul far from peace. I forgot prosperity.”

In other words, there was no light at the end of the tunnel for him. All he was doing was suffering. He says, “My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord.” Verse 19: “Remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.” He says, “My soul had them still in remembrance and is humbled in me.” Everything Jeremiah

had been going through had caused his soul to be humbled before God.

Notice verse 20 again: “My soul had them still in remembrance,” everything that he suffered, “and is humbled in me.” Then he says in verse 21, “This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.” Something gave him encouragement and hope. What was it? It was that which he recalled to his mind, found in verses 22 and 23.

The Meaning of 'Mercies' and 'Compassions'

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They're new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness." The Hebrew word translated "mercies" is chesed, and it literally means mercies, kindnesses, loving kindness, goodness, and favor. Then he says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions." The word for compassion is racham, and it speaks of compassion, bowels, pity, and tender love. But note what he says: "It is the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed." The word "consumed" is a very interesting word. It is tamam in the Hebrew, and it means to consume, to end, to finish, to cease being, and to be destroyed. So literally, here's what he's saying: It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not absolutely, totally, completely wiped out, because his compassions, they fail not. They're new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness.

In the context, Jeremiah is not only giving hope to himself, but also to the remnant that remain. No matter how desperate the situation, God will never leave Himself without witness. God will always have a remnant.

Matthew Poole commented on what was going on in Jeremiah's mind based upon these verses: "Mercy is nothing else but love flowing freely from any to persons in misery and differs from compassion only in the freeness of the emanation. It is not because God had not power enough utterly to have consumed us. Nor because we had not guilt enough to have provoked his justice to put an end to our lives, as well as the lives of many thousands of our countrymen. But it is merely from the Lord's free love and pity to us in our miseries. If God had not a blessing in store for us, how is it

that we are captives and not slain as many others were during the siege?"

If God did not have a purpose or tender mercies toward us, why were we not destroyed as others? Why were we not consumed as others? Jeremiah said, "This is my hope."

When things become difficult, when we enter into hard things or suffering, we always tend to think that it is God's judgment upon us. Can the hard times and suffering be from God's mercies instead of God's judgments?

Suffering Can Be God's Mercy, Not Judgment

And the answer is yes. Let me give you an illustration. Hold Lamentations 3, but turn back to Jeremiah 24. Nebuchadnezzar had come against Jerusalem in 605 B.C., captured the king and the princes, along with a number of the important people, tradesmen, and skilled people, and taken them into captivity in Babylon.

Many were left. King Zedekiah then came, and he had his princes. Jerusalem was totally destroyed in 586 or 587 B.C., right in that area. Originally, however, a number of people had already been captured by Nebuchadnezzar and taken into Babylon. Look in Jeremiah 24, verse 1.

“The Lord showed me and behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the Lord. After that, Nebuchadnezzar, 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.” This was the first deportation. “One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that were 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 sayest 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 into 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. And I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will

God said of those whom He took and sent initially into Babylon, “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 a heart to know me, and that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.”

But of the evil figs, which could not be eaten, He said, “Surely thus saith the Lord, 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 the 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.”

Stop and think with me. Suppose you were in Jerusalem in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar comes with his army, captures you or your family, and takes you into Babylon. Another group stands there saying, “We just missed that. I am so thankful we did not go into captivity. That was close. God must be having mercy on us. Look at those people; they were carried into captivity.”

Did you hear what God said? Those whom He took and sent into Babylon initially, He took for their good. He would give them a heart to know Him, and they would return to the land. Those who were left were not left for their good, but for their hurt; they would be destroyed. The people initially taken into captivity probably thought, “This is the judgment of God.” No, it was the mercy, compassion, and love of God, because God put them there for their good.

God does succor His people. He protects and provides for them, even in the worst hour. When we think we are being destroyed, that is actually when His mercy shines more brightly in sparing our lives and giving us hope.

In a very general sense, God's mercy is over all of his works, because he causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike. The Bible teaches us that he holds our souls and

lives, and our times are in his hands. Psalm 145, verse 9, says, "The Lord is good to all. And his tender mercies are over all of his works."

Think about all of the unsaved people, all of the wicked reprobates who hate God, who despise the Lord Jesus Christ, and who would never ever read the Bible. Yet God feeds them. He clothes them. He gives them families and friends. He provides for them and even protects them. Everything that He gives them, they use and rebel against Him. But His tender mercies are over all of His works.

God does bless the just and unjust, but He has a special sense and a special protection and a special blessing for His own. When our comforts fail, His compassions do not fail. They are new every morning.

One of the traps into which we fall causes us great consternation: we tend to look at circumstances and be controlled by our situations. When we see situations that we deem not good, we think, “That's bad. That's God's judgment.” We cannot do that. We have to look beyond the situation and beyond the circumstances.

Looking Beyond Circumstances

David had problems dwelling on a circumstance or situation. In Psalm 77, he said, "Will the Lord cast off forever? Will he be favorable no more?" Then, "Is his mercy clean gone forever? Does this promise fail forevermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" What is David saying? “I can't see, I can't perceive, I can't grasp this situation. It looks to me like God has just forgotten to be gracious, and in anger he shut up his tender mercies. It looks as if I'm going to be consumed.” Ah, watch verse 10.

Here is how he corrects himself: “And I said, ‘This is my infirmity.’” Here is where I am failing and sinning. “But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most high. I’ll recall that which God has done, what he is, how he’s blessed me and helped me. I will remember the works of the Lord. Surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also on all thy work and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary. Who is so great a God as

our God? Thou art the God that doest wonders. Thou hast declared thy strength among thy people."

David said, "Here's my infirmity. Here's where I'm wrong. I'm concentrating on the situation and looking at circumstances. I ought to be thinking about God and how he's preserved me, protected me, and provided for me. I ought to be thinking about all of his wonders and the works he's done for me, for my family, and for our people in times past."

The truth of the matter is, recalling the past gives hope for the present and faith for the future. Any time you become discouraged, disheartened, or disappointed, stop and remember all the blessings of God in your life and how God has been merciful unto you. It is proper, and not only proper but necessary, that we beseech God and ask him for his tender mercies for ourselves and for others, even though we have sinned against God.

Daniel, in Daniel chapter 9, verse 9, was praying and confessing his sins and the sins of his people. He says, "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we rebelled against him." Our rebellion does not stop his mercy or his forgiveness. God is the source of all mercy, compassion, and comfort. In fact, 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." God is called the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

It is proper to ask God to display His tender mercies in our lives. David prayed in Psalm 25:6, "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindness; for they have been ever of old." God is immutable and unchangeable. When David says, "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindness, for they've been ever of old," he is saying, in effect, "God, You were merciful back then. You had kindness back then. Lord, You do not change. Please have that lovingkindness and mercy even right now."

Psalm 40:11 records David's prayer: "Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me." David is asking God not to withhold these tender mercies. In Psalm 119:58, he says, "I entreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy

word.” He is asking God to fulfill His Word and give mercy. In verses 76 and 77, David prays, “Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to the word of thy servant. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.” In verse 156, he says, “Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord: quicken thou me according to thy judgments.”

God’s mercies are indeed over all His works, but they are especially given to His people. We need His mercy not just daily, but hourly and really moment by moment.

God’s tender mercies, His lovingkindnesses, and His compassions are clearly taught in Scripture over and over. Psalm 103:8 says, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.” Psalm 116:5 says, “Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.” Scripture establishes that God is a merciful God, and that it is only because of His tender mercies and compassions that you and I are alive right now.

But let me ask you a question. In fact, I'll ask you several. Is it possible for God to withdraw his mercy from an individual? Is it possible for God to withdraw his mercy from a society, a people, a state, or a nation? Here's another question: If God did withdraw his mercy, his compassions and his loving kindnesses, what would it be like? Well, a short answer would be death and destruction. But let me go back and try to answer these one at a time.

First of all, is it possible for God to withdraw his mercy from an individual? And the answer is yes. May I remind you that mercy is that which gives us that which we do not deserve? So God is not obligated to be merciful to anyone. The only thing God actually owes anybody is justice. And I can assure you, we don't want that.

God Can Withdraw Mercy

So we know for a fact God did withdraw his mercy from one individual, because he said he did. But there were others as well. In 1 Chronicles chapter 17, God is entering into a covenant with David. In this covenant with David, God makes a statement. What I am going to show you not only involves Solomon, David's physical son, but it has greater reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, his true spiritual son.

Because you remember in the New Testament, our Lord himself said, "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here." And in Matthew 1, verse 1, Jesus Christ is designated as the son of David.

But notice that King Saul preceded David. In 1 Chronicles chapter 17, God says to David, "And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired, that thou must go to be with thy fathers," that is, David's going to die, "that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons, and I will establish his kingdom."

Now, he didn't do that for Solomon, but this kingdom is referring, I think, to the greater Solomon. He said in verse 12, “He shall build me a house.” Certainly Solomon did that. “And I will establish his throne forever.” Solomon's throne is not established forever, but our Lord's is. He says in verse 13, “I will be his father, and he shall be my son. And I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee.” That is King Saul. “But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom forever. And his throne,” that would be the greater Solomon, “shall be established for evermore.”

Certainly, God said that he took his mercy away from Saul. That is why Saul turned to witchcraft, to the witch of Endor, because he said, “God won't answer me. God won't speak to me.” And so he turned to the witch. Now, were there others from whom God withdrew his mercy? The answer is yes.

In Isaiah chapter 27, verse 11, this is talking about the destruction of the people, but notice what he says: “When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off. The women come and set them on fire. For it is a people of no understanding.” The boughs are speaking about the people. “It is a people of no understanding. Therefore, he that made them will not have mercy on them. And he that formed them will show them no favor.” So God says, “There's a people that I'm not going to have mercy upon.”

In Jeremiah chapter 13, verse 14—verse 13 shows that he is still talking about Judah and Jerusalem—God says, “Then shalt thou say unto them, ‘Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne and the priests and the prophets and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with drunkenness. And I will dash them one against another, even the

fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord. I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.'" So God at one time was merciful. Now he is being merciful no more. And let me just give you the last one.

You remember Hosea married a woman who was unclean and unfaithful. Even then she ran off, was unfaithful, and had children that were not his children. God says this because her life pictured the life of Israel. In Hosea 2:4, He says, "And I will not have mercy upon her children, for they be children of whoredoms." God said, "I will not have mercy upon them." So, yes, God can not only withdraw His mercy from an individual, but from groups of individuals. But the question has to be asked: Will God withdraw His mercy from a society, from a people, from a nation? Again, the answer is yes.

In Jeremiah 16, pay close attention to what God is saying that He is going to do to these people, and then observe why it is happening. The word of the Lord came also unto me saying, "Thou shalt not take thee a wife. Neither shalt they have sons or daughters in this place." Jeremiah, you are not getting married; you are not having children. Why? "For thus saith the Lord concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place and concerning their mothers that bear them and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land, they shall die grievous deaths. They shall not be lamented. Neither shall they be buried. But they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven and for the beasts of the earth. For thus saith the Lord, 'Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them,' for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the Lord, even loving kindness and mercies."

"Both the great and the small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried. Neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them. Neither shall men tear themselves for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead. Neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother. Thou shalt not go also into the house of feasting to sit with them to eat and to drink."

For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride." And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt show this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, "Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?" Then shalt thou say unto them, "Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods and have served them and have worshiped them and have forsaken me and have not kept my law. And you have done worse than your fathers. For behold, you walk everyone after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me. Therefore I will cast you out of this land into a land that you know not, neither ye nor your fathers, and there shall you serve other gods day and night, where I will show you no favor."

Remember, the word "mercy" is translated as "favor" as well. Literally, it says, "And I will show you no mercy." Go back to verse 5: "For thus saith the Lord, 'Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them, for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the Lord, even lovingkindness and mercies.'"

Oftentimes, we have to suffer before we truly begin to recognize God's mercies, kindness, and favor. God said, "I'm going to remove it. I'm going to take it away." Once it is taken away, there is nothing but death and destruction. There is a principle that we need to learn: We need to become more cognizant of His mercies and compassions. We need to be more grateful, thankful, and appreciative. God has not totally forsaken us yet. We are still alive. We still have family and friends. We still have a society—it may not be much of one, but at least it still exists. We still have a state and a nation. Therefore, we need to learn to praise Him daily for His mercies to us.

Psalm 92:2 says, "To show forth thy lovingkindness every morning, and thy faithfulness every night." God is merciful. Some people will say, "God cannot be merciful, because look at all the wars, all the people being killed, and all the bad things." Those people need to hear the words of Thomas Merton.

Thomas Merton said this: “It is only the infinite mercy and love of God that has prevented us from tearing ourselves to pieces and destroying his entire creation long ago. People seem to think that is in some way a proof that no merciful God exists. If we have so many wars, on the contrary, consider how in spite of centuries of sin and greed, lust, cruelty, and hatred, and avarice, and oppression and injustice, spawned and bred by the wills of men, the human race can still recover each time and can still produce men and women who overcome evil with good, hatred with love, greed with charity, lust and cruelty with sanctity. How could all this be possible without the merciful love of God pouring out His grace upon us?”

“There is not a seed that falls into the ground and not an ear of wheat that nods on the end of its stalk that does not preach the greatness and the mercy of God to the whole world. There is not an act of sacrifice done or a word of peace and gently spoken that does not sing hymns to God before his throne and the eyes of men.” The very fact that God allows us to rebound and rebuild is an act of his mercy. If God had not been merciful, we would have destroyed ourselves and his creation a long time ago.

So we need to learn to praise him daily. Some people are going to say, “Well, what am I going to praise him for?” There are so many things, but let me give you a starter: Psalm 103. Once you read this passage, you can come up with a multitude of things for which you could really praise God and be thankful, especially in light of his tender mercies and loving kindnesses.

David says, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” He then lists a few of them: “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities?” That is something to be thankful for, I can assure you. “Who healeth all thy diseases?” Everyone in this room has been sick and has gotten well innumerable times. “Who redeemeth thy life from destruction?” How many times have you nearly died and you didn’t, or you were almost in a wreck and you didn’t even know it? “Who redeemeth thy life from destruction?”

"Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies?" There are so many of them. "Who satisfies thy mouth with good things?" You get to eat and enjoy your food, "so that thy youth is

renewed like the eagles. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." We can be thankful for that. "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel."

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever." Here is something we can really be thankful for: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."

"As far as the East is from the West, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we're but dust." There are a multitude of things in this brief passage for which we could praise him, for giving us all these mercies and kindnesses. It is of the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed. The only reason you and I are alive right now is because of his mercies.

Applications: Daily Thanksgiving for Mercies

God's mercies do not fail, even in his anger against us and when he chastens us. His chastening, according to Hebrews 12, is for our good, that it may produce holiness. God's mercies run fully and constantly, but they never, ever run dry. His mercies and his compassions are new toward us every morning. Whatever hard things we suffer—financial reverses, the death of loved ones, sickness—we must never have hard thoughts concerning God. It is only his tender mercy and loving kindness that enable us to keep going.

Matthew Henry said this: "These streams follow us to the fountain. It is the Lord's mercies here. Mercies are in the plural number, denoting the abundance and variety of those mercies. God is an inexhaustible fountain of mercy, the Father of mercies. Note, we all owe it to the sparing mercy of God that we're not consumed. Others have been consumed round about us, and we ourselves have been in the consuming, and yet we're not consumed. We're out of the grave. We're out of hell. Had we been dealt with according to our

sins, we should have been consumed long ago. But we have been dealt with according to God's mercies, and we're bound to acknowledge it to his praise."

Nehemiah summed that up in Nehemiah 9:31: “Nevertheless, for thy great mercy's sake, thou didst not utterly consume them nor forsake them, for thou art a gracious and merciful God.” For thy mercy's sake, God did not utterly destroy the people in the wilderness. No, he did not utterly destroy us. As Christians, we need daily to thank him for his tender mercies and loving kindnesses.

He holds our soul in life, and our times are in his hands. Whenever we are awakened to life, health, and happiness, we should begin praising him. Anytime a sinner wakes up this side of hell, it is a good day for him. Sinners may refuse to acknowledge God's mercies, compassions, and loving kindness, yet one day they will. It may be too late, but they will still acknowledge him.

If someone is unsaved, the best thing he can do is run to the Lord Jesus Christ and beg for mercy. God does not owe mercy to anyone, and there comes a time when God withdraws that mercy. But while you are alive, there is hope, because God in his mercy has spared you.

By sharing this truth, I have not said or implied that the cessation of God's mercy brings death to a believer. Believers are never, never forsaken. It is true that death comes to all, but death for the believer does not mean that God's mercies have ceased toward him. Isaiah 57:1-2 says, “The righteous perisheth, and no man lays it to heart, and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He that is the righteous and the merciful man shall enter into peace. They shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.”

Psalm 116:15 says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” David said in Psalm 23, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, thou art with me.” Just because we die as Christians does not mean that God withdrew his mercy from us as believers. Oftentimes, according to Isaiah 57:1, God in his mercy takes us so that we would not see the judgment that was to come.

Here is what I would like to leave with you. I believe this would be a good practice and start for each of us. I've tried to make it a practice for I don't know how long. When I open my eyes each morning, before I rise, I lie there and quote, “It is the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed.”

“Because his compassions fail not. They’re new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness.” I begin by thanking Him for His tender mercies, His compassions, and His faithfulness. His faithfulness is extremely important, because if He were merciful and compassionate one day and not the next, we would still be destroyed. It is only God’s faithfulness that enables us to awaken each morning.

When I lie down at night, I quote this passage: “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we’re not consumed because His compassions, they fail not. They’re new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness.” I thank God for allowing me to live through the day, and every morning I thank Him for allowing me to live through the night. I thank Him for allowing Alice to live. I always tell everybody, if the Lord took her, I’d have to marry 40 to take her place.

Once we begin to thank God for those tender mercies, we see them everywhere we look and every which way we turn. By His grace, through the Lord Jesus Christ, we will enjoy His mercies for eternity. We can be thankful that all we are getting on this earth is a good taste of that which is to come, which will be far better, because His tender mercies never cease.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You this day. We’re thankful for Your tender mercies, Your compassions, and Your lovingkindnesses. Help us to love Thee, live for Thee, praise Thee, and acknowledge Thee. Help us understand that the only reason we are alive is because of those tender mercies, those compassions, and Your faithfulness. We thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance and faith, and for drawing us to Thyself. We thank You, Heavenly Father, for food and rest, and for everything You have given unto us. We acknowledge that we are what we are, and have what we have, only by Your grace and mercy. We praise Thee and acknowledge that it is by the Lord’s mercies that we’re not consumed, because Thy compassions fail not. They’re new every

morning. Great is Thy faithfulness. We thank Thee. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 12

Are You Praising The Wrong God?

April 11, 2020

SCRIPTURE READING - Daniel 5:1-10 (KJV)

Introduction: The Obligation to Praise the True God

> Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple, which was in Jerusalem, that the king and his princes, his wives, and his concubines might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God, which was at Jerusalem. And the king and his princes, his wives, and his concubines drank in them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and of silver, brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.
>
> In the same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace. And the king saw the part of the hand that

> wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him so that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers.
>
> And the king spake and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Whosoever shall read this writing and show me the interpretation thereof shall be clothed with scarlet and have a chain of gold about his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." Then came in all the king's wise men, but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. Then was King Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished. Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house, and the queen spake and said, "O king, live forever. Let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed."

"There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar, thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

Then was Daniel brought in before the king, and the king spake and said unto Daniel, "Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof."

"But they could not show the interpretation of the thing. And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts. Now, if thou canst read the writing, and make

known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom."

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation."

The title of this message is, "Are You Praising the Wrong God?" We are obligated to praise the one true and living God. There are a multitude of Scriptures that tell us to praise him: praise him with the sound of music, praise him in song; "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." The Bible tells us in Psalm 33 and verse 1 that praise is comely for the upright. Therefore, we are duty bound, obligated, responsible, and privileged to honor and praise him. However, many people do not know him, and therefore it is impossible for them to praise him. How in the world can you praise someone that you do not know?

And the answer is: you cannot. When individuals begin to praise ignorantly their god, what they are doing, in essence, is praising a false god. Let me show you what I am talking about. Hold Daniel 5, but look first in your Bibles at Deuteronomy chapter 32, and then we will go to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. Look at Deuteronomy 32:17.

The Danger of Worshiping a God of Imagination

The Bible tells us about Israel, who transgressed God's law and left Him. In verse 16, it says, "They provoked him"—that is, the one true, living God—"to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger." Now look at verse 17: "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not."

They either made up a god or took any god of the heathen that they heard about. The Bible says that they sacrificed unto devils. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, the apostle Paul uses this same truth. In verses 20 and 21, he says, "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice"—in this instance, the heathen, the unsaved—"they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. And I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and

the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."

Note that he said, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils." It is important not only to know whom you are worshiping, but also whom you are praising. Unhappily, I believe that today a vast majority of professing Christians are worshiping the God of their imagination and not the God of Holy Scripture. They have no idea who the God of Holy Scripture really is. They know what they have heard and what they have been taught all their lives, but they have never really read or studied the Bible, and they have never seen who the God of the Bible really is.

I related this to you sometime back. You have probably forgotten it, but years ago I was in a pastor's office, discussing theology. His door was open, and his secretary's desk was right outside. We got around to the doctrine of election and were talking about the biblical doctrine of election.

All of a sudden, his secretary, who was not involved in the conversation, although she could hear, jumped up, ran into the office, looked at the pastor, and said, “I don't care what the Bible says. I know that God's not like that.” The pastor looked at her and said, “Did you hear what you just said? Let me tell you, the only God that is, is the God of the Bible. And if you don't know him as he's revealed in the Bible, then you're worshiping some false God. You're worshiping a God of your imagination. God is not how you imagine. God is as he's revealed himself.”

Idolatry as Walking After One's Own Imagination

Turn back a few pages in your Bibles to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 13. Look at verse 10. God is talking here about Israel: “This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods to serve them and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.” Note that he calls them an evil people. They refuse to hear his word. What is happening? They are walking after their imaginations, and because they are walking after their imaginations, they are walking after other gods.

Look at Jeremiah 16:12: “And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me.” Anyone who is walking after his own imagination is refusing to listen to God and refusing to hear the Word of God.

Then look at Jeremiah 18:12: “There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.” In other words, they were saying, “We're not going to listen to God. We're not going to change. We're going to do what we want to do.” When you look at Daniel 5, which we will return to shortly, Belshazzar and all his people were worshiping gods of their own hearts.

They were worshipping gods of their own imagination. They were worshipping idols, false gods. Psalm 115 says, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

So our God is sovereign. Here he is contrasted with the gods of the heathen: “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.”

Just like an idol is nothing but a dumb, lifeless piece of wood or stone or material, those that make them are like unto them, and those that trust them are likened to them. In other words, it is worthless, worthless, worthless. Most professing Christians would never fall down before an idol; however, they will easily, readily, and quickly place themselves, their desires, their will, their way ahead of God and his word. Anytime you put anything on an equal par with God, or anytime you try to place anything above God, it is idolatry. Many times people place their children before God. They’ll place their mates before God. They’ll place any and everything before God.

Belshazzar did not know, recognize, or honor the one true God. He gave all of his praise and all of his worship to idols. Such worship is not only an abomination, but according to Scripture it is an affront to God because it is a denial of God. They worship their idols, but they refuse to worship the one true and living God.

Isaiah 42:8 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 has said that He is not going to give His glory to another. He is not going to give His praise to graven images.

Giving praise to the wrong god brings death. In fact, in Daniel chapter five, Belshazzar died that very night. However, God says that He desires that the wicked live, that the wicked repent. Ezekiel 33:11 says, "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

In other words, God says, if you do not repent, if you do not turn, then you are going to die. It is just that simple. When you look back in Daniel chapter five, note verse six. When he saw the handwriting on the wall, look at verse six.

Disregarding the Examples of History

"Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." Belshazzar was scared. He was frightened. But he did not repent. His thoughts were troubled, but he did not repent. Daniel 5:30 tells us, "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." He died that very night. All his fear and all the thoughts that went through his head did not change him.

How did Belshazzar arrive at this point in his life, at the point of God's judgment and wrath? How does anyone arrive at this point? Look around us today.

Belshazzar's Failure to Learn from History

The truth of the matter is that when someone arrives at God's judgment, it did not happen in a vacuum or overnight. What is the

path? What are some of the things that bring us to God's bar of judgment? Look with me at Daniel chapter five, verses 18 through 21. This is the first step in coming to God's judgment, and each of us is involved in it, as well as others who are listening.

We, like Belshazzar, disregard the examples of history, even though we know them. Daniel says, "O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him."

"Whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will."

One of our major problems is unbelief. Coupled with unbelief is ignorance. When we have unbelief and ignorance, we must also add unthoughtfulness, laziness, apathy, and an unwillingness to consider and meditate on things that we know absolutely.

Now, the point I'm trying to make is this. Belshazzar was obligated to learn from what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. I'm going to show you a verse, but listen to me carefully. Belshazzar was obligated to learn from the work of God in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. If you would hold Daniel 5, but turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 21, and look if you would please at verse 32. Matthew 21, verse 32. Watch carefully. Matthew 21. Verse 32, look what our Lord told the Pharisees. Matthew 21, verse 32.

He said, "For John"—that is John the Baptist—"came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him."

Now watch this, "and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." Now he said, you bunch of Pharisees, you didn't believe the preaching of John. You wouldn't

listen to him. But the publicans, the tax collectors, the thieves did, the harlots did. And they were changed. "And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." In other words, our Lord is saying, look, you are responsible to profit from the work of God in the lives of those that you know. Did Belshazzar know Nebuchadnezzar? Well, of course. Now, there are some people will say that Nebuchadnezzar was his grandfather and that Nebuchadnezzar's son was the ruler.

You will find in the Bible many times the founder of a dynasty is always called the father. For instance, you can read about individuals who were not like David, their father. Well, David was not necessarily their earthly father, but he was the head of that dynasty. He was the head of that clan, so to speak. Well, whether Nebuchadnezzar was his father or grandfather in one sense of the word does not matter. If he was the grandfather, Belshazzar should have known. If it was his father, he certainly should have known. Well, what happened to Nebuchadnezzar? Look back to Deuteronomy—not Deuteronomy, I'm sorry—Daniel chapter four, just one chapter back, Daniel chapter four. Now, Nebuchadnezzar was a very proud, arrogant, and haughty monarch. So, in Daniel chapter four, beginning there with verse 27, Daniel is speaking to Nebuchadnezzar, and he says this.

"Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." In other words, he had already told him what God was going to do to him. He says, now here's the answer. You need to repent. You need to change your life. Well, he didn't listen. So verse 28, "All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar."

SCRIPTURE READING - Daniel 4:29-37 (KJV)

> "At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken;

The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.

"And they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen"—this is known as boanthropy—"and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. And at the end of the days"—that is the end of seven years—"I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

"At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me."

"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

Why was Nebuchadnezzar driven insane for seven years? So he could learn one lesson: that God was absolutely sovereign. There was one God. He is in control. He is sovereign. He reigns over all, even the heathen. And Nebuchadnezzar said, I learned this. It took me seven years of insanity. It took me seven years of eating grass and living like an ox, but I finally lifted my eyes to heaven and I recognized there's one God that I should praise and that I should honor.

Did you know that in Psalm 46 and verse 10, the Bible says, “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” Psalm 47 verse eight says, “God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.” Proverbs 21 and verse 1 says, “The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” So God is sovereign.

This is exactly what Belshazzar should have learned. It was either his father or his grandfather, but he should have learned it. It was in the family. There are sometimes secrets in families, but only the family members know. This was no family secret. It was done out in the open. Everyone in the kingdom knew that Nebuchadnezzar was crazy for seven years, and he had to learn one lesson.

There are twelve books of history in the Bible. However, all of the Bible is history. It teaches us in every book, if we will read, if we will listen, and if we would learn, that we could profit not only from its counsels and admonitions, but also from its warnings and examples. Just as Belshazzar was obligated to learn from the history of Nebuchadnezzar, we are obligated to learn from history as well.

In 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 4, the Bible says, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.”

Now, turn to the book of Jude, right before the book of Revelation, and look at verse seven, because here it is again. In fact, let's read verse six.

You will see the two examples here: “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

God did not spare the angels that sinned. God did not spare the old world. God did not spare Sodom and Gomorrah or the cities of the plain. The Bible repeatedly tells us these are examples. In First Corinthians chapter 10, Israel is used as an example as well, and we are told to learn from how God judged Israel.

When you stop and think about not only biblical history but our history, look at the fall of tyrants and wicked politicians. Inevitably, invariably, we should be learning from history. Let me give you one more example. It is Romans 8:32: “He that”—that is, God the Father—“he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Listen again: “he that spared not his own Son.”

God did not spare the angels that sinned, the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah, or the cities of the plain. And when sin was imputed to his own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, he did not spare him. What makes anyone think that somehow, some way, some unrepentant, God-hating, God-denying reprobate who spits upon God, tramples the Lord Jesus Christ under his feet, and denies his word will escape the judgment of God?

If God did not spare his own Son, he is not going to spare anyone who rebels and sins against him. Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way; Belshazzar never learned at all. We need to learn from history and from the experience and works of God in the people we know. Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall, but the truth of the matter is that Belshazzar himself is the writing on the wall for us.

Now, let us consider a second thing that brought Belshazzar to the place of judgment. Look back in Daniel chapter 5, verses 22 and 23. He had already been told that he did not learn from Nebuchadnezzar.

The Sin of Pride and Lifting Oneself Against God

He tells him that Belshazzar displayed pride, arrogance, and haughtiness: “And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.” Belshazzar had not humbled his heart but had lifted himself up. Pride is a root sin, the foundation of practically every other sin. It is pride, arrogance, and a know-it-all attitude that fights against truth, the Word of God, and God Himself.

Belshazzar had lifted himself up against God. Do you realize that when someone fights against God, God fights against them? Inevitably, God is going to be the winner. The Bible tells you in James 4:6, “Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” The word “resisteth” means to fight against. God fights against the proud, but gives grace to the humble. He said it again in 1 Peter 5:5: “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”

In verse 23, he says, “but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven.” Belshazzar did not rant and rave against God. He did not curse God, write a dissertation denying the existence of God, or start an organization to separate government from God. Let us be honest: Belshazzar was religious. He believed in gods. In fact, he was worshiping and praising, but he was worshiping and praising the wrong God. The Aramaic word for “he lifted up himself” literally means to exalt, to lift oneself up, and to set oneself up above. He was elevating himself above God.

He was following the example of Pharaoh, Sennacherib, and even Nebuchadnezzar. There is another one who did the same thing in the New Testament. In Acts 12:20–21, “And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished of

the king's country. And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them."

"And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." Immediately God smote him. All the tyrants and politicians who refuse to honor and worship the one true and living God will sooner or later be smitten. God will not give his praise to another, nor his glory to false idols.

