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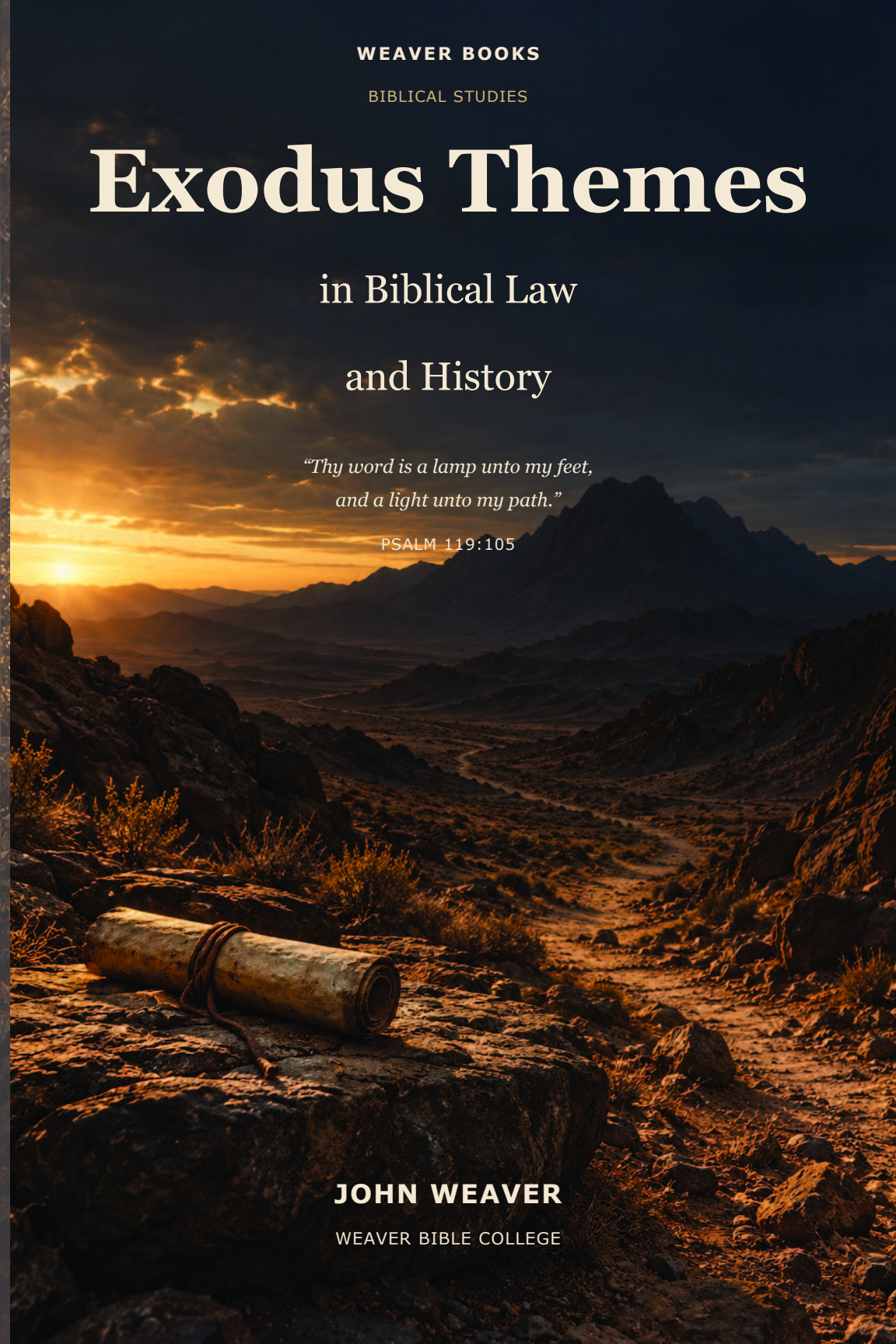
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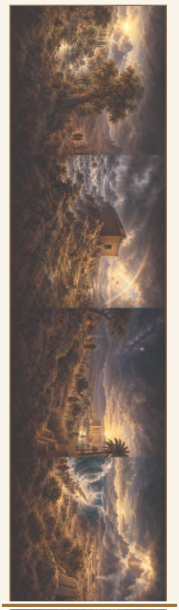
“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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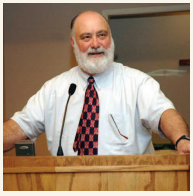
The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

EXODUS 14:14

The history and instruction associated with Exodus continue to raise questions about worship, authority, witness, and wisdom. John Weaver draws connections between biblical accounts and the responsibilities of later communities. This collection invites readers to consider how God's revelation should guide judgment about both inherited history and present conduct.

“If they had only persevered a short time longer, they would have been brought safely into the promised land.”

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.

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CHAPTER 1

Idolatry, Tyranny, and Responsibility

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 32:1-10 (KJV)

Introduction and Reading of Exodus 32

Open your Bibles to the book of Exodus, chapter 32. We are going to read the first 10 verses and then the last five verses. The message today is entitled Idolatry, Tyranny and Responsibility. Listen very carefully. Some of the material is going to be very familiar, then some of it is not. Please look in your Bibles, Exodus 32, beginning there in verse one.

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what has become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people break off the golden

> earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.
>
> And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graven tool, after he had made it a molten calf. And they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down, for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.
>
> They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, who have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people.

"Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation."

On the morrow Moses said unto the people, "You have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." Moses returned unto the Lord and said, "O this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." The Lord said unto Moses, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people into the place which I have spoken of thee. Behold, mine angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them." And the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

Consider several questions, and answer them in your mind. Who was responsible for the idolatry in Israel? Why did events turn out as

they did in Exodus chapter 32? Who misused, perverted, and abused his office?

These questions are also applicable to our time and day. Who is responsible for the tyranny and the idolatry in America? Who has misused, abused, and perverted his office? And why are events as they are in America?

Exodus chapter 32 is a well-known incident. Moses has gone up into the mountain to receive the law of God, and while he is gone, the people become impatient and demand action. Remember that Moses was gone only forty days and forty nights. Look in Exodus chapter 24 and verse 18. The Word of God says, "And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount, and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights." According to Exodus 34:28, when Moses went back the second time, once again it was for forty days and forty nights.

Remember also that, according to Exodus chapter 32, it was Aaron, the brother of Moses, who gave the order that formed the calf, proclaimed the feast, offered the sacrifice, and led the people in the worship of the calf. This is important as we consider who Aaron was and what responsibility he bore in this incident.

Aaron's Role and Authority as a Ruler

So who was Aaron? He was, first of all, the brother of Moses. Exodus chapter 4 and verse 14 specifically says that he was Moses' brother. When you get to Exodus chapter 2, verses 1 through 4, and Exodus chapter 7 and verse 7, you will find that Moses had an older brother, Aaron, and an older sister, Miriam. Miriam and Aaron were both older than Moses. That is probably why they later tried to reproach Moses in the wilderness, because they were older than he was.

Here is another illustration where God chooses the younger and not the elder. But both Aaron and Miriam were older than Moses. Aaron wanted to be more than a brother to Moses. How can I say that? Because the Word of God tells us that Aaron was to be God's mouthpiece for Moses. He was to be as a prophet to Moses and as a spokesman to Moses. Do you remember when God called Moses?

One of the objections that Moses offered unto God was, “I don’t speak well.”

Moses asks, “How's Pharaoh going to listen to me? I have no command of language. I can't speak well.” God answers, “I know your brother can speak.” In Exodus 4:15, God says to Moses, “And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth. And I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.”

Moses was to tell Aaron what to say. Aaron was to be more than a brother; he was to be Moses’ spokesman and mouthpiece. Exodus 7:1 says, “And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.” God was speaking to Moses, Moses was to teach Aaron, and God would be with both of them. Since Moses objected that he did not speak well, Aaron would be his mouthpiece. Aaron would be a prophet to Moses, while Moses would be as a god to Pharaoh. Moses was still the head, so to speak. As Moses represented God, Aaron was to represent Moses.

Although Aaron was Moses’ brother, he was to be more than a brother. He was the spokesman and prophet who represented God to Moses and Moses to the people. Exodus 28 shows that, as a priest, he was also to represent the people to God and God to the people. God said, “And take thou unto Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.” He then commanded, “And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty.” These garments included “a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle”; holy garments were to be made for Aaron and his sons.

Exodus 28 says that Aaron was to minister unto God in the priest's office. The two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod were to be stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: “And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his shoulders for a memorial.” Verse 29 says, “And Aaron shall bear the names of the

children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart when he goeth in unto the holy place for a memorial before the Lord continually." Verse 35 adds, "And it shall be upon Aaron to minister, and his sound shall be heard when he goeth into the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not."

Aaron was to be a minister unto God, but as he ministered unto God, he was to bear the names of the children of Israel. He was to represent the people to God, and then he was to represent God unto the people. The reason this must be made plain is that Aaron was a ruler. He had a position of authority and a position of trust; therefore, he was obligated to represent God. Rulers are to represent God.

There is only one sovereign, one supreme, one ultimate, and one absolute: God. God has all authority. Therefore, any other authority on earth is delegated; its authority is derived from God. If God does not give them authority, they have no authority. God established the family, which is a ministry of education; the church, which is a ministry of grace; and the state, which is a ministry of justice. In each of these three institutions, God gave a limited amount of authority. That authority is derived from God and delegated by God. Consequently, we can only go as far as God allows us to go. We cannot usurp or steal authority that God has never given unto us.