As you go back to Daniel chapter five, understand that Belshazzar failed in three particular areas. First, he profaned and dishonored that which was holy. All the vessels Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple had been dedicated to God and were to be used only in the service and worship of the one true and living God. Belshazzar took these dedicated, holy vessels and used them to drink wine and party with his wives, concubines, and lords. Second, he praised and honored that which was dishonorable and unholy. He took something dedicated to the one true God and used it to praise and worship those which were no god.

These were gods of wood, stone, gold, silver, and metal, which could not see, hear, speak, move, or walk. They were nothing but dumb idols. Belshazzar took that which was holy and dedicated to God and used it to praise these false gods. Third, he refused to praise the one true and living God, who held his life and all his ways in His hands. He refused to give God the glory.

John Calvin comments on this passage: "The prophet Daniel continues his own sentence and confirms what I've said. Namely, King Belshazzar was intractable and willfully blind to God's judgment. For thou hast raised thyself, says he, against the Lord of heaven. If he had raised himself thus insolently against men, his sin would be worthy of punishment.

"But when he had provoked God on purpose, this arrogance neither could nor ought to be borne. Again, therefore, the prophet increases the guilt of the king's pride by saying he raised himself against the King of heaven. He also expresses the manner of his doing so by commanding the vessels of the temple to be brought to

sight. He drank from them. This profanation was an indecent sacrilege, but Belshazzar was not content with that indignity. He used these vessels for luxury and foul debauchery, abusing them in the company of concubines and abandoned women, and added a yet greater reproach against God in praising his gods of silver, gold, brass, and iron, wood, and stone, which cannot feel."

Since Daniel here sustains the character of a teacher, he does not relate the events so briefly as at first. When he said at the beginning of this chapter, "Belshazzar celebrated this impure banquet," he spoke historically; but now he executes, as I have said, the office of the teacher. Thou, says he, hast praised the gods made of corruptible material, who neither see nor hear nor understand, but thou hast defrauded the living God of his honor, whose hand is thy life, on which thou dependest, and whence all in which thou boastest proceeds, because thou hast so despised the living God, who has been so gracious unto thee. This ingratitude was so base and shameful. We see, therefore, how severely the prophet reproves the impious tyrant for sacrilege, mad rashness, and foul ingratitude toward God.

No wonder you read, in verse 30, "and Belshazzar was slain that very night." What brought Belshazzar to God's judgment? What brings people to God's judgment? Not only failure to understand history—the history of the Bible and the history of the world—but failure to profit from the example of others and the work of God in their lives. And secondly, pride.

Pride always lifts us up and somehow makes us think that we are going to escape the judgment of God. I never will forget when I was in college many, many moons back. I forget how many bank robberies there were in Greenville, South Carolina, during the four years I was in undergraduate school. But out of all the bank robberies, not one robber ever made it out of the city limits. They caught them all before they ever got out. I had to think to myself, Why are they so stupid?

Here is the answer I came up with: every criminal thinks the criminals before him were stupid, but he is smart. They got caught, but he will not. Do you realize that is how people rationalize fighting against God? God may damn everybody else, destroy everybody else,

and judge everybody else, but not me. I will be the exception. No, you will not be the exception. The pride of your heart will deceive you.

Thirdly, we, like Belshazzar, will face God's judgment for our failure to acknowledge and worship Him alone. Look, if you would, in Daniel five, beginning there with verse 24: “Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.”

The Certainty of Divine Judgment

"And this is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. It did not last long. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old." So Daniel was the third ruler for only a few hours.

Let me tell you something, folks. We will be weighed. We will be found wanting. Whatever we hold dear above God and His truth will be destroyed and taken away from us. We hold our idols in our hearts, in our minds, and in our imaginations. The truth of the matter is that we really and truly do not hold God's Word and God's worship as sacred, because we so easily refuse to attend to it. We so easily and quickly refuse to do it.

Most people stay out of church if they have a toe ache. They go to work, but they would not go to church. The evidence is clearly manifested when we refuse to worship God and praise Him for everything that He has done, not just during worship, but on a daily basis. Every time I see one of those crosses beside the road, where someone has been killed, I stop and thank God again for life and health.

I passed by Jasper coming down here and saw a huge man sitting in a wheelchair, unable to do anything else. Again, I thanked God for

life and health. We have so much for which we should praise Him. The Bible says, in Psalm 50 and verse 23, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." If you want to glorify God, you need to learn to praise Him daily—for your children, your wife, your husband, life and health, and everything. Now, consider Daniel 5 and verse 5. Here is something that we need to consider.

"In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." I want you to understand that the judgment written against Belshazzar was not only plain; it was public. And it was done supernaturally. Do you realize that the judgment written in His Word is plain and public, and it is the supernatural revelation of God?

The apostle Paul, preaching on Mars Hill, brought his sermon to a close. In Acts 17, verses 30 and 31, he said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Why does God command all men everywhere to repent? Here is why: "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." How do I know that there is going to be a judgment? God's judgment is just as sure as the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Just as surely as God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, just that surely there is going to be a judgment.

And may I tell you something else? Jesus Christ will be the judge. The Bible says in John 5, verses 21 through 23, "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." So yes, there will be a judgment. Turn to Luke 24.

One of the reasons God has ordained the preaching of His Word is for warning and instruction. It was Daniel who was called, Daniel the prophet of God, the man of God who interpreted the writing on the wall. In Luke 24, beginning with verse 46, Christ was speaking to His disciples: "And said unto them, Thus it is written"—plainly,

publicly—"and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

"And ye are witnesses of these things." You are the ones who have seen them, who know them, and who are responsible to proclaim them. It is true that the wicked will face God in judgment. But it is equally true that Christians will have to give an account of our lives, our service, our worship, and our praise.

Have you ever prayed, sought the Lord, and asked Him to help you love Him more, serve Him more, and praise Him more? Certainly you understand what Scripture declares: He is worthy of all honor, all praise, and all glory. Have you ever prayed and bewailed before God your own neglect, feebleness, apathy, and lukewarmness? Have you ever asked God to stir you up and truly enable you to worship Him, praise Him, and give Him honor and glory?

Application: Praising the True God Daily

One thing is sure: we do not want to be Belshazzars. We want to praise the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here are a couple of things we have to learn. The first is this: praising the wrong God brings death. The only God who exists is the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is one God, and He said, “Besides me there is none other.” We need to make sure that we praise the one true and living God through Jesus Christ.

The second thing is this: we must understand that our attitudes, our actions, and our lives are indeed praising some god. How we talk, how we think, how we walk, and how we live will inevitably be praising some god. It may be the god of self. It may be what the world calls luck, chance, fate, or fortune. But it is going to be praising someone.

Just the week before Christmas, when that tornado came through our town, I was at the place of business where I buy feed. I said to the man who owned the business, “I heard there was a tornado in the area.” He said, “Yes, it’s on its way here now.” I had just gotten the

feed, so I got in my truck and left. Evidently, just after I passed through, it hit. Within a hundred yards of that business, houses and barns were destroyed, and trees—trees this big around—were piled one on top of another. It was total devastation, a royal mess. In that one area, they are still cleaning up.

That has been nearly two months now. I went back the next week to get more feed and asked, "Did you see what happened a hundred yards from you?" He looked at me and said, "Yes, we were lucky." I said, "No, sir. You were blessed. God protected you." Then he looked at me and said, "That's right." I am not interested in praising luck, chance, fate, or fortune. I am not interested in praising myself. I want to praise the one true and living God who holds my times and my life in His hands.

Conclusion: Make Your Praise Count for the True God

Remember that our attitudes, actions, and lives—however we live—praise someone or something every day. Make it the one true and living God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Father, give us wisdom and understanding, and help us render unto Thee the fruit of our lips, thanksgiving, praise, and honor to Thee, who deserves all honor, praise, and thanksgiving. We thank Thee for the Lord Jesus Christ, life and health, and how Thou hast provided, protected, and preserved us. We thank Thee for Thy kind and gracious providence. Thank You, Father. We praise Thy holy name through the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

The Rise And Fall Of A Tyrant

July 11, 2020

Introduction and Definition of Tyranny

Acts chapter 12, beginning with verse 1:

"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church, and he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter. And then were the days of unleavened bread. And when he apprehended him, he put him in prison and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him, intending after Easter or Passover to bring him forth to the people. Peter, therefore, was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison."

Tyrants come in all shapes and sizes, as well as degrees in their tyranny. When we think of a tyrant, we normally think of men like Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, and Idi Amin, individuals who literally

killed or murdered millions of their own people. But we often fail to realize that there is also a benevolent tyranny. Tyranny does not necessarily have to be cruel and oppressive in order to be tyranny.

If you look up the word “tyrant” in a dictionary, you will find definitions like these: “A sovereign or other ruler who uses power oppressively and unjustly.” A second definition is, “Any person in a position of authority who exercises power oppressively or despotically.” If you look up the word “tyranny,” here are two definitions: “arbitrary or unrestrained exercise of power, despotic abuse of authority.” And then, for the purpose of explanation, I like this one: “Government by a ruler or small group of people who have unlimited power over the people in their country or state and use it unfairly and cruelly.”

The truth of the matter is that no man has unlimited power. Only God is sovereign. But a tyrant is not necessarily always someone who is cruel and oppressive. A tyrant could also be someone who uses lawful authority unlawfully. If you simply look around at what is taking place in America today, you will find that there is a lot of tyranny being demonstrated.

Constitutional and Biblical Basis for Lawful Authority

Whether people agree with the United States Constitution or not, Article 6, paragraph 2, says: "This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding." Article 6, paragraph 2, therefore says that it does not matter what the state constitutions say if they are in contradiction to the United States Constitution. Neither does it matter what laws any states pass. If they are in contradiction to the Constitution of the United States, they would then be null and void.

One may be lawfully elected and may be given lawful power. But when he uses that lawful power unlawfully, then he becomes a tyrant. He is ruling according to his own dictates, wishes, and desires, and not according to law. The difference between a

democracy and a republic is very simple. The word "democracy," of course, refers to mob rule. But a republic is supposed to be ruled by law, and we are supposed to have a republic. After the Constitutional Convention, someone asked Benjamin Franklin, "What kind of government have we been given?" His answer was, "A republic, if you can keep it."

In the exact sense, then, a tyrant is an individual who arrogates to himself authority without having a right to it, and/or one who has been given that authority and then turns around and uses it unlawfully. A tyrant may either be a usurper or one who ignores the law.

When Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to invade and conquer the South, Claiborne Jackson, who happened to be the governor of Missouri, responded to Abraham Lincoln. He said, "Your request is illegal, unconstitutional, revolutionary, inhuman, diabolical, and cannot be complied with." He spelled it out for Lincoln very clearly.

Quotes on Despotism and COVID-19 Tyranny

David Davis, who was a Supreme Court justice, left us these remarkable thoughts on despotism: "The Constitution of the United States is a law for rulers and people, equally in war and peace, and covers with the shield of its protection all classes of men, at all times, under all circumstances."

"No doctrine involving more pernicious consequences was ever invented by the will of man than that any of its provisions can be suspended during any of the great exigencies of government. Such a doctrine leads directly to anarchy and despotism." This Supreme Court justice was saying that the Constitution cannot be suspended for any reason—pandemic or no pandemic, war or no war. Justice William O. Douglas likewise said, "Since when have we Americans been expected to bow submissively to authority and speak with awe and reverence to those who represent us? The constitutional theory is that we the people are the sovereigns. The state and federal officials only are agents. We who have the final word can speak softly or angrily. We can seek to challenge and annoy as we need not stay docile and quiet." This decision was Colton v. Kentucky in 1972.

Montana State Representative John Fuller made the following statement concerning COVID-19: "We did not vote on this shelter-in-place dictum. Yeah, we did not vote on the shutdown of all non-essential businesses. Hysteria leads to a dismissal of the factual. And the factual analysis of the current Wuhan flu is that many of the policies enacted here in Montana are irrational and insulting."

He continued, "Does anyone believe that the vulnerable, such as this mid-70s old man, are incapable of taking appropriate precautions on their own without the governor destroying the livelihoods of our fellow Montanians? Does anyone really expect now that a governor has assumed the power to decide who is essential or not, that future governors will not expand on such policies? Increasing dependence on government and passively accepting that some elite somewhere knows best about our welfare is much more dangerous than the Wuhan virus."

He concluded, "The natural desire to be safe often suppresses the need to be free. But abandoning one's own responsibility to provide for their own safety will result in government tyranny and you will still die."

Rushdoony also pointed out that the word "tyrant" basically means one who rules without God. How could a tyrant be simply one who rules without God? Listen carefully to Psalm 75, verses 5 through 7: "Lift not up your head on high, speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the south, nor from the west. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and he setteth up another."

Biblical Definition: Ruling Without God

God is the one who puts down rulers and exalts rulers as well. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, “Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.” God is the one who removes kings and sets up kings.

In order to understand that a tyrant is one who rules without God, remember the passage in Romans chapter 13. Since the Bible commands everyone to be in submission to the higher authority, there is no higher authority than God. He is the highest. Whatever position anyone occupies, he must be in submission to God.

God created only three institutions: the family, which is a ministry of education; the church, which is a ministry of grace; and civil government, which is a ministry of justice. Since God is the creator of each institution, anyone who is in those institutions is answerable and accountable to him.

In Romans 13, especially verses 4 and 6, the Bible says that rulers are his ministers: “He is the minister of God to thee for good.” The word “minister” is diakonos in the Greek, from which we get our English word deacon, and deacon literally means a servant. God appointed civil rulers as his deacons, his servants. If you do evil, be afraid; “for he is the revenger of God. He is the avenger of them that do evil.” The word “revenger” is ekdikos in the Greek, meaning one that exacts righteousness out of.

Why has God created civil rulers? First, to be his deacon, minister, and servant. Second, to be his exactor of righteousness. Third, Romans 13:6 speaks of them as ministers using a different word: leitourgoi, plural, leitourgos, singular. It is where we get our English word liturgy, meaning public worship. God ordained civil rulers to be his deacons, his exactors of righteousness, and his public worship.

Obviously, when you have a civil ruler who does not bend the knee to God, bow to God, and rule according to God, he is indeed a tyrant. God is the Creator, and as creatures, we owe Him honor, glory, and submission. I love this quote from the Alabama Constitution: “That the sole object and only legitimate end of government is to protect the citizen in the enjoyment of life, liberty, and property. And when the government assumes other functions, it is usurpation and oppression.”

A tyrant is not going to recognize God, any law, or even the people. A tyrant is much like that individual in Luke 18 whom our Lord described: “There was a certain ruler who feared not God nor

regarded man." A tyrant does not fear God and consequently has no regard for man.

That is why, in the Bible, a tyrant is compared to a roaring lion and a raging bear. Proverbs 28:15 says, "As a roaring lion and a raging bear, so is a wicked ruler over a poor people." If you look up the word "wicked," you will find that it means cruel, despotic, and criminal.

The Fury of a Tyrant: Herod's Persecution

When we are talking about tyrants, we have an excellent illustration of one in Acts chapter 12: Herod. Acts 12:1-2 says, "And now about that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church, and he killed James the brother of John with a sword." This passage shows us the fury of a tyrant, and the Bible specifically says, "now Herod the king."

This was not Herod the Great, who slew the infants at Bethlehem, nor Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist. This was Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great. Like his grandfather, Herod Agrippa was an Idumean, another word for an Edomite in the Bible. Through his grandfather, Herod the Great, he was an Idumean, and he was the grandson of Miriam, the Maccabean princess. Obviously, this man had a rather bad heritage: his grandfather murdered babies, and his father murdered John the Baptist.

Usually, wicked rulers always try to outdo the others. Here Herod the king was stretching forth his hand to vex certain of the church. When the Bible says he stretched forth his hands, it means that he was in fury, going to try to persecute certain individuals.

So undoubtedly he began with the leaders, and the word "vexed" indicates that he oppressed, afflicted, harmed, maltreated, and evilly and wickedly attacked them. At first, it was probably fines, confiscation of goods, or imprisonment; then, of course, it led to murder.

This is a renewing and reviving of persecution. In Acts chapter 8, we find the persecution that arose under Saul of Tarsus: "And Saul was consenting unto his death"—the death of Stephen—"and at that

time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him. And Saul made havoc of the church, entering into every house and hailing men and women and committed them to prison." Saul was persecuting, arresting, and confining everyone he could.

He hated Christ and the truth so much. After Saul was saved by the grace of God, Acts 9:31 says, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and were multiplied." After Saul was converted, the churches had rest. In other words, they began to multiply through peace.

This persecution under Saul was not limited to imprisonment; it often led to death. In Acts 26:10, Paul gives his own confession: "Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them." It was not only Stephen against whom Paul gave his voice, but obviously plenty of the saints as well. Herod, then, in Acts chapter 12, was beginning to stretch forth his hand in fury.

He undoubtedly began lightly, but it progressed into murder, for he murdered James, the brother of John, with a sword. James was one of the first three apostles and was with our Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration. Now James had the honor of being the first apostle to be martyred for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before I go any further, there are several truths that we need to grasp right here. First, milder and lighter persecution usually progresses into heavy and more severe persecution. If you buckle under when persecution is light and mild, what will you do when it is rough and severe? Jeremiah sets this principle out very clearly in Jeremiah chapter 12 and verse 5: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace where thou trustest, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of the Jordan?" So if you cannot run with the footmen, you are not going to be expected to run with the horses.

And if you cannot stand in the land of peace when everything is hunky-dory, so to speak, what is going to happen in the swelling of the Jordan? What is going to happen when real tribulation and real trouble arise? The truth of the matter is, if we give in to light persecution, we are certainly going to give in when it becomes more severe.

Principles of Persecution and the Head of the Church

Our Lord taught us that we are going to suffer persecution. You remember what He said in John 15, verses 18 through 20. He said to His disciples, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Then He said, “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord.” “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”

The apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 12, said this: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” We should not be surprised at persecution. We should understand that anytime we enter into what might be called mild or moderate persecution, we might as well get set and get ready, because it will probably be intensified and lead to far more severe persecution.

Secondly, understand that oftentimes the ungodly understand a biblical principle far better than do the godly. What am I talking about? Look at verse 1 again of Acts 12.

"Now about that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with a sword." He vexed certain of the church, not everyone in the church. Why would he go after James? Because James was the leader of the church at Jerusalem. Here is the principle: strike the head and it is over with. This is what Herod was thinking: If I will kill James and these other leaders, I will be through with this Christian business. These Christians will be out and gone and done away with. It is just that simple.

This principle is clearly seen in reference to our Lord. Zechariah 13:7 says, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn my hand upon the little ones." What is he saying? Smite the shepherd. Once you kill him, I can gather everything that he owned into my own hands. They are mine.

Our Lord quoted this passage twice in the New Testament. Matthew 26:31 says, "Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." He said it again in Mark 14:27: "And Jesus said unto them, All of you shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."

This truth is applicable in any tyrannical situation. Many people become aggravated and upset with the local entities that offer the excuse, "Well, I am just doing my job." As reprehensible as someone is who does a job contrary to the Constitution and contrary to the Bible, that person is not the real problem. The real problem is those giving orders for the local entities to do what they are doing. In other words, it is the head that needs to be severed. That is exactly what Herod understood: those directing and giving the orders are the problem. Thus he sought to destroy the head of the church.

Third, notice that usually persecution is at the behest of, and for the benefit of, a certain group. In verse 3 we read: “And because he”—Herod—“saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.”

When he saw that it pleased the Jews, remember that anytime you see the phrase “the Jews,” it does not refer to everyone in the tribe of Judah, nor to everyone who happens to live in the land of Judea. Sometimes “the Jews” refers only to the rulers.

Look at Acts 28:17. Paul is in Rome at his own hired house. “And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together.” Here the phrase refers only to the rulers. He called the chief of the Jews together.

“And when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I've committed nothing against the people or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. Now watch. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar.”

“Not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.” Notice that he said, “when the Jews spake against it.” To know who the Jews were, go back to Acts 24, where Paul had to appeal to Caesar. Verse 1 says: “And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.” Here we have Ananias, the high priest, the elders, and Tertullus. Verse 9 says: “And the Jews assented, saying that these things were so.” Which Jews? Those mentioned in verse 1. Read the context. Tertullus makes his oration, and then verse 9 says that the Jews assented, referring back to Ananias and the elders, because Tertullus is the one speaking. I did five messages on “Jews, Judaism, and Christianity.”

The Jews probably requested and were pleased with what Herod had done. Obviously, rulers without a conscience, rulers without biblical convictions, will always defer to a group that will enhance, promote, and prosper their position of usurped authority. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he said, “I’ll take Peter as well.” Thus, you have the fury of the tyrant when he murders James and captures Peter.

The Failure of a Tyrant: Peter's Miraculous Escape

Secondly, this passage shows us the failure of a tyrant. Although a tyrant is a usurper who claims power that he does not have, he cannot always succeed. He does not always accomplish that which he sets out to do. When Herod apprehended Peter, he put him in prison and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. But Peter was kept in prison, and prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

When Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, while the keepers before the door kept the prison. “And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and the light shined in the prison. And he smote Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell from off his hands. And the angel said to him, Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he said to him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.” Peter escapes. He does not suffer the consequences that James suffered.

Undoubtedly, Herod had probably heard of Peter’s previous escape from prison in Acts chapter 5. There he was in prison, but the angel opened the door and said, “Go proclaim all the words of this life.” They found Peter out preaching the next day.

Therefore, Herod made sure that Peter would not escape. The Bible says that he had four quaternions of soldiers. Two soldiers were chained to Peter, one on each side, and two stood guard out front. That was four. But four quaternions means four times four—sixteen soldiers—rotating in six-hour shifts. Thus, there was never a time when Peter was without four soldiers: two chained to him and two guarding the door, in case he slipped out of those chains and reached the door.

There are some things in this passage that I find not only very interesting, but very humorous as well. The first is this; look in verses 6 and 7: "When Herod would have brought him forth the same night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison. And he smote Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell from off his hands."

Note, first of all, that a light shined in the prison. The light did not awaken Peter. I do not know about you, but usually, if a light comes on in the room or the next room, it wakes me up. This light was a supernatural light, and it did not wake him. The angel had to smite him on the side to wake him. Please remember: here was a man about to be executed, waiting for his head to be cut off like James. Yet he was sleeping so soundly that the angel had to slap him on the side and say, "Get up!"

What's wrong with you, boy? Stop and think about this. Most Christians cannot even sleep through a thunderstorm. Yet here is a man about to be executed, sleeping like a baby. The angel has to smite him and tell him to get up. He rises, the chains fall off, they walk out, the gate opens to them of its own accord, and he goes to John Mark's house, where all the disciples are gathered.

Now note the second thing that is rather humorous. He goes to John Mark's house and knocks at the gate. A damsel named Rhoda comes to hearken. When she knows Peter's voice, she opens not the gate for gladness, but runs in and tells them that Peter is standing outside the gate. Think about this. Peter has escaped the prison, walked out the main gate, gone to the house, and knocked on the door. When Rhoda hears his voice, she becomes excited, turns around, and runs back to tell everybody that Peter is at the gate. He has just escaped from prison, and she leaves him standing outside, where anybody who happened to be up at that time might see him. It is not, “Come on in. Let me hide you. Let me give you a secret place.” No, she simply leaves him standing there.

The third thing that is absolutely astounding is that the Christians praying for Peter did not believe their prayers were answered. Acts 12:5 says, “Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.” The church was praying, “God, deliver him.” Yet when Rhoda ran back and said, “Peter’s at the gate,” they said unto her, “Thou art mad.” She constantly affirmed that it was so, but they said, “It is his angel,” or his ghost. Peter continued knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

Isn't this amazing? This is exactly the way Christians are. We pray and ask for something, and then, when God gives it to us, we do not even believe it. We ask God for a miracle, and then we do not believe that God has given us the miracle.

God sovereignly, powerfully, miraculously, and marvelously delivered Peter from death. But if God delivered Peter from prison and allowed him to escape Herod, why did He not do the same for James? Why was James executed and Peter not executed?

God's Sovereignty Over Life and Death

God has not only ordained the day of our birth; He has also ordained the day of our death and the way in which we are going to die. Job 14:1-5 says, “Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down. He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of the unclean? Not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.”

Our days are determined, and God has appointed our bounds that we cannot pass. We will not live one second past our appointed time. We will die in exactly the same way God has ordained for us to die. God had ordained James to die by the hand of Herod. He had not ordained Peter to have his head cut off.

John 21:18-19 tells us what our Lord said concerning Peter’s death: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said to him, Follow me.”

Peter, therefore, was to be executed by crucifixion. Tradition says he was crucified upside down because he did not believe himself worthy to be crucified in the manner Jesus Christ was crucified. God had ordained that Peter would suffer death by crucifixion.

The truth of the matter is this: it was just not Peter's time to die. Neither was it the way in which he was to die. Herod beheaded James, but Peter would die later by crucifixion. Regardless of how a Christian dies, or the way in which a Christian dies, the Bible says in Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

We need to learn this: until it is our time to die, we are immortal. We are not going to die until the day and the second that God has ordained that we die. God spared Peter, but he did not spare James.

So you find not only the fury of the tyrant, but the failing of the tyrant, and then the fall of the tyrant.

The Fall of a Tyrant: Herod's Death

"And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon. But they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace because their country was nourished by the king's country. And upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied."

Here is something very reassuring: every tyrant shall fall, even the petty tyrants. We normally remember the big tyrants, like Pol Pot, Idi Amin, and Stalin. But we have a host of petty tyrants as well. Psalm 82:6-7 says, "I said that you were gods, and all of you the children of the Most High. But you shall die like men."

You claim to be a god. God says, "I'm going to show you something. You're not a god and you're going to die just like a man."

Herod's death pictures the fall and destruction of tyrants who love to play God and think that they are God. Isaiah 42:8 says, "I am the Lord: that is my name: my glory will I not share with another, neither my praise to graven images."

Herod was upset with these people. Their country was nourished by the king, so they wanted to get back in good graces. They made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend, probably with a bribe. Blastus then prevailed upon Herod, and Herod came and gave an oration unto them, seated upon his throne. Josephus says that Herod had on a very splendid robe, woven tightly of silver, which glittered brilliantly in the sun as he gave this oration.

When the people heard the oration, they began to praise him and said, "It's the voice of a god and not a man." Why would somebody be so stupid as to say that? You have to remember that if they had gotten plenty of goods from him simply as a man, as a king, now they were proclaiming him a god. Maybe they would get more from him.

They were on the dole; they were on the take. They wanted everything they could get. So they ascribed godhood to this wicked murderer.

Here was Herod's sin: pride. He stole the honor and glory that belonged only to God. He gloried in their praise, admiration, and adulation. He was lifted up; he took God's glory. The Bible says that immediately, instantly, the angel of the Lord smote him. He was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost.

The word for "worms" is "skolex," which literally means a worm, and it means to be worm-eaten. It is true that when we die, worms will devour our body, but they devoured Herod while he was alive. They literally ate him to death. The temporary judgment upon Herod was only emblematical of the eternal judgment that awaited him. Three times in Scripture, eternal punishment is described as "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Probably the word "worm" there might refer to the conscience, but still, all who play God and want to steal God's honor and glory will suffer the fate of a tyrant. God will judge them.

Applications: God Humbles the Proud and His Word Prevails

God delights in bringing down proud men, and He delights in bringing them down in mortifying, embarrassing, and humiliating ways. Pharaoh was plagued with lice and flies. Ephraim was consumed as a moth. Herod was eaten of worms. Proverbs 16:5 says, "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to God: though hand be joined in hand, he shall not be unpunished." Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to God; the word "abomination" means a stench in God's nostrils. Though hand be joined in hand, it does not matter who supports whom: he shall not be unpunished.

Remember what Nebuchadnezzar did in Daniel 4, when he lifted himself up in pride and said, "Is this not great Babylon, which I have built for my majesty and mine honor?" God brought him down and made him eat grass as oxen for seven years. Finally, in Daniel 4:37, Nebuchadnezzar confessed, "And those that walk in pride, he is able to abase." God brought him down.

God does not even need to raise His mighty hand to bring down the wicked. People are so foolish as to stand up and try to challenge God: "God, I dare You. I challenge You." They expect God somehow to supernaturally slap them. No, God does not have to do that. He can send a little worm, a little germ, or a little virus, and that will take care of them. That is what He did for Herod. God is in absolute and sovereign control. He does not need to do anything except that which He pleases, and whatever He pleases will accomplish His purpose.

Herod raised his hand to vex certain of the church. But in verse 24 we read, "But the word of God grew and multiplied." Persecution is not going to stop the Word of God, the kingdom of God, or the children of God. When Herod was taken out of the way, the persecution stopped for a while, that is for sure. Men down through the centuries have thought they have destroyed Christianity.

Diocletian was one of them, and Voltaire, the French infidel, was another. In 1776 Voltaire predicted, “One hundred years from my day, there will not be a Bible on earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker.” He said that within a hundred years of his death the Bible would be extinct and Christianity gone.

In August 1836, only fifty-eight years after Voltaire’s death, Reverend William Ackworth of the British and Foreign Bible Society saw with his own eyes Voltaire’s former residence in Geneva, Switzerland, being used as a repository for Bibles and religious tracts. At that time, the house was occupied by Colonel Henry Truchin, president of the Evangelical Society of Geneva from 1834 to 1839.

It should also be noted that only sixteen years after Voltaire’s death, in 1794, the Bible began making inroads in Ferney, France, where he had spent the last eighteen years of his life. The very printing presses Voltaire had employed to print his irreverent works were used to print editions of the Bible, on paper specially made for a superior edition of Voltaire’s works.

The Voltaire project failed, and the paper was bought and devoted to a better purpose than printing Bibles. Does God mock the tyrants? Of course. Does God mock the infidels? Of course. Although we may

have tyranny, tyranny cannot and will not prevail because God is on the throne. And so all of our great tyrants and all of our petty tyrants need to be aware of the judgment that awaits them.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth, that Your Word will increase and multiply regardless of persecution and tyranny. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. May we not fear what Your divine providence brings our way. But may we submit to Thee and honor Thee in all that we say and do. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 14

It's The Mind, Stupid

March 9, 2021

Introduction: The Importance of the Mind

The title of the message is “It’s the Mind, Stupid.” You will understand as we get started. Look in Ezekiel 8 and verse 12:

Ezekiel's Vision of Idolatry in the Chambers of Imagery

“Then said He unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark? Every man in the chambers of his imagery, for they say, The Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth.”

So I would say at the very beginning, do not be upset at the title of the message. It is there for emphasis. But many of you will remember years ago, during a prominent election, there was a slogan which candidates were using as they were running for office: “It’s the economy, stupid.”

And of course that was there. I have a friend, of course, some of you know him, who teaches Bible. One of his favorite sayings is, “It’s

the context, stupid.” Certainly, whenever we ignore economics and whenever we ignore the context, we are acting very stupidly and very wickedly at the same time. I would also say that not only is the economy essential, but the context—not only the immediate context, but also the remote context of a passage—is absolutely essential as well.

You remember, I think it was Forrest Gump who popularized the saying, “Stupid is as stupid does.” There is a phrase or a sentence attributed to Albert Einstein. Whether he said it or not, I do not know, but it goes like this: “Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity, and I’m not so sure about the universe.”

So what he is saying is basically true, I can assure you, because each one of us has done stupid things. If we were honest, we would freely admit that we have done stupid things.

Not only in our actions, but many times in our attitudes and words. In fact, when I do something like that, I usually end up saying it out loud: "Now that was mighty stupid of me," and certainly it was. Obviously, we do many things that are wrong and that you and I would call stupid. Oftentimes we regret our actions and our words, and we certainly cannot call any of them back.

I've always said that one way to avoid trouble is not to go with stupid people to stupid places and do stupid things. Most people avoid that piece of advice, but it is still good advice.

I've preached many messages in times past concerning the mind. Probably the most fundamental, needed, and necessary message that I've ever preached dealing with the mind is "Keeping the Heart." I've also preached a message on "The Mind of Christ," a series of messages on "Changing Your Mind Doctrinally," and a series on "The Supremacy of Christ over the Mind." Probably the most recent message that I've preached was titled "Take Out the Garbage."

The interesting thing is this: when you ask, "How often does God have to say something to make it true?" the answer is, "One time." But when you see a truth repeated over and over in Scripture, it is there for emphasis, and it means that it is very important. What I am going to teach and share with you from the Word of God today can be found in many passages of the Bible.

This particular truth is shown here in Ezekiel chapter 8, verse 12. It may come from a different passage or book, but it is still exactly the same truth. We have to conclude that it is vitally important for it to occur so many times in Scripture.

Now turn back to Ezekiel chapter 1 and look, please, at verse 3. It is important to understand that Ezekiel was a priest whom God called to be a prophet, and he was a prophet to the captives in Babylon. Ezekiel was already in Babylon, and many of the Judahites were already there.

They were there in the first deportation, 605 B.C., when they were taken captive. Ezekiel 1:3 says, "The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar, and the hand of the Lord was there upon him." Ezekiel was a priest whom God called to be a prophet, and he was already in Babylon. Since he was a captive, he was prophesying to the captives who were already there.

Anything that Ezekiel prophesied concerning Jerusalem had to be by vision. In Ezekiel 8:3, what is shared here was through a vision that God gave Ezekiel. The Bible says, "And he put forth the form of a hand and took me by the lock of mine head; and the Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy."

The context of this passage deals primarily with the sin of idolatry and all of the sins particularly related to idolatry. As this chapter unfolds, the progress of idolatry goes from bad to worse.

In verse 3, God shows Ezekiel an image that had been set up by the gate. We are not told specifically what the image was. It was indeed an idol, but in all probability it was an idol either to Baal or Ashtaroth. Ahaz, the king of Israel, was a particular worshipper of Baal, and so was Manasseh, the king of Judah. Manasseh was also a worshipper of Ashtaroth. Ashtaroth was simply the female consort of Baal, so even the worship of Ashtaroth was indeed worship of Baal as well.

In 2 Kings 21:7, we are told about Manasseh, the king of Judah: "And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name forever."

It was Manasseh who set an image of the grove. The word "grove" refers to Ashtaroth, the female consort of Baal; it was therefore a worship of Baal. Whether it was Baal, Ashtaroth, or anything else, it was indeed an idol. Deuteronomy chapter 4 and verse 16 says, "Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female." Thus, whether it was Baal, Ashtaroth, or anything else, it was totally and completely forbidden by God and contrary to God and His law.

Now consider the context before verse 12. God had already shown Ezekiel this horrible image, and now He goes farther. In verse 6 He says, "He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary?"

In other words, they are driving God away. God is going to withdraw; He will not stay there and put up with idolatry. He said in Isaiah 42, "My glory will I not share, nor give my praise to graven images." Then He says, "But turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations." The idol was bad, but it was not the greatest abomination. Verse 7 says, "And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here."

"So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his

imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth."

Interestingly, the Word of God tells us that every one of these men was doing this in the chambers of his imagery. Ezekiel saw this portrayed upon the wall. Very obviously, it had to be portrayed upon the wall because he could not read or see the minds of the men. Yet it was still the idolatry that was in the chambers of their imagery.

Was there a real chamber or room? I am not sure, and I would probably say no, since this was a vision. Obviously, God had to portray it somehow for Ezekiel to see what was actually going on in their minds, in the chambers of every man's imagery. One thing we know for sure is this: the idolatry was in their minds.

The Imagination Precedes the Image

The imagination always precedes the image. You cannot build, mold, sculpt, paint, or draw something until first you imagine it in your mind. I looked up the word "imagination" in the dictionary and found two very interesting definitions. The first one begins, "Imagination:

Imagination is “the faculty of imagining, or of forming mental images or concepts of what is not actually present to the senses.” I have friends in the Dominican Republic who sent me a beautiful picture of a beach with palm trees about two miles from where they live. I can see that in my mind. I saw the picture, and so I have that image in my imagination. I cannot touch the palm tree, pick up the sand, or put my foot in the water, but I can form a mental image of something that is not actually present to my senses.

The second definition is, “The product of imagining; a conception or mental creation, often baseless or a fanciful one.” In other words, I can imagine things that are not real or true. Imagination may be based upon fact or reality, or it may be based upon pure fancy. It is only the mind that can imagine. The mind is the chambers of the imagery.

Now consider verse 12: “Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark? every man in the chambers of his imagery.” The word “dark” is the

Hebrew word choshek, which literally means darkness, night, obscurity, or a secret place.

As you read through the Bible, you grasp the concept of darkness. Our Lord said, “Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Darkness is usually associated with sin and evil. Psalm 74:20 says, “For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.” Notice that it is the dark places of the earth that are full of the habitations of cruelty. Proverbs 4:19 says, “The way of the wicked is as darkness. They know not at what they stumble.” The way of the wicked is as darkness, and usually it is during the dark that many vile and wicked acts are performed.

Turn your Bibles back to Isaiah—hold Ezekiel 8—but turn back to Isaiah 29, and look, please, at verse 15. Isaiah 29 and verse 15. Watch what is specifically spelled out. Isaiah 29, verse 15. Here it is plainly. 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?” He is talking about people who commit their wicked deeds in the dark, hoping that no one sees and no one will know. That is why, in Proverbs chapter 7, verses 9 and 10, you read about the harlot: “In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart.”

When you look at the dark, it simply refers to darkness, to night, to obscurity, or to a secret place. Look at the next word: “Then said He unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark? every man in the chambers.” The word “chambers” is the Hebrew word cheder, and it literally refers to a chamber, a bed chamber, the inmost part, or the innermost part.

This word could therefore apply not only to the physical, but also to the mental and spiritual. Then look at the word “imagery.” It is from the Hebrew word maskith, which means an image, an idol, an imagination, or a conceit. “Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark? every man in the chambers of his imagery.”

In this vision, Ezekiel had to dig through the wall to find the door. He had to work to get at the chambers of the imagery of these seventy ancients. I could look at Gary and say, “Hmm, what is in his mind?” I cannot read his mind, but I can listen to him, watch him, and question him. Pretty soon, I can come up with a fairly decent idea of what is going on in his thinking and in his mind. In other words, it is something I would have to work at; it is something I have to dig at. That is exactly what God had Ezekiel do: dig it out. Then he saw portrayed upon the wall exactly what was in the minds of these individuals.

The Jamieson-Fausset-Brown commentary says, “The chambers of imagery are their own perverse imaginations, answering to the priest's chambers in the vision where all the pictures are portrayed.” Once again, they are saying it is the mind. Calvin, in his commentary, said, “Some translate ‘in the chambers of their painting,’ but I take the word maskith for imagination, as it is also taken in other places. It properly signifies painting, but it is also transferred to the thoughts of men.” He continues, “Now therefore we see in what sense the prophet mentions the hiding places of their imaginations.”

Idolatry Begins with Wrong Thoughts About God

Idolatry does not begin with statues, paintings, sculptures, or anything material. Idolatry, and every sin, actually begins in the mind. Look at Romans 1:21–23: “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”

Notice in verse 21 that what came first was their vain imaginations. What came next was their changing the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image like man, four-footed beasts, and creeping things, to dishonor themselves. In other words, the imagination precedes the image. It always does. They imagined God to be something other than He was.

The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of God, unlike God, or contrary to God. Wrong ideas about God are not only the fountain from which the polluted waters of idolatry flow; they are idolatrous in and of themselves. God, the only God that exists, is the God revealed in the Bible. If we insist upon thinking about God in any way other than that which is revealed in the Bible, we are guilty of idolatry. We are not building an idol of physical materials; we are building an idol with thoughts, an idol in our minds.

God is not what you think, what you believe, or what you state. God is what He is, what He has revealed Himself to be in His Word. The only way that you and I can know anything about God is that He has revealed Himself in His Word. To the extent that we think unbiblical thoughts about God, to that extent we are guilty of idolatry. It may not be the abominable kind described in Ezekiel chapter 8, but it is still idolatry.

Before I show you the truth I want to emphasize, the truth emphasized over and over in Scripture, I want to remind you of a simple truth: the heart is the mind. In a message preached many years ago on keeping the heart, I delineated very carefully from Scripture that the heart is the mind. I will take just about two minutes and go over three or four points.

The Heart Is the Mind

The simple truth is this: the heart is the mind. Scripture makes this clear. Genesis 6:5 says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." God saw the imaginations and thoughts of man in the heart, but in the mind. How do you think? In your mind. How do you imagine? In your mind. Whatever the heart is, according to Genesis 6:5, it can imagine.

Moreover, Genesis 27:41 tells us that the heart can speak, because Esau said in his heart. Proverbs 5:12 tells us that the heart can either receive instruction or refuse instruction. In Matthew 5:28 our Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

There is, therefore, a connection somehow between the eyes and the heart.

When you get to Daniel 4, that should be the nail that solidifies it for you, because God said concerning Nebuchadnezzar, “Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him.” For seven years, Nebuchadnezzar was driven insane. He went out and ate grass like an ox. His hair grew like eagles' feathers, his nails like birds' claws. Finally, when God's judgment was over, he said in Daniel 4 and verse 34, “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me.” What did God change? God changed his heart. How did his understanding return? Because the heart is the mind. Then he said in Daniel 4 and verse 36, “My reason returned unto me.” God changed his heart, but He gave him the mind of an animal. Therefore, he acted like an animal and thought like an animal. You have to understand that the heart is the mind. It is in our mind, listen carefully, that our sins and our idolatries begin.

In Ezekiel chapter 14, beginning with verse 1, you will see the word “heart,” but the word “heart” refers to the mind: “Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, that is, in their mind, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face,” that is, they cannot walk straight because of their wrong thinking.

Then he asked this: “Should I be inquired of at all by them?” Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, or in his mind, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols, there in his mind. That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

Wrong thinking leads to wrong worshiping. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and

setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the Lord will answer him by myself: And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

So these people had set their idols up in their hearts, in the chambers of their imagery. One thing that God has said He hates in Proverbs 6 and verse 18 is "a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations." It is the heart that can imagine; therefore it is the mind. The heart is the mind. It is the chamber of the imagery.

The Imagination of the Evil Heart in Jeremiah

It is wrong thinking that leads us into idolatry, and wrong thinking that leads us into sin. In Jeremiah chapter 7, verse 24, read the context: "But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you." God simply says, "Obey me." But verse 24 says, "But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward." So God said, "I told you what to do."

You would not listen to me. You walked in the counsels and in the imagination of your own evil heart. You would not take my word. You would not believe my word. You believed your own wicked thoughts.

Jeremiah 9:13-14 says, "And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them." It is the imagination—the wrong thinking—of our heart that leads us to worship other gods and into other sins.

Jeremiah 11:8 says, "Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart. Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not." God said they

ignored Him, refused to listen to Him, and still walked according to the imagination of their evil heart.

Jeremiah 13:10 says, “This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.” This is what He calls them: an evil people who refuse to hear God’s words and walk after the imagination of their own heart. They refuse to hear God’s Word, yet listen to their own heart.

And they fall into idolatry. Jeremiah records God's indictment: "And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me." You can either listen to your own mind or listen to the Word of God, but you are not going to listen to both. Romans 8 says, "For the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." That is exactly what Jeremiah is saying in Jeremiah 16. Again, "And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." They said, "We are just going to do what we want to do. We will think the way we want to think, believe the way we want to believe, and do exactly what we want to do."

"They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you."

Now I want you to pay close attention to verse 17: "They say still unto them that despise me." What does he say? Those who are walking after the imagination of their own heart actually despise God. Obviously, they do, because they refuse to listen to Him and refuse to listen to His Word. Let me ask you, have you ever considered how many devices, how many counsels, how many desires, and how many imaginations exist in our minds? We could ask another question: How many of these concepts, how many of these imaginations, and how many of these desires are contrary to God and His Word? You remember that passage in Proverbs 23:7 that teaches us, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Now let me make a statement, and I want to share it with you and show you the truth of it. Everything that we do, whether good or evil, right or wrong, holy or unholy, begins in our minds. All of our sins begin in our minds, and all of our good deeds begin in our minds. So, if I saw Steve with a sack that has a hundred pounds of gold in it, and I knew it was a hundred pounds of gold, I could sit here and say, "Hmm, I'd like to have that. How could I get that from Steve?" What am I doing? I'm already plotting and planning and sinning because God has said, "Thou shalt not covet," and, "Thou shalt not steal."

Everything Begins in the Mind

However, I could also see Steve struggling to carry that hundred pounds of gold in a sack. Now, I may not even know that there's a hundred pounds of gold in it, but I could say, "That fellow needs help. Let me just go over and offer to see if I can help him carry his burden." Where one is an evil, wicked desire and thought, the other is a good and holy and right desire and thought.

But both begin in the mind. So, let me show you. Our Lord explains this parable, and He is really hitting the Pharisees: “And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” Peter then said, “Declare unto us this parable.” And Jesus said, “Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”

Note that all of this proceeds out of the heart. It proceeds out of the mind. Notice the first thing named: evil thoughts. You cannot do one thing without thinking whether it is right or wrong, whether it is good or bad. Everything begins in the mind. Every act of idolatry begins in the mind. Every act of sin begins in the mind. Every act of obedience begins in the mind.

In Colossians 3:5–6, God says, “Mortify”—that is, make dead—“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.” What are you to mortify? What are you to make dead? Here is what you are to make dead: “Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.” Pay attention to the fact that he says, “and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

Turn back in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 20. You will also find this passage in Deuteronomy chapter 5, for it is the Ten Commandments, the law given by God. The tenth commandment is in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 17:

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

To covet my neighbor's house, I have to see it. To covet my neighbor's wife, I have to see her. To covet his manservant or maidservant, I have to see them. To covet his ox or his ass, I have to see them.

The eyes are the portals into the mind. Imagination is the concept of imaging: seeing something in the mind that I cannot touch with my senses. I cannot taste it, smell it, hear it, or feel it. It is all mental; it is in the mind. On the other hand, I could have a mental image of something baseless, fanciful, and untrue. I could say, "I'm going to covet Gary's house," and imagine that he lives in a palace with fourteen bathrooms and twenty bedrooms. Does he live in a house like that? No. If I built that up in my mind, it would be fanciful. There would be no basis for it, but I could envision it and think, "That's really what he's got, and that's what I want." Usually, however, when we covet, it is something that we actually see.

That is why our Lord said in Matthew 5 and verse 28, "Verily I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." In other words, it goes into the mind through the eyes. The eyes are the portal to the soul.

In Ezekiel 23, God is dealing with Judah, though He also deals in this passage with Israel. He says of Judah and Jerusalem: “And that she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity: And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea.” In other words, it was through the eyes that the mind began to imagine certain things.

It is with the mind that you see, in one sense of the word, that you observe and that you desire. It does not matter if it is a man's wife, a woman's husband, a wedge of gold, a new truck, a fancy house, a big farm, or a strange god. When we see something, we decide and think, “Boy, it'd be nice to have that. I'd like that.”

Then we roll it over in our minds, cherish it, play it out, toy with it, relish it, and entertain it over and over until we experience some type of sensation or pleasure. Without even knowing it, we are dethroning God and enthroning ourselves. God said, “Thou shalt not covet.” God said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” God said, “Thou shalt not steal.” Yet we say, “It doesn't matter what you said. This is what I want. This is what I'm thinking about. This is what I'm going to enjoy right now. I don't need you. I need this to satisfy me.”

It is in the mind. In doing so, we set ourselves above God and above His law. We become a god unto ourselves and a law unto ourselves. We disobey Him in order that we might derive some type of mental pleasure from what we are entertaining, which is absolutely contrary to God.

Your imagination will lead you always further into sin and into idolatry. Your sin, your idolatry, just like Judah's and just like Israel's, is in the chamber of your imagination. Your wife may not see it. Your husband may not see it. Your children may not see it. Your family may not see it. Your friends may not see it, but God does. Our thoughts are not our own. In Job 21 and verse 27, God says, "Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me. I know your thoughts." In Psalm 94 and verse 11, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are

vanity." In Isaiah 66 and verse 18, God says, "For I know their works and their thoughts."

How many times did our Lord in the New Testament say, "And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" If you and I really understood the importance of keeping our minds upon the Lord, keeping our minds upon Biblical truth, and keeping them upon that which is right and holy, we would fight more effectively to control our thoughts, our imagination, and our mind.

You remember that passage in Isaiah 26 and verse 3? The Bible said, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." If we want perfect peace, our minds must be stayed upon the Lord. There are many things that we can think about.

Controlling the Mind and Thinking on What Is Good

You had better watch carefully what appears on TV. You also need to watch carefully what appears on the Internet. Once you see things, you cannot erase them from your minds. Some information may be good, but when I hear people using foul language and taking God's name in vain, I cut it off. I am not going to listen to it. I do not care how right they are or how conservative they are. If they want to present the truth, they can do so in a rational way, without taking God's name in vain and without using foul language. I refuse to listen to it; I just turn it off.

Why? Look in Philippians chapter 4, verse 8. Here is what he said.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." I do not have to think about evil things. There are too many good things to think about. I do not have to think about wrong and wicked things. There are too many holy and righteous things to think about.

The chambers of our imagery are our mind. Everything begins in the mind. Whether it is right or wrong, good or bad, holy or unholy, it begins in our mind. If you wish to be holy, obedient, and righteous,

it begins in the mind. You must concentrate on the Lord Jesus Christ. You must saturate yourself with the Word of God, and you must not allow anything in your mind that is contrary to God and contrary to His mind. If you want to be holy, obedient, and godly, think on these things. Think upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word. On the other hand, if you wish to be scattered, peeled, and destroyed, allow your thoughts and imaginations to run wild and go contrary to God and His Word.

Applications and Warnings

He said in Luke 1 and verse 51, "He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." God will scatter us. Darkness does not hide us. Our thoughts are not our own. There is no such thing as privacy even in our minds, because ultimately, as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

It is going to spill out sooner or later. It is going to come forth. Moreover, God knows precisely. Listen as I quote Hebrews 4, verses 12 and 13: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” The Word of God is “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Our thoughts are not secretive; they are not our own. God knows every thought that enters our mind, and He knows the intent of every thought.

We have to learn to control our minds, our thoughts, and our imaginations. David said in Psalm 119:113, “I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.” How many times have we been praying or even reading the Bible when, all of a sudden, some stupid, vain thought invades our mind? We have to reject it and put it out. We have to say, “Lord, I hate vain thoughts. I don’t want that. I refuse that. But thy law do I love.”

Jeremiah 3:17 says, “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to

the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. Neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart." To me, this is going to be one of the greatest blessings of eternity. When we get to glory, it is not just that we will have a new glorified body and our body will be fixed; so will our minds. There will be no more vain or empty imaginations, and no more thoughts that are wicked, wrong, fruitless, worthless, or vain.

Our minds determine how we live. We can submit our minds to the Word of God and be obedient, or we can let our minds run wild, imagining and entertaining things that we have no right to think of or entertain. Thus we bring the judgment of God upon us. He said He knew how to scatter the proud in the imagination of their heart, and He will do so.

Your mind is important. Do not be stupid and ignore your thoughts or your imaginations. Do not be stupid and think that your thinking is not known by the Lord, or that you can think these things and get away with it. You cannot, and you will not. It is your mind, so do not be stupid with it.

Use it the way God ordained for you to use it, for your good and for His glory.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We ask, Lord, that you would teach us and build us up in the most holy faith. In thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

One More Time

October 24, 2021

Introduction: Teaching the Same Truths Again

Let us open our Bibles to Mark chapter 10 and verse 1. I am not going to expound this verse today, other than simply to tell you something about it. I am going to use it to reinforce a truth. The Bible says, “And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again.” And, as he was wont, he taught them again.

Our Lord came to the farther side of Jordan, and the people resorted to Him again. It was the same group. The Bible says that, as He was wont—that is, as He usually did—He taught them again. He may have taught them the same exact truth; I do not know. He may have taught them a different truth. The truth is that He was willing to teach the same people over and over.

I am going to preach something today that you should already know and should have heard in times past. I am also preaching something that you probably have not heard, have not read about, and certainly do not know. Both are vitally important, and it is vitally

important that you grasp and understand the principles being taught today. If you do not grasp or understand them, you are going to be in deep trouble. In fact, you may already be in deep trouble for ignoring these principles in your life.

Some of the verses, and one or two of the paragraphs, that I will quote are from messages I have taught you in times past. I am not re-preaching those messages; I am telling you that there are principles in them that you need to hear and make sure you know. The first is keeping the heart. The second, of course, is the biblical essence, or the essence of biblical godliness. I think those two messages are absolutely foundational to our Christian faith and Christian walk. If you have not heard them in a while, I urge you to listen to those messages again.

Here is a simple truth I know, and you probably know as well: most Christians, at least most professing Christians, do not read their Bible regularly or consistently. It is also a known fact that most professing Christians really and truly do not study their Bibles. Consequently, there are a lot of words in the Bible that they have absolutely no idea what those words mean, and they certainly have not perceived the doctrines, the interpretations, the principles, or the concepts; they simply go on their way.

The Heart Is the Mind

There is a truth given to us in Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 7: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Two very important truths are taught clearly in this verse. The first is this: the heart is the mind. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." You think with your mind and with your reasoning ability. So, obviously—and I will clarify it even later—the heart is indeed the mind. The second truth is this: it is the heart, or the mind, that controls the life. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." These two principles lead to a third principle, which is vitally important and which I want you to really comprehend today: whoever controls the mind controls the life. The truth of the matter is that we have been deceived.

We have been lied to, brainwashed, propagandized, and mentally destroyed on many subjects and many topics. One of them, which I am mentioning not in detail but in passing, is what we know as the

COVID crisis. It was COVID expert Dr. Peter McCullough—and you should listen to him, I can assure you—who urged unbreakable resistance to vaccine for kids. He said, "This can't be about COVID at this stage. It's about some type of totalitarian takeover that's occurred all over the world. Something very dark is going on."

Those were his words. Then constitutional attorney John Whitehead said this, speaking about Congress: "We find ourselves badgered, bullied, and browbeaten into bearing the brunt of their arrogance," paying the price for their greed, suffering the backlash for their militarism, agonizing as a result of their inaction, feigning ignorance about their backroom dealings, overlooking their incompetence, turning a blind eye to their misdeeds, cowering from their

Jacob G. Hornberger has written an article titled “The CIA Has Stultified American Consciences.” He says, “One of the worst consequences of converting the federal government to a national security state has been the stultification or warping of the consciences of the American people. With unwavering allegiance to the Pentagon, the CIA, and the NSA, all too many Americans have sacrificed their sense of right and wrong at the altar of national security. The two-word term, national security, has become the most important term in the political lexicon of the American people.” Basically, he is saying that the consciences of average Americans have been stultified, even destroyed, because of national security. Anything goes under its guise.

Each of these three quotes demonstrates that we have been deceived and controlled medically, politically, and militarily. The truth is that we have been brainwashed and controlled in a much broader area than these three. Consider the average American, and then the average American Christian. We no longer think, meditate, consider, analyze, deduce, or concentrate.

We sit down and watch television, play with our cell phones, surf the net, and entertain ourselves in a multitude of ways. We basically believe everything that comes through the television set and everything the mainstream media puts out. We believe the government has our best interests at heart and submissively follow suggestions, mandates, decrees, orders, and regulations without

checking or asking questions. We never consult the Bible to see what the Word of God says. Consequently, we never consult the Constitution to see whether that authority is real. The average American and average American Christian simply meekly submit to anything and everything.

We have lost our character, our fighting spirit, our ability to think, and our independence as well.

One of the main thrusts in the Bible concerns the mind. I could quote verse after verse: “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” “Let this mind be in you.” Why is there so much emphasis in the Bible on the mind? The answer is Proverbs 23:7: “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” In other words, your life, conduct, and actions are determined by what you think and what you believe. David said it like this in Psalm 116:10.

He said, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." In other words, you end up speaking about and stating what you actually believe. You may not put it into a doctrinal statement, but you spill out in your everyday conversation what you actually believe.

Whatever you think and whatever you believe inevitably molds your life. Let me give you an illustration. Why did the people of Nineveh repent at the preaching of Jonah? Why did they put on sackcloth and ashes? You can answer, “The grace of God in their lives.” That is true, but let me give you a specific answer. In Jonah, chapter 3 and verse 5, the Bible says, "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." Why did they repent? They believed God. In other words, their belief and their thinking worked itself out in repenting and sackcloth and ashes.

Why did not the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees come savingly to Jesus Christ? These were supposed to be the scholars, the individuals who knew the law. Why did they not come savingly to Jesus Christ? The answer is found in John 12 and verse 37: "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him." They did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. They did not believe that he was the Son of God. Consequently, they did not come to him.

Keeping the Heart

The point is that what you think and what you believe actually controls your life. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs, chapter 4. This is the passage I have preached from on keeping the heart. I am not going to re-preach that message, but I want you to see this passage and let me explain it very quickly. In Proverbs chapter 4, beginning with verse 23, through verse 27, the Word of God says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil."

"Keep thy heart with all diligence." Why? "For out of it are the issues of life."

How can I tell whether or not you are keeping your heart? According to verse 24, if you keep your heart, you will put away from you a froward mouth and perverse lips. According to verse 25, your eyes will look right on, and your eyelids will look straight before you. In verse 26, you will ponder the path of your feet and let all your ways be established—that is, established in truth and by the Word of God. In verse 27, you will not turn to the right hand or to the left. You will stay on the straight path and remove your foot from evil.

If you are not keeping your heart, you will have a froward mouth and perverse lips. Your eyes will be wandering, and your eyelids will be moving. You will not ponder the path of your feet; your ways will not be established, and you will not remove your foot from evil. You will be rushing headlong into it.

Even in this passage, keeping the heart manifests itself in obedience, action, and conduct. Failure to keep your heart manifests itself in disobedience and wicked conduct as well.

When the Bible says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," it is obviously not referring to the physical organ. Your heart is an involuntary muscle. It beats whether you like it or not. I am thankful because I do not have to lie awake at night and say, "Beat hard, beat hard." It just does it.

And one day it'll stop doing it. There's not one thing I can do about it. So when he says, “Keep your heart,” it is obviously not referring to your heart muscle. He is referring to what you and I would call the innermost being of man. What is the innermost being of man? Let me tell you what the heart is from the Bible.

First of all, in Genesis 6 and verse 5, this is the very first time the word heart is mentioned in the Bible. The Bible says that God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, “and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Whatever the heart is, according to Genesis 6 and verse 5, it can think and it can imagine, because God saw the thoughts and the imaginations.

In hermeneutics, you have a rule called the law of first mention. The very first time a word is mentioned in the Bible, that is usually the way it will be used throughout the Bible, unless the context dictates otherwise. The very first time the word heart is used, it refers to the thoughts and the imaginations.

The second verse is Genesis 27, verse 41: “And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.” The heart can speak: Esau said in his heart. He evidently also expressed it verbally, because word got back to Rebecca, and she told Jacob that Esau was comforting himself, saying that he was going to kill him. How did Esau speak in his heart?

The answer is that he thought it in his mind. He determined it in his mind. He planned it in his mind. Proverbs 5:12 says, "And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?" The heart can either receive reproof and instruction or despise them. It can say, "I'm not going to listen to that. I don't want that." Whatever the heart is, it can think, imagine, and speak; it can either receive or despise instruction.

In Matthew 5:28, our Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Somehow, then, the eyes are

intimately connected with the heart, or with the mind. In other words, you see, and you commit the act in your mind.

If you have not understood what the heart is from these passages, turn to Daniel, chapter 4. This will spell it out very clearly. We are talking about Nebuchadnezzar, a wicked, heathen monarch whom God decreed to take down a notch or two. Daniel 4:16 says concerning Nebuchadnezzar, "Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him. And let seven times pass over him." Seven times is the Chaldean way of saying seven years. For seven years, a man's heart is going to be taken from him, and he is going to have a beast's heart.

Daniel records how he admonished Nebuchadnezzar: “Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.” Nebuchadnezzar did not listen. Twelve months later, as he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, he said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”

While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from men, ate grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. For seven years he was driven insane; he ate grass like an ox, and his hair and fingernails grew. At the end of those days, however, his understanding returned: “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me.”

He then blessed, praised, and honoured the Most High, whose dominion is everlasting and whose kingdom is from generation to

generation. He acknowledged that the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and that God does according to his will in heaven and on earth; none can stay his hand or say unto him, “What doest thou?” At the same time his reason returned, and his honour, brightness, counsellors, kingdom, and excellent majesty were restored.

In Daniel 4:16, God says, “Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him.” So it was the heart that was changed. In verse 34, Nebuchadnezzar says, “At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me.” Then, in verse 36, “At the same time my reason returned unto me.” What is the heart? It is the mind, the understanding, and the reason. When God changed Nebuchadnezzar’s heart from a man’s heart to a beast’s heart, he thought and lived like an animal. When God changed it back, he thought and acted like a man. The heart controls the life because the heart is the mind. The Hebrew word for heart is leb. It is translated mind eleven times in our Bibles and understanding twenty times.

If we were to take the time to examine every use of the word heart or mind in the Bible, we would see that they are one and the same. When God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence,” he is saying, Set a double watch. Make sure that you keep your mind, your thoughts, your imagination, and your reasoning ability.

Why am I rehearsing this? Why am I telling you something I hope you already know, grasp, and understand? Because there is a war going on over your mind. There has been, and it is about to get even worse. Everyone understands the term psyops, or psychological operations. Although PSYOPs are bad, what I am going to share with you today is one hundred percent worse.

The following definition of psychological operations comes from the United States Department of Defense, which has engaged in psychological operations since World War I: PSYOPs are the use of propaganda and psychological tactics to influence emotions and behavior. Psychological operations are designed to influence your emotions and behavior. If they affect your behavior, they have to affect your mind, because “as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

Psychological Operations (PSYOPs)

The Department of Defense's 2004 and 2010 counterinsurgency operations explain PSYOPs as follows: “The mission of psychological operations (PSYOP) is to influence the behavior of foreign target audiences to support United States national objectives. PSYOP accomplishes this by conveying selected information and advising on actions that influence the emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign audiences. Behavioral change is the root of a PSYOP mission.”