Now, let me just show you several passages very quickly that demonstrates that all rulers are accountable and responsible to God. If you look in your Bibles, hold Exodus 32, but look in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter one. Deuteronomy, chapter one. And look, if you would please, at verses 16 through 18. Deuteronomy chapter one, and by the way, I'm being very selective because there are a multitude of verses, but Deuteronomy chapter one, verse 16, notice the word of God says, And I charged your judges at that time saying, Hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between every man and his brother

and the stranger that is with him. You shall not respect persons in judgment, but you shall hear the small as well as the great. You shall not be afraid of the face of man. Why? For the judgment is God's. And the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will

hear it, says Moses. And I commanded you at that time all these things which you should do.

Who are judges to represent? God. Whose judgment are they to execute? God's. Look in your Bibles to Second Chronicles, Chapter 19. Turn over to Second Chronicles, Chapter 19 and look at verses 6 and 7. Second Chronicles, Chapter 19, verses 6 and 7. Second Chronicles 19, verse 6, And said to the judges, Take heed what you do. Why should they take heed what they do? For you judge not for man, but for the Lord who is with you in the judgment. Who are judges to represent? God. Who are they to judge for? God. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Take heed and do it, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking gifts. Now, he says, look, judges, you better be careful what you do. Why? For you are judging for the Lord. You are to represent God. You're to represent God's law. Let me just quote. I'm not asking you to turn there, but let me just quote Ezra chapter 7, verses 25 and 26.

Listen to what the king told Ezra: “And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God, and teach ye them that know them not.” Who could be a magistrate or judge? Those who knew the law of God. The king said, “If you make any man a judge who does not know the law of God, you must teach him that law.” And he said, “Whosoever will not do the law of God, let judgment be executed upon him speedily.” Do you realize that one of the promises God has given His people is found in Isaiah 1:26?

God said, “And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and my counselors as at the beginning. Afterwards thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.” In other words, one of the blessings of God upon an obedient people is that God will give us godly rulers. Of course, the opposite is equally true: one of the curses upon a disobedient people is ungodly rulers.

It is God himself who delegated authority. Likewise, it is God himself who lays down the qualifications for those who rule. In 2 Samuel 23, David says, “Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the

anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said." Then observe how many times he claims direct inspiration for one simple statement: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me," that is one time, "and his word was in my tongue," twice. "The God of Israel said," three times, "The Rock of Israel spake to me," four times. Four times, David claims direct inspiration for one simple statement.

What is it? "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." If you are going to be a ruler, you must rule in fear of God, because only as you rule in fear of God can you rule justly. You will never have justice without righteousness. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for righteousness and the Hebrew word for justice is the same word, because whatever is right is just, and whatever is just is right. In Romans chapter 13, God calls civil rulers, God calls magistrates, His ministers or His deacons, that is, His servants, and He also calls them His public worship.

Any way you cut it, according to the Bible, rulers are to represent God. They are to rule for Him and judge for Him. You cannot get around the fact that Aaron was a ruler. Aaron had an office of authority and trust. He was obligated, responsible, and accountable to lead the people into obedience and conformity to the law of God.

Aaron was not only a ruler; he was also in a position of authority and trust. When Moses was called to go up farther into the mount, he sent Aaron back to the people and gave him specific instructions. Exodus 24:13 says, "And Moses rose up with his minister Joshua. And Moses went up into the mount of God."

He said to the elders, "Tarry ye here for us until we come again unto you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them." Moses was saying, in effect, "Aaron, you and Hur are in charge now." Aaron was not merely present among the people; he had been specifically entrusted with their oversight while Moses was away.

Evidently, Hur had nothing to do with what followed, because he is not even mentioned in the rest of this passage. It was all on Aaron. Aaron was not only the high priest, not only the prophet of Moses, not only the spokesman of Moses, and not only the man of God; he had now been left in charge, in a position of trust as well as

authority. That responsibility makes his later conduct especially significant.

The Timeline and the People's Impatience

To grasp the context, consider the timeline from Exodus 19 through Exodus 32. Israel had just ratified its covenant with Jehovah and had received the most encouraging and unequivocal pledges of His protection and love. You find this in chapters 19 through 23. In chapter 24, Moses was called up into the mountain. Chapters 25 through 31 give the details concerning the tabernacle and also the installation of the priesthood. In that sense, Exodus 25 through 31 is a parenthesis: in chapter 24 Moses goes up into the mountain, Aaron and Hur are left in charge, and then, in chapter 32, Moses comes back down out of the mountain after they have made the golden calf.

Now look at Exodus 32:8. Moses was to be gone only forty days and forty nights. God said concerning the people, “They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. And they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” What did He mean by saying that they had turned aside out of the way quickly? Had Moses not been gone forty days?

And already they have fallen into idolatry. They have turned aside quickly out of the way, said God. If they had only persevered a short time longer, they would have been brought safely into the promised land. But alas, they sinned and provoked the Lord to depart from them and to destroy the work of his hands.

Just think: a little more time, a little more patience, a little more faith, and a little more perseverance. Because of their impatience, because they could not wait a few hours longer or a day or two longer, they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness.

Look at the implication in Deuteronomy chapter 9, beginning with verse 11. Moses says, “And it came to pass at the end of 40 days and 40 nights that the Lord gave me the two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant. And the Lord said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence, for thy people which thou hast brought

forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them, and they have made them a molten image."

It came to pass at the end of the forty days and forty nights. Moses was almost through. He was almost back—almost there. But they could not wait on Moses. They were the ones who said, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us." This incident happened only hours before Moses would have returned anyhow. Aaron may not have known exactly how long Moses would have been gone upon the mount, but I am sure he probably had a pretty good idea.

Do you realize how many who are on the borders of the promised land and are about to cross over Jordan have, through an act of unfaithfulness, been turned back to wander many, many years in a dreary wilderness? How many times have you and I berated ourselves for not waiting upon the Lord? How many times have we acted hastily and impatiently, only to regret our action? How many times have we said, "I would to God, I'd never done that. I would to God, I'd been patient just a little longer"?

How do I say that? When Moses was commanded of God to ascend into the mount to get the tables of stone, Aaron, his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, along with seventy of the elders of Israel, were permitted to accompany him partway up the mount. In Exodus 19:24, the Lord said unto him, "Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou and Aaron with thee. But let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the Lord, lest he break forth upon them." God says that Moses can bring Aaron up a little way with him.

Exodus 24 tells us, "Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand. Also they saw God, and did eat and drink."

Here they are on the mount. In verse 12, the Lord said unto Moses, "Come on up into the mount." That is why, in verses 13 and 14, Moses sends Aaron back, telling him to return and receive

anyone who had anything to deal with, bringing it to him and to Hur. Thus Aaron and these rulers were on the mount. They probably had at least some idea of what was going on and probably about when Moses would come back.

Now let us ask a question: When Moses sends Aaron back to the people, how does he fulfill his office of trust and responsibility? Exodus 32:1 says, “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what has become of him.” And Aaron said to them, “Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives and your sons and your daughters, and bring them unto me.”

Aaron's Tyrannical Actions

Aaron, first and foremost, is to represent God. He is God's ruler and God's priest. Secondly, he is to be a spokesman for Moses, a prophet for Moses: God told Moses, and Moses told Aaron. Yet Aaron weakly and meekly succumbs to the demands of the people. He tells them, “Break off your golden earrings, and bring them unto me.” That does not sound like representing God or Moses.

After he receives the golden earrings, verse four says, “He received them at their hand, and he fashioned it with a graving tool.” After he has made it a molten calf, the people say, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” Once Aaron gets the gold, he casts it into the furnace and melts it; then he deliberately takes a graving tool and engraves a molten calf. He makes the calf.

When the people see it, they say, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” When Aaron sees the people worshipping the golden calf, he builds an altar before it. Verse five says, “And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it.” Then he proclaims a feast of the Lord, saying, “Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.”

Now, may I ask you a couple of leading questions? Where did Aaron derive his authority to make the molten calf? He had none.

Where did he derive his authority to build an altar? He had none. Where did he derive his authority to proclaim a feast? He had none. Where did Aaron have authority to offer sacrifices? He had none.

It is true that God gave Moses a pattern for the altars, but this altar was not according to the pattern. It is true that God demanded sacrifices, but God never demanded sacrifice at this altar.

Since Aaron had no authority from God, he had to manufacture, or steal, or usurp that which he did not have. God never gave him authority to make a molten image. In fact, God said, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." God never gave him authority to proclaim a feast without God, nor authority to offer sacrifices before that wicked altar. Aaron simply stole that authority and tyrannized the people by giving them what God had never commanded him to give.

A tyrant is one who rules without God or apart from God. One does not have to be oppressive and cruel in order to be a tyrant. A beneficent tyrant is still a tyrant. When one has no authority to do what he does, he is a tyrant, no matter how much he is liked, no matter what the polls show.

Webster's 1828 dictionary defines tyranny: "To act a tyrant, To exercise arbitrary power. To rule with unjust and oppressive severity. To exercise power over others not permitted by law or required by justice." When we think of tyranny, we think first and foremost of a despot or cruel, wicked, oppressive ruler. Certainly, that can be a tyrant. But arbitrary power is power that is not fixed or based upon law or fixed rules. When one exercises arbitrary power—when he simply does what he wants to do—that is tyranny. Webster also understood that when one exercises power over others not permitted by law nor required by justice, it is tyranny.