In other words, they seek to change your behavior, mold you, and make you think as they want you to think, so that you will act as they want you to act. PSYOPs are bad enough in themselves, especially when those engaging in psychological operations do so against their own citizens, much like our own government has been doing. COVID, COVID masks, social distancing, and a host of other COVID-related requirements, including the COVID jab, are psychological operations, all designed to change thinking and behavior.

However, there is something far worse than psychological operations. I came across an article that literally blew me away. There is now a term being bandied about by our own government and NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, called cognitive warfare. The article was reported by Tyler Durden, evidently written by Ben Norton at thegrayzone.com. I will give you the salient points. Listen carefully. Here is the headline: “NATO is developing new forms of warfare to wage a battle for the brain, as the military alliance puts it. The United States-led NATO military cartel has tested novel modes of hybrid warfare against its self-declared adversaries, including economic warfare, cyber warfare, information warfare, and psychological warfare. Now, NATO is spinning out an entirely new kind of combat. It is branded cognitive warfare, described as the weaponization of brain sciences.

Cognitive Warfare: The New Threat

“The new method involves hacking the individual by exploiting the vulnerabilities of the human brain in order to implement more sophisticated social engineering.” Let that sink in. They are hacking

the individual by exploiting the vulnerabilities of the human brain in order to implement more sophisticated social engineering. In other words, they are attacking your brain to make sure that you act as they want you to act.

Until recently, NATO had divided war into five different operational domains: air, land, sea, space, and cyber. But with the development of cognitive warfare strategies, the military alliance is discussing a new sixth level, the human domain. A 2020 NATO-sponsored study of this new form of warfare clearly explains, "While actions taken in the five domains are executed in order to have an effect upon the human domain, cognitive warfare's objective is to make everyone a weapon."

"The brain will be the battlefield of the 21st century. Humans are the contested domain, and future conflicts will likely occur amongst the people digitally first, and physically thereafter in proximity to hubs of political and economic power." In a chilling disclosure, the report said explicitly, "The objective of cognitive warfare is to harm societies, and not only the military." They are not just trying to attack a military enemy; they are trying to attack societies as a whole—that is, citizens, non-fighters.

"With entire civilian populations in NATO's crosshairs, the report emphasized that Western militaries must work more closely with academia to weaponize social sciences and human sciences to help the Alliance develop its cognitive warfare capacities. The study described a phenomenon as the militarization of brain science. But it appears clear that NATO's development of cognitive warfare will lead to a militarization of all aspects of human society and psychology, from the most intimate of social relations to the mind itself."

"Such all-encompassing militarization of society is reflected in the paranoid tone of the NATO sponsored report, which warned of an embedded fifth column when everyone, unbeknownst to him or her, is behaving according to plans of one of our competitors. The study makes it clear that those competitors purportedly exploiting the consciences of Western dissidents are China and Russia."

Our own government is going to say, “We want you to believe this, we want you to think this, and we want you to act this way. If you do not think the way they want you to think, if you do not act the way they want you to act, then undoubtedly there is a competitor, either China or Russia, who now has control of your mind, and now therefore you are a dissident, and you’re under their control, and you have to be dealt with.”

“In other words, the document shows that figures in the NATO military cartel increasingly see their own domestic population as a threat, fearing civilians to be the potential Chinese or Russian sleeper cells, dastardly fifth columns, that challenge the stability of Western liberal democracies.” They are going to try to control everyone’s brain. It is cognitive warfare.

A lot happened in Canada this past year. The Ottawa Citizen reported in September that the Canadian military's Joint Operation Command took advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to wage an information war against its own domestic population, testing propaganda tactics on Canadian civilians. If Canada is doing this, the United States is doing it as well. An internal NATO-sponsored report suggests that this disclosure is only scratching the surface; in other words, they have done far worse.

At a conference, the Canadian government described cognitive warfare this way: “Cognitive warfare seeks to change not only what people think, but also how they act.” Its official statement said, “Attacks against the cognitive domain involve the integration of cyber, disinformation, misinformation, psychological, and social engineering capabilities.” Ottawa’s press release continued, “Cognitive warfare positions the mind as a battle space and contested domain. Its objective is to sow dissonance, instigate conflicting narratives, polarize opinion, and radicalize groups. Cognitive warfare can motivate people to act in ways that can disrupt or fragment an otherwise cohesive society.”

They are saying, in effect, that they can destroy you. “Cognitive warfare is a new concept that starts in the information sphere. That is a kind of hybrid warfare.” Du Cluzel—I suppose I am pronouncing his name correctly—explained: “It starts with hyper connectivity. Everyone has a cell phone. It starts with information because

information is, if I may say, the fuel of cognitive warfare. But it goes way beyond solely information, which is a stand-alone operation."

He went on to explain that this exotic new method of attack goes well beyond information warfare or psychological operations: "Cognitive warfare is not only a fight against what we think, but it's rather a fight against the way we think. If we can change the way people think, it's much more powerful and it goes way beyond the informational warfare or psyops." He concluded, "It's crucial to understand that it's a game on our cognition, on the way our brain processes information and turns it into knowledge rather than solely a game on information or on the psychological aspect of our brains."

It is not only an action against what we think, but also an action against the way we think—the way we process information and turn it into knowledge.

Now, one more. Marie-Pierre Raymond, who is a retired Canadian Lieutenant Colonel and currently serves as a defense scientist and innovation portfolio manager for the Canadian Armed Air Forces, said at this October 5th panel, "Long gone are the days when war was fought to acquire more land. Now the new objective is to change the adversary's ideologies, which makes the brain the center of gravity of the human. And it makes the human the contested domain, and the mind becomes a battlefield. When we speak about hybrid threats, cognitive warfare is the most advanced form of manipulation seen to date."

Let me repeat that: when we speak of hybrid threats, cognitive warfare is the most advanced form of manipulation seen today. We can manipulate you. We can make you think, and we can make you act the way we want you to, noting that its aim is to influence individuals' decision-making and to influence a group of individuals in their behavior, with the aim of gaining a tactical or strategic advantage. In other words, cognitive warfare is not just another name for information warfare; it is a war on our individual processor, on our brain.

Now, let me try to summarize everything I just read to you. If you did not understand that, here it is plainly spoken: our government is coming to control your thinking. It is coming to control your brain. It

is coming to control your actions. It is coming to control you so that you will think, say, speak, and do exactly the way they want you to in order to work out their program, their purpose, and their agenda. To me, this is absolutely, in one sense of the word, horrifying. It is not only horrifying; it is absolutely insane, in the sense that their purpose is to enslave the entire population.

Now, while all of this is true, there is an escape route. There is an escape route. I want you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians, chapter 10, and look, if you would please, at verse 13. I would encourage you to memorize this verse. It is a wonderful verse I have quoted over and over for many years: 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 13. Look at it. God says.

God's Escape Route

"There hath no temptation taken you." Let me just stop right there. Temptation—I think the word is peirasmos. It refers to a test, a trial, a tribulation, or an affliction. This is not necessarily tempting. When you hear the word temptation, you think about temptation to sin, but the word peirasmos can be used in a good sense and a bad sense. Here it refers to a test, trial, or tribulation.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." In other words, all of us have the same tests, trials, and afflictions, and, in one sense of the word, the same temptations. But watch carefully: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." If God puts something on us, that means we are able to bear it. If He allows it to come on us, we are able to handle it.

"But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." God's escape route is the only escape route. It is the only alternative. If you do not take God's escape route, you are going to be enslaved far greater than you already are. You will become a pawn, a puppet, a subservient, obedient, fawning, and controlled robot. It is just that simple.

Now, what is God's escape route? You remember Daniel 11:32: "But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits. John Gill wrote on that passage: "Such who knew the Lord God of Israel to be the true God and owned and acknowledged him as such and not only professed Him, but served and worshipped Him, having a spiritual knowledge of Him and communion with Him, and therefore could not be drawn off from Him or His worship by flatteries or

These were strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. They held fast to their religion and the profession of it, and were proof against all the allurements or threatenings and endured racks and tortures and all sorts of punishment and death in every shape with the greatest constancy and courage. If we really and truly know our Lord, if we really and truly know truth, nothing is going to draw us away from that truth. We are going to stay true even to death.

“The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.” If you do not know the true God, how can you identify a false god? If you do not know the true God, obviously you will fall for a false god. If you do not know the truth, if you do not believe the truth, you will believe a lie, error, or heresy. You cannot identify untruth unless you know the truth.

When we talk about the mind, one of the greatest verses in the Bible is found in Philippians 2:5: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Our Lord not only knew the truth; He thought the truth, and He obeyed the truth. He never strayed from His mission, His purpose, or the Father’s will. He often said, “I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” So He obeyed in every aspect and in every area.

Since we are commanded to have the mind of Jesus Christ—“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”—how can we tell whether or not we have the mind of Christ? What will be the characteristics of having the mind of Christ?

The Mind of Christ and Spiritual Warfare

Consider 2 Corinthians 10:3: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.” We are in the flesh, but the fight we are fighting and the war in which we are engaged are not fleshly. You can have a truckload of M1s and AR-15s and howitzers and bazookas, but none of that will help you in this war. We are in the flesh, but we are not warring after the means of the flesh.

Now look at verse 4. He says, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,” that is, they are not fleshly, “but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.” Your stronghold is your place of defense. It is where you protect yourself, and it is where you fight for your life. If I were going to fight for my life and needed some protection, I might get behind that cabinet. If I got behind that cabinet, it would then, at that particular point, be my stronghold. You would have to get through that cabinet to get to me.

So here is the point: What is the stronghold of man? Verse 4 says, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.” Watch, if you would, verse 5: “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” If we have the mind of Christ, what we are doing is bringing every thought into captivity to Jesus Christ.

Here is a good question to ask: How many thoughts are you and I allowed that are unbiblical, ungodly, and unscriptural? None. Not one. That means there is a fight to keep the truth of God in our minds and to keep our minds focused upon the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what he is talking about. We are to cast down every high thing, every high thought that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring every thought into captivity to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not allowed any unbiblical thoughts.

You know what the Bible says in Proverbs 23 and verse 23? That is another good verse to remember. God says, “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.” Buy the truth and sell it not. No matter what it costs, buy the truth and never, ever sell it. If we are fighting the warfare that we should be

fighting, it is a warfare for our minds. We are fighting to keep our minds in line with the Word of God, which means this:

We must submerge ourselves in the Scripture. We must not just read our Bibles; we must study them, understand them, and grasp the principles and the concepts that are being taught. We must never, ever entertain anything in our minds that is contrary to the Word of God—not for one second. Because it is a battle. It is a war. "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."

In light of our own government and our own NATO alliance—which we are in, and which has admitted that it is going to engage in cognitive warfare—the simple question is this: How will the government attack us with cognitive warfare?

Practical Applications and Warnings

The answer is: by any and every means available to them. So here are some suggestions. The first is very simple: Turn off the television. Do not watch it. Basically, the only thing a television is good for is propaganda. You say it is entertainment. No, most of it is not entertainment. I refuse to watch a lot of things. In fact, we do not even have television. Even if I am in a motel room, I hardly ever turn it on unless a storm is coming and I want the weather channel. I am not interested in it, and most of it is propaganda.

Think about these stupid sitcoms with canned laughter. Gone are the days of Jack Benny and Red Skelton. You do not have any real entertainment. The same thing is true of newspapers. We get a little local newspaper, and the first thing Alice and I do is look at the obituaries. I can read our entire newspaper in about five minutes, if it takes that long.

Mark Twain said it correctly: "If you do not read the newspapers, you're ill informed. If you do read the newspapers, you're misinformed." That is true. Think about all the smartphones we have and use, which track us everywhere we go and spy on us. Think about the smart appliances.

Do you realize that there are televisions now that can watch you? There are washing machines. There is Alexa. Many doorbell cameras are connected directly with the police department, or at least can be.

There are so many ways in which we are being spied on that it is unbelievable.

How about movies? We kept a television set so that we could watch DVDs. I have a wonderful group of DVDs, but I hardly ever watch them. I do not remember the last time I watched one. I usually do not have time. The point I am trying to make is this: If you think, "I am going to sit down and enjoy a good movie,"

Here are the headlines: "Washington, D.C.'s role behind the scenes in Hollywood goes deeper than you think." The article is written by Matthew Alford, a teaching fellow in propaganda and theory at the University of Bath. He says: "On television, we found more than 1,100 titles that received Pentagon backing, 900 of them since 2005, from Flight 93 to Ice Road Truckers and Army Wives."

"Files we obtained mainly through the United States Freedom of Information Act show that between 1911 and 2017, more than 800 feature films received support from the United States government's Department of Defense, a significantly higher figure than previous estimates indicate. These include blockbuster movies such as Transformers, Iron Man, and The Terminator. When we include individual episodes for long-running shows like 24, Homeland, and NCIS, as well as the influence of other major organizations like the FBI and the White House, we can establish unequivocally for the first time that the national security state has supported thousands of hours of entertainment. For its part, the CIA has assisted in 60 film and television shows since its formation in 1947. This is a much lower figure than the Department of Defense, but its role has nonetheless been significant. State officials have described Washington, D.C."

Hollywood and the capital, Washington, D.C., have been described as being sprung from the same DNA, with Washington called "Hollywood for ugly people." The ugly DNA has been embedded far and wide. These two cities, on opposite sides of the United States, are much closer than we imagine. The point is that movies are simply a form of propaganda, subliminal messages, and cognitive warfare.

Lance D. Johnson wrote an article entitled “Moderna admits jab an operating system to program humans.” Moderna has already admitted that the vaccine is an operating system to program humans. One quotation from the article states: “The system is not medicine. Nor is it vaccination. The system is a complete cellular manipulation using foreign biological molecules to code, decode, regulate, change the expression of, and alter the physiological instructions within human beings.”

The Stu Peters Show, with Karen Kingston, a biotech analyst who used to work, I think, with Pfizer, presents her reading of patents and their section numbers. One quotation says: “In some embodiments, the app on our smart device is configured to inform the user's location at all times and communicate with adjacent smart devices such as Bluetooth, for example, to assess the interactions between users. For example, vicinity between users, movement of users.” She is reading it from the patent. In Australia, the app called G2G is being used. If you are in lockdown, you have to download it to your smartphone, check in periodically, and take a selfie to send to them. The app can tell where you are and what you are doing. Patent section 0380 says: “For example, send a communication to the user to enhance his awareness to behavioral rules during pandemic, to come and to be vaccinated if you need a booster, to avoid certain locations which are high risk for contagion.”

In other words, once they get this stuff in you, they can find you and control you. It's absolutely insane. But you can listen to it for yourself. She reads right from the patent. In fact, the patent is put on the screen where you can see it and it is underlined. So here's another question, and I don't know the answer, but I'm asking it. Is it possible to control brains with the jab and the 5G technology? Many people assert that it's true and that is quite real, whether it is or not, I do not know. But I'm just simply saying we have to understand that governments are going to use any and every means to reach our brains and to break us and to bring us into what they want us to be and what they want us to do.

If you do not fight to control your mind, someone else will. They'll do it for you. When you are talking about keeping your heart, keeping your mind, keeping your thought, and keeping your

imagination, it is a daily task. It is an hourly task. Sometimes it's a minute-by-minute task. You must keep your heart in line with the Word of God. You must immerse yourself in Scripture. You must know the truth. You remember what our Lord said in John 8 and verse 32? He said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." If you don't know the truth, you're not free. If you don't keep the truth, you cannot keep being free.

There's an interesting passage everyone knows about Psalm 91, verse 4. This is a wonderful truth. In fact, the whole psalm is absolutely wonderful, but look at verse 4, talking about God's sovereign protection: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler." His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Now, what's a shield?

Here Brother Gary is, throwing a right punch at me, and I happen to have a shield on my arm. I just throw that shield up and block that punch. Maybe then, after I block his punch, I hit him and knock him out and knock him down. But that shield protected me, right? But let's suppose now that Brother Gary has 100 archers back 20 yards.

When he says, “If I go down, you shoot him,” he has 100 archers behind him. They see him go down, draw their bows, and start shooting the arrows. That little shield? No, I have a buckler. The buckler is a huge shield that will cover my whole body. I can get under it and ward off all those arrows. So he says in verse 4, “His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”

Do you remember Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 16? “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” What is the shield of faith? It is the shield of truth. You cannot have faith without truth; faith is based upon truth. If you do not know the truth, you are not free. If you are not able to keep the truth, you are not free.

Someone says, “I just don’t want to be brainwashed by the Bible. I don’t want to be a slave to Jesus Christ.” I have news for you: everybody is brainwashed. You are either brainwashed with truth or brainwashed with error. To be absolutely honest, I would much rather be brainwashed with the Word of God than by the New World

Order, the global reset, the CFR, the Bilderbergers, the UN, CNN, and all the other news media put together. I would much rather be a slave to Jesus Christ than a slave to the global elite.

Paul gloried in the fact that he was a servant, a slave of Jesus Christ. Everyone is already a slave, whether you like it or not. Our Lord said in John chapter 8, “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” The word servant is doulos, which means a slave of sin. You are either a slave to sin or a slave to Jesus Christ.

You have to learn to fight for your sanity. The world has gone stark raving crazy. Political correctness, transgenderism, transhumanism, and trans everything else are nothing more than rebellion against God. Teen Vogue magazine is now referring to women as non-prostate owners. Isn't that crazy?

You had better be prepared to fight for your sanity and for truth. You had better be prepared to control your mind, your thoughts, and anything that you hear that is absolutely insane or contrary to Scripture. You must say, "I know what the truth is. I'm not going to believe that. I'm not going to fall for that. Here's what the Word of God says. This is exactly what I'm going to do." You must prepare.

There have been psychological operations against us for years and years, but it is fixing to get a whole lot worse with cognitive warfare. They are coming for your mind. Whoever controls the mind controls the body, the conduct, and the action. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." You had better be aware of cognitive warfare.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, I pray that You will give us a holy determination to fight, to think, to study, to believe, to follow, and to hold fast that which You've given unto us. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 16

The Cure For The Sin Of Pride

July 5, 2022

After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Enon near Salem, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and

heard, that he testifieth. And no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Introduction: Pride as a Root Sin

The message is this: the cure for the sin of pride. Pride is a root sin. Every individual, whether saved or unsaved, by nature is proud and by nature has a problem with the sin of pride. When I say that pride is a root sin, I mean that it grows and flourishes into a much larger plant or tree, and it produces much fruit. It's much like that mustard seed that our Lord spoke about in Luke chapter 13 and verse 19. When he was talking about the kingdom of heaven, he said, "It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden."

"And it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches thereof." Pride allows other fruits to multiply from its root. None of those fruits are good, godly, or biblical. Fowls of all kinds lodge in the branches of the tree of pride, and these other sins fertilize it with their droppings. Thus pride increases in the heart and life. The Bible says in Proverbs 11 and verse 2, "When pride cometh, then cometh shame; but with the lowly is wisdom." Think about that: when pride comes, shame comes. Pride is a sin of the heart.

Pride Originates in the Heart

Pride is also a sin of the mind. Usually in the Bible, the heart and the mind are synonymous; they are considered the same. When David was sent by his father Jesse to check on his brothers in 1 Samuel 17, Eliab, his older brother, criticized him. In verse 28, Eliab censured David with these words: "And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou

mightest see the battle." First, Eliab said, "I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thy heart." Pride and the naughtiness of the heart are therefore from the heart, or from the mind.

But the interesting thing is this: when Eliab was censuring David for pride, Eliab was expressing pride himself, because he was saying to David, “I know who you are. You’re a kid, and I know what you’re doing. Look at us. I’m a soldier. These are soldiers out here. You’re nothing but a shepherd boy. And besides that, you don’t have very many sheep. With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? Yeah, yeah, I know you.” And so, while he was censuring David, he himself was exposing the pride and the arrogancy of his own heart as well.

Pride, of course, comes from the heart. In 2 Chronicles 32, God had healed Hezekiah and given him a great healing, but Hezekiah did not render back to the Lord that great honor and glory that he was deserving. “But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him.” Why did he not? “For his heart was lifted up: therefore was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.” Notice: his heart was lifted up. Yet verse 26 says, “Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.”

So pride is, of course, a sin of the heart. In Daniel 5:20, when we are talking about Nebuchadnezzar, the Bible says, “But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him.” So again, his heart was lifted up and his mind was hardened in his pride. In the New Testament, in the book of Mark, chapter 7, verses 21 through 23, our Lord teaches us that pride comes from the heart. So obviously we have that command in Proverbs 4:23: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” And we understand also, or at least we should, Proverbs 23:7, because the Bible says, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he,” which means that if pride is in our mind and in our heart, ultimately it will be revealed in our conduct and in our actions as well. There will be a great demonstration of it.

Definition and Manifestations of Pride

There are several different Hebrew words for pride, but each of these words is intermingled and interwoven. Based upon those Hebrew words, pride is a rising up and exalting of oneself; haughtiness, arrogance, a swelling up, assuming a position of superiority, which also results in a judgmental attitude.

When you come to the New Testament, one of the main words is the Greek word tuphoō. It literally means to make proud, to puff up, to be foolish or stupid, and to be insolent. Interestingly, this is the word used in 1 Timothy 3:6, where the Apostle Paul is talking about bishops and elders: "Not a novice, that is, not a neophyte, not a beginner, not someone new to the faith, not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, being puffed up, he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

The word pride is often associated with insolence. Pride speaks of arrogance and haughtiness, but also of insolence. To be insolent means to be boldly rude or disrespectful, contemptuously impertinent, insulting, and brazen. When I read that definition, I could not help but think of pastors, preachers, and Christians who are insolent toward those with whom they disagree, or those who do not see exactly as they see or understand what they understand. Consequently, they look down upon them with a judgmental attitude. They mock them and ridicule them, and all of this stems basically from pride.

It is almost impossible to think about pride without thinking about Pharaoh. In Exodus 5:1, Moses came to Pharaoh and said, "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may serve me." Then, in verse 2, Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go." Who is the LORD that I should listen to Him? I do not recognize Him or acknowledge Him to be God. He has no authority over me and no right to command me. I do not know Him, and I am certainly not going to allow Israel to go.

There were ten plagues in the land of Egypt, and each of these ten plagues was directed at a different god in Egypt. The tenth plague was the death of the firstborn. Pharaoh himself claimed to be a god.

That is why he said, "I know not the LORD. I don't recognize him. I'm certainly not going to obey him," because Pharaoh was claiming to be a god himself. In that tenth plague, when his firstborn child died and he could not protect that child, it obviously disproved his godhood. Moreover, he could not protect his own child or any of the children in the land of Egypt. Here was a great demonstration of pride.

When Pharaoh said, "I know not the LORD, why should I obey him? I'm not going to let Israel go," he persecuted the children of Israel and had them beaten. He made them work mercilessly. In fact, he increased their work when they were trying to go into the wilderness to serve God.

Psalm 10:2 says, "The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor." It continues, "Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined." Pharaoh, thinking himself to be a god, persecuted the Israelites, the poor, helpless Israelites. That is exactly what happens today when a superior persecutes an inferior, or when someone with knowledge mocks, ridicules, and persecutes someone who does not have like knowledge.

Then Psalm 10:4 says, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." In other words, his thoughts are centered upon himself—what he wills, what he wants, and what he desires. Here is a picture of Pharaoh: he claimed himself to be a god.

Individuals would never come out and say, "I am a god," yet they will live as though they are a god by ignoring the one true and living God and ignoring His Word. We have never really discerned, as Christians, that most of our problems truly stem from our pride. The truth is that most of our faults and failures are also caused by pride. When you read the Bible, it is interesting how many times God warns us about the sin of pride over and over.

Biblical Warnings Against Pride

So let me show you a few of them. If you look in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs 11, and look, if you would please, at verse 2. We'll turn through several of these very quickly. Proverbs chapter 11, look,

if you would please, at verse 2. The Bible says, "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom." So when pride cometh, then cometh shame. Look, if you would, in Proverbs 13 and verse 10. Proverbs 13 and verse 10. Here's a verse we really need to pay attention to: "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom."

Now the word contention means strife, debate, arguments, confusion. So only by pride cometh contention, all of these things, he says. Then if you'll look in Proverbs 16 and verse 18, here's a passage that most of you can quote, Proverbs 16 and verse 18, where he says that "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." So pride precedes destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Then if you'll look in Proverbs 29 and verse 23, look what the Bible says here. Proverbs 29 and verse 23: "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

Although pride is condemned over and over in Scripture, before we are converted, we enjoy our pride. We relish our pride. After we are converted, we understand that pride is a sin, and we are taught from the Word of God to hate pride.

The Bible says in Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate, saith the LORD." The fear of the LORD is to hate evil, and the very first evil that He mentions is pride.

Look in your Bibles, first of all, to the book of James, chapter 4, and then we are going to go to 1 Peter. Notice, beginning with verse 5: "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" In other words, the spirit fights against envy, fights against the flesh. That is what he also says in the book of Galatians. But look at verse 6: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." God resisteth the proud, but He giveth grace unto the humble.

God Resists the Proud

The word resisteth is antitassomai, and it literally means to resist, to oppose, to fight against, and to rage in battle against. God actually

fights against and rages in battle against pride. In 1 Peter 5:5, the same word is used again: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." So God actually fights against pride.

Pride is a root sin. A root sin naturally produces other sins; it grows. One of the main sins connected with pride is envy. The Bible says in Proverbs 14:30, “A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.” Envy is the rottenness of the bones. Proverbs 27:4 says, “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?” In other words, envy is a very powerful enemy. When the Bible says that envy is the rottenness of the bones, it literally means that it will eat us alive.

Pride Produces Envy and Other Sins

Pride, arrogance, and haughtiness will always lead to the sin of envy, but they will also lead to a number of other sins. We could find this in the Old Testament as well, but turn to Acts chapter 7. Stephen, the first martyr, is preaching to those who are going to stone him to death. Speaking of the patriarchs, or fathers, he says in Acts 7:9, “And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him.”

Stop and think about that: the patriarchs were moved with envy. Why were they envious of Joseph? God was giving him all those dreams. He was telling them that their sheaf was going to bow before his sheaf. He received the coat of many colors, and he was going to be the administrator of the estate. They were envious. They were also proud and arrogant. In other words, they were saying, “This young whippersnapper is not going to take our place.”

Do you remember when they first planned on murdering him? They said, "Yonder cometh this dreamer. Let us kill him and see what comes of his dream." The Bible says they were moved with envy. Look in your Bibles at Acts chapter 13 and verse 45. You will see it again: "But when the Jews saw the multitudes"—people who were coming to hear the apostle Paul preach—"they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." Why were they moved with envy?

Because they saw the multitudes. They saw that Paul was having greater response and a greater success than they were having, and so they disbelieved the Apostle Paul and began contradicting and blaspheming. Then, if you will turn to the book of Acts chapter 17 and look again at verse 5: "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."

Note all the violence, all the trouble, and all the pain that begin with envy. The envy was a product of their pride. What was their pride? They were unwilling to submit to God. They were unwilling to listen to the Word of God. They thought they knew better. They thought their traditions were far better than the truth of God. Their pride led to their envy, and their envy led to all of these other problems.

Now, I want you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 6. I want you to see a large number of sins that are connected with pride. Begin reading there with verse 3, and watch carefully: "If any man teach otherwise." The apostle has just laid down the principle that servants are to be obedient to their masters—or the word servants is the word slaves. Slaves were to be obedient to their masters, and masters were not to despise their slaves, because God had made them masters, and they themselves have a Master in heaven. After teaching this in verses 1 and 2, he says, "If any man teach otherwise," that is, contrary to verses 1 and 2, "and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness." If someone does not submit to the Word of God, they are not going to accept the teaching or doctrine of Jesus Christ. What is the result?

Look in verse 4: “He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.” All of these sins are connected with pride. Envy is leading the way, followed by strife, railings, and surmisings.

Since each of us has pride in our lives, how do we deal with it? How do we recognize the expressions of pride in our lives? In some

instances, the word pride can be used in a good sense. For instance, I could say, “Gary has pride in his work.” You would understand that to mean he does a good job and wants to do it correctly. But in reality, we are not talking about pride. We are talking about character, integrity, and a biblical work ethic.

The Cure: John the Baptist's Humility

Although we use the word pride, pride in the Bible is usually a word that is condemned. So how do we deal with our pride, and what is the cure for the sin of pride? My answer is this: the cure for the sin of pride is found in the life and testimony of John the Baptist. We are going to go back to John chapter 3 and look at that.

May I remind you that in Luke chapter 7 and verse 28, our Lord himself testified that John the Baptist was the greatest prophet: “For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” Our Lord testified to the greatness of John the Baptist. Turn back, first of all, to John chapter 1, and let us see what John says concerning himself.

John chapter 1, beginning with verse 19. This is where the scribes and Pharisees sent to John, asking who he was: “And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias?” or Elijah.

They came to John and asked, "Who are you? Are you the Messiah?" He answered, "I am not." "Well, are you Elijah?" "No, I am not Elijah." "Are you that prophet?" They were referring to Deuteronomy 18, where Moses said, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken," which is another expression for the Messiah. John said, "No, I am not that either."

Then they asked, "Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?" And here is what John said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." In other

words, "I am just one man, crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord."

I want you to note something. When they came to John the Baptist and asked, "Who art thou? What sayest thou of thyself?" do you know what he could have said? He could have said it truthfully: "Why are you asking who I am? Have you not read your Scriptures? I am one who is a subject of Old Testament prophecy. Not only am I the subject of Old Testament prophecy, I was miraculously and supernaturally conceived and born. Moreover, I was filled with the Holy Ghost from my mother's womb. And I happen to be the forerunner of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ."

He could have said all those things, and each one was true. But when they asked, "Who are you?" he answered, "I am just one man, crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." With that in mind, look back to John chapter 3. This is astounding to me: in John chapter 3, the Jews endeavor to excite pride, envy, and jealousy in John the Baptist.

Look in verse 25: “Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.” Now, wait a minute. Purification. We've got a question about purification. That is the legitimate question. But look at verse 26: “And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.” What in the world has verse 26 got to do with verse 25? Verse 26 has nothing to do with purifying. If you have a question about purification, ask about purification. Why are you coming and telling John, “You know that one whom you gave witness to beyond Jordan? Wow, he's now baptizing and he is gathering followers. In fact, he's getting more than you. All men are now coming unto him.”

Here is their argument: “John, you were here first. You were the one that started baptizing. He came to you. You baptized him. You gave witness to him. And now, John, he's getting more followers than you. He's becoming more popular. He's gaining where you're not. I mean, John, look at you and look at him. You're the one that was first.” Do you realize that, with this little bit of argument, the average Christian would already be falling apart because his feelings would be hurt and his pride would be bruised?

His envy and jealousy would be aroused, and he would immediately become angry, resentful, and bitter. He would say something like this: “It's not fair. I've worked so hard. I've worked my fingers to the bone. I've prayed. I've done this. I've done that. And everything I'm touching now is falling apart.” I've heard pastors say that. I've heard Christians say that. But the reason they did not upset John, and the reason he did not become angry and bitter, was that he understood the sovereignty of God. When they tried to pull this on John, verse 27 says, “John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.” The Greek word didōmi means to give, to bestow a gift, to grant, and to furnish. It is the same as the noun dōron, which means a gift. That is why Ephesians 2:8 says, “For by grace are ye saved through

Everything We Have Is a Gift from God

"Faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Let me ask you a question: Do you realize that everything you are and everything you have, everything that you ever will be and everything that you ever will have, is the gift of God? He holds your soul in His hand. Your times are in His hand. Your life happens to be in His hand. Everything you are and everything you have is His gift.