What is to be the supreme law in our land? The Constitution. When our rulers do that which is not permitted by the Constitution, what does this definition make them? Tyrants. When they do that which is not required by justice, what does this definition make them? Tyrants. I want you to understand that idolatry and tyranny go together.

Aaron had no authority to do what he did. Aaron had absolutely no authority to proclaim a feast, build an altar, or offer sacrifices. When he did that, he acted as a tyrant. How foolish you and I are, and how senseless, when we do not see the tyranny around us. Do you realize that our presidents, congressmen, governors, judges, and all the others basically ignore the word of God? They ignore the Constitution and rule according to their own whims, unrestrained by even common sense and decency. Like Aaron, they rule without authority and dictate based upon usurped power—that is, stolen power, power that neither God nor the Constitution nor the people ever gave them.

Idolatry and Tyranny Lead to Wickedness

Idolatry and tyranny also lead to wickedness. To demonstrate the wickedness of tyranny and idolatry, especially as it was expressed in this calf, the altar, and the sacrifices, consider what the Bible says in Exodus 32:6: “And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” What were they playing? Monopoly, chess, badminton, or soccer? No.

Now, let me show you two other verses. I want you to look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 10 and to Genesis 26. We're going to 1 Corinthians 10 first, and then we're going back to Genesis 26. 1 Corinthians 10. Notice, if you would please, verse 7. Here is a direct quote from Exodus 32. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 7. He says, Neither be ye idolaters as some of them, as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. What in the world does the word play mean? Well, go back in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 26. You remember in Genesis chapter 26, Isaac had told Abimelech that his wife was his sister. You remember that? Yeah, Abraham did it, but Isaac did it as well. In Genesis 26, look at it if you would, please. Let's see. I believe it's 26. Yeah. Genesis 26, and notice if you would. And Isaac dwelt in Gerar. And the men of the place asked him of his wife, and he said, She is my sister.

For I feared to say, She is my wife, lest any of the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah, because she was fair to look upon. And it came to pass, that when he had been there a long time, that

Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, looked out a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety, she is thy wife.

And I said, thou, She is my sister. What did Abimelech know? He knew that brothers and sisters didn't act the way Isaac and Rebekah were acting. By the way, the word sporting in Genesis 26 and verse 8 and the word play in Exodus 32 and verse 25 are the same Hebrew word. So when it says the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play, it means they were naked, they were dancing, they were fornicating. That's what it means.

They were having an orgy, basically speaking. Go back to Exodus chapter 32. Exodus 32. By the way, I hope you understand that the idolatry and the tyranny in our land today has led to what? Fornication, divorce, sodomy. Plain and simple, that same thing. Now watch this. Exodus Chapter 32. Look if you would please. Let's skip down to verse. Where is the verse it said that Aaron had made them naked to their shame? That would be verse.

Oh, I'm in Genesis, no wonder I can't find it. Exodus 32. Exodus 32 verse 25, And when Moses saw that the people were naked, for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies.

Now the word naked there refers only to being uncovered and unclothed. It also means a lack of restraint. So what were they doing when they were playing? It was sexual sins. Aaron had made this golden calf, proclaimed a feast, offered the offerings the people had brought, and they sat down, ate, and drank, and rose up to fornicate.

God tells Moses, “Get down. The people you brought out of Egypt have quickly turned aside. They have gone out of the way.” When Moses comes down and sees all the nakedness, all the dancing, and the golden calf, he is fit to be tied. I am not telling you everything that he does.

I am skipping around because I want to show you what Moses finally confronts Aaron about. Remember, Aaron is to represent God first and Moses second. When he confronts him, look in chapter 32, beginning at verse 21: “And Moses said to Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?”

What did they do to you, Aaron? Surely they had to threaten your life or something.

Aaron's Evasion of Responsibility

Here is my question: When Moses confronts Aaron, does Aaron take responsibility for what he did? Oh, no. Aaron says, “Let not the anger of my lord wax hot. Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.” They asked him to make gods to go before them because they did not know what had become of Moses.

Then Aaron says, “Whosoever hath any gold, let him break it off.” They gave it to him, and “when I cast it into the fire, there came out this calf.” That was a notable miracle in and of itself: throw the gold into the fire and, hop, out pops a calf. Aaron claims he was pressured, that he did not really make the calf, but merely threw the gold into the fire and it came out. Let me say, God was so angry that He wanted to kill all the people.

To make a new nation from Moses, the Lord told him, “Go, get thee down for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made them a golden calf, and they worshiped it, and sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” The Lord said, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation.”

The only reason God did not kill these people is because Moses interceded for them. The only reason God did not kill Aaron was because Moses interceded for him. Deuteronomy 9:20 says, “And the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him. And I prayed for Aaron also at that time.” God was going to wipe Aaron out as well as the people, but Moses interceded, and God spared Aaron and the people. Moses tells Aaron that the Lord was very angry with him.

As idolatry is never an acceptable form of worship, so tyranny is never an acceptable form of government. Both idolatry and tyranny are under the judgment and condemnation of God.

Aaron was wrong, wicked, and guilty. There is no question about that. But was he alone in his wickedness and guilt? Was Aaron the only one responsible for the idolatry and the tyranny? Was he the only one responsible for the nakedness, lasciviousness, and fornication? Was Aaron the only one responsible for the golden calf?

The People's Shared Guilt

Look at Exodus 32, verse 35: “And the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf that Aaron made.” Did you hear that? They made the calf that Aaron made. How could the people have made it? We have already been told in Exodus 32:4 that Aaron took a graving tool and fashioned it a molten calf. Here is how the people made it. In Exodus 32:1, when the people saw that Moses delayed to come out of the mount, they gathered themselves together unto Aaron and said, “Up, make us gods which shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.” Aaron said to them, “Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives and your sons and your daughters and bring them to me.”

All the people broke off their golden earrings, which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. It was when the people saw that Moses delayed; it was when the people gathered themselves together. They came to Aaron and asked for gods. They broke off their golden earrings and gave that gold for the idol. The whole incident was instigated by the people.

The forty days and forty nights did not meet with their approval, determination, and expectation. Since Moses had not returned within the time frame they thought he should have returned, they took matters into their own hands, although they had no authority to do so. They had no authority to request an idol or a god, nor to assemble together like this. When they assembled, they voted to make themselves a molten calf. Tyranny can be exercised by many just as easily as by one. Simply because a majority of people vote for something does not make it right. If there has never been any lawful

authority, and if it was not required by law or justice, it is still tyranny, no matter how many people vote for it. Have you ever heard the phrase, "the tyranny of the majority"? Moreover, it was the people who worshiped the calf and brought the sacrifices.

It was the people who engaged in lewdness, nakedness, and fornication. Clearly, the Scripture teaches that. That is why verse 35 says, "And the LORD plagued the people." They were responsible, and so was Aaron, but they were the ones who instigated it. They asked for the gods. As the old adage says, "He who asks for gods makes them." They asked, they got, and the Lord plagued the people.

The Bible did not say that Aaron was plagued. It says that the people were plagued. Evidently, this plague does not refer simply to the three thousand men killed in Exodus 32 by the children of Levi. Look at verse 34: "Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee." Nevertheless, "in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them." God said He would not let them get away with it; He would still plague them. Evidently, the plague means more than three thousand being killed.

God certainly held Aaron responsible, because He was going to kill him as well. In Deuteronomy 9:20, Moses interceded for Aaron. But God was also going to kill the people. They were responsible. The calf was the people's calf by demand and donation, but it was Aaron's by determination. He determined what it would be like, because he took the graving tool and made it.

Modern Applications

He fashioned it, but they demanded it. They donated it, and then they worshipped it.

Why do we have idolatry and tyranny in this country? Why have we forsaken the foundations that our founding fathers have laid for us? Here is the answer: the people demand it. We have corrupt politicians because we have a corrupt people. The people of this nation demand idolatry and tyranny, and our rulers are giving it to us, just as we demand.

We are repeating the same sins that Israel repeated over and over in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 5:31 says, “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?” This is one of the saddest verses in the Bible, and it is applicable to our land today.

There are four truths that should be very obvious based upon this verse. First, he said the prophets prophesy falsely; that is, there was no truth in the land. Error, heresy, and falsehood only promote idolatry and tyranny. There is no truth in the land.

Secondly, he said the priests were ruled by their means. That is, there was a power elite who ruled the land through their money, through their power, and through their wealth. Thirdly, the people love to have it that way. Why would a people love falsehood? Why would a people love tyranny? The answer is that a corrupt people demand a corrupt government. If the government is corrupt, it cannot condemn them for being corrupt.

But fourthly, the question that God asks is, What will you do in the end thereof? In other words, what are you going to do when My judgment falls upon you? What are you going to do but be judged and destroyed? God holds both the rulers and the people answerable and accountable.

Now, let us go back to Exodus 32. Here is the first application: “When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mountain, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us: as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.” How easily, readily, and quickly God's man is rejected and forgotten.

Theocracy, Not Democracy

He had not even been gone forty days, and already his influence, help, directions, and work were being trashed by the people for whom he had given his life. It was not, “Let’s remember Moses,” or “Let’s honor Moses,” or “Let’s follow in his teaching.” We do not even know what became of him, and we do not care. Give us gods.