If you do not believe that, try living without breathing His air or drinking His water. Everything about us has been given to us. Hold John 3, but turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 7. Notice this question. In fact, there are two questions here: 1 Corinthians 4:7.

"For who maketh thee to differ from another?" Who makes you to differ? Why do you see what you see? Why do you understand what you understand? Why do you have what you have? "And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" In other words, everything that you have, you received it of God. Here is the third question: "Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" Who made you to differ? What do you have that you have not received? You say, "I work for everything I've got." Who gave you the breath, ability, knowledge, and life to work? Everything we have is the gift of God.

Turn over to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. We are coming back to John 3, but I want to begin reading there with verse 1. This chapter deals with spiritual gifts. Not everyone has the same gift. Paul says, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." He talks about diversities of gifts, so not everybody has the same gift. There are diversities or differences of administrations, but the same Lord; there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God. Now skip down to verse 11 with all these diversities and differences.

He says, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Here is another question: whatever gift you have, do you realize that God gave it to you? I did not get to choose my gift, and you did not get to choose yours. God gave me the gift of teaching, and I am thankful for that. I am not crying and bemoaning the fact that I do not have the gift of singing. I cannot sing; I cannot carry a tune in a bucket. One lady said, "No, Brother Weaver, you can carry it. You just can't dump it." Whatever it is, I cannot do it. But I am not going to sit around and bemoan the fact that I truly cannot sing. The choice was his and not mine. Whatever I have, God gave me; whatever you have, God gave you.

Listen very carefully. There are two truths we need to emphasize and grasp. First, everything we have, God gave us. Whether we are talking about abilities, gifts, talents, money, possessions, life, or health, everything that we have, God gave us. Second, not only did God give us what he gave us in his sovereign will and sovereign pleasure, he can also take it away in his sovereign will and sovereign pleasure.

It is totally up to Him. I have known men who were much greater preachers than me, much greater students of Scripture, and had much greater understanding than I would ever acquire. They died in their forties and fifties. Why? All I am saying is, as Job said, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." I want to show you something.

The point I am trying to make is this: I do not care how talented we are or how many gifts we have; it is nothing to be proud and arrogant about, and nothing to brag about, because everything that we have, we received. They were gifts. I have a missionary friend named Kevin McCoy. When I read the qualifications another missionary sent out, I learned that Kevin was a master builder. He was project manager on numerous high-rise and expensive buildings. He could draw and read blueprints, build his own jeep, and do mechanical, heating and air, electrical, and plumbing work. I do not know—there were fifteen or twenty different things that he mastered. His number was there, so I called him.

I said, "Is this Kevin McCoy?" He said, "Yes, it is." I said, "Well, this is Pastor John Weaver in Georgia." He was in Florida. I said, "I just want to tell you up front that I hate you." He laughed and said, "Well, you're probably not the only one." Then I laughed and explained, "No, the reason I'm saying that is I can't do any of those things that you can do." And I cannot.

But stop and think: How in the world does one man have all these talents? It was the same with Melvin Stringer, one of my best friends. He built over five hundred homes in North Carolina alone. If you wanted a house built and told him what you wanted, he did not need a blueprint. He could wire, plumb, carpenter, and do mechanical work. I often tell Melvin, "Melvin, I just hate you." But better than that, I loved him because he was one of my best friends. I could never do anything he could do like that, but there were things I could do that he could not do.

The point I'm trying to make is that everything we have, we receive. Now look at Psalm 75, beginning with verse 4: "I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn." Lifting up the horn means that you are proud and arrogant. He says, "Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck." In other

words, do not be so arrogant, proud, haughty, heady, and high-minded. Why?

Verse 6 says, “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” God gave it, and God can take it away. That is exactly what he is saying. Promotion does not come from the east, the west, or the south; it comes from God.

Rejoicing in Others' Successes

Now go back to John chapter 3. Instead of John being upset, angry, and proud, he answers beautifully: “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.” John answered, “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”

I like what John said. He had told them at the beginning, “I’m nothing. I’m a nobody. I’m just the voice of one crying in the wilderness. I’m not the Messiah. I’m not that prophet. I’m not Elijah. I am just the voice of one.” Jesus Christ is the bridegroom. The bride belongs to him and not to John. John was merely the friend of the bridegroom, happy that Christ was excelling, surpassing him, growing, dominating, and conquering. His joy was fulfilled.

Have you ever prayed for a heart that would rejoice in the successes and blessings of others? We are so narrow-minded. A heart that rejoices in the blessings and successes of others is the opposite of selfishness, envy, jealousy, and pride. We always try to build up ourselves—our house, our family, our ministry, and our church.

We're not really concerned with the ministries of other people or with the work of God in other areas. When we see someone excelling, someone blessed by God, or someone given greater success than we have, normally we begin to criticize, belittle, ridicule, and mock

those people, saying, "Yeah, I bet something's wrong." In other words, we try to build ourselves up by tearing them down.

John's attitude was not like that. John said, "I'm just rejoicing that he's increasing. I'm happy. I'm glad. I'm thankful." Let me point something out. Do you realize that God has set our bounds? God has set our bounds in the fact that we can't pass. He said in Job chapter 14 and verse 5, talking about man, "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."

So in my life and ministry, God has set my bounds. I'm never going beyond those bounds, whatever they are. Whatever gift he has given me, or whatever blessing he gives me, I'm to use and improve to reach that boundary, wherever it is and whatever it is, but I'm not going beyond it. I'll never be a George Whitefield. I'll never preach to 10,000 people at one time. I've probably preached to more than that in times past and over the period of years, but I've never done that at one time. A couple thousand, but not 10,000. No. George Whitefield did that on a regular basis.

I'm just somebody pointing out the fact that God has set our bounds, just as he set the bounds of the ocean in Job chapter 38 and verse 11. Then he said to the ocean, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." We can go to our bounds, but that's as far as we're going. We must improve our talents until we reach that bound. We should never be envious of someone else's gifts, talent, success, or family. I'm thankful for every family that has good, godly, obedient, and Christian children. I'm thankful for every husband and wife who have lived together to old age. Alice and I were talking this morning, and I asked her, "Do you remember how long your parents were married before your father died?" I think 57 years. Well, my parents were married about 57 years before my father died.

But Alice and I are going on our sixtieth. I passed my father as far as life is concerned. Dad died at seventy-six. Whatever my bounds are, when I reach those bounds, that is it. It is true in life, in ministry, and in everything that you and I are going to reach.

Now, turn to Philippians chapter 1, beginning at verse 12. I want you to see how the Apostle Paul rejoiced not only in the good, but also in the bad and the ugly. The Apostle Paul is in prison. He says, “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.”

If I were thrown in prison for preaching the truth of God, I am sure I would be sitting around saying, “Lord, why am I in prison? I was trying to do what was right, Lord.” But what did Paul say? “I’m happy where I am.” He said, “I want you to understand that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” He had encouraged many of them to be more bold and vocal.

He continued, “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”

So he said, "Some of these people that are preaching are just mocking me. They're just ridiculing. They're insincere. It's a game to them. They don't care." But he said, "Christ is being preached, and I'm happy with that." If God can use a jackass to rebuke the prophet Balaam, He can use an unsaved man to proclaim the word. In fact, I read years ago—I forget where—about a preacher who was preaching as an unsaved man. He was convicted by his own preaching, got converted, and other people had been converted under his preaching before he was converted himself.

Whatever our lot, whatever our station in life, whatever gift we have, like the Apostle Paul, we can always rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ. Is it possible to rejoice in the gift that God has given you? Of course it is. We need to learn only one thing: everything that we have, every gift that we have, is from Him. Do you realize that God is

not obligated to give us any gift? He is not obligated to give us another breath of air or another blessing. Everything that we receive from Him is of His grace and mercy. The very fact that we are alive today is a demonstration of that love, grace, and mercy.

He Must Increase, I Must Decrease

Now, if you will go back in your Bible to John chapter 3, I want you to see one verse that shows the absolute pinnacle of John's humility. In John chapter 3, verse 30, it says, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Then he says, "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all." The pinnacle of John's humility is found in verse 30. Here is the greatest expression against pride, envy, arrogance, and haughtiness: "He must increase, and I must decrease." Are we willing, then, to decrease in order that the Lord Jesus Christ may increase?

Have you realized that he that comes from above is above all? We should be seeking to honor him in our life and in our death because he is above all.

I know I'm getting old, but I'm not getting tired, and I'm thankful. We can go all day long, from 5:30 in the morning to 10 o'clock at night, and we can keep going. My life has been a life of preaching and teaching the Word of God. I know I'm not going to live forever; I understand that. I know I'm going to die.

But one of my greatest desires is to be able to preach and teach up until I do die. That's what I want, because that's been my life. When my dear friend, Pastor Bob McCurry, was dying, his son David was sitting by his side, and the doctor was there trying to encourage Brother Bob to hold on. The doctor asked him, “Pastor McCurry, is there one thing that you'd really like to do before you die?” He was thinking he could give him hope to get to do this one thing and put a little more fight in him.

Pastor McCurry shook his head. “Yes. There's one thing I wanted to do before I died.” The doctor said, “What is it?” With his almost last breath, he said, “Preach. Preach.” That's what he wanted to do. He had been preaching since he was fourteen years of age, and he

preached for seventy years. That's exactly what I'd like to do till I die: preach. Preach. As the old saying goes, I'd like to die with my boots on.

Do you understand that any and every gift that we have has been given to us for God's honor and God's glory? We must improve the gifts all that we can. I want you to look in your Bibles very quickly to 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 11. This is a powerful verse. It will explain to you what you are supposed to be doing.

It will give you your duty. 1 Peter 4 and verse 11 says, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." In other words, if I am going to preach, I better preach the word of God. "If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Whatever we do, whatever gift we have, do it to the best of our ability, for God's honor and God's glory.

So let me give you some very quick applications. The first is this: the way to overcome pride, envy, and jealousy is to learn to be thankful for any and everything that God gives us—whether it is another day alive, the ability to eat a meal, another opportunity to preach, or another opportunity to help someone. Simply be thankful, and improve and use the gifts that God has given us until we reach our boundary.

Applications: Thankfulness and Reliance on Grace

The second is this: pride and the desire for praise and recognition from men make faith impossible. I will go further and say they make ministry impossible. Our Lord asked in John 5 and verse 44, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" How can you believe when you are seeking honor from one another, from man? The desire for pride, praise, and recognition from man makes faith impossible.

The third application is that we must come to the realization expressed by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 10: "By the grace of God I am what I am." It is only by the grace of God that we are alive, that we have any ability, or that we can do anything. As

our Lord said in John 15 and verse 5, "Without me ye can do" what? Nothing. So it is only by the grace of God.

We are what we are only by the grace of God, and it is only by the grace of God that we have what we have. How in the world can we be proud, arrogant, haughty, heady, high-minded, envious, jealous, full of anger, bitterness, and resentment when we realize that whatever we have, God gave us? Was it ours to begin with? And really and truly, it is still not ours. Because when we die, we are not taking any of it with us. It will be gone. So I am what I am only by the grace of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word, and, Lord, we confess in our lives the sin of pride. It has indeed risen its ugly head many times, but, Lord, we ask for Your divine forgiveness. Help us to realize that everything we are and everything that we have, You gave to us. These are Your gifts, and You deserve all honor, praise, and glory. Help us realize that we are what we are only by Your grace. Give us a desire to use these gifts and improve them for Your honor and Your glory until we reach the boundary that You have established for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 17

The Earthly Comprehensiveness of Christ's Prayer

August 25, 2022

Introduction and Context

I am so thankful for God's grace and God's mercy.

Open your Bibles, if you would, to Luke 11. I know that Brother Tim has already read this, but I want to point out a couple of things before we begin. I am only going to read the first four verses. Luke 11, verse 1: “And it came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said to them, When you pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.”

“Give us day by day our daily bread.” We will stop right there. But note that in verse three he said, “Give us this day our daily bread.” In verse two, however, he said, “When you pray, say, Our Father, which

art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

The subject tonight is really and truly a daunting one. At first, I was confused when Brother Tim wrote me, called me, and emailed me about what the subject was to be. So I called him back and said, "I don't understand what you're actually saying. Is it from John 17? Is it from Luke 11? Is it from Mark 6?"

"No, no," he said. "It's Luke 11." He said, "You'll just have to forgive me. I was sick." I said, "Really? I thought it was old age." But anyhow, that is the way it goes, Brother Tim. I can assure you, the more older you get, the less clarity you have so many times.

This topic certainly is indeed a daunting one, that is for sure, because the high priestly prayer of our Lord, as you know, occurred in John chapter 17. This prayer is actually known as the model prayer, the disciples' prayer, or the pattern prayer. There are several very interesting and very vital truths connected with this prayer. First of all, look, if you would please, at verse one.

Observations on Christ's Prayer Life

"And it came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place." First, observe that our Lord Jesus Christ was praying. He was and is indeed the sinless Son of God, and yet He prayed. The question has to be asked: if He, the sinless Son of God, prayed, how much more do you and I truly need to pray? As God, He received prayers, but as man, He prayed unto the Father.

Certainly, He is our example. The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 2:21, "For even hereunto ye are called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." If Christ prayed, and if Christ is our example, then we likewise should pray.

There is a second observation here that is very important. The Bible says, "And it came to pass, that he was praying in a certain place." Undoubtedly, this certain place was probably the Garden of Gethsemane. John 18:2 says, "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted

thither with his disciples." In other words, our Lord had a certain, specific, special place where He prayed.

So here are two very good questions. First, are you known to pray? Has anyone ever caught you praying? Has anyone ever observed you praying? Everyone in this room probably knows that Stonewall Jackson was a mighty prayer warrior. The first time his pastor, Pastor White, called upon him to lead in prayer, he mumbled and stumbled. It was so horrible and terrible that not only was Stonewall Jackson embarrassed, but everyone else was embarrassed for him. After a month or so, the pastor no longer called on him to pray. Finally, Stonewall approached his pastor and said, "Sir, is it my duty to lead my brethren in prayer?"

He said, "Well, yes, it is." He said, "But you have not called on me." He said, "Yes, I know. I wanted to spare you." He said, "My feelings are not important. If it's my duty, I must learn to do it and do it correctly." He continued to call on Stonewall, and Stonewall became very eminent in prayer. After one council of war, he was praying in his tent when General Ewell, having forgotten his saber, went back and stood outside the tent because he heard Stonewall praying. As he listened, he said to himself, "If this is Christianity, I must have it. I must have it. I must have it." It was there that the conviction for the conversion of General Richard Stoddard Ewell actually began, by listening to Stonewall Jackson pray.

So, are you going to pray? Has anyone ever observed you pray? May I remind you that Daniel's enemies found him in Daniel chapter 6. The Bible tells us in verse 11, "And when they found Daniel, they found him praying." Have you ever been observed praying?

The second question is this: Do you have a special or regular place to pray? All the disciples of our Lord knew about the garden. Even Judas knew about the garden. He resorted there thither many times. We do indeed have a secret place. Our Lord said in Matthew 6 and verse 6, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Regardless of whether it is a closet or a secret place, it is indeed a particular place. I think we often err greatly by not having a special

place of prayer. I know that we can pray everywhere and anywhere. I pray while I drive. I used to hate trains because I loved to read, and there I was sitting with nothing to read. Then it dawned on me: Why don't you pray if you can't read? So now, when I have to wait on a train, I just start praying.

I understand that you can pray just about anywhere, but a certain place is sometimes not only a place of solace and comfort; it is also a place of refuge. You remember how, in John chapter 1, Philip findeth Nathanael and said, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said, "Come and see." So Philip brings Nathanael to the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus sees him, He said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said, "Whence knowest thou me?" Our Lord said, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Evidently, Nathanael had a certain place to pray under that fig tree.

The Need to Be Taught to Pray

Here is a third observation in this first verse. He said, "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Have you ever stopped to think about this? We must be taught to pray. Our Lord is here teaching His disciples to pray. The word teach is from the Greek word didasko, which literally means to teach, to instruct.

It is true, in one sense, that prayer for the Christian is like breathing. It is something we do automatically, something we do naturally. But oftentimes we do not even breathe correctly. When you get excited, not only emotionally but sometimes physically, instead of breathing deeply, you start short, shallow breaths, and all of a sudden you are ready to pass out. Usually, when we are really distressed, that is when we truly need to learn to breathe correctly. And it is usually when we are distressed that we truly need to learn to pray correctly as well. So this disciple said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said it like this: “True prayer is measured by weight and not by length. A single groan before God may have more fullness of prayer in it than a fine oration of great length.” Stop and think about that. There have been times in prayer when our words could not even be formed, and all we could do was groan and say, “Oh, Lord, oh, Lord, oh, Lord.” Oftentimes, it is the weight of the prayer and certainly not the length of the prayer.

He also said, “I believe that no man loves prayer until the Holy Spirit has taught him the sweetness and the value of it.” The truth of the matter is this: we must be taught to pray, and we must be taught to pray correctly. It is not simply the way of prayer. Our Lord said, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” In Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 18, the Bible says, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

The Depth of the Lord's Prayer

No one can come to the Father except through the Lord Jesus Christ. When you look in Luke chapter 11 and Matthew chapter 6, you find that this prayer has seven petitions, and there is a connection between each one of these petitions. Once you begin to analyze this prayer, you find that it is very deep and very detailed. Most of us can recite this prayer. Most of us have prayed it all our lives and never really stopped to think about it.

I am amused when young Christians, and sometimes older ones as well, hear theology or a little doctrine and say, “I just believe in the simplicity of John 3:16.” I love for them to say that to me. I say, “Well, let’s stop and analyze John 3:16.”

If this is so simple for God, would you please delineate who God is? Why are there so many names of God in the Bible? Can you define God? You cannot, because to define is to limit, and God is infinite. Can you describe God? No, because God is indescribable. Is there anything to which you can compare God? No, because nothing is like God.

“For God so loved.” Would you explain the depth, height, and breadth of God's love? “For God so loved the world.” Really? Cosmos. Do you realize that the word cosmos is used thirteen

different ways in the Bible, and three different ways in one verse, John chapter one, verse eleven? Explain the word world, the context, and how it is used. “For God so loved the world, that he gave.” Explain what moved God to give. What is the greatness of this gift, this unspeakable gift of which the Apostle Paul spoke?

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” If you have reached this point, explain how Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God and also the begotten Son of God. Since He is God in eternity, how did God become flesh, dwell among us, and allow us to behold His glory? “That whosoever believeth in him”—tell me about faith. What is real, genuine faith? What does the word pistis mean in the Greek? “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Explain perishing. Explain everlasting life.

The point is that John 3:16 is not so simple. When you look at Luke chapter 11 and Matthew chapter 6, you will find that this prayer is not so simple either, because each petition is connected to the others. Our Lord began this prayer by teaching us to say, “Our Father.” I have three messages just on these first two words. Would you explain how God can be our Father? Those words denote, first of all, a personal relationship. If God is my Father, there has to be a personal relationship.

First Petition: 'Our Father' and Hallowing God's Name

Secondly, when He taught us to pray, “Our Father,” there is not only a personal relationship, but also a familial relationship, which means we are not alone. We are not an only child; there are other children in the family. We must recognize, realize, and consider them. He is not simply my Father; He is your Father. If you are in the family as well, He is our Father. When you consider these words, “Our Father,” you must understand that He is only our Father because He is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our God because He is the God of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Each of these connections is very important. He said, “When you pray, you say, Our Father which art in heaven.” Solomon prayed in 1 Kings chapter eight, “The heaven of heavens cannot contain thee;

how much less this house that I have builded?" "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." The Greek word is hagiazo. It literally means to sanctify, to hallow, to consecrate, to make holy. When we say, "Our Father, hallowed be thy name," we are giving God the utmost respect, honor, and glory, and ascribing all power and praise to Him. Hallowing God's name means giving Him first place in our lives, thoughts, and desires. God is to be sanctified in the totality of our lives.

Arthur W. Pink wrote, "Hallowed be thy name is the first of the petitions of Christ's pattern prayer. There are seven in number and are significantly divided into two groups of three and four respectively. The first three relate to the cause of God. The last four relate to our own daily concerns. A similar division is discernible in the Ten Commandments. The first five teach us our duty toward God, because the fifth, honor thy father and thy mother, the parents are placed over the children in the place of God. The last five teach our duty toward our neighbors." Our primary duty in prayer is to disregard ourselves and give God the preeminence in our thoughts, desires, and supplications. This petition necessarily comes first, for the glorifying of God's great name is the ultimate end of all things.

"All other requests must be subordinate to this one and be in pursuance of it." We cannot pray aright unless the glory of God is dominant in our lives. We often say we want God glorified, but do we really genuinely want it? William Perkins said it clearly: "Oh, Lord, open our eyes that we may know that thou art right and that we may discern thy power, wisdom, justice, and mercy, and enlarge our hearts that we may sanctify thee in our affections by making thee our fear, our love, our joy, our confidence, and open our lips that we may bless thee for thine infinite goodness. Yea, O Lord, open our eyes that we may see thee in all thy works, and incline our wills with reverence for thy name appearing in thy works, and grant that when we use any one of them that we may honor thee in our sober and sanctified use thereof."

"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." This is the comprehensiveness of Christ's prayer: the very first thing Christ teaches us to pray is that God's name is to be hallowed. I preached years ago a message entitled "Preaching Profanity." When we think

of profanity, we think of cursing. But you can be profane and never utter a curse word. Remember that profane man Esau, whom the Bible speaks of in Hebrews chapter 12? Esau did not necessarily curse. What did he do? He despised his birthright. He despised spiritual blessings.

The word profanum means "before the temple"—pro, before, and fanum, the temple threshold. To be profane is to be outside the temple, not in line with the will of God or the Word of God. You can be profane by despising spiritual blessings. You can be a profane individual.

Second and Third Petitions: Kingdom and Will

The very first petition is, “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” The second petition is, “Thy kingdom come,” and the third is, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” In other words, let it be done in earth as it is done in heaven.

The first petition, “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,” concerns God’s glory. The second and third petitions concern the means whereby God’s glory is manifested and promoted on earth. God’s name is glorified here only in proportion to the degree that His kingdom comes to us and His will is done in us, through us, and by us. Once we have learned to pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,” we must pray concerning the means whereby that is accomplished in time, history, and earth: God’s kingdom being brought and God’s will being done in and through us.

It seems to me that our Lord said something like this in Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Let me give you another quotation by Pink: “There is a threefold application when we pray ‘Thy kingdom come.’”

First, it applies to the external sphere of God’s grace here on earth: Let thy gospel be preached and the power of thy Spirit attend it; let thy church be strengthened, let thy cause on earth be advanced, and the works of Satan be destroyed.

Secondly, it applies to God’s internal kingdom, His spiritual reign of grace within the hearts of men: Let thy throne be established in

our hearts. Let thy laws be administered in our lives, and thy name be magnified by our walk.

Thirdly, it applies to God's kingdom and its future glory: Let the day be hastened when Satan and his hosts shall be completely vanquished, when thy people shall be done with sinning forever, and when Christ shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

Certainly, each of these applies when we pray, "Thy kingdom come." We are praying not only for victory in time and history, but also for victory in our lives and for the future glory when the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

I want to concentrate tonight on this third petition: "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." In Matthew 6:10, it is stated a little more clearly: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

In other words, if we genuinely and truly sanctify and hallow the name of our Father, there will be a natural longing for the extension and enlargement of His kingdom—not just in our personal lives, but in the earth, in time, and in history. We understand that the will of God is done in heaven. His will is sovereign, His will is supreme, and He is always obeyed.

Have you ever stopped to think about the cherubim, the seraphim, and the angels? Do you realize that all these angelic beings obey Him instantly and willingly? They obey Him promptly, wholly, perfectly, and with great delight. This is how we should obey Him. Psalm 103:20 says, "Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." The angels not only obey God's commandments, but sit listening, waiting to see what God will command them, so that they may instantly do it.

Obedience as Evidence of God's Kingdom

We are praying, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This third petition deals with our personal obedience. What manifests whether the kingdom of God has come to us, whether God is our Father, and whether we are hallowing His name? It is whether or not we are obeying Him. Our Lord Himself says in Luke 6:46, "Why call

ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Our obedience demonstrates that God's kingdom is in our heart, that we want Him glorified, and that we want Him honored.

SCRIPTURE READING - Acts 9:10-16 (KJV)

That our rebellious wills have been subdued. That we've been conquered by the grace of God. Let me give you an illustration. Everyone is familiar with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, but there is a certain point that I need to make. In Acts chapter nine, beginning with verse 10, the Bible says:

"And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth.

"And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight." Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name." But the Lord said unto him, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

"For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."

If you go back and read all of Acts chapter 9, the very first verse begins, "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." He held the coats of those who stoned Stephen. He held men and women who were believers and had them thrown into dungeons. God told Ananias, "Ananias, there's a man called Saul. I want you to go there and lay your hands on him so that his eyes may be open." Ananias replied, "Lord, I've heard of

this man. He's done much damage to the people of God. And here he has authority to bind all who call upon my name and throw them in dungeons." The Lord said, "Go thy way. He's a chosen vessel."

Look at what God said in Acts 9:11: "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus. For, behold, he prayeth."

Do you know what God just said? I've got him tamed. There's a yoke on him. There's a halter on him. You do not have to be afraid. I have broken his proud, rebellious, stubborn heart. He's praying. The point is this: our obedience demonstrates that the kingdom of God has indeed come in our hearts.

When our Lord said that we are to pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," we are asking not only for obedience for ourselves, and not only for the spirit of obedience, but also for the manner in which our obedience is to be rendered: submitting to the will of God, whatever that will is.

Consider 1 Peter, chapter 1, beginning at verse 13: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

Look back at verse 14: “As obedient children.” Not just children, but obedient children. Parents, don’t you want your children to be obedient? Of course you do. I was in a neighboring town a few years back, in a Walmart, when a man was standing probably three feet in front of me. Around the corner came a woman pushing a buggy with a crying, screaming, temper-tantrum child hollering at the top of his lungs. She pushed the buggy to the man and said, “Do something with this child of yours. He’s upset because I won’t buy him a toy that he already has one just like it at home.” The man just shrugged his shoulders.

I had to bite my tongue to keep from saying, “Give him to me, lady. I know what to do. I can take care of this situation.” You know

why? Because we want obedient children. Do you think God wants disobedient children? Of course not. He said, “as obedient children.” The Bible says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise.”

In Malachi chapter 1, verse 6, God asks the priests, “A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name.” Do you realize that disobedience to God is despising God? If He is our Father and we are His children, we must be obedient children.

The Will of God and His Law

We do this by sanctifying His name, asking His kingdom to come, and asking that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We are asking God to give us a submissive, obedient spirit, that we may do His will with gladness, joy, and happiness, the way the angels do. “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” This prayer is all-inclusive: that God’s will would be done in everything—in our lives, families, churches, society, government, nation, politics, economics, business, religion, and every sphere of existence. Why? Because God is sovereign.

The whole earth belongs to him. This is his kingdom, "Thy will be done." You know what we're asking when we say "Thy will be done"? Listen to me. We're actually saying "Thy law be enforced, thy word be accomplished." Now, you're going to ask me, "How can you say that?" Well, I can say it for several reasons. Number one, Deuteronomy 29:29. The Word of God says there, "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." What is God's will?

It's that we will be obedient to him. That's his will. You know what the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians chapter four and verse three? "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication."

Now, if it's the will of God that you and I obey the seventh commandment and the ninth and the tenth commandment and the first commandment and the fifth commandment, don't you think it's the will of God that we obey all of his commandments? He said, "For this is the will of God." The will of God is revealed in his word. The will of God is revealed in his law. You know what is said of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, in Psalm 40 and verse 8, the Messiah said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." So the will of God is connected with the law of God. That is why. And John 6 and verse 38, our Lord said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."

And think about it like this. In Galatians, chapter four, verses four and five, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Why was Jesus Christ made under the law?

Well, there are a lot of answers. But we had dishonored God's law. We had disobeyed God's law. And Jesus Christ was made under that law that He might magnify it, that He might hallow it, that He might make it honorable, that He might work out an absolute perfect righteousness because the law of God demands a personal obedience, a perfect obedience, and a perpetual obedience. And so Jesus Christ was made under the law that he might fulfill that law, and that is why the Word of God tells us in Isaiah chapter 42 and verse 21. Listen carefully. "The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable." That's exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ did. He magnified the law of God. He made it honorable.

When we pray, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven,” we are praying that His law will be obeyed, that His word would be perfectly obeyed on earth exactly the way it is in heaven. The object of these first three petitions is that God’s name should be glorified and that His kingdom should be established. By placing them first, we learn that His glory and His kingdom are of more consequence than our wants, and that these should be first in our

hearts. We demonstrate that by asking that His will be done in our lives on this earth.

Heaven's Standard and Our Response

What makes heaven heaven? You could say, “Well, the Lord Jesus Christ is there. God, the Father’s there. The saints are there.” I understand that. But Psalm 103:20 says, “Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.” Have you ever stopped to think that heaven is heaven because the will of God is obeyed perfectly? There is no rebellion, no sinful disposition, and no innate depravity. The will of God is done there.

When we pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we are understanding that God is not going to lower His standard. He did not lower His standard for His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was made under the law, suffered, and became our propitiation. He did not lower His standard then, and He is not going to lower His standard now.

What we are going to pray for is that His will will be done. Would it not be a little bit of heaven on earth if everyone in this neighborhood, community, or town simply obeyed God? Would that not make a change? It absolutely would. It would make a difference.

We want to be treated right. It is only reasonable that if we are indeed the children of God, and He is our Father, we should be obedient children. We should be obedient children because of His grace and mercy. You and I have something that the angels have never had: grace. It is true, there are elect angels.

There is no such thing as a redeemed angel. In fact, 1 Peter 1:12 says, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." Angels do not understand anything about grace in the sense that they have never experienced it.

If an elect angel, who knows nothing about grace, mercy, forgiveness, and redemption, will obey God instantly, immediately,

promptly, with delight and joy, how much more should you and I, who have tasted the grace of God, experienced the mercy of God, received the forgiveness of God, and been redeemed by the Son of God, obey willingly, promptly, joyfully, and gladly? God is not going to lower His standard. He is not going to require less from us than He does from His elect angels. It is true that, while we are saved, we are still sinners; I understand that. But still, God is not going to lower His standard.

Comprehensiveness and Application

Colossians 1:9–10 says, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

When you pray, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth," you are saying, "Lord, work in me that which is well-pleasing in Thy sight, and make me pleasing in Thy sight. Make me obedient. Make me holy. Make me godly." That is what you are praying.

This verse has caused me all kinds of trouble—not bad trouble, but good trouble. In John 8:29, our Lord said, "He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."