I have known preachers who served congregations for thirty and forty years. They grow older and a little sickly; they develop a problem, and the congregation kicks them out, refusing to help or take care of them. They had given their entire lives to the people. That is exactly what is happening here. It was Moses who brought them out of Egypt, brought them to the Mount of God, and taught them right. Instantly, they were ready to trash him and kick him out. They did not remember anything about him. "We do not even know what became of him, and who cares? Let's get on with our lives. We'll vote ourselves some more gods."

Secondly, notice how easily a democracy replaces a theocracy. When one denies and forgets the man of God, it will not be long before they forget the God of the man. Neither Israel nor the church of Jesus Christ has ever been a congregationally ruled people. We are a theocratic people; that is, we are under God. God is absolutely supreme and absolutely sovereign. You know what they did in Exodus 32 and verse 1? They got together and voted on this thing. The people gathered themselves together: "We're the majority. This is what we want."

You do not vote on whether or not to obey God. You do not vote on whether or not to do right. You obey. In Ephesians 5 and verse 23, the Bible says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." Why? "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." Ephesians 1:21–23 says that God put Christ over everything, and that He is the head of the church. Colossians 1:18 says He is the head of the body, the church. Jesus Christ is our head. The church of Jesus Christ is not a congregationally ruled church. It is a theocracy. Jesus Christ sits as King and tells us what to do through His Word. What we have done is turn the church into a democracy.

There is no reason to vote on anything that we are commanded to do. There is no reason to vote on anything that is biblical, and there is certainly no reason to vote on anything that is unbiblical, for we have no authority to do that which is unbiblical. Any time a people want to second-guess God or ratify what He has commanded, it is a clear indication that they believe they are sovereign.

Trouble always follows the denial of God's sovereignty and supremacy. Isaiah 42:8 says, “I am the Lord. And besides me there is no other. And my glory will I not share with another.” God would not share His glory with the gods of Egypt, and He is certainly not going to share His glory with the puny little humans who think they are God and can second-guess Him.

How easily a theocracy is turned into a democracy. You have the same thing in 1 Samuel 8, when the people demanded a king, although the Lord was their King. Here is a third application: there is an old saying that no affliction has ever happened to Israel in which there was not some particle of the dust of the golden calf. Simply stated, there has always been a little idolatry, a little rebellion, or a little disobedience left in them to continually bring heartache and trouble.

That is our problem. We think a little idolatry, a little tyranny, or a little wickedness will be all right. But 1 Corinthians 5:6 says, “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” It does not take much leaven; once it is put in the bread, it spreads throughout the bread.

Practically every one of our problems—individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally—can be traced back to idolatry and tyranny. The fourth application is a very serious one: how easy it is for the most dedicated to go astray. Think about needing to pray for each other. Aaron had been mightily used of God in Egypt, and now he stumbled and failed.

He had been fearless before Pharaoh, but now he falters before the people. Instead of remaining a prophet of God, he becomes a politician, giving in to the whims and demands of the people and coddling them, even when he knew they were wicked and wrong. He could face the enemy without, but not the enemy within. Psalm 106:16 calls Aaron the saint of the Lord. And yet how easily it was for that saint to fall.

We who are saints are frail, and we can stumble and fall just as easily as Aaron. That is why Scripture tells us in Psalm 118:8–9, “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” The Bible tells

us in 1 Corinthians 10:12, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Proverbs 16:18 says, “A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.” We must make sure that we understand how easy it is to stumble and fall.

Syncretism is always wrong. Syncretism is when you try to blend two or more things together. What did Aaron try to do? He tried to mix the religion of Egypt with the religion of the true God. He made a golden calf. Why did he make it a golden calf? Because the bull, or the calf, was worshipped in Egypt. In Memphis, in Hierapolis, living bulls were worshipped as the incarnations of Ra. Moreover, the sun was revered as the valiant bull, and the Pharaoh was known as the Bull of Bulls. Aaron was taking what the people had seen and heard in Egypt and mixing it with what God had taught him through Moses.

Multiculturalism always leads to tyranny and idolatry. You cannot mix the religions of the world with Christianity. I do not care how politically incorrect I am in making this statement: all religions are not equal, and Christianity is the only true religion. There is one God, one Christ, one Bible, and one salvation. That salvation is revealed in the Word of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

We need to make sure that we keep Christianity pure and distinct. We follow always the Word of God, never the majority. In fact, Scripture says in the book of Exodus, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.” We follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray. Father, we do ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would teach us and help us, build us up in the most holy faith, and indeed preserve and protect us. Protect us from sin and wickedness and idolatry and tyranny. May we, as a congregation, not fall into syncretism. May we not demand idolatry or tyranny, but come back to the Word of God and worship You as the only true and living God who has revealed Yourself in Jesus Christ. May we worship Thee according to Your Word, and submit ourselves to Thee in the totality of our beings. Give us grace and faith to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Truth About Andersonville Prison

Introduction and the Ninth Commandment

Our Father, we are so thankful today for the Lord Jesus Christ, for His grace and mercy and truth to us. Lord, help us to understand the principles of Thy Word and that all history is Thy history. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

Exodus chapter 20 and verse 16 gives the ninth commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." Bearing false witness, of course, is a sin against the law of God. If you really want to know what sin is, the Bible tells you in 1 John 3 and verse 4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth the law, for sin is a transgression of the law." Bearing false witness, then, is indeed a transgression of the law.

What in the world has this to do with history? The message I want to bring today is the truth concerning Andersonville Prison. When God says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness," it applies not only to

people, but also to families, churches, sections, and whole countries. I want to give you an illustration of bearing false witness against the southern section of our country. When one hears the name of Andersonville, one cannot help but think of Andersonville Prison. When you think of Andersonville Prison, there is automatically conjured up in the mind thoughts of torture, inhumanity, and diabolical maltreatment of prisoners.

Northern Propaganda vs. Confederate Policy

That kind of thinking has been brought to you by successful propaganda, slander, outright lies, and false witnessing by the North and the Northern Empire. Yankee propaganda has successfully made most people think that Andersonville Prison was nothing but a den of torture. It is true that men died in prison, especially Andersonville Prison. Many men died there of starvation, disease, and lack of medical attention. But Confederate men died in northern prisons as well. In fact, people die today in our modern-day prison system, so deaths in prison are not unique. It is one thing for prisoners to die in prison during the war while they are in captivity, and quite another thing for one section of the country to charge another section with deliberate and premeditated murder of those prisoners. The Confederacy did not have a war policy that purposely crafted and was designed for the maltreatment of prisoners as did the North.

The South did indeed endeavor to treat the prisoners with humanity and compassion. As early as May 21, 1861, the Confederate Congress passed a law:

"That all prisoners of war taken, whether on land or sea, during the pending hostilities with the United States, shall be transferred by the captors from time to time as often as is convenient to the Department of War, that shall be the duty of the Secretary of War, with the approval of the President, to issue such instructions to the Quartermaster General and his subordinates, and shall provide for the safe custody and sustenance of prisoners of war, and the rations furnished prisoners of war shall be the same in quantity and quality as those furnished to enlisted men in the Army of the Confederacy."

The Confederate government therefore required that Union prisoners receive rations equal in quantity and quality to those furnished its own enlisted men.

However, the North had an official policy on the maltreatment of Southern prisoners. This can be found in SR 97, in the Congressional Records and in old law books in universities and courthouses. Passed by the 38th Congress, second session, it stated:

"Rebel prisoners in our hands are to be subjected to treatment finding its parallels only in the conduct of savage tribes and resulting in the death of multitudes by the slow but designed process of starvation and by mortal diseases occasioned by insufficient and unhealthy food and wanton exposure of their persons to the inclemency of the weather."

The United States government thus declared that Southern prisoners would be starved, deprived of sufficient clothing to keep warm in northern camps, and treated worse than savage tribes treated their prisoners.

One cannot deny that there was a premeditated effort on the part of the North to murder Southern prisoners. On July 19, 1866, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton published a federal report about prisoners during the war. Stanton certainly waters down how the North treated Southern prisoners, but even in his report, from beginning to end, he states that Confederate armies captured and held in prisons more than 270,000 Union men, while the Union captured and held 220,000 Confederates.

Comparative Death Statistics

The South had 270,000 Yankees, and the North had 220,000 Confederates. Of the federal prisoners held in Confederate prisons, only 22,576 died in captivity; on the other hand, 26,576 Confederates died in Yankee captivity. In other words, the South held 50,000 more Union prisoners and had 4,000 fewer inmate deaths. Very obviously, when you look at the figures, you have to conclude that something is wrong somewhere.

Before turning to eyewitness accounts and firsthand reports concerning Andersonville, consider a brief synopsis of the prominent

northern prisons. Andersonville is mentioned here as a southern prison for one important fact, which will become clear shortly. Camp Douglas in Illinois was used as a prisoner-of-war camp from 1862 to 1865. Originally designed as a training station, it was converted to a prison because of the influx of prisoners of war. It was designed for a capacity of 6,000, but 12,000 were crammed into it, and almost 4,500 Confederates died in that prison. Elmira Prison in New York was designed for 5,000, yet at one point it held over 9,400. In just two years, just under 3,000 Confederates died there. Elmira has been called the Andersonville of the North, or the Death Camp of the North, because so many died there. Andersonville, Georgia, which I will address today, was a southern prison designed to hold 10,000 prisoners.

At its highest peak, however, there were 32,000 prisoners at Andersonville, and 12,919 people died there due to the Confederacy's lack of resources. During the three years that Point Lookout in Maryland was used, 3,500 men died there. At its height, it was crowded and doubled its capacity, with 22,000 prisoners. Camp Morton in Indiana was set up for 2,000 but reached a height of 5,000; 1,700 Confederates died there. When you look at all these prisons, you find that every camp had prisoners who died.

Reverend William Brown of the Central Presbyterian wrote this concerning the Confederate prison camps. He said: “So far as the intentions and orders of the Confederate government were concerned, no blame can rest upon it. The places selected were healthy.” In fact, that was one reason Andersonville was selected: it was out of the way, healthy, and had a lot of springs there. He continues: “The places selected were healthy and the food and medicines ordered were the same as those assigned to our own soldiers and hospitals. The fate of prisoners, especially if the number be large, is generally and unavoidably a hard one. The volume of testimony gathered from a large number of returned prisoners, men of undoubted veracity, we were invited by the kindness of Judge Watson to inspect.

“It was in the hands of the printer in Richmond when the memorial fire occurred at the time of its evacuation in April of 1865, and unfortunately consumed in the great fire. But Camp Douglas,

Rock Island, Johnson's Island, Elmira, Fort Delaware, and other federal prisons, could they find a tongue, would tell a tale of horror that should forever silence all the clamor about Libby Prison, Belle Island, and Andersonville."

Here is a man saying that it was far worse in those Yankee prisons than it ever was at Andersonville. If the truth were actually known and exposed, it was a whole lot worse for the Confederate prisoners held in Yankee prisons than for Yankees held in Southern prisons. I can assure you, as bad as Andersonville was—and it was bad—it would probably look like a Sunday school picnic when compared to some of the atrocities and horrors of Northern prisons. Why am I saying that? Because the horrors at Andersonville were mainly produced by the Lincoln administration.

You say, how in the world can you say that? You will find out in just a moment. You could accurately say that all prisons in the North and the prisons in the South were basically hellholes. But there is a difference between having the food, materials, and medicine to prevent a hellhole and deliberately withholding food, clothing, and medicine in order to create one.

In fact, when you talk about Andersonville, you will find that the guards suffered just as greatly as the prisoners did during that time. I am going to take eyewitness accounts—accounts of individuals who lived through Andersonville—and tell you what they had to say. One of the most common charges against the South, especially at Andersonville, was that the prisoners were starved: they were not given food; the food was withheld. All you have to do is go online or buy books and look at pictures of some of those prisoners. You can say, "Man, they were starved. Look at them. They are nothing but skin and bones."

Eyewitness Accounts of Equal Treatment

But it was not just prisoners who died of malnutrition at Andersonville. The Confederate guards also died of malnutrition there. Dr. Isaiah H. White, a surgeon in the Confederate Army, testified concerning the treatment of prisoners: "In refutation of the charge that prisoners were starved, let it be noted that the Confederate Congress in May 1861 passed a bill providing that the

rations furnished to prisoners of war should be the same in quality and quantity as those issued to the enlisted men in the Army of the Confederacy. And the prisoners at Andersonville received the same rations that were furnished to the Confederate Guard."

That this was sometimes scant, every old rebel in the field can testify, but this was due to the poverty that existed in the South. Men in both the North and the South served and lived at Andersonville and through Andersonville. One of those men was Lemuel Madison Park, a Confederate soldier who worked there.

In Ohio, Park saw a historical exhibit describing how prisoners were treated at Andersonville. It displayed tiny portions—three or four peas and a tiny piece of bread—as the daily ration given to the prisoners. But Park testified: "I was for three months a clerk in the commissary department at Andersonville, and it was my business to weigh out rations to the guards and prisoners alike. And I solemnly assert, or I solemnly swear, that the prisoners got ounce for ounce and pound for pound of the same quantity and quality of food as did the guards.

"The state authorities of Ohio ought to blush at thus traducing and slandering a fallen foe and never in the first instance to have placed on exhibition for preservation of truth this fabrication of partisan hate. No Andersonville prisoner, unless he were lost to all sense of honor and shame, could make such a statement as that the rations were no more than the specimens shown."

Park said, in effect, that he knew better because he had been there in the commissary department and had weighed out those rations to the northern prisoners as well as the southern guards.

Mr. John F. Frost was a prisoner at Andersonville. He survived Andersonville, and here is his firsthand testimony: "I was orderly of Captain Folger's company, 19th Maine, and was made prisoner at Petersburg in June 1864 and was at Andersonville 11 months or until the war ended.

"There was suffering among the men who were sick from the lack of medicines and delicacies, but all had their rations as fully and regularly as did the Confederate Guard." Remember now, this was a Yankee prisoner. "There were times of scarcity when supply trains

were cut off by Federal forces. At such times, I have known the Confederate guards to offer to buy rations for the prisoners, being very short themselves. On these occasions, the guards would take a portion of their scanty supplies from the people of the country to feed the prisoners. The rebels were anxious to effect an exchange and get the prisoners off their hands, but it was reported and believed among the prisoners that the federal authorities refused. At one time, I was with a detail of 3,000 prisoners marched 200 miles to the coast to be exchanged, and it was declined by the federal authorities. And as we reported, we marched back with no enviable feelings."

I believe that the larger share of the responsibility for the sufferings in that prison belonged to our own government. But I believe the Confederate authorities did as well as they could for the prisoners in clothing, provisions, and medicines. This was a prisoner.

He concludes his report: “This, let it be remembered, is not the talk of a designing politician who stayed safely at home, but the testimony of a soldier of good record from an actual experience of 11 months in Andersonville Prison.” Mr. Frost is saying, “I lived through it, and I can testify that the guards and the prisoners shared equally.” The guards at Andersonville died equally with the prisoners. Percentage-wise, their death was not much less than the inmate deaths. The highest number of guards at Andersonville was usually around 1,000.

Most of these men were from the Georgia Reserves. Most were young boys, old men, or wounded veterans not really fit enough for combat. Yet out of the thousand, 226 died. Approximately 22.5% of the guards in Andersonville died, while 24.5% of the prisoners died. The death rate among the guards was therefore only 2% less than among the prisoners, because the guards did not have sufficient food themselves. Two percent, of course, is not a very large variation.

When considering Andersonville, remember that some Union prisoners died because of the aggression and violence of other Yankee prisoners. In those prisons, especially Andersonville, cliques and clubs would steal from new prisoners, beat them, and sometimes murder them.

Violence Among Prisoners and Wirtz's Cooperation

Albert Schatzel, a private in Company A, 1st Vermont Cavalry, gave this first-hand testimony on May 24, 1864: “Some of the old prisoners made a raid on the new prisoners and stole their blankets and rations. And the new fellows pitched in and there was a big fight. And Minneapolis got his head bashed in with clubs or stones.” Prisoners who had been there longer attacked their new fellow Yankee prisoners to steal their rations.

John Urban, a private in Company A, 1st Pennsylvania Infantry, wrote on June 28, 1864, that “what extremes bad men will go to secure their own comfort was fully illustrated in the doings of a band of robbers in Andersonville.” These were Yankee prisoners whom other Yankee prisoners called Mosby’s Marauders, because they went around stealing from and beating fellow Yankee prisoners.

“As the rest of the prisoners called them, that is Mosby’s Raiders. Their rendezvous was near the southwest end of the prison.” Thus, a group of men made it their business to go around beating up and robbing other Yankee prisoners.

On July 4, 1864, Johnny Warren gave this testimony. A police force had been organized among the Yankee prisoners to stop the thefts and murders. Captain Wirtz, later Major Wirtz, worked with these men to help capture the marauders. Warren said: “So far as I know, the idea that brought about the overthrow of the murderous raiders came from Wirtz himself, and it is certain that the efforts of the Law and Order organization and of the police force, of all who deserve great credit in arresting the raiders, would have been fruitless but for the cooperation of Captain Wirtz.” Captain Wirtz, who was over Andersonville, cooperated with the Yankee prisoners to stop other Yankee prisoners from stealing and murdering their fellow inmates.

The North was well aware that the South did not have enough food, clothing, or medicine. We could not even feed and clothe our own troops. How could we feed and clothe 32,000 men in one place? Many people in the North called for retaliatory measures against the South, saying that the South was starving their men. Of course, the South was not; the South was starving itself.

Union General Dan Sickles made this statement on August 10, 1864: “Apart from the objections which exist to the policy of retaliation, it is at least doubtful whether it would inure to the benefit of our men, for the reason that the enemy are reported to be without means to supply clothing, medicines, and other supplies even to their own troops.” There was no reason to retaliate, because the South could not even feed and clothe its own troops.

What do you expect them to do to the prisoners? Edward Wellington Boate was a Yankee soldier with the 42nd New York Infantry. He was a prisoner at Andersonville in 1864, and soon after the war wrote his experiences in the New York Times:

"You rulers"—and remember, he is talking to the North—"you rulers who make the charge that the rebels intentionally killed off our men, when I can honestly swear that they were doing everything in their power to sustain us, do not lay this flattering unction to your souls. You abandon your brave men in the hour of their coolest need. They fought for the Union. And you reached no hand out to save the old faithful, loyal, and devoted servants of our country. You may try to shift the blame from your own shoulders, but posterity will saddle the responsibility where it justly belongs."