The truth of the matter is that we please ourselves most of the time more than we please Him. I think about that and say, “Oh, Lord, what a wreck I’ve made of my life. Lord, help me to want always to do those things which please You and bring You honor and glory. I am to be likened to Jesus Christ. He is my example. I am to want Your will in my life.”

Let me summarize this again. The first three petitions teach us that when we say, “Our Father who art in heaven,” this implies that we are children. Since we are His children, we should be His obedient children.

Secondly, we should desire His kingdom to come—in our hearts, in our lives, in our families, in our societies, and everywhere that we should see and desire the rule and reign of God. Thirdly, in order to manifest that kingdom in us, we want His will to be done in our lives. I would love to see the will of God done in Washington, D.C.; in Montgomery, Alabama; and in Atlanta, Georgia.

David, in 2 Samuel 23, put forth a simple principle: “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” The interesting thing is that, when you read that simple principle, four times in the preceding verse and that verse, David claims direct inspiration from God for that one simple truth: “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” Would you like to see the ruling reign of God in this world? Of course you should. We should never be afraid of the will of God.

I have had people say, “But I don’t know what God’s will is.” Yes, you do. It is in His Word. You may say, “But not everything is spelled out.” No, but it is there in principle. Whatever His will is, you can trust Him, because He is too righteous to be unholy, too loving to be unkind, and too wise to make a mistake. He is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods, and you owe Him allegiance and submission.

There is no reason to be afraid of God’s will. God’s will is revealed in His Word. Spurgeon said, “The very invitation to us to pray implies that there are blessings waiting for us at the mercy seat. Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace.” I would add that we are not only invited to pray, but taught to pray following our Lord’s teaching. Therefore, we should have greater boldness, coming in prayer as the Lord Jesus Christ taught us.

The comprehensiveness of this prayer demonstrates that it extends to every part, every area, every sphere of our lives, and every corner of the Lord's dominion. How can I say that? The Bible says in Psalm 24:1, “The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” Everything you see and everything around you is God's; it belongs to Him.

The comprehensiveness is this: it not only touches all the realm of the world and the universe; it touches every child of God. There are

none exempt. Each one of us is commanded to honor Him, sanctify Him, glorify Him, and venerate Him. Each one of us is commanded to pray, “Thy kingdom come”—enlarge Thyself in my life, in my family, in our church, in our community, society, nation, and the world. Then we are to demonstrate it by saying, “Thy will be done in me.” There is no person, no saint, and no area that is excluded.

I will tell you one of our greatest problems as Christians: we want to see everyone else become obedient and righteous to the exclusion of ourselves. We want to sit back and watch everybody else do the work. I read many years ago that in every church there are usually about two percent of the people willing to work, while the other ninety-eight percent are willing to watch them work. That is about the truth.

God has a word concerning that attitude. He said in Amos 6:1, “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.” We are at ease; we do not understand what we are praying for when we pray. Our Lord said to the church of Laodicea, “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” Do you realize that our Lord would much rather have us either out and out against Him or out and out for Him? There is no in-between. He said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”

When we take a lackadaisical attitude and the easy way, refusing to become involved because we do not want to be slandered, hurt, or have our feet stepped on, what did our Lord say?

"If they have hated me, they will hate you." Our Lord also said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." He also spoke to the church at Ephesus in Revelation chapter two and verse five: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Here are three things our Lord said: Remember. Remember from whence thou art fallen. Remember what you were commanded, the first love that you had, and the joy that used to be yours. Then He said, repent. If there is no repentance, He said, "I will come and

remove thy candlestick." Read Revelation chapters one, two, and three; the candlestick is the church. "I will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

When we pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we are sanctifying God's name and placing Him first: His work, His kingdom, and His will. We are asking, Work it in us and through us, but let it be done. If God's will were done on earth exactly as it is in heaven, it would be heaven on earth.

Conclusion and Prayer

When you pray this prayer, you are praying for victory and for dominion in time and in history, that God would be honored and glorified. Father, help us in the name of Jesus Christ to bow to Thee. May we remember. May we repent, else Thou wilt indeed remove our candlestick from its place. We are so indebted unto Thee because of Thy grace and Thy mercy, a debt which we could never pay. The only One who could pay it is the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has done so.

Therefore, based upon the person and work of Jesus Christ, help us to remember and give us grace to repent. Give us grace, Father, to sanctify Thy name and desire Thy kingdom and Thy rule in our hearts and our lives, and for Thy will to be accomplished in us and through us. Bless the other speakers in this conference. Open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 18

The Power Of The Mind

June 27, 2023

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Samuel 6:12-23 (KJV)

"And it was told King David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom into the city of David with gladness. And it was so that when they bare the ark, and the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the LORD with all his might, and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet. And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looking through a window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD.

"And she despised him in her heart. And they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in his place in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for him. And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace

offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts.

"And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well as to the women as the men, to everyone a cake of bread and a good piece of flesh and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed everyone to his house. Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David and said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD who chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD over Israel.

Introduction: The Problem of Marital Breakdown

"Therefore will I play before the LORD, and I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in my own sight. And of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor. Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death."

Have you ever wondered, and have you ever considered exactly as to why there are so many marital problems today? Why are there so many separations and why are there so many divorces?

Did you know that the divorce rate even among Christians is exceedingly high? I am simply pointing out this truth: If Christians cannot live together, what does one expect from the world? How can Christians be an example of godliness, faithfulness, steadfastness, forgiveness, and love if they cannot maintain a relationship one with another? I understand that Christians are sinners. Moreover, they have problems with the flesh, as do the unsaved. But Christians are supposed to be guided and controlled by biblical principles, by truth, by convictions, and by those things that rule their lives—not by the flesh.

The Mind as the Battleground

The title of this message, "The Power of the Mind," should not be confused with the concept of the power of positive thinking. Years ago, Norman Vincent Peale, whom I would not recommend to anyone, wrote his book on the power of positive thinking. While there may be some truth in positive thinking, it has nothing to do with obedience, godliness, or holiness. I prefer what one man said concerning Norman Vincent Peale: "I find Norman Vincent Peale appalling and the Apostle Paul appealing." I certainly concur with that. In reality, the mind is the battleground, and the control of our thoughts is the main issue. The mind of man was affected in the fall.

Our minds are just as depraved and just as perverted as our affections and our will. The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4, beginning with verse 17, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not, as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the knowledge of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Notice that he speaks of the blindness and of being alienated through the ignorance that is in them.

Then, in Colossians chapter 1 and verse 21, the Apostle Paul said, "And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind, yet hath he reconciled." I desire for this message to demonstrate one simple truth, and hopefully that truth will encompass other truths that are interrelated and interconnected. We are told in Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 7, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Now stop and let that sink in: “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” We are a product of our thinking. We act out, live out, and move in regard to our thinking, in regard to our mind. If our thinking is wrong, our lives are going to be wrong. If our thinking happens to be biblical, then our lives will be biblical; that is, we will live in godly obedience.

Perception vs. Facts

Years ago, I preached two messages which I entitled “Sinful Perceptions.” I would encourage you to listen to each of those messages again. Why am I saying that? Here is the answer: there is a great difference between facts and the interpretation of facts. There is a vast difference between facts and your perception of facts. We always interpret everything in light of our own perspective. Our perspective may be right, or our perspective may be wrong. It does not matter. Everything that we see, we interpret in light of our own perception. We see things the way we want to see them and the way we desire to see them. Many times, we see things the way we want them to be. Sometimes we see things as they are not really are. An eyewitness is not always accurate.

When someone says, “I know what I have seen,” no, you know what you think you have seen. What you think you saw, you interpreted. I could demonstrate that very easily today, but I am simply pointing out that everything we see and everything we hear, we interpret according to our own perspective. Everything comes out of the heart—everything. Our Lord told us this.

Biblical Evidence: Heart and Mind Interchangeable

In Matthew 15:18, our Lord says, “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.” Did you get that? The first thing out of the heart is evil thoughts: “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.” Now look in Luke 6:45 and notice what the Word of God says.

Luke 6:45 says, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil." Then our Lord says, "For of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." What is our Lord saying? You are going to live out what is in your heart. You are going to live out what is in your mind. David said in Psalm 116:10, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." Whatever you believe is

ultimately going to come out. Whether it is right or wrong, it is going to come out.

We bring forth that which is in our minds. I have used the words mind and heart interchangeably because that is the way they are used in the Bible. I realize that there are times in the Bible when the heart refers to the affections, but most of the time the word heart refers to the mind.

The very first time the word heart occurs in the Bible is Genesis 6:5: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Whatever the heart is, it can think and imagine, because God saw the imaginations and thoughts of the heart. Whatever the heart is, it can speak. Genesis 27:41 says, "And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father had blessed him. And Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob." Notice that Esau said in his heart. Whatever the heart is, it can speak. Whatever the heart is, it can either receive or refuse instruction. Proverbs 5:12 says, "And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?"

The heart, of course, is intimately connected with the eyes. Our Lord said in Matthew 5:27-28, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

So looking and lusting go together. In Daniel chapter 4, God is going to teach Nebuchadnezzar a lesson. He is a proud, arrogant, haughty monarch. In verse 16, the word of God says, “Let his heart be changed from a man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.” Nebuchadnezzar's heart is going to be changed from a man's heart, and he is going to be given the heart of an animal. Seven times, or seven years, are going to pass over him. For seven years he is going to be insane. This is called boanthropy, where a man lives and acts like an animal.

“All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. And at the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. And at the end of the days, that is, after seven years, I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me."

I thought it was his heart that was changed. It was, because the heart is the mind, the understanding, the rational faculty. Notice what he said: "My understanding was returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

"And none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Watch verse 36. "At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me." Note that God said, Let his heart be changed.

So his mind—he went insane. He thought he was an animal, lived like an animal, and ate grass like an animal. In the seven years, it was his understanding and reasoning ability that was returned. Obviously, clearly, the heart and the mind are used interchangeably. With this understanding, go back to 2 Samuel chapter 6, and look at verse 16: "And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window, and saw King

David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart."

Michal's Despisement of David

You want to know why there are so many separations and divorces, and why there are even failed friendships? Here is one: She despised him in her heart.

Now, let me point something out. Michal loved David—she genuinely loved him with a strong love. Saul, who was king, had promised David Merab, his oldest daughter, if he would be valiant and fight the LORD's enemies for King Saul. King Saul could care less about the LORD's enemies, and he could care less about David. He wanted David dead. Saul was so subtle, saying, "Let not my hand be upon David, but let him fall by the Philistines."

In 1 Samuel chapter 18, verse 17, the Bible says: "And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him. And David said unto Saul, Who am I?"

"And what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" Watch verse 19. "But it came to pass at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife." Isn't that interesting? David did not respond wickedly to King Saul. Saul had promised Merab to David, then turned around and gave her to another man. David may not have been really interested in her anyhow, I don't know. But the very fact that she was a king's daughter and had been promised to David—David just said, let it pass.

Now, however, Michal, the younger daughter, was very interested in David. In fact, look in verse 20 and 21. "And Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him." Here's why it pleased him: "And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him."

"Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in the one of the twain." Obviously, Michal did love David. When Saul said David could be his son-in-law, David said, "Look, my family is poor in Israel. I don't have the money for a dowry." Saul then told his servants to say, "I don't want a large dowry. All I want is a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." In other words, he wanted David to kill a hundred men and bring proof. When David heard that, it pleased him. He went out and killed two hundred and brought the foreskins back.

And he didn't die in battle. Watch verse 28, 1 Samuel chapter 18: “And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him. And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.” Twice now we have been told that Michal loved David. It did not take her long to prove that she loved him.

In 1 Samuel 19, Saul was so incensed that he tried to kill David. He had thrown a javelin at him, but David escaped. Now Saul was ready to kill him himself: “And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand. And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin.”

“But he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night. Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, If thou save not thy life tonight, tomorrow thou shalt be slain. So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped. And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth.” When Saul's messengers came, she said, “He is sick.” Saul ordered them to bring David to him in the bed so that he might kill him, but they found an image there. Saul said unto Michal, “Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped?”

“And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?” Note that Michal admonished David to flee, let him down from the window, placed the image in the bed, pretended

he was sick, and lied to her insane father in all probability to preserve her life.

So, obviously she did love him. She did everything she could to protect him. So let me ask you this question. We know that Michal loved David. Did David love Michal? And the answer is yes. I want you to look in your Bibles, if you would, to 2 Samuel chapter 3. Because Abner, who happens to be the captain of the hosts of Israel, when he came to David to deliver the kingdom over to David, David said, look, there's one requirement that you must meet. If you want me to be king over Israel, and you want to hand over the whole kingdom to me—he was king of Judah at that time, but not over the northern tribes—he said, there's a requirement. What is it? Look at it. 2 Samuel chapter 3, beginning there with verse 12. "And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee." So Abner is offering him the kingdom.

He can be king over all Israel. Watch verse 13. "And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face." David said, you better bring my wife back. He was willing to turn the kingdom down to get Michal. Wow.

Now you have to ask, what happened? How in the world did Michal, who loved David so strongly and protectingly, come to despise him? The Bible says, in verse 16 of 2 Samuel chapter 6, that she despised him in her heart. Now the Hebrew word for despised is the word bazah. And here's what it means. It means to despise, to hold in contempt, to disdain, to view as vile, worthless, and to scorn. So, Michal, at this point, counted David as vile, despicable, and worthless. Now, wait a minute. I want to show you the impact of the word despised. Okay? I want you to hold 2 Samuel chapter 6.

Turn in your Bibles, if you will, to Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53. And all we're going to look at is verse 3. And of course, I hope you remember and know that Isaiah 53 deals with the Lord Jesus Christ, the suffering servant, the Messiah. In fact, we will read verse 1 and 2 just so you can see this. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is

the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Now watch verse 3.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." The word despised in verse 3, which occurs twice, is the same exact word used in 2 Samuel chapter 6. Just as men hated, scorned, rejected, refused, and counted vile the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, so that is exactly what Michal is now doing to David.

The Bible says in verse 16, she despised him in her heart. The Hebrew word for heart is leb. This word is translated in our Bibles as mind twelve times and as understanding ten times. She despised him in her heart; she despised him in her mind; she despised him in her understanding. It is the same word used in Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Everything issues from the mind. Everything issues from the understanding.

Twice in this passage, Michal is referred to as Saul's daughter, not David's wife. Why is she called Saul's daughter? Saul despised spiritual things and persecuted David. Saul was rejected by God. In this context, she is acting more like her father, rather than simply being David's wife. Now, look at verse 16.

David and the people, the Levites, were bringing the ark back to Jerusalem. Verse 15 says, "So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet." As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart. David was wearing a linen garment.

Michal's Wrong Perception and Its Consequences

He did not have on his kingly robes. A linen garment was what the priest wore. Thus he was wearing the same thing as a priest, jumping and dancing before the LORD, so happy that the ark of God was

coming to Jerusalem. When Michal saw David without his kingly robes and apparel, wearing a linen garment, jumping up and down, dancing, and praising the LORD, she counted him uncouth, unkingly, vile, shameful, and disgraceful.

That was her interpretation and perception of what was happening. Was her perception and interpretation correct? No. In verse 20, we read, "And Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!" She said, "David, you are so vile, wicked, and low down. You are not acting like a king. You are acting like some stupid, vile individual who could care less who sees him or what." Saul's daughter again: in her mind, David was now worthless.

There was absolutely nothing shameful about rejoicing before the LORD. There was nothing disgraceful about bringing the ark of the covenant back into Jerusalem, nothing unethical, vain, or vile in honoring and worshiping God. Look again at verse 20: "Then David returned to bless his household." David had blessed the people and sent them away. Now he was on a spiritual high and came in to bless his household—not merely to greet them, but to bless them.

His wife said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today?" In effect, she called him a reprobate, a shameful, lowdown, good-for-nothing scumbag. She accused him of uncovering himself from his kingly robes in front of all the handmaidens, his servants. Thomas Scott said concerning Michal, "David, the brave captain, bringing forth and leading forth the people to battle and returning with them in triumph, she admired. But David, the saint, leading the people in the ordinance of God and setting before him the examples of fervency of spirit in his service, she despised."

When she mocked David in verse 20, David very quickly let her know how the cow eats the cabbage. Look what he said in verse 21: “And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD which chose me before thy father.” What I did, I did unto the LORD, not to you or to anyone else. “It was before the LORD who chose me before thy father and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people

of the LORD over Israel. Therefore will I play before the LORD." I will rejoice. I'll jump up and down if I want to jump up and down.

"And I will yet be more vile than thus." You don't like what I've just done, rejoicing before the LORD? I will become more vile because I will rejoice more and more and more. "And I will be base in my own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor." Michal was wrong. Her attitude was wrong. Her perception was wrong. Her interpretation was wrong.

She judged David, and God judged her. She unjustly reproached David for his devotion, and God therefore justly put her under the perpetual reproach of barrenness. So, in verse 23: "Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death." In Bible times, and especially in the Old Testament, to be without a child was a great reproach for a woman. God placed her under perpetual reproach.

Biblical Roles and Particular Sins in Marriage

God does require wives to honor and reverence their husbands. He also requires husbands to love their wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. When we fail in these two areas as husbands and wives, we fail in our marriage.

In Ephesians 5:33, the Apostle Paul concludes his teaching on the position of the husband and the position of the wife: "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." The word reverence refers to a righteous and godly fear, a righteous respect and honor. The wife is to reverence the husband.

I may not always be right. I may make mistakes, and I may do things unthinkingly, ignorantly, or stupidly. But I am always Alice's husband. I am her head, according to 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 3. God gives us His order: God, Christ, man, woman.

The husband's position is a position of responsibility—to lead in God—but it is also a position of honor. When a marriage fails, in one sense of the word, most of the onus is laid upon the husband because he is the head. Having said that, the wife is to reverence her husband and honor him at all times and in all things.

Colossians 3:19 says, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." One particular sin of a wife is that she sometimes does not reverence her husband. One particular sin of a husband is that he is sometimes bitter against his wife.

The Greek word for bitter is pikraino. It literally means to become embittered, exasperated, indignant, irritated, and angry. If a wife is to honor her husband at all times, it requires consistent biblical thinking. If a husband is never to be bitter against his wife, it requires constant biblical thinking.

The particular sin of the wife is failure to honor her husband. The particular sin of the husband is failure to love his wife, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. Thus he becomes bitter against his wife.

If I allow incidents, interpretations, and perspectives to build up in my mind—if I think Alice has wronged me and keep letting it build up in everything she does—I then interpret everything as, "She's doing it again." The next thing you know, there will be an explosion.

Resolving Conflict and Avoiding Bitterness

There are no perfect husbands and no perfect wives. This is why the Bible says in Ephesians 4:27, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Anger, bitterness, resentment, and problems are to be worked out daily. There is a righteous anger, but even that righteous anger has to be resolved. The way to avoid bitterness and anger is to resolve it daily.

When we have problems—and we do have problems—there is no reason to focus on why. I could look at Alice and ask, “Why did you do that?” I know why she did it: because she is a sinner. She could ask me the same question, and the answer would be the same. I am human. I may have done it unthinkingly or ignorantly. The question is not why. The question is, What was done? And what needs to be done to rectify it? You do not ask why; you ask what. What was done?

What should be the biblical response? What is the biblical solution to the problem? Modern-day divorces usually have something like this: “This divorce is being granted due to

irreconcilable differences." There is no such thing as an irreconcilable difference unless someone is unwilling to reconcile. If both parties are willing to reconcile and to work everything out biblically, there will be a reconciliation. The only time you have irreconcilable differences is when somebody does not want to reconcile.

That is because they have reached the place of despisement. The particular sin of the wife is dishonoring her husband. The particular sin of the husband is becoming bitter against his wife. These sins are particular, and they stem from wrong thinking. Wrong thinking has the power to turn love into hate, honor into despise, respect into disgust, and desire into revulsion.

The Power of the Mind to Transform Relationships

Consequently, when couples reach that point, they separate or head for the divorce courts. Michal failed to honor David as her husband, even as her king, and ended up despising the man she initially loved. Women today fall into the same trap and the same pit. Husbands likewise fall into the same trap and pit of becoming exasperated, irritated, bitter, and angry: "My wife does not understand me." Then they go looking for another woman, and they end up in divorce court.

The power of the mind cannot be overlooked, discarded, or disregarded, because all our actions proceed from our minds. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." "I believed, therefore have I spoken." You cannot move, act, or do anything without thinking. Here is a pair of glasses. I am picking them up. I thought about picking them up before I ever picked them up. Everything comes out of the heart. Our mind, which is our heart, has the power to turn love into hate and honor into despisement.

Applications

Practical Applications

Most people, including most Christians, live by their feelings and emotions rather than by biblical principles. Consequently, we do not control our thoughts or our thinking. Our emotions, feelings,

situations, and circumstances control us. Instead of sitting down and calmly asking, “What should be our biblical response? How should I respond to this in honor of the Lord Jesus Christ?” we simply feel a certain way. We give prominence to our feelings and emotions instead of the Word of God and instead of thinking things through. We actually become enslaved to our feelings and emotions.

Love, honor, obedience, and reverence are acts of the will. God does not command our feelings or emotions; He commands our wills. When He says, “Wives, honor your husbands,” that is an act of the will. When He says, “Husbands, love your wives,” that is an act of the will. When God says, “Obey,” that is an act of the will. God has designed our feelings to follow. Feelings are never to lead; they are to follow. What if I looked at Tom and said, “I just feel like hitting you upside the head”? I might feel two or three coming back at me. I cannot live by my feelings.

People ask, “How do you feel about this? What are your feelings on this subject?” No. What does the Word of God say? What do you think? Most people live by their feelings, but God has designed our feelings to follow. When we do right, we feel good; when we do wrong, we feel bad. Our feelings follow our actions, our conduct, and our mind. Therefore, do not ever think that just because you have no feeling, you cannot obey. You can.

Years ago, one man came into my office. He had already determined that he was going to divorce his wife. She was a sweet woman whom I knew personally, and they had two handsome young boys. He had met some floozy at a bar, and he was going to divorce his Christian wife and marry this floozy. He came in to talk with me and let me know up front that he was going to divorce his wife.

God commands you to love your wife: “Husbands, love your wife.” One man told me, “I just can’t love her as a wife.” I asked, “Is she still in the same house with you?” He said yes. I said, “Then you would consider her at least your closest neighbor.” He agreed. I reminded him that the Bible says, “Love your neighbor.” He said, “I can’t even love her as a neighbor.” I asked, “Would you count her an enemy?” He said yes. I told him, “The Bible says, ‘Love your enemies.’ You can’t get out of it. Love is an act of the will.”

I am glad feelings are involved, but I love Alice because I will to love Alice. I want to love Alice. The third thing is this: We must learn to dwell on the positive, the good, and the blessed side of our spouses. Everyone is going to aggravate the other every now and then. You are going to get irritated and upset. But you had better thank God that you at least have a spouse. God can remove us at any time that He pleases.

Have I ever been upset with Alice? Of course. Has she ever been upset with me? Yes. I am not going to ask her how many times, but I know. Lord willing, if He lets us live to the 13th, we will have been married sixty years. In sixty years, we have never, ever had a thought of divorce. Murder, yes, but divorce, never. If the Lord took her out, I would have to marry forty to take her place.

We must remember that no one is as bad as he can be. There are good sides and positives, and we need to concentrate on those, not the bad parts. And here is the last one.

If we wish to live right, we must think right in order to act right. Thinking precedes action and conduct. If you think wrongly, you're going to act wrongly. If you think biblically, you're going to act biblically. Never underestimate the power of the mind. Scripture says, "Keep thy heart; for out of it are the issues of life." Everything issues from your mind. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." You live out what is in your mind. Make sure that mind is right toward your mate, toward your spouse, and toward your friends. The power of the mind can turn love into hate, respect into disgust, and desire into revulsion. Think about what God says and requires of us, and how we're to resolve problems in a biblical manner.

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. We pray, Father, that these words will help us, help others who hear, and help us, Lord, to order our lives according to Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 19

Pride - The Particular Sin of Rulers

August 10, 2025

SCRIPTURE READING - Daniel 4:1-5, 28-36 (KJV)

Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation. I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace.

I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.

All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. And at the end of twelve months, he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word

was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

Pride: The Particular Sin of Rulers

Introduction: Pride as a Root Sin

"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

Pride is a root sin of all men, and it is especially the root sin of what we would call rulers or politicians, or those who have any authority whatsoever. Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4 and Belshazzar in chapter 5 are excellent examples of this particular evil of pride in rulers.

We are knowledgeable concerning at least two verses in the Bible that deal with pride. The first is Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." The second is Proverbs 29:23: "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

There is a warning in Deuteronomy 29:18 that we need to heed: "Lest there should be among you"—"man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood."

The Bible does indeed talk about root sins, and certainly pride is one of those root sins, because pride turns you away from God and His Word and leads you to trust in yourself and in your will. All one has to do to be destroyed and to receive destruction is to walk in pride, arrogancy, haughtiness, headiness, high-minded.

Pride Produces Other Sins

These things are completely condemned in the Scripture. I call pride a root sin, and so does the Bible, because a root sin is a sin that produces other sins. It blossoms and produces fruit, multiplying itself over and over.

Sins such as theft and fraud stem from pride. A haughty man thinks that he may do any or all of these things and simply escape God's judgment. In fact, pride gives a man what he believes to be the right to steal because he thinks he deserves everything. Certainly, these are sheep, and they simply need to be shorn at his will and pleasure.

Such sins as fornication, adultery, and sodomy also stem from pride because a haughty man thinks that he should please himself and satisfy his flesh above everything else. He believes that others exist merely for his pleasure and satisfaction. They are his sheep, and he may shear them. They deserve to be used in any way that he decides. This is an attitude of pride.

This is also, I believe, evidence in our modern-day politicians. So, how is it that someone who is making $175,000 Federal Reserve notes per year, at the end of four to eight years, happens to now be

worth 50 to 60 to 100 million bucks? That blows my mind in one sense of the word. And if you recall all of the scandals in Washington and the state capitals that deal with fornication and adultery, it is prevalent among our modern-day politicians.

We may ask two very leading questions. Why do they act in that manner? Why are they willing to deceive, defraud, and steal? Why are they willing to be corrupt, and why are they willing to be what you and I would call absolutely immoral? The answer is because of pride. Pride is a root sin, and from that root sin many other sins blossom and flourish.

Pride Deceives and Hardens

What makes them think that they can escape God's judgment? What makes them think that they can get away with it? I've often thought about this, and I thought about it again this week in light of this message. I thought about Bill and Hillary Clinton. I thought about George Soros and some of these other people. I have enough sins to answer for; I surely would not want to have to answer for their sins when you think that murder is acceptable and fornication and adultery—all of this is acceptable unto them—and fraud and theft. It does not bother them at all. So what makes them think that they are going to escape and get by with all of this?

God gives us the answer in the book of Obadiah, chapter 1 and verse 3. He is talking to Edom: “The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?” Edom was placed in a very rocky cliff and had the high point of advantage over any enemies. The pride of his heart deceived him, saying that no one was going to bring him down to the ground. No one could conquer him. God says, “You’re deceived. You will come down to the ground. You will be conquered.”

Root sins are sins that produce an abundance of fruit. Bitterness happens to be a root sin. I've seen people absolutely destroyed through bitterness. But the Bible says in Hebrews 12:15, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” Bitterness does not simply trouble the individual; it defiles a

multitude of people as well. Bitterness, along with pride, is a root sin. Another root sin is the love of money. The Bible tells you in 1 Timothy 6:10, “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after,”

“They have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” It is not money itself that is the root of all evil, but the love of money, which causes a multitude of sins, beginning with covetousness. We see it, and we want it. I know one man who told me to my face that his hobby was making money. He loved to make money because he loved money. The man is now dead, so I am sure none of his money helped him at all.

Pride is a basic root sin because it is in the life of every sinner, and it is pride that keeps us from seeking God. The Bible says in Psalm 10:4, “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.”

While preparing this message, I thought again of Trump's slogan, “Make America Great Again.” As I considered that slogan, I thought that we ought to define our words. Who is it that defines greatness? What is great according to the Word of God may not necessarily be great according to man, and what is great according to man is not necessarily great according to God and His Word. Simply because a nation is economically prosperous does not make it great in the sight of God. Neither does a huge military make it great in His sight. When greatness is considered from God's viewpoint, it would be humility and obedience, and perhaps trust and faith as well—not necessarily anything else. Clearly, the word “great,” or “greatness,” differs according to one's definition.

Associated with pride is what we call boasting. We fail to realize how often our tongue gets us into problems, not only with other people but with God Himself. James says of the tongue, “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” Have you ever gotten into trouble because of your tongue? The answer is yes. All of us have said things we wish we had never said. But do you realize that boasting is a sin? The Bible says that the tongue likes to boast.

James 4:13-17 says, "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." He said, "All such rejoicing is evil." Pride and boasting go together. We normally say, "I did this" or "I did that," or, "Look at me, look what I've done, look what I've accomplished." That is why Proverbs 27:1 says, "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

All men are sinners, but not all men necessarily have the same sins or the same propensity, although all are sinners. Some sins are more prominent in some men than in others. A miser is prone to covetousness, hoarding, and selfishness, but a spendthrift is not. Likewise, politicians are prone to pride because of their sense of power, authority, and control. They also believe somehow that God has ordained them to rule and the peasants to be ruled over. They therefore benefit because he happens to be at the top of the ladder. Politicians usually view the people as nothing but sheep who need to be shorn. All you have to do is look at what is coming out, especially with USAID and all of these programs that demonstrate how much we have been stolen from all these years.

Now Nebuchadnezzar was such a man as I just described. His pride was unwounded, even when God told him exactly what was going to happen, Daniel interpreted and explained the dream, and told him exactly what was going to happen. Here is what you should note: The truth did not affect Nebuchadnezzar at all. The truth did not change him. The truth did not move him. The truth did not humble him. In Daniel 4:4-5, he says, “I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.” So Nebuchadnezzar admits that a dream made him afraid and troubled him. Yet the truth is, they did not change him.

The word "afraid" means to cause fear, and the word "troubled" means to be frightened and alarmed. Nebuchadnezzar was frightened, alarmed, and fearful, and yet he never changed.

We see the same thing in relation to Felix. In Acts chapter 24, beginning in verse 24, the Apostle Paul witnessed to Felix: "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

The word "trembled" is the Greek word "emphobos," and it literally means to be thrown into a state of fear. It means to be terrified and frightened. At Paul's preaching, teaching, and witnessing, Felix was absolutely terrified, and yet it did not change him.

Here is a point that we must learn: Not all conviction is a saving conviction. Someone may be convicted and still remain unconverted. Fearfulness is insufficient in and of itself for change. If someone changes simply because of fearfulness, when the fearfulness leaves, so does the change. Nebuchadnezzar was frightened, yes, but he did not change.

Now look in Daniel chapter 4, beginning in verse 10: "Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; he cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and"

SCRIPTURE READING - Daniel 4:15-22 (KJV)

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Daniel's Counsel

> the fowls from his branches: nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. "Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him." Now "seven times" was just the Chaldean way of saying seven years. "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. This dream I Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now therefore, O Belteshazzar"—which is what he named Daniel—"declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee. Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonied for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth."