Here is another Andersonville prisoner saying that the problem came from the Lincoln administration, from the rulers up there.

At Rock Island prisoner-of-war camp, a northern camp that held Confederate soldiers, John A. Bateson was a soldier. His testimony is vouchsafed by a district judge. Concerning the treatment of Confederate prisoners at Rock Island, he said:

"During a period of 10 months, I was a member of the garrison of the Rock Island Military Prison. There were confined there about 10,000 men. These men were retained in a famishing, that is a starving, condition by order of Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War. That order was approved by Abraham Lincoln. It was read before the ensigned garrison of the prison sometime January 1864. It was read at assembly for duty on the second in front of the prison. It went into effect the following day. It continued in force until the expiration of my term of service which was the close of the war.

"At the end of the war, Colonel Hoffman proudly turned over to the federal government $1.8 million, representing what he had saved from his budget and accumulated in the prison funds by reducing the rations of the prisoners. In other prisons, this accumulation of money often led to graft and corruption among prison officials. As Union authorities received reports of hunger and suffering among their men in Confederate hands, they instituted a policy of retaliation. From 1864 to 1865, Colonel Hoffman, backed by General Meigs, the quartermaster, and Edwin M. Stanton, intended to treat Confederate prisoners of war as they believed the Confederate government was treating Union captives. Hoffman ordered a further reduction of rations, reduced or restricted settlers' access to the prisoners, and eliminated the receipt of food packages from home."

The result was an increase in disease from malnutrition as well as starvation. Here was a soldier in Rock Island saying, “I can testify to the fact Edwin M. Stanton, General Meigs, Abraham Lincoln, purposely, deliberately starved the prisoners of the South.” He could turn back over $1.8 million from money given to buy food for Southern prisoners. Would you like to guess what $1.8 million would be today? Back then, it would probably have been in gold. Here they were purposely and deliberately starving Southern prisoners, although the South had run out of food.

The Union Army had burned homes, torched crops, and shot the livestock. No medicine could be obtained practically at any price. You remember Sheridan said that he was going to torch and burn the Shenandoah Valley so that if a crow flew over it, he would have to carry his own food, because there would be nothing there for the crow to find. Although the South was basically broke and had no food or medical supplies, the North had plenty of food, supplies, and money.

Yet they were starving Confederate prisoners. Dr. Stevenson, a Confederate surgeon and doctor, wrote: “The greatest difficulty was experienced in procuring medicines and anti-scorbutics,” a treatment for scurvy. “These were made contraband of war by the federal government.” He went on to say that “the most rigid discipline failed to make the prisoners pay that attention to cleanliness which was absolutely necessary.” What did the federal

government do? They made any medicine, anything needed to treat their own men, contraband of war.

When you look at pictures of those emaciated men at Andersonville Prison, designed to hold 10,000 men, yet at its height holding approximately 32,000, you have to ask: Was the South fighting that well? Were we really capturing that many prisoners at that time? If we were not, how in the world did that prison camp go to 32,000 men? There is an answer. The South held so many prisoners because the North refused to exchange prisoners. The Lincoln government refused to accept and care for its own men. By June of 1864, they had finished, or had just ended, exchanging prisoners.

Union Refusal to Exchange Prisoners

The Union had greater manpower, greater weaponry, greater finance; they had everything. They decided, “We do not need to exchange prisoners with the South.” Here is a first-hand quote from Union Brigadier General Seymour regarding the exchange of prisoners for Andersonville, and not just Andersonville, but all Southern prisons. He said: “The southern authorities are exceedingly desirous of an immediate change of prisoners.”

Their urgency is unbounded, but it is the poorest policy for our government to deliver them 40,000 prisoners, better fed and clothed than ever before, in good condition for the field, while the United States received an equal number of men worn out with privations and neglects, barely able to walk, enjoying their last breath, and unfit to take the field as soldiers. It is wiser to leave the prisoners where they are. What did he say? Let them die. They are not going to do us any good; they cannot fight, being too sickly, poor, and starved.

None other than Union General Ulysses S. Grant himself decided there was to be no exchange of prisoners. He said, "The exchange of prisoners would mean a reinforcement of the rebel army. An exchanged rebel soldier behind barricades and fortifications was equivalent to three Union soldiers attacking him. If we hold these men, they are no more than dead men, as the time of enlistment is over.

"If we liberate them, we will have to fight until the whole South is exterminated. It is hard on our men to be held in Southern prisons, but not to exchange them is humanity to those left in the ranks to fight our battles. At this particular time, releasing all rebel prisoners in the North would ensure Sherman's defeat and compromise our safety here."

That announcement comforted the sick and starving men, not only in Andersonville, but in other southern prisons as well. Grant was saying that Sherman's activities and their safety took precedence over captured men who were dying and needed exchange. Since the South would benefit and the Union would derive no benefit, they would not do it. Did those men in Andersonville know that their own government refused to exchange them?

The answer is yes. James Madison Page, a second lieutenant in Company A, 6th Michigan Cavalry, a Union officer and prisoner at Andersonville, wrote "The True Story of Andersonville Prison." In it he vindicates Captain Wirtz and demonstrates how the federal government refused to accept its own men. In July of 1864, Henry Wirtz had paroled some men to act as emissaries for the prisoners.

Since Grant and Seymour did not want to exchange prisoners, Captain Wirtz selected men from Andersonville as emissaries to Washington, D.C., to plead with Abraham Lincoln and his administration to reopen prisoner exchange. These men were being starved in Andersonville for lack of food and medicine and could go back home. When the delegation failed, some returned to Andersonville Prison. Page writes: “When the Andersonville emissaries returned from Washington, there was not one word about the exchange of Negro soldiers being in the way of our release.”

It was not thought of. I know for the past 42 years that the matter has been publicly broadcast in the North as a reason why we were not exchanged. Grigsby, another prisoner there who wrote an account of Andersonville, said, “Grigsby is writing this. The Washington authorities had concluded to stop the exchange before there were any Negro prisoners.” So some were saying that they did not want to exchange the Negroes.

But no, he said, that was not true. In spite of all the Northern post-moralizing, he says the real reason the Union soldiers were not exchanged is because the Northern government considered them expendable. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton said, “We will not exchange able-bodied men for skeletons, and we do not propose to reinforce the rebel army by exchanging prisoners. Let them die.” That was the attitude of Edwin Stanton.

Page goes on: “When we heard Secretary of War Stanton’s reply in regard to exchange, we felt we were forsaken by our own government. The War Office at Washington preferred us to die rather than to exchange us. Many of the prisoners, being but human, raised their clenched fists, trembling hands toward heaven, and with fearful oaths, cursed the authorities at Washington, and also cursed the day that they were born.” He says, “Oh, what hatred was engendered for our Secretary of War.”

So here were these Union prisoners. They sent their own ambassadors, and Lincoln and his administration refused to hear those prisoners. They carried a petition signed by practically every prisoner in Andersonville. When they had to come back and say that they would not exchange those prisoners, and would not do one thing for their release, those Union men clenched their fists and cursed their own authorities.

Melvin Grigsby, whom Madison Page quotes, was also a prisoner in Andersonville, and he states this: “I do not know who’s responsible for that fearful blunder, but a blunder it was”—he was talking about the refusal to exchange prisoners. “The prison authorities at Andersonville permitted the prisoners to send to Washington three of their own, chosen for that purpose, who took with them a petition to the President asking them that an immediate exchange be agreed on on the terms proposed by the rebels, and setting out fully and plainly the suffering that was

The petition was signed by thousands of prisoners and is probably now on file among the records of the War Department. There are many thousands of gravestones at Andersonville which would not be there, and many thousands would have been orphans, caused by the mistaken zeal and cold-blooded principle of those in authority at that time.

He goes further: "When it was all over, and thousands of the poor, emaciated creatures that survived were sent home and scattered throughout the land, and the truth became known, and Harper's Weekly and other illustrated papers sent out pictures of the starved heroes, then a storm of indignation arose which threatened to burst over the heads of these misguided politicians who had refused to exchange. Then something must be done. Andersonville must be avenged. The storm must be averted. And something was done. Andersonville was avenged. Major Wirtz was hanged."

The Scapegoating and Execution of Major Wirtz

What is Grigsby saying? Wirtz was nothing but a scapegoat. They knew they were wrong. They knew they were wicked. Yet instead of saying, "We're the ones responsible for those men dying," they trumped up charges against Major Wirtz and had him hanged.

Andersonville prisoner John W. Urban, sometime after those men returned from Washington, said this: "We sometimes felt embittered against the government for not making a greater effort to release us. And among ourselves, we often were tempted to say bitter things. But in the presence of our enemy, any insinuation of this kind against our own government would excite ire and indignation. It was a sad fact, however, that hundreds died feeling in their hearts that the government they loved so well and fought so hard to save was indifferent to their sad fate."

One of the orders that General Ulysses S. Grant wrote encouraged Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War, not to allow General Foster to exchange prisoners. Dated August 21, 1864, it states: "Please inform General Foster that under no circumstances will he be authorized to make an exchange of prisoners of war. Exchanges simply reinforce the enemy at once, while we do not get the benefit for two or three months and lose the majority entirely. I telegraphed this from just hearing that some 500 to 600 prisoners had been sent to General Foster. U.S. Grant, Lieutenant General."