"And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field,

till seven times pass over him; this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule."

What is a watcher? What is a holy one? Not all of Daniel was written in Hebrew; some of it was written in Aramaic. The Aramaic word for a watcher is "eer," their word for an angel. A watcher is an angel; that is why they called him a holy one.

Daniel has not only interpreted the dream for Nebuchadnezzar; he has told Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation is to his enemies and what is going to happen to him. He is going to be driven insane for seven years, live like an ox, and eat grass like an ox. His hair is going to grow like birds' feathers, and his fingernails like birds' claws. It is a condition known as boanthropy, where a man actually lives as an animal. There have been people like that.

It is a form of insanity. Daniel has told Nebuchadnezzar everything about this dream, but he does a little bit more than that. In verse 27 he says, “Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.”

After interpreting the dream, Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, “What you need to do is repent. You need to learn what righteousness is. You need to learn to be obedient. This is my counsel to you. I’m telling you what God has ordained for you. If you want to save yourself a lot of heartache and trouble, you need simply to break off your sins. You need to stop this wickedness. You need to repent. You need to do that which God requires.”

The Fulfillment of Judgment on Nebuchadnezzar

So here is my question: God has given Nebuchadnezzar this dream, and Daniel has interpreted it. God has told Nebuchadnezzar what is going to happen, and Daniel has counseled him to repent and change his conduct. Did any of this affect Nebuchadnezzar? The answer is no.

Skip down to verse 28. “All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”

While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, “O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.” Take careful note of what the king was saying. Notice pride and boasting: “Is not this my house? Is not this my kingdom? Is not this my greatness? Is not this my power? Is not this my honour? I’ve done this.”

“This is mine. I built this.” Yet Scripture tells us that God gave everything into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. Holding Daniel chapter 4, turn back to Jeremiah chapter 27. This truth appears at least three times in Scripture. Jeremiah 27:4 says, “And command them to say unto their masters”—those representing the kings of these nations—“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's Sovereignty Over Rulers

God says in verse 8, “And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of

Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand."

Now the question is this: Who made Nebuchadnezzar great? Who gave Nebuchadnezzar all of his dominion, all of his honour, and all of his glory? The answer is God. God gave him everything. Yet in Daniel chapter 4 he says, "This is my kingdom. This is my palace. This is my honour. This is my glory." Why did God drive Nebuchadnezzar insane for seven years? What was the purpose of this insanity? Look in your Bibles to Daniel 4:17. I am going to show it to you at least three times in this one chapter. This is for our benefit as well, so pay close attention. Daniel 4:17 says, "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones:

Angels are spirit beings that wait on God's command and do as He commands. Why did they order this thing? "To the intent"—here is the reason—"to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." This happened to Nebuchadnezzar so that the living might know that God rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He pleases, and can set over it even the basest of men.

Verse 25 says, "And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

Nebuchadnezzar, you are going to learn this lesson. You are going to learn that God is sovereign and in control. Verse 32 repeats it: "And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

Rulers, as well as the people, must know who is in charge. They must understand that there is one Judge, one Lawgiver, and one King to whom they will give an answer. They are accountable. God is sovereign and has all power. It took seven years of insanity for Nebuchadnezzar to learn this one simple truth: God is in charge. God gives it to whomsoever He will.

Even before Nebuchadnezzar had this dream, he had already been given this truth. Daniel 2:20-21 says, "Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." God had already told him, "I'm in charge. I'm the one that puts up kings. I'm the one that takes down kings."

God says, “Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck.” That is, do not be haughty, arrogant, prideful, heady, or high-minded. Do not lift up your horn on high; do not speak with a stiff neck. I like the King Rhinoceros. Here is why: “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” God is the judge. He puts down one and sets up another. “I put you up, and I can take you down.” It is just that simple.

Now I want to give you a truth that you and I need to see, and we are going to see it in the next chapter. Hold Daniel 4 and go to Matthew 21:32. Our Lord is speaking to the Pharisees: “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 the Baptist came preaching righteousness, and they did not believe him. But the publicans, who were notorious thieves and tax collectors, and the harlots, impure and immoral women, believed him. They not only believed him; they changed. Remember Zacchaeus, the wee little man? When our Lord said, “Zacchaeus, come down; for to day I must abide at thy house,” he answered, “Lord, behold, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” Our Lord said, “This day is salvation come to this house.”

He was changed. The harlots were changed. But the Pharisees, when they had seen it—when they knew it—"repented not afterward, that ye might believe."

This verse teaches us that we are responsible and accountable to learn from the work of God in the lives of others. We are responsible and accountable to learn what God does in the lives of the unsaved. How is that? We see God's judgment and His curse upon them, and we see that we do not need to emulate their sins or their conduct. Then we look around, and here is the godly man; we see God's blessing upon him, and we are responsible to learn from God's blessings upon him. We are not to emulate the one, but we are to emulate the other. We are to learn whatever we can from what God does in the hearts and works of others.

Belshazzar's Pride and Fall

With that in mind, look in Daniel chapter 5. Nebuchadnezzar has just been dealt with—we are going to come back to him momentarily—but now we come to Belshazzar. Daniel 5:1 says, "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, and his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."

Nebuchadnezzar has learned his lesson, in one sense of the word. Belshazzar has not learned his lesson. He takes all the vessels that God had in the temple, captured by Nebuchadnezzar, and he, his

wives, concubines, and princes drink wine from them while praising all the false gods. Then a hand comes out and writes upon the plaster of the wall. Belshazzar was so terrified that his knees knocked together, his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one another. He was actually terrified, but it did not change him. So he called for all the soothsayers and magicians, but no one could interpret the writing on the wall.

Finally his queen said, “You know, I remember there was a man by the name of Daniel. He helped Nebuchadnezzar, your father, and he can probably help you, so you need to call Daniel.”

He said to Daniel, “And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.”

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.” So Daniel said, “I don’t want your gifts.”

“O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou”

Belshazzar had praised the gods of silver, gold, brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; but the God in whose hand his breath was, and whose were all his ways, he had not glorified. Then the part of the hand was sent from him, and the writing was written: "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." MENE: God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL: Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES: Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. Then Belshazzar commanded, and Daniel was clothed with scarlet, a chain of gold was put about his neck, and a proclamation was made that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Daniel had rebuked him thoroughly and interpreted the writing on the wall. John Gill, the great Baptist theologian, said that "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN" may be literally rendered, "He is numbered, he is numbered"—that is, God is certainly, perfectly, and exactly numbered. "He is weighed"—that is, God had weighed Belshazzar. "And they shall divide the kingdom"—that is, the Medes and the Persians. That was essentially the interpretation.

The reason for reading this is not merely to explain MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN, but to show the truth in verse 22. After Daniel told Belshazzar all that had happened to Nebuchadnezzar, he said, "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this." Belshazzar knew what had happened to his father. He knew the pride, arrogance, and haughtiness in Nebuchadnezzar's heart, in his own heart, and in the hearts of all those in positions of power. Yet it did not change him or move him.

The Hard Lesson of Pride

When someone is hardened in pride, truth does not shake him, experience does not convince him, history does nothing for him, and confrontation and rebuke are useless. He must learn the hard way. Nebuchadnezzar had to learn the hard way, and Belshazzar had to learn the hard way. When God finished with Nebuchadnezzar, he confessed: "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

He can bring you down. I learned that the hard way—from seven years of eating grass, and from seven years of not having a haircut or my nails trimmed. I learned it the hard way.

If you look in Daniel chapter 5, Belshazzar learned it the hard way as well. In verse 30: "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old." The very night he saw the hand and God said, "Your days are numbered. You've been weighed in the balances and you've been found wanting. I've divided your kingdom; the Medes and the Persians are getting it," he was slain.

So let me ask you a question: If God has judged the greatest, shall He not also judge the smallest? A man who steals two cents is just as much a thief as a man who steals two million. A man who has a little pride is just as guilty of pride as a man who has a lot of pride, because pride is an abomination to God. Pride is a stench in God's nostrils.

God's Purpose to Stain Pride

Nebuchadnezzar had to learn the hard way, and Belshazzar had to learn the hard way. You would think that, with all the corruption, theft, and fraud being exposed in our land today, somebody would say, "Wait a minute. I need to repent. I need to make things right. I need to give back what I can give." You would think that, but it does not happen. Do you think God is going to allow the petty thieves to escape? The answer is no.

Turn in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 23 and verse 9. Look at the purpose of God specifically, concerning pride and these rulers who are proud, haughty, arrogant, heady, and high-minded, who will not listen to God.

"The LORD of hosts hath purposed it"—what is he purposed?—"to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth." Those who think they are so honourable will be stained and brought into utter contempt, and many to everlasting contempt.

Do you remember that passage in Psalm 2? It is a beautiful psalm. It begins with a question: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people

imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed." It deals with the rebellion, arrogance, and pride of the kings of the earth—that is, the rulers, politicians, and leaders. When you come to the last two verses of Psalm 2, the Word of God gives this counsel to the kings and rulers:

"Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." You had better kiss the Son. You had better humble yourself and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ before you perish in the way.

There is another passage to consider in light of this. Think of the absolute arrogance of leaders, not just in America but throughout the world, who think they can do anything, escape, and get by with it. Look at how the people have been destroyed, and yet they think somehow they will escape God's judgment. Remember Philippians chapter 2, beginning with verse 5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion"

Christ's Humility as the Antidote

As a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When these arrogant, pride-filled rulers and individuals—they do not have to be rulers—face God in judgment, they will kneel. They will confess they should have loved him and served him. It will be too late, but they will confess it. God will stain the pride and bring all their supposed honour into contempt.

Applications: Replace Pride with Humility

Let me make some applications. Each one of us should be aware of the pride of our own hearts, and we should seek to displace it and replace it with humility and thankfulness. I could go to a conference and stand up and say, “I preached for 60 years.” But if I said it like that, would it not reek of a little bit of pride and boasting? Maybe a lot of pride and boasting.

But I could say the same thing another way: “I’m so thankful that Jesus Christ saved me and called me to preach and gave me life and health and the ability to study and proclaim his word. I want him to have all the honour and glory for the 60 years that I’ve preached.” Is there a difference between those two things? It is so easy and natural for you and me to boast and brag, and to claim everything for ourselves, when in reality everything we have is of him.

We should be thankful for our successes, our possessions, our families, and our lives. But let me put it to you very pointedly: Everything that you have right now, everything that you are right now, God gave you. Everything that you ever will have and everything that you ever will be will be because of God’s

God gives grace and mercy, and he receives all the honour and all the glory. What does God require of us? Micah 6:8 says, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" God wants us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

First John 2:15-17 says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The reason is this: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Note the pride of life, along with the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. It does not matter what we possess now. You may be the richest man in the entire world, or own more property than anyone else, but when you die, you will leave everything. This world and

everything in it passeth away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Conclusion: Warning and Prayer

Jonathan Edwards wrote: "Pride is a person having too high an opinion of himself. Pride is the first sin that ever entered into the universe and the last sin that is rooted out. Pride is the worst sin. It is the most secret of all sins. There is no matter in which the heart is more deceitful and unsearchable. Alas, how much pride the best have in their hearts. Pride is God's stubborn enemy. There is no sin so much like the devil as pride. It is a secret, subtle sin and appears in a great many shapes which are undetected and unsuspected."

If pride is God's great enemy, we need to do everything we can to banish it from our lives and from our hearts.

And do as Micah said: to love justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. Everything we are, everything we have, He gave us. We are what we are by the grace of God. Whatever we will be two years from now, we'll still be by the grace of God. He gets all the honour and all the glory. And so, one word to the world rulers and politicians: you shall not escape the righteous judgment of God. He will stain your pride and bring your depraved honour to the ground. And you will willingly confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The easy way out is to kiss the Son. Submit to him, lest he be angry with thee and you perish in the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. May God help us not to be proud and arrogant, but to be thankful and humble.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we pray today for your help, your grace, and your mercy. Lord, we pray especially today for Joshua, Felicia, and the children, that you would help them, supply their needs, and take care of them. We pray for healing for Joshua, and that the paralysis would only be temporary. Lord, have your will and your way, and give grace and mercy there. Thank you for sparing our lives, for protecting us during the storm, and for protecting us as we travel. Help us to honour thee in everything we say and do. In the name of Jesus Christ, we do pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 20

Do You Need to Eat Grass?

April 5, 2026

Introduction: The Question of Eating Grass

Let us open our Bibles to the book of Daniel, chapter 4. We will certainly come back to this passage. The title of the message is, Do You Need to Eat Grass? Notice Daniel chapter 4, verse 27. This is the counsel Daniel gave to King Nebuchadnezzar: “Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.”

My first question tonight is this: have you ever considered eating grass? I will make a statement that most people might object to, but it is certainly true, so do not throw a hymn book at me: most people, really and truly, even Christians, need to eat grass. You will see the intent and the impact of that statement a little later.

Literal Grass and Its Nutritional Value

But I must make it clear that when I am talking about eating grass, I mean real, genuine grass—the grass that grows in the woods and on

our lawns. I am not talking about drugs, by any stretch of the imagination, because some of those are also called grass.

You know that dogs eat grass. I see my dog grazing like cattle on newly grown grass in the woods. Dogs eat grass for a multitude of reasons. First, they may simply eat it for dietary fiber; they need roughage just as you and I do. Sometimes they eat it out of boredom or anxiety. Some people have suggested that dogs have a nutritional need met only by eating grass. At other times, I think they may eat it simply because they like its taste and texture.

I've often smiled when I've heard mothers encourage their children to drink their milk because they need the calcium. I wonder if they ever thought how the cows get the nutrients to make the milk, including its calcium. Of course, it comes from eating grass. Years ago, when I was preaching in Los Angeles, California, a pastor friend asked me to go to the health food store with him, and I consented. There he purchased a twelve-by-twelve plot of grass for ten dollars. This had to be thirty or forty years ago, which I thought was really exorbitant. I asked him why he bought it, and he said it was to make juice; he would show me when we got home. He took scissors, cut some grass close to the dirt, put the clippings in a little press, and mashed it. Out came about an ounce of juice, which he gave me to drink.

I drank it and thought, “Wow, this tastes just like wheatgrass or ryegrass or oatgrass.” I asked what kind of grass it was, and he said wheatgrass. “What? Wheatgrass? That’s what I plant for my cows. That’s what I plant for the deer in the woods. Have you paid ten dollars for this one little twelve-by-twelve plot?” I began thinking how much money I could make if I sold two acres of this at ten dollars for a little twelve-by-twelve plot.

Of course, I am not going to do that. You would have to be insane. Today it is probably closer to twenty dollars for someone to buy that in a health food store. But it is amazing how much grass and herbs are nutritional and good for us. Since that time, whenever I plant my wheat, rye, and oat grass, when it first comes up and gets a good couple of inches high, I work some of it off, put it in my mouth, chew it, get all the good juice and chlorophyll, spit the cud out, and keep going. It is astounding how much nutrition there is in a lot of grass.

Human Life Likened to Grass in Scripture

I gave you those illustrations so that you will know that this is not what I'm referring to by the title of this message. When I ask, “Do you need to eat grass?” it has another potent answer: yes, we need to eat grass unless we learn biblical humility.

Before I get to the body of the message, let me ask you another question. Have you ever considered your life in relationship to grass? I've been astounded at the Word of God, at how we are likened to grass over and over. If you will hold Daniel chapter 4 and turn back in your Bibles to Psalm 90, which was the Psalm of Moses, look at verse 5. The Bible says, “They are carried away as with a flood; they are as a sleep; in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.” Now look at verse 6: “In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth.” Here our life is likened to grass.

Turn over to Psalm 92 and look at verses 5 through 8: “O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever: But thou, LORD, art most high for evermore.” Now it's not just the wicked that are likened to grass; each of us are.

In Psalm 102, beginning with verse 11, the psalmist said, “My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass. But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.” Notice that he said, “I am withered like grass.” Now in Psalm 103, verses 15 and 16, again he says it like this: “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.”

It's astounding how many times this is repeated in the Word of God. Isaiah chapter 40, verses 6 through 8, continues this testimony.

The voice said, “Cry.” And he said, “What shall I cry?” “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD

bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

James says, "...but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways."

Peter quotes from Isaiah 40: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

When you think of grass, you think about its brevity and fragility. You can walk upon grass, stomp it, kill it, break it, bruise it, and do all kinds of things to it. Here is a picture not only of our weakness, fragility, and impotence, but also of the brevity of our lives. When the sun arises in its heat, the grass is gone. That is true. It grows up in the morning and is dead in the evening.

In Psalm 90, our lives are likened unto a flood, which is over with very quickly, and then a tale that is told, and then there is a sleep. It is astounding how you can lie down to sleep, get perhaps eight hours of sleep, and when you wake up it seems like just a few minutes have passed. It is over with very quickly.

In Job 20:8, Job describes our lives as a dream. How long does a dream last? It can be just moments or seconds, but it is over with very quickly. And in James 4:14, he describes our life as a vapor: "What is your life but as a vapor?"

The Worthlessness of the Flesh

It appears for a little while and then it is gone. So it should be exceedingly humbling to us when you think that our lives are compared to grass, to a tale, to a dream, to a vapor. Everything is over with very quickly.

I think there is another application that shows you the absolute worthlessness of our flesh. In other words, grass does not please God, and our flesh cannot please God. You must remember Romans chapter 8, verses 6 through 8, where the Word of God says, "For to

be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Then he says, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Now listen: "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Wow.

John Gill, the great Baptist commentator and preacher, made a comment on "all flesh is grass." I would like to read the two paragraphs to you, and one part of this should really make you sit up and take notice. Listen to what he says: "All men are born of corruptible seed, are frail, mortal, and perishing; they spring up like grass and look beautiful for a while, but are very weak and tender, and in a little time they are cut down by death and wither away; and while they live are, in a good measure, nothing but grass in another form."

The substance of their life is greatly by it. What is the flesh they eat but grass turned into it? Think about that good steak that you just ate. That steak was made by grass.

He said, "in this mortality is not only the case of wicked men, but of good men, even of prophets and preachers of the gospel. And yet the word of God spoken by them continues forever." Then he makes his comment, "and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass." He says, "all those things which are in esteem with men, and render them glorious one to another, as riches, honor, wisdom, strength, external righteousness, external holiness, and external goodness, all which are fading and transitory, like the flower of the field. But the gospel continues and reveals durable riches and honor with Christ, and true wisdom and strength with him, and spiritual knowledge in comparison of which all things are dross and dung, and an everlasting righteousness and true holiness in him."

Some have thought respect may be had to the legal dispensation—that is, the ceremonies of the temple, and all the glory and stateliness and goodliness of its worship and ordinances, which were to endure but for a time and are now removed. But the gospel has taken its place and will continue to the end of the world. It is true that everything we have is transitory.

It is here, and it is gone. That is why those multi-millionaires were jumping out of their windows in 1929 and ’30 and committing suicide, because everything they had was taken away instantly.

Nebuchadnezzar's Pride and Humbling

Do you need to eat grass?

Would it not be humbling to have nothing to eat but grass? If I came to your house and you invited me for supper, and then you served me a plate of nothing but grass, while you had nothing but grass yourself, that would truly be humbling. What would you think if you had to eat grass for seven years? Think about eating grass for seven years: no meat, no vegetables, no chocolate, no ice cream, no desserts whatsoever—nothing but grass.

When you look back in Daniel chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar was a proud, arrogant, haughty monarch. He refused to listen to Daniel, the prophet of God. He refused to listen to God when he refused to listen to Daniel. He refused repentance. He refused humility. He refused submission to God. Daniel, of course, gave him good counsel. He told the king, “to break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.”

The sin of pride has historically been the sin of kings, rulers, politicians, and basically anyone trusted with any power or authority whatsoever. Zedekiah was the last man to be king before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed him and Jerusalem. His example shows that pride was not limited to Nebuchadnezzar; it also brought down those who ruled after him.

Jeremiah preached to Zedekiah and the queen in Jeremiah chapter 13, beginning with verse 15. He said, “Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken.” In other words, do not be lifted up with pride; be not proud, for the LORD has spoken. He continued, “Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.”

Then he said, “But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock is carried away captive. Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down: for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory.” Jeremiah warned both the king and the queen that their principalities and crown would come down. If you do not humble yourself and submit, everything is coming down.

Consider King Zedekiah, the man in charge of Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar took it. Second Chronicles 36:11-14 says, "Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem."

Zedekiah refused to hear the prophet Jeremiah. In refusing to hear Jeremiah, he refused to hear God himself.

The problem with pride is not simply the problem with kings, rulers, princes, and politicians; it is our problem as well. The sin of pride is the sin of practically every man and every Christian. We are proud in so many different ways. We are proud of our works, our accomplishments, how we live, and what we do. You may say, "I live for the Lord and serve the Lord. I do this and I do that." I am thankful for that, and you should be doing that.

The Sin of Pride in All People

But may I remind you of Isaiah 26:12: "LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." Any good thing in us is from God. It is God who works it in us. It is God who gives us the mind, the ability, and the desire.

In and of ourselves, in our flesh, we can do absolutely nothing to please our Heavenly Father. Remember the passage in Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence," and then, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." He is not telling the Philippians to earn their salvation, neither is he saying that salvation is by works. When he says, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," it must be understood in light of verse 13: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

God puts the to will in us, and God puts the to do in us. Any time we will to do that which is right, holy, godly, obedient, submissive, and humble, it is God who put it in us. It would not be in us by nature. Once God puts it in us, he requires us to work it out—that is, to bring it forth into application in our lives.

In 1 Corinthians 4:7, the apostle Paul asks three questions, and I want you to consider them. The first is this: "For who maketh thee to differ from another?" Stop and think about that. Who makes you to differ from another? Why is it that you are saved while you have family and friends who are not saved? Why is it that you understand truth while family and friends do not understand truth? Why are you healthy while some of your family and friends are deathly sick? Why do you have certain abilities while others do not? Who makes you to differ?

Obviously, the answer is God. The second question is, "And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Stop and think about this. Even your intellect was given to you by God. You say, "But I studied." Who gave you the ability to study, to understand, to comprehend, and to apply? Everything you have, God gave you. He gave you life. He gave you health. He gives you breath. If you do not believe that, just let him withhold your breath and see how long you can continue.

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” This is the third one: “Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” In other words, if God gave it to us, it was not ours. It was not in us by nature. And we have no right to glory in ourselves and say, “I can do

this," or, "I have this," or, "This is my specialty." No, no, no. Everything we have is from God.

Let me point something out. God hates pride. God condemns pride. But our flesh loves pride. The problem with pride is not just that it adheres to people like Zedekiah and Nebuchadnezzar; it goes to all of us. Jeremiah chapter 13, verse 10, says, "This evil people, which refuse to hear my words." Why do they refuse? Pride, arrogance, haughtiness, headiness, and being high-minded. "This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing."

God's Hatred and War Against Pride

The truth of the matter is this: we usually take pride in everything we do the wrong way. We take pride in our accomplishments, not even thinking that it was God who gave us the desire, the wisdom, and the strength to do it, even if it was done for Him. It is our failure to recognize Him, acknowledge Him, and honor Him in this area that actually results in stealing His honor and glory.

What did He say in Isaiah? "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." So when God says He is not going to share His glory with another, that other would even include you; it would include me. So many times, we just become extremely proud and prideful. I have said this before: I do not have television, do not watch television, and do not care for television.

But somewhere years ago, I was in a building and the television was on. The Simpsons were on that cartoonish program, and it was Thanksgiving. Here was a little child saying, "Why should we thank God for this food? We bought this turkey. We cooked this dinner." That is utter blasphemy. If God had not given you the means to purchase it, you would be without. If God had not given you the intellect to cook and prepare it, you would have done without.

We oftentimes are arrogant and haughty like the king of Assyria. Turn back in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 10. God did use the king

of Assyria to subdue and break the Northern Kingdom, that is, Israel. Isaiah 10:5 says, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets."

"Howbeit he, the Assyrian, meaneth not so; neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few."

God is saying, "I'm sending the Assyrians. I'm giving them a charge." But he does not mean to obey God, serve God, or do God's will. The only reason he is going is to rape and rob and kill and plunder. That is it.

Now skip down to verse 12 and see what God says He will do to the king of Assyria: "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks."

God is going to punish him for doing what He sent him to do. He sent him to do it, but the man did not mean to obey God or honor God. Here was his attitude: "For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped."

Now look what God asks: "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood. Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of

his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standardbearer fainteth."

God said, "I'm going to destroy Assyria." Why? It was by His hand. The king claimed, "My might. My prudence. My wisdom. I did this." But it was all God, and God fought against the king of Assyria.

The sin of pride has to be rooted out of our lives. If you examine your life, you will find many times that things happen and God blesses; then, before you know it, you are singing God's honor and glory while thinking it was you. But it was not you. It was all God.

When you hook a water hose to the spigot, water runs through it and waters the garden, producing a great harvest. What if the hose said, "Without me, the water is nothing"? The hose is nothing. The hose is only a vessel. The water is everything.

Remember what the Apostle Paul said: we have this treasure in earthen vessels. You can take a pitcher and pour some of the best lemonade you've ever seen, and the pitcher can boast and say, "I'm holding this lemonade and I'm pouring out this lemonade." It is not the pitcher that is nourishing; it is the lemonade. But so many times we turn everything around. What did the Apostle Paul say in 1 Corinthians chapter 3? He said, "One sows and one waters, but God gives the increase." So neither is he that soweth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. Look at our churches that boast of all their numbers, all their programs, and all their buildings. Look at Christians that boast all the time, and they never stop to think that it is God who gives us everything.

So we are kind of like the two monks I saw in a cartoon years ago. They were walking side by side in their robes, with their hands up their sleeves. One monk looked at the other monk and said, "You know, it kind of makes you proud that we're so humble, doesn't it?" That's it.

Now, I want you to follow up with me in some Scriptures. I want to show you some passages, and I am going to start making an application back to our text momentarily. Look in the book of Proverbs, chapter 8, and notice verse 13: "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." What is the fear of the Lord? It is to hate evil. Part

of that evil is pride and arrogancy—not just the evil way and the froward mouth, but pride and arrogancy.

Look in Proverbs 11 and verse 2: “When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.” Pride always produces shame. Maybe that is why the Sodomites have their gay pride month, because it is nothing but shame. Look in Proverbs 13 and verse 10: “Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.” Fussing, fighting, and feuding come from pride. “I don't like what you said to me.” Why is it that you don't like what I said to you? “Because it hurt my feelings.” He says again, “Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.” Look in Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 3.

I hope you're astonished at how many times God speaks about this. "In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them." Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 29:23 says, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

The Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:6, "Not a novice," that is, a neophyte, a newbie, a beginner, "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." He is talking about preachers: "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

Consider 1 John 2:15-16: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

So let me put it to you very plainly. Humility is the opposite of pride. Humility is hearkening unto, submitting unto, and obeying the Word of God. Daniel is interpreting the dream for Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:22: "It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and

saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him." Seven times is simply the Chaldean way of saying seven years.

Daniel says, “This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.”

Here was Daniel’s counsel: “Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.” Daniel counseled Nebuchadnezzar to repent, to break off his transgressions, submit to God in His law, and evidence that submission by showing mercy.

Did he listen? The answer is no, a thousand times no. “All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.” Everything Daniel told him came upon him. “At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” Pride, arrogance, and haughtiness filled his words.

“While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

"The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." Nebuchadnezzar was driven insane for seven years. He lived like an animal, ate grass, and watched his hair grow like bird's feathers and his fingernails like bird's claws. It is a condition known as lycanthropy, where a man lives and even begins to look like an animal.

The breaking of pride, especially among God's people, is an act brought upon us by the curse in Leviticus 26:18–20. God said to His people, "And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits." God said, "I will break the pride of your power." That is exactly what He did to Nebuchadnezzar.

You have heard the old adage, "Different strokes for different folks." God knows exactly what it will take to break you, to humble you, and to bring you to the end of yourself. He knows what will take away our pride, arrogance, haughtiness, and self-confidence. We may end up losing everything, a member of our family, our spouse, or even our mind. We may have nothing to eat or wear for seven years. God knows exactly what it will take.

Nebuchadnezzar turned the hard way. Daniel told him what to do, "if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility," but he would not listen. That is one of our greatest sins: we simply will not listen. So God drove him insane for seven years.

God Resists the Proud

Now look at verse 34. "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High." He knew that previously, but now he was ready. "And I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth

according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

Didn't he begin as they learn? Yes. Did he learn the hard way? Yes. So you and I, as his children, have an opportunity to learn the easy way rather than the hard way. Let me make some truths and some applications concerning this lesson and concerning pride. Here is number one: the truth concerning God and pride. God not only hates it, He not only despises it, He not only condemns it, He actually fights against it. So when you are proud, and you express your pride, you are engaging God as an enemy.

James chapter 4, verse 6, says, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." Now I want you to note that word resisted. God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace unto the humble.

First Peter chapter 5 and verse 5 says, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." The word resisteth in James chapter 4 and verse 6 and the word resisteth in 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 5 happen to be the same exact Greek word, antitassomai.

To resist means to rage in battle against, to oppose, and to make war against. When it says that God resisteth the proud, God rages in battle against the proud. He makes war against the proud. He despises pride, hates pride, condemns pride, and wars against pride. Let this truth sink in: if you want God to fight against you, continue in your pride, and you will have God as your enemy.

You say, “But I’m His child.” You will still have God as your enemy because of your pride and sin. We realize that three times in the New Testament, our Lord warned against pride and its consequences.

Matthew 23:12 says, “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” If you want to exalt yourself and lift yourself up, God can bring you down. Then He said in Luke 14:11, “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

One more time He said it in Luke 18:14, speaking about the publican: “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Here is my second application: if you do not mind being abased, eating grass, or God having to wage war against you, continue to walk in pride, arrogance, and haughtiness. You will face the sovereign God who will make war against you, and He never loses. He always wins. If, however, you desire peace with God, His blessings upon you, and a walk pleasing in His sight, then you must walk humbly with Him in faith and obedience. Micah 6:8 says, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”

Walking Humbly with God

So how do we walk humbly with our God? With submission and obedience.

We must remember this: He is the Father, and we are the child. Every father in this room has given an order, command, or direction to his child. When the child gets older, he says, “Why?” and daddy says, “Because I said so.” Daddy says, “I’m the head of this house. I’m the authority.” When God gives us directions in His Word, we must obey them because He said so.

Secondly, He is the Lord, and we are the servant or the slave. We are duty-bound and obligated to obey Him. Thirdly, He is the Creator, and we are the creature. Fourthly, He is the Potter, and we are the clay. In each instance, He has the absolute right to direct our lives, order us, command us, dictate to us, direct us, or do as He pleases. He is the Father, the Lord, the Creator, and the Potter. We simply need to obey.

Isn't that simple? If we just submit and obey. Remember that song we used to sing, "Trust and Obey"? "For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." That is really the secret of the Christian life: submission, trusting, and obedience.