Here, General Grant is saying, "Don't let Foster take those Yankee prisoners. No, no, no. Let them go back." Dr. Isaiah H.

White, who was a surgeon with the Confederate Army, also says this from the private journal of a Confederate officer:

"At one time, an order came to Camp Lawton, which was in Millen, Georgia, to prepare 2,000 men for exchange. The order from Richmond was first to select the wounded, next the oldest prisoners and the most sickly, and then fill up the ranks with healthy men according to date. This party went first to Savannah, from Millen to Savannah, as arranged, but by some mistake the ships were at Charleston.

"And the poor wretches had to be taken there. Everyone who knew the southern railroads in those days, and the difficulty, or rather impossibility, of procuring food for such a crowd along the road, will well know what those poor fellows suffered. At Charleston, they were refused, the commissioner declaring that he was not going to exchange able-bodied men for such specimens of humanity. The term was more brutal," he says. "Finding him obdurate, Colonel Ord requested that he take them without exchange. This he refused with a sneering laugh, and the crowd was ordered back to Camp Lawton.

"Never did the writer of this witness such woe-begone countenances, in which misery and hopelessness were more strongly painted than shown by these poor fellows on their return. The curses leveled against the rulers who thus treated the defenders of their country were fearful, although certainly well-deserved. As the stockade gate closed upon them, the surgeon in charge said, 'Poor fellows, the world has closed upon them, and more than half of them, their disappointment will be their death knell.' His words proved true. Who murdered these men?"

He says, "Let history answer the question." Dr. White is saying that Colonel Ord begged the Union officer: if you are not going to exchange them, just take them. We cannot feed them, clothe them, or treat them. Just take your own men. And the Union officer sneered and laughed.

Some of the Yankee prisoners there drew up resolutions concerning Andersonville Prison. One, signed by P. Bradley, chairman of the Committee on Behalf of Prisoners, says: "That while allowing the Confederate government all due praise for the attention

paid to prisoners, numbers of our men are consigned to early graves. Resolved that 10,000 of our brave comrades have descended into untimely graves caused by differences in climate and food."

And whereas these difficulties still remain, we would declare our firm belief that unless we are speedily exchanged, we have no other alternative but to share the same lamentable fate of our comrades. Must this thing still go on? Is there no hope? Resolved, we have suffered patiently and are still willing to suffer if by so doing we can benefit the country. But we most respectfully beg leave to say that while we are willing to suffer for our country, we are not willing to suffer for any party or clique to the detriment of our families and our country.

They said this while praising the Confederate government. In other words, these men realized that the Confederacy was doing everything they could to give them the proper quantity and quality of food. And yet, you always hear about Andersonville, while you never hear that it was the North who refused even to take their own men when they were offered.

Senator Benjamin H. Hill carried on a controversy with Mr. Blaine of Maine concerning Andersonville and northern and southern prisons. Senator Ben Hill from Georgia said: "Yet after all this has been said on the subject, the stubborn fact remains that over 3% more Confederates perished in northern prisons than federal prisoners in southern prisons. The figures to prove this statement have been several times given in this discussion, but they are so significant that we give them again in the form in which they are presented." He then said to Mr. Blaine: "Will the gentleman believe testimony from the dead? The Bible says the tree is known by its fruits. And after all, what is the test of suffering of these prisoners north and south? The test is the result. Now, I call the attention of the gentleman to this fact: the report of Mr. Stanton, the Secretary of War, on the 19th of July, 1866, exhibits the fact that the federal prisoners in Confederate hands during the war that died were 22,576, while the Confederate prisoners in federal hands who died were 26,436. And Surgeon General Barnes reports in an official report that, in round numbers, the Confederate prisoners in federal

hands amounted to 220,000, while the federal prisoners in Confederate hands amounted to 270,000."

Out of the 270,000 in Confederate hands, 22,000 died, while out of the 220,000 Confederates in federal hands, over 26,000 died. More than 12% of the Confederates in Federal prisons died, and less than 9% of the Federals in Confederate hands died. What is the logic of these facts according to the gentleman from Maine? "I scorn," Ben Hill says, "to charge murder upon the officials of Northern prisons as the gentleman has done upon the Confederate prison officials." If you want facts, let us deal with facts: more Confederates died in Union hands than Union prisoners did in Confederate hands, and the Confederates still had 50,000 more prisoners.

Bearing false witness is wrong. Whether it is done as an individual, a family, a church, a state, or a nation, it does not matter. Bearing false witness is wicked and wrong regardless of whom, what, when, and where the sin is committed.

Major Wirtz was lied about. He was slandered and regarded as a monster. To avenge Andersonville, they had to try Major Wirtz, find him guilty, and have him hanged. The one who gave the most damning testimony at Major Wirtz's trial was Felix Delabombe. Like James Madison Page and some of these other men, Delabombe was not allowed to testify on behalf of Major Wirtz.

Delabombe was the only witness who said that he could identify by name a victim whom Major Wirtz had shot and killed. Here was an eyewitness claiming, "I saw Major Wirtz shoot this man and murder him, and I can give you his name." That was rather damning testimony. Delabombe claimed to be a Frenchman and a descendant of Lafayette. After the trial, and after Major Wirtz was hanged, he was found out to be Felix Osser. Felix Osser was born in Saxony, Prussia, and had lied to conceal the fact that he was a deserter from the 7th New York Volunteers who had deserted during the war. Osser had never set foot in Andersonville Prison, yet he testified that he could give the name of a man he knew firsthand that Major Wirtz had shot and murdered. His testimony was so believed because of his skill as an orator, and he so impressed the commission investigating Major Wirtz that he was given a written commendation

signed by all the members of the Commission concerning his testimony.

He was also appointed to a position in the Department of the Interior before the trial ever ended. Eleven days after Major Wirtz was hanged, it was found that this man had perjured himself. He did not know Major Wirtz, did not see him shoot anybody, did not know anybody he had shot, and had never even been at Andersonville. "Thou shalt not bear false witness."

Conclusion: The Sin of False Witness

In this instance, the man who bore false witness lived, for I do not know how long; the man against whom the false witness was borne died. But God says, "Then both the men between whom the controversy is shall stand before the Lord, before the priest and the judges, which shall be in those days. And the judges shall make diligent inquisition. And behold, if a witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother, then shall you do unto him as he thought to have done unto his brother. So shalt thou put evil away from among you."

Here was a man who bore false testimony against an innocent, and a very godly man, and had him hanged for something he did not do. What has happened to our history? It has been rewritten by the victor. We hear propaganda, lies, and slanders against Major Wirtz, Andersonville, the Confederacy, and the South. It is exactly what I have said: false witness. The truth is that men did die at Andersonville. They died of starvation, malnourishment, lack of medical supplies, and numerous other reasons.

But the main charge has to be laid at their own government, because the federal government refused to take the prisoners even when offered without exchange: "We can get along better without them than we can with them. You keep them; let them die."

"Thou shalt not bear false witness."

Father, we are so thankful today for Jesus Christ and for truth, Lord: Thy Word is truth, and all history is Your history. We ask, we beg of You, help us not be led astray by false accusations, lies, slander, and innuendos. Give us grace to check the facts for

ourselves, that we may know and understand, and to serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. Help us as we continue this day. May we honor those men who fought for truth and righteousness and stood for Thy Word. Thank You for Your grace and mercy. In Christ's name, Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Christ Leading His Army In Advancing God's Social Order on Earth

Introduction and the Need for a Fighting Spirit

It has been a joy to be here and to be with Brother Mooney again and everyone else. I am thankful and appreciative of the Lord for His grace and mercy. Pastor said that she could go ahead and tell him the name because he had his hearing aids in. Well, I have my hearing aids in and I still cannot hear. So the truth is, I usually tell people who ask me, “How did you lose your hearing?”

I say, “I have a very simple explanation for that.” They ask, “What?” I say, “I have been married sixty years. What do you expect?” My wife says, “Eh,” but that was not the reason, I can assure you. It has indeed been a joy to be here.

Tonight I am going to bring a message, following basically what Brother Tim sent me. He said that I am supposed to be dealing with, “Thy will be done on earth, Christ leading His army in advancing His

social order on the earth." There are so many messages that I would really like to preach and really wanted to preach, but I think this message tonight is very informative, and I hope it will be very encouraging as well.

Open your Bibles, please, to Zechariah chapter 10, the book right before Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament. Look with me at verses 3 through 5, and especially verse 5, beginning with verse 3.

God says, "My anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats. For the LORD of hosts hath visited His flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle. Out of him came forth a corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together."

"And they shall be as mighty men which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle, and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders of horses shall be confounded." Note that phrase: "and they shall fight. Because the Lord is with them." I preached for a number of years—in fact, fifty-seven, to be exact.

One thing that I have noticed in our generation today is this: we have sired a generation basically of pansies, sissies, and mediocre men. We have sired individuals who have no backbone, no stamina, and, as we would say, no intestinal fortitude. In South Georgia, we simply say they do not have any guts. There are very few men today who really possess what is known as a fighting spirit.