God hates pride and fights against it. I do not want to eat grass. I don't want God fighting against me. I want to walk pleasing in His sight. I want to double-check myself, confess pride, fight against pride, and deny pride. I recognize that everything I am, everything I have, everything I ever will be, everything I ever will have, and everything I ever will do is only by His grace, mercy, and strength. I don't eat grass, do you?

Here is something I hope will help each of us: We must remember that He is the Father, and we are the child. Every father in this room has given an order, command, or direction to his child. When the child gets older, he says, "Why?" And daddy says, "Because I said so." Daddy says, "I'm the head of this house; I'm the authority." When God gives us directions in His Word, we must obey them because He said so.

Secondly, He is the Lord, and we are the servant or the slave. We are duty-bound and obligated to obey Him. Thirdly, He is the Creator, and we are the creature. Fourthly, He is the Potter, and we are the clay. In each instance, He has the absolute right to direct our lives, order us, command us, dictate to us, or do as He pleases. He is the Father, the Lord, the Creator, and the Potter, and we simply need to obey.

Isn't that simple? If we submit and obey. Remember that song we used to sing, "Trust and Obey"? For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. That is really the secret of the Christian life: submission, trusting, and obedience. God hates pride and fights against it. I do not want to eat grass. I do not want God fighting against me. I want to walk pleasing in His sight. I want to double-check myself, confess pride, fight against pride, and deny pride.

Everything I am, everything I have, everything I ever will be, ever will have, or ever will do is only by His grace, mercy, and strength. I don't eat grass, do you?

Source Notes

Chapter 1: Keeping the Heart
JW01096 | 2000-10-01 | SermonAudio

Chapter 2: The Reason for Wars
JW00894 | 2007-01-28 | SermonAudio

Chapter 3: Jefferson Davis Revisited
JW00830 | 2008-06-29 | YouTube

Chapter 4: Trembling at the Word of God
JW00818 | 2008-08-24 | SermonAudio

Chapter 5: The Excommunication of Christ
JW00688 | 2011-08-14 | SermonAudio

Chapter 6: Keeping Your Heart
JW00594 | 2013-12-11 | SermonAudio

Chapter 7: Turning Love Into Hate
JW01393 | 2015-07-07 | YouTube

Chapter 8: Has The Lord Spoken To You?
JW01520 | 2018-11-21 | YouTube

Chapter 9: Keeping the Heart
JW00392 | 2018-12-05 | SermonAudio

Chapter 10: Lessons Learned From The Omnipotence Of God
JW01526 | 2019-01-06 | YouTube

Chapter 11: Why You Are Still Alive
JW01566 | 2020-01-23 | YouTube

Chapter 12: Are You Praising The Wrong God?
JW01571 | 2020-04-11 | YouTube

Chapter 13: The Rise And Fall Of A Tyrant
JW01582 | 2020-07-11 | YouTube

Chapter 14: It's The Mind, Stupid
JW01609 | 2021-03-09 | YouTube

Chapter 15: One More Time
JW00251 | 2021-10-24 | SermonAudio

Chapter 16: The Cure For The Sin Of Pride
JW01666 | 2022-07-05 | YouTube

Chapter 17: The Earthly Comprehensiveness of Christ's Prayer
JW00204 | 2022-08-25 | SermonAudio

Chapter 18: The Power Of The Mind
JW01708 | 2023-06-27 | YouTube

Chapter 19: Pride - The Particular Sin of Rulers
JW01796 | 2025-08-10 | YouTube

Chapter 20: Do You Need to Eat Grass?
JW00007 | 2026-04-05 | SermonAudio

Topical Index

Chapter titles and section headings are listed with the pages on which they begin.

A

A Clear Command: 'Keep Thy Heart with All Diligence' p. 12, p. 170

A Personal Responsibility: You Keep Your Heart p. 176

Ability and Responsibility p. 116

Ability and Responsibility: God's Work and Man's Agency p. 179

An Explanatory Reason: 'For Out of It Are the Issues of Life' p. 184

Application: Praising the True God Daily p. 243

Application: Trusting and Asking According to His Power p. 207

Applications p. 352

Applications and Conclusion p. 84

Applications and Warnings p. 278

Applications: Consequences of Forsaking God p. 49

Applications: Daily Thanksgiving for Mercies p. 223

Applications: Fellowship with the Excommunicated Christ p. 104

Applications: God Humbles the Proud and His Word Prevails p. 259

Applications: Hearing God's Voice Today p. 165

Applications: Heart-Keeping for Obedience, Evidence, Worship, and Dependence on God p. 123

Applications: Obedience, Sincerity, and Duty p. 186

Applications: Replace Pride with Humility p. 372

Applications: Requirements and Evidences p. 29

Applications: Thankfulness and Reliance on Grace p. 318

Are You Praising The Wrong God? p. 227

Are You Praising the Wrong God? p. 227

B

Bearing Christ's Reproach p. 104

Belshazzar's Failure to Learn from History p. 232

Belshazzar's Pride and Fall p. 367

Biblical Definition: Ruling Without God p. 248

Biblical Evidence: Heart and Mind Interchangeable p. 342
Biblical Principle: God Raises Adversaries When Ways Displease Him p. 37
Biblical Roles and Particular Sins in Marriage p. 350
Biblical Warnings Against Pride p. 305
Blame-Shifting and Self-Control p. 118

C

Christ Excommunicated by His Professing People p. 89
Christ's Humility as the Antidote p. 371
Christ's Position: Outside the Gate and Without the Camp p. 91
Cognitive Warfare: The New Threat p. 289
Comprehensiveness and Application p. 335
Conclusion and Prayer p. 338
Conclusion: Make Your Praise Count for the True God p. 244
Conclusion: Revisiting Davis and Reclaiming Principles p. 66
Conclusion: The Blessing of a Kept Heart p. 188
Conclusion: True Peace Only Through the Prince of Peace p. 51
Conclusion: Warning and Prayer p. 373
Constitutional and Biblical Basis for Lawful Authority p. 246
Controlling the Mind and Thinking on What Is Good p. 277
Controlling Thoughts p. 114

D

David's Exile and Michal's Forced Marriage p. 135
Defining the Heart as the Mind p. 13
Definition and Manifestations of Pride p. 304
Disregarding the Examples of History p. 232
Do You Need to Eat Grass? p. 375

E

Everything Begins in the Mind p. 274
Everything We Have Is a Gift from God p. 311
Ezekiel's Vision of Idolatry in the Chambers of Imagery p. 263

F

First Petition: 'Our Father' and Hallowing God's Name p. 326

First Reason for War: Wickedness of Civil Rulers p. 40

G

God Can Withdraw Mercy p. 218
God Is Able to Abase Those Who Walk in Pride p. 194
God Resists the Proud p. 306, p. 388
God Speaks Through His Prophets and Preachers p. 155
God Upholds His Failing Servants p. 200
God's Compassion in Sending Preachers p. 160
God's Design for Marriage p. 141
God's Disregard for Temples and Buildings p. 73
God's Escape Route p. 293
God's Full and Final Revelation in Christ and Scripture p. 150
God's Hatred and War Against Pride p. 383
God's Omnipotent Acts in 1 Samuel 2 p. 193
God's Purpose to Stain Pride p. 370
God's Sovereignty Over Life and Death p. 257
God's Sovereignty Over Rulers p. 364
God's Work and Man's Agency p. 22

H

Has The Lord Spoken To You? p. 149
Has the Lord Spoken to You? p. 149
He Must Increase, I Must Decrease p. 317
Heaven's Standard and Our Response p. 334
Human Life Likened to Grass in Scripture p. 377

I

Idolatry as Walking After One's Own Imagination p. 230
Idolatry Begins with Wrong Thoughts About God p. 269
Implications of God's Transcendence (Isaiah 66:1) p. 70
Introduction and Context p. 321
Introduction and Definition of Tyranny p. 245
Introduction and Personal Anecdote p. 53
Introduction and Scripture Reading p. 127
Introduction and Text p. 69

Introduction: Pride as a Root Sin p. 302, p. 356
Introduction: Teaching the Same Truths Again p. 281
Introduction: The Concept of Excommunication p. 87
Introduction: The Difficulty and Necessity of Keeping the Heart p. 169
Introduction: The Difficulty of First and Last Sermons p. 107
Introduction: The Importance of Keeping the Heart p. 11
Introduction: The Importance of the Mind p. 263
Introduction: The Obligation to Praise the True God p. 227
Introduction: The Omnipotence of God Defined p. 191
Introduction: The Problem of Marital Breakdown p. 340
Introduction: The Question of Eating Grass p. 375
Introduction: The Question of God Speaking p. 149
Introduction: The Unrecognized Danger of Sin p. 209
Introduction: War as Advancement of Politics and Religion p. 33
It's The Mind, Stupid p. 263

J

Jefferson Davis Revisited p. 53
Jefferson Davis: A Christian Statesman p. 54
Jeremiah's Suffering and Hope p. 211

K

Keeping Certain Things Out and In p. 177
Keeping Out Evil and Keeping In Good p. 21
Keeping the Heart p. 11, p. 107, p. 169, p. 285
Keeping Your Heart p. 107

L

Lesson 1: He Is Able to Abase Those That Walk in Pride p. 194
Lesson 2: He Is Able to Deliver in Unique Ways p. 198
Lesson 3: He Is Able to Uphold His Failing and Faltering Servants p. 200
Lesson 4: He Is Able to Succor Those That Are Tempted p. 202
Lesson 5: He Is Able to Save to the Uttermost p. 203
Lesson 6: He Is Able to Subdue All Things to Himself p. 204
Lessons Learned From The Omnipotence Of God p. 191
Lessons Learned from the Omnipotence of God p. 191

Literal Grass and Its Nutritional Value p. 375
Looking Beyond Circumstances p. 216

M

Manasseh's Wickedness and God's Speech p. 152
Michal's Contempt for David p. 138
Michal's Despisement of David p. 345
Michal's Love and Protection of David p. 133
Michal's Pride and David's Rebuke p. 143
Michal's Wrong Perception and Its Consequences p. 348
Modern Federal Coercion and the Loss of Fighting Spirit p. 61

N

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Daniel's Counsel p. 362
Nebuchadnezzar's Pride and Humbling p. 380
New Testament Ambassadors in Christ's Stead p. 163
New Testament Emphasis on the Mind p. 174

O

Obedience as Evidence of God's Kingdom p. 329
Obedience as the Evidence of Trembling p. 82
Observations on Christ's Prayer Life p. 322
Old Testament Parallels: Empty Rituals and Rejection of God p. 92
One More Time p. 281
Out of the Heart Proceed Actions p. 115
Outside the Camp p. 100

P

Parallels Between 1861 and 2008 p. 56
Perception vs. Facts p. 342
Personal Responsibility to Keep the Heart p. 19
Personal Responsibility: You Keep Your Heart p. 113
Practical Applications p. 352
Practical Applications and Warnings p. 296
Practical Applications for Marriage p. 145
Prayer and the Opening of Hearts p. 31

Pride - The Particular Sin of Rulers p. 355
Pride Deceives and Hardens p. 358
Pride Originates in the Heart p. 302
Pride Produces Envy and Other Sins p. 307
Pride Produces Other Sins p. 357
Pride: The Particular Sin of Rulers p. 356
Principles of Persecution and the Head of the Church p. 252
Psychological Operations (PSYOPs) p. 289

Q

Quotes on Despotism and COVID-19 Tyranny p. 247

R

Rejecting Sound Doctrine Rejects Christ p. 90
Rejoicing in Others' Successes p. 314
Resolving Conflict and Avoiding Bitterness p. 351
Ruling One's Own Spirit p. 26

S

Saul's Deception and Attempts to Kill David p. 129
Secession as a Right, Not Rebellion p. 59
Second and Third Petitions: Kingdom and Will p. 328
Second Reason for War: Wickedness of the Common People p. 46
Suffering Can Be God's Mercy, Not Judgment p. 214

T

Taking God's Mercies for Granted p. 210
Taking Responsibility for Reactions p. 181
The Battle for the Mind p. 17
The Bible as God's Voice p. 158
The Biblical Meaning of the Heart p. 139
The Blueprint Analogy p. 112
The Certainty of Divine Judgment p. 241
The Clear Command: Keep Thy Heart p. 107
The Constitution as a Flaunting Lie p. 65
The Contrite Spirit Defined p. 78

The Cure For The Sin Of Pride p. 301
The Cure for the Sin of Pride p. 301
The Cure: John the Baptist's Humility p. 309
The Danger of Adding to God's Word p. 151
The Danger of an Evil Heart of Unbelief p. 24
The Danger of Building a Case in the Mind p. 143
The Danger of Worshiping a God of Imagination p. 229
The Depth of the Lord's Prayer p. 325
The Earthly Comprehensiveness of Christ's Prayer p. 321
The Excommunication of Christ p. 87
The Explanatory Reason: 'For Out of It Are the Issues of Life' p. 26
The Explanatory Reason: Issues of Life p. 120
The Failure of a Tyrant: Peter's Miraculous Escape p. 254
The Fall of a Tyrant: Herod's Death p. 258
The Fulfillment of Judgment on Nebuchadnezzar p. 364
The Fury of a Tyrant: Herod's Persecution p. 250
The Hard Lesson of Pride p. 369
The Heart as Mind and Conscience p. 111
The Heart Defined as the Mind and Understanding p. 171
The Heart Is the Mind p. 270, p. 282
The Imagination of the Evil Heart in Jeremiah p. 272
The Imagination Precedes the Image p. 267
The Irreducible Minimum: Rebellion Toward God and His Law p. 36
The Love Story of David and Michal p. 128
The Man to Whom God Looks p. 76
The Meaning of 'Mercies' and 'Compassions' p. 213
The Mind as the Battleground p. 341
The Mind of Christ and Spiritual Warfare p. 295
The Nature of Lawful Resistance p. 58
The Necessity of a Virtuous People p. 63
The Need to Be Taught to Pray p. 324
The Old Paths and Biblical Principles p. 57
The Performance: Bearing His Reproach p. 102
The Person: Coming to Christ, Not a System p. 99

The Place: Without the Camp—Separation from the World p. 100
The Plea: Go Forth to Christ Outside the Camp p. 98
The Power of the Mind p. 339
The Power Of The Mind p. 339
The Power of the Mind to Transform Relationships p. 352
The Reason for Wars p. 33, p. 34
The Rise And Fall Of A Tyrant p. 245
The Rise and Fall of a Tyrant p. 245
The Sin of Pride and Lifting Oneself Against God p. 238
The Sin of Pride in All People p. 381
The Still Small Voice vs. Spectacular Expectations p. 153
The Tabernacle Without the Camp: A Type of Christ p. 94
The Third Application p. 30
The Wickedness of Civil Rulers p. 40
The Wickedness of King Ahaz as a Case Study p. 39
The Will of God and His Law p. 332
The Worthlessness of the Flesh p. 378
Trembling at the Word of God p. 69
Turning Love Into Hate p. 127

W

Walking Humbly with God p. 390
What Is the Heart? p. 109
What It Means to Tremble at God's Word p. 79
Why Christ Suffered Without the Gate p. 95
Why You Are Still Alive p. 209

Scripture Index

Scripture references identified in chapter readings, headings, and manuscript text are listed with their page locations.

Genesis

Genesis 6 p. 286

Genesis 6:5 p. 13, p. 14, p. 139, p. 171, p. 173, p. 270, p. 343

Genesis 11 p. 37

Genesis 27 p. 13, p. 14, p. 173, p. 286

Genesis 27:41 p. 14, p. 139, p. 171, p. 172, p. 270, p. 271, p. 343

Genesis 32:10 p. 210

Exodus

Exodus 5:1 p. 304

Exodus 33 p. 94, p. 95

Exodus 33:7 p. 94, p. 95

Leviticus

Leviticus 19:32 p. 53, p. 57

Leviticus 26:18-20 p. 388

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 18 p. 309

Deuteronomy 29:18 p. 357

Deuteronomy 29:29 p. 151, p. 332

Deuteronomy 32 p. 205, p. 206

Deuteronomy 32:17 p. 229

Judges

Judges 6:6 p. 160, p. 161

1 Samuel

1 Samuel 2 p. 193

1 Samuel 2:1-10 p. 191

1 Samuel 12:14 p. 158

1 Samuel 13 p. 79

1 Samuel 14:15 p. 79

1 Samuel 15:22 p. 93
1 Samuel 17 p. 302, p. 303
1 Samuel 18:16 p. 128
1 Samuel 19 p. 346
1 Samuel 25 p. 135

2 Samuel

2 Samuel 6 p. 128, p. 138, p. 139
2 Samuel 6:12-23 p. 339
2 Samuel 23 p. 336

1 Kings

1 Kings 8:27 p. 71, p. 72
1 Kings 11 p. 37
1 Kings 19 p. 153

2 Kings

2 Kings 17 p. 48
2 Kings 17:23 p. 157
2 Kings 18:12 p. 158
2 Kings 21:10 p. 157
2 Kings 21:7 p. 266
2 Kings 24:2 p. 157

2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles 6 p. 73, p. 74
2 Chronicles 16 p. 12
2 Chronicles 16:9 p. 108
2 Chronicles 27 p. 39
2 Chronicles 28 p. 42, p. 43, p. 45
2 Chronicles 28:1-6,16-25 p. 33
2 Chronicles 28:16 p. 49
2 Chronicles 28:19 p. 50
2 Chronicles 28:6 p. 46
2 Chronicles 32 p. 303
2 Chronicles 33:10 p. 152

2 Chronicles 36 p. 160
2 Chronicles 36:11-14 p. 381
2 Chronicles 36:15 p. 161

Ezra

Ezra 10:1-3 p. 81, p. 82

Nehemiah

Nehemiah 9:31 p. 224

Job

Job 14:1-5 p. 257
Job 20:8 p. 378
Job 21 p. 276, p. 277
Job 42:2 p. 192

Psalm

Psalm 2 p. 45, p. 46, p. 47, p. 370, p. 371
Psalm 2:11 p. 83
Psalm 10:2 p. 305
Psalm 10:4 p. 305, p. 359
Psalm 21:8-9 p. 205
Psalm 23 p. 224
Psalm 24 p. 73
Psalm 24:1 p. 336
Psalm 25:6 p. 217
Psalm 31:15 p. 198
Psalm 33 p. 229
Psalm 34 p. 78
Psalm 37 p. 206
Psalm 37:7 p. 206
Psalm 37:7-15,34-35 p. 205
Psalm 40 p. 333
Psalm 40:11 p. 217, p. 218
Psalm 43:1 p. 198
Psalm 46 p. 236

Psalm 47 p. 236
Psalm 50 p. 73, p. 76, p. 77, p. 241, p. 242
Psalm 51 p. 78
Psalm 62:11 p. 193
Psalm 66:18 p. 30, p. 125, p. 187
Psalm 69 p. 212
Psalm 69:9 p. 102, p. 103
Psalm 73 p. 159, p. 205, p. 206
Psalm 74:20 p. 268
Psalm 75 p. 248, p. 313, p. 314
Psalm 77 p. 216
Psalm 78 p. 207
Psalm 82:4 p. 198
Psalm 82:6-7 p. 258
Psalm 89 p. 73
Psalm 90 p. 159, p. 377, p. 378
Psalm 91 p. 299
Psalm 92 p. 377
Psalm 92:2 p. 221
Psalm 94 p. 276, p. 277
Psalm 102 p. 377
Psalm 103 p. 222, p. 377
Psalm 103:20 p. 329, p. 334
Psalm 103:8 p. 218
Psalm 110 p. 91, p. 159, p. 205
Psalm 115 p. 231
Psalm 115:3 p. 71
Psalm 116:10 p. 284, p. 342, p. 343
Psalm 116:15 p. 224, p. 257
Psalm 116:5 p. 218
Psalm 119:113 p. 278
Psalm 119:58 p. 217, p. 218
Psalm 132 p. 73, p. 74
Psalm 138 p. 85

Psalm 139:1-12 p. 72

Psalm 145 p. 215, p. 216

Psalm 145:13 p. 44, p. 45

Proverbs

Proverbs 4 p. 107, p. 121, p. 169, p. 170

Proverbs 4:19 p. 268

Proverbs 4:23 p. 12, p. 16, p. 27, p. 28, p. 108, p. 111, p. 120, p. 170, p. 171, p. 174, p. 185, p. 303, p. 348

Proverbs 5 p. 173

Proverbs 5:12 p. 14, p. 139, p. 172, p. 270, p. 271, p. 286, p. 343

Proverbs 6 p. 272

Proverbs 6:16-19 p. 194, p. 195

Proverbs 8:13 p. 195, p. 306

Proverbs 11 p. 302, p. 305, p. 306, p. 386

Proverbs 13 p. 305, p. 306, p. 386

Proverbs 14:30 p. 307

Proverbs 16 p. 22, p. 23, p. 179, p. 180, p. 306

Proverbs 16:1 p. 22, p. 23

Proverbs 16:18 p. 195, p. 357, p. 386

Proverbs 16:32 p. 26, p. 119, p. 120

Proverbs 16:5 p. 195, p. 259

Proverbs 16:7 p. 37

Proverbs 21 p. 236

Proverbs 23 p. 295, p. 296

Proverbs 23:12 p. 23

Proverbs 23:7 p. 27, p. 273, p. 284, p. 303

Proverbs 25:28 p. 26, p. 119

Proverbs 27:1 p. 360

Proverbs 27:4 p. 307

Proverbs 28:15 p. 250

Proverbs 29 p. 306

Proverbs 29:23 p. 357, p. 386

Isaiah

Isaiah 2 p. 51
Isaiah 9:16 p. 47, p. 48
Isaiah 9:8 p. 38
Isaiah 10:5 p. 383, p. 384
Isaiah 26 p. 21, p. 277
Isaiah 26:12 p. 381
Isaiah 29 p. 268
Isaiah 40 p. 378
Isaiah 42 p. 266
Isaiah 42:8 p. 232, p. 258
Isaiah 46:10 p. 192
Isaiah 53 p. 347, p. 348
Isaiah 57 p. 78
Isaiah 57:1 p. 224
Isaiah 57:1-2 p. 224
Isaiah 57:15 p. 79
Isaiah 66 p. 69, p. 75, p. 78, p. 79, p. 276, p. 277
Isaiah 66:1 p. 70, p. 76
Isaiah 66:5 p. 79

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 3:17 p. 278, p. 279
Jeremiah 5:22 p. 83
Jeremiah 6:10 p. 84
Jeremiah 6:16 p. 57
Jeremiah 7 p. 162, p. 211
Jeremiah 9:13-14 p. 272
Jeremiah 11 p. 211
Jeremiah 11:8 p. 272, p. 273
Jeremiah 13:10 p. 273
Jeremiah 14 p. 211
Jeremiah 15:4 p. 50, p. 51
Jeremiah 16 p. 220, p. 273

Jeremiah 16:12 p. 231
Jeremiah 18:12 p. 231
Jeremiah 22:13 p. 93, p. 94
Jeremiah 24 p. 214
Jeremiah 25 p. 157
Jeremiah 27:4 p. 364
Jeremiah 35 p. 157

Lamentations

Lamentations 3 p. 214
Lamentations 3:22-23 p. 209

Ezekiel

Ezekiel 1:3 p. 265
Ezekiel 8 p. 263, p. 268
Ezekiel 8:3 p. 265
Ezekiel 23 p. 276
Ezekiel 33:11 p. 232

Daniel

Daniel 2:20-21 p. 366
Daniel 4 p. 45, p. 173, p. 259, p. 271, p. 366
Daniel 4:1-5,28-36 p. 355
Daniel 4:15-22 p. 362
Daniel 4:16 p. 14, p. 15, p. 172, p. 287, p. 288
Daniel 4:17 p. 365
Daniel 4:22 p. 386, p. 387
Daniel 4:28 p. 140
Daniel 4:29-37 p. 234
Daniel 4:30 p. 96
Daniel 4:35 p. 71, p. 192
Daniel 4:37 p. 259
Daniel 4:4-5 p. 360
Daniel 5 p. 229, p. 231, p. 233, p. 241, p. 242
Daniel 5:1 p. 367
Daniel 5:1-10 p. 227

Daniel 5:20 p. 303
Daniel 5:30 p. 232
Daniel 6:3 p. 198
Daniel 9 p. 157
Daniel 10:11 p. 83
Daniel 11:32 p. 64, p. 294

Hosea

Hosea 2:4 p. 220
Hosea 4:17 p. 46
Hosea 4:6 p. 27, p. 184
Hosea 5:10 p. 47
Hosea 5:6 p. 97
Hosea 8 p. 92
Hosea 8:4 p. 47
Hosea 10 p. 22, p. 23, p. 180
Hosea 10:12 p. 23
Hosea 13:1 p. 83

Amos

Amos 3 p. 157, p. 158
Amos 6:1 p. 337
Amos 7:12 p. 40

Jonah

Jonah 2 p. 39

Micah

Micah 3 p. 97
Micah 6:8 p. 93, p. 372, p. 390

Zechariah

Zechariah 13:7 p. 253

Matthew

Matthew 1 p. 218, p. 219
Matthew 5 p. 30, p. 139, p. 140, p. 173, p. 275
Matthew 5:27-28 p. 14, p. 172, p. 343

Matthew 5:28 p. 270, p. 271, p. 286, p. 287
Matthew 6 p. 323
Matthew 6:10 p. 329
Matthew 6:33 p. 328
Matthew 11:28 p. 99
Matthew 15 p. 115, p. 120, p. 177
Matthew 15:16 p. 21
Matthew 15:18 p. 342
Matthew 21 p. 233
Matthew 21:32 p. 366
Matthew 23:12 p. 389, p. 390
Matthew 24 p. 75
Matthew 24:1 p. 75
Matthew 26:31 p. 253

Mark

Mark 4:24 p. 123
Mark 4:24-25 p. 29
Mark 6 p. 322
Mark 8:34 p. 99
Mark 12:36 p. 205
Mark 14:27 p. 253

Luke

Luke 1 p. 278
Luke 6:22 p. 103
Luke 6:26 p. 104
Luke 6:45 p. 342, p. 343
Luke 6:46 p. 329, p. 330
Luke 11 p. 321, p. 322
Luke 14:11 p. 389, p. 390
Luke 18 p. 93, p. 249, p. 250
Luke 18:14 p. 390
Luke 19:10 p. 152, p. 153
Luke 24 p. 188, p. 242, p. 243

John

John 3 p. 311, p. 312
John 3:16 p. 325, p. 326
John 5 p. 242, p. 318
John 6 p. 90, p. 333
John 6:63 p. 165
John 7:37 p. 99
John 8 p. 298, p. 299
John 8:29 p. 335
John 8:32 p. 27
John 12 p. 284
John 12:26 p. 98
John 15 p. 252, p. 318, p. 319
John 15:18 p. 104
John 17 p. 322
John 18:2 p. 322, p. 323
John 21:18-19 p. 257

Acts

Acts 5:29 p. 49
Acts 7:9 p. 307
Acts 8:13 p. 185
Acts 9:10-16 p. 330
Acts 9:11 p. 331
Acts 9:31 p. 251
Acts 12 p. 252
Acts 12:1-2 p. 250
Acts 12:20-21 p. 238, p. 239
Acts 12:5 p. 256
Acts 16 p. 31, p. 188
Acts 16:29 p. 84
Acts 17 p. 242
Acts 24 p. 80, p. 254
Acts 24:16 p. 16, p. 174

Acts 24:24 p. 80
Acts 26:10 p. 251
Acts 28:17 p. 253

Romans

Romans 1:21-23 p. 269
Romans 3 p. 84
Romans 5:8 p. 164
Romans 8 p. 273
Romans 8:32 p. 237
Romans 12:1-2 p. 17, p. 174, p. 175
Romans 13 p. 249
Romans 13:6 p. 249
Romans 14 p. 201
Romans 15:3 p. 102, p. 103

1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 2:14 p. 31
1 Corinthians 4:7 p. 311, p. 382
1 Corinthians 10 p. 293
1 Corinthians 11 p. 141, p. 142
1 Corinthians 14:33 p. 149
1 Corinthians 15 p. 318, p. 319

2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 2 p. 88
2 Corinthians 4:5-7 p. 164
2 Corinthians 5:20 p. 164
2 Corinthians 10 p. 112
2 Corinthians 10:3 p. 295
2 Corinthians 10:3-4 p. 175
2 Corinthians 10:4 p. 17
2 Corinthians 12:10 p. 103

Galatians

Galatians 6:1 p. 201

Ephesians

Ephesians 2:8 p. 311

Ephesians 3:20-21 p. 207

Ephesians 4:23 p. 17, p. 174, p. 175

Ephesians 4:27 p. 351

Ephesians 5 p. 141, p. 142

Ephesians 5:33 p. 350

Philippians

Philippians 1 p. 204

Philippians 2 p. 112

Philippians 2:12 p. 84, p. 382

Philippians 2:5 p. 17, p. 174, p. 175, p. 294

Philippians 3:20-21 p. 205

Colossians

Colossians 1:9-10 p. 335

Colossians 3:19 p. 142, p. 351

Colossians 3:5-6 p. 275

2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 3:6 p. 87, p. 88

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 3:6 p. 304, p. 386

1 Timothy 4:10 p. 103

1 Timothy 6:10 p. 358, p. 359

2 Timothy

2 Timothy 1:12 p. 204

2 Timothy 3:16-17 p. 158, p. 159

2 Timothy 4 p. 90

Hebrews

Hebrews 2:17 p. 202

Hebrews 3 p. 23, p. 24

Hebrews 3:12 p. 23, p. 24

Hebrews 4 p. 278

Hebrews 4:14 p. 202, p. 203
Hebrews 10:9 p. 98, p. 99
Hebrews 11 p. 102
Hebrews 11:24 p. 103
Hebrews 12 p. 223
Hebrews 12:15 p. 358, p. 359
Hebrews 12:2 p. 204
Hebrews 13 p. 95
Hebrews 13:11-13 p. 87
Hebrews 13:12 p. 95
Hebrews 13:13 p. 100

James

James 1:13-15 p. 202
James 2:19 p. 79, p. 80
James 4:13-17 p. 360
James 4:14 p. 378
James 4:6 p. 77, p. 238

1 Peter

1 Peter 1:12 p. 334
1 Peter 2:21 p. 322
1 Peter 4 p. 112, p. 146, p. 318
1 Peter 4:1 p. 17, p. 174, p. 175
1 Peter 5:5 p. 77, p. 238, p. 306, p. 307

2 Peter

2 Peter 1:21 p. 159

1 John

1 John 2:15-16 p. 386
1 John 2:15-17 p. 372
1 John 3 p. 30
1 John 5:2 p. 22
1 John 5:3 p. 116, p. 179

Jude

Jude 24 p. 201

Revelation

Revelation 3 p. 97

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

Your companion study guide

Daniel

Follow the Scripture references, reflect on each lesson,
and use the written-response space to apply what you learn.



Scan to open the matching study guide

Downloadable PDF | 8.5 x 11 inches
No sign-in required

studyguides.weaverbiblecollege.com

If you cannot scan the code, visit the address above
and search for this book by title.