This is exactly what the Bible is talking about in Zechariah chapter 10, verse 5: "They shall fight, because the Lord is with them." What in the world is a fighting spirit? A fighting spirit is courage, determination, and a willingness to fight and struggle. It is a determination to hold fast, to do that which is right and just. It is a determination that you are not going to put up with wickedness, evil, injustice, or tyranny.

You could also use the phrase "a combat mentality." Years ago, I preached a message on Captain Jonathan Davis and a combat mentality. Captain Jonathan Davis, in the 1800s, killed more outlaws in one battle by himself than any other incident in the history of the entire frontier. Fourteen men attacked him; he killed

eleven, and three ran away, because he had what we call a fighting spirit, or a combat mentality. The church of Jesus Christ has basically lost what the Bible calls a fighting spirit.

In most churches, you never hear sung the song "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Think about that. "Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before. Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe. Forward into battle, see His banner go." The second verse says: "At the sign of triumph, Satan's host doth flee. On then, Christian soldiers, on to victory. Hell's foundations quiver at the shout of praise. Brothers, lift your voices, loud your anthems raise. Like a mighty army moves the Church of God. Brothers and sisters, we are treading where the saints have trod. We are not divided, all one body, we; one in hope and doctrine, one in charity. Onward, then, you people, join our happy throng. Blend with ours your voices in this triumph song."

"Glory, laud, and honor unto Christ the King. This through countless ages, men and angels sing." Isn't it amazing? Most of us have not even sung that song in a multitude of years.

The Bible does indeed speak of Christian soldiers. In fact, the Bible tells us in 2 Timothy 2, verses 3 and 4, Paul wrote Timothy and said, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Then he said that "no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." When you look around and think about Christian soldiers, especially in the church, you have to conclude that most of them have gone AWOL.

We have deserted our posts, discarded our military equipment, thrown away our swords, and settled down on a bed of ease. We have been brought to a place where the curse of God is upon us instead of the blessing. Amos 6:1 says, "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came."

The Curse of Ease and Trust in Man

Notice again what he says: "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion, and that trust in the mountain of Samaria." The curse is not only

upon those who are at ease; he also tells us why we are at ease and why the curse is upon us. They trust in the mountains of Samaria. The mountains of Samaria refer to the governmental power in Samaria. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom. They did not trust in the arm of the Lord. They trusted in the flesh. They did not trust in God. They simply trusted in man. They looked to government, especially the Samaritan government, to supply all their needs, just exactly the way we do today.

Listen carefully, because here is a curse and a blessing. Jeremiah 17, beginning with verse 5, says, "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the Lord."

And then he tells you what he is going to be like: "For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabit it." Then he says, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is, for he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaves shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease yielding fruit."

Isn't that amazing? He says, cursed is the man that trusteth in flesh and maketh flesh his arm, but blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord God. So what has happened in our land today? How in the world did we become so dependent upon the mountains of Samaria and fail to trust in the One True and Living God?

May I remind you that it was Jeroboam I, in 1 Kings chapter 12, who made the golden calves? Jeroboam denied the sovereignty of God and attempted to make his own gods. In doing so, he set himself up as a dictator and a tyrant. He really could care less about the people of God; he really could care less about God. In fact, that is basically the way it is in our society today. When he demanded that the people worship these calves, some fled and went down to Rehoboam in Judah. A lot of the Levites went down as well.

Clearly, here was a man saying, "You will trust in me, and you will do what I want you to do, or else." So, in Amos chapter 6, he begins

by saying, “Woe unto those that are at ease in Zion,” and notice, “that trust in the mountain of Samaria.”

Now, let me begin reading with verse three. Listen carefully: “Listen, you that put far away the evil day and cause the seat of violence to come near. That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall, they chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David, they drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with”

“The chief ointments, but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” What is he saying? We have become a people who like ease and comfort. We like to anoint ourselves and enjoy all the pleasures we can have. We like the calves out of the stall, the lambs, and the tender meat. We do everything we can to please ourselves. But he says we are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. We have become so absolutely materialistically minded, so engulfed in satisfying ourselves and delighting our flesh, that we have basically forgotten God and His people.

I find it very interesting that most assemblies are interested only in their own assembly, not in the other assemblies or the other people of God. Here is my ministry; I am interested in my ministry. Brother Mooney is interested in his ministry, and Brother Nelson in his ministry. Then there is our ministry. Our ministry should take precedence over my ministry. And beyond my ministry and our ministry, there is the ministry, which is everywhere—the work of God. God is telling us that we must be concerned not only with ourselves or our work, but with His people and the affliction of His people.

The truth is that, in these days, we want ease instead of excitement, calmness instead of contention, peace instead of war, and comfort instead of fighting. We simply want to be like those in the days of Amos: “Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion.” We want to sit back.

Isaac Watts wrote a wonderful hymn years ago: “Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb, and shall I fear to own his cause, or blush to speak his name? Must I be carried to the skies on flowery

beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas? Are there no foes for me to fight? Must I not stem the flood?"

"Is this vile world a friend of grace to help me unto God? Sure, I must fight if I would reign. Increase my courage, Lord. I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy word. Thy saints in all Thy glorious war shall conquer, though they die. They see the triumph from afar by faith's discerning eye. When that illustrious day shall rise, and all thy armies shine, in robes of victory through the skies, the glory shall be all thine."

No, the truth of the matter is that we do not want to fight. We do not even want to fight for the Lord Jesus Christ. We need reviving, renewing, and awakening. We need to shake off the lethargy in which we have been and awaken to righteousness.

We are being overwhelmed in this society with wickedness and all kinds of evil, and we are doing absolutely nothing. The enemy is flooding in. We are not even praying the imprecatory prayers given in the Word of God. We do not realize the danger we are in. We are walking almost blindfolded, with our ears covered. Yet, in another sense, we recognize that we are hopeless and helpless in ourselves. People have asked me, "What in the world can I do about the wickedness in this world? What can I do about the evil?"

What can I do about the tyranny? God certainly has not left us alone. He has given us an answer. Isaiah 59, beginning with verse 12, gives us a promise and a blessed truth.

The Promise of God's Standard Against the Enemy

"For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us, for our transgressions are with us. And as for our iniquities, we know them." Our transgressions are multiplied before God; our sins testify against us, our transgressions are with us, and God knows our iniquities.

"In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood, And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off." That is God's justice.

“For truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth. And he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.” And the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment.

Now watch: “And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head. And he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with the zeal of his cloak.”

“According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay. Fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies. To the islands he will repay recompense. So they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. And when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.”

Do you realize this passage pretty well describes where we are today, when judgment is turned away backward and justice is fallen in the streets? I never will forget, I had a dear friend; he’s now with the Lord.

He began to really understand wickedness. Then he got a speeding ticket and decided to use it as a learning experience. He had been studying justice and the Constitution, so he went to court intending to argue the ticket on both biblical and constitutional grounds. He gave all of his arguments, repeatedly saying, “The Bible this, the Constitution this.” Finally, the judge said, “Sir, if you mention the Constitution one more time in my courtroom—not the people’s, but in my courtroom—I’m going to find you in contempt of court.”

Henry looked at him and said, “Your honor, if you did, it’d be the only honest thing you’ve done all day long, because all I have for this court is contempt.” Pow! A hundred bucks. Henry said it was the best hundred bucks he ever spent.

But the point is that justice has fallen afar off, and truth cannot enter. Obviously, clearly, we are in trouble up to our eyeballs. Look at our churches, our society, our culture, and our families. It is time that we begin to seek the Lord and ask Him to move and do

something. There is a verse I love and quote quite often, found in Psalm 119:126: “It is time for thee to work, O Lord, for they have made void thy law.” It is time for God to work, for they have made void His law. God is not going to sit around and just let them destroy His law.

The Bible tells us in Isaiah 59 that when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall raise up a standard against them. The illustration is that of a defeated, demoralized, and disoriented army still on the battlefield. Suddenly, one trooper reaches down, picks up the battle flag, and says, “Follow me, boys; we’re going to fight it out to the end.” They group together, attack the enemy, and win.

The Hebrew word for standard means to put to flight, to drive away hastily, and to cause to disappear and dissipate. When the Spirit of the Lord lifts up His standard, the enemy flees. They run away and hide.

There are a number of implications in this truth: when the Spirit of the Lord takes up that standard, the enemies disappear. What are those principles? First of all, we must remember that God is a warrior. He is a man of war. That is what the Bible says in Exodus 15:3: “The Lord is a man of war: the LORD is his name.” And in Isaiah 42:13: “The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.”

God as a Warrior Who Fights for His People

Notice that He stirs up jealousy like a man of war. God not only fights, but the Bible tells us that He leads, equips, and inspires others to fight. Everybody knows that David was the man after God’s own heart. But everyone also knows that David was a man of war. In fact, David was selected to be with King Saul not only because of his ability to play a harp, but also because of his coolness, confidence, and ability to fight. In 1 Samuel 16:18, the Bible says, “Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.” The Lord was with him.

Everyone knows the saying, especially the ladies, that Saul has killed his thousands and David his tens of thousands.

But let me ask you a few questions. From where did David derive his martial skills? Who taught David to fight? And why was David always successful in his battles? David answers that for us in Psalm 144:1–2: “Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: my goodness, and my fortress, my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.” What did he say? Blessed be the Lord God, who teaches my hands to war and my fingers to fight.

The very first implication, then, is clearly that God is indeed a man of war. The second implication is that when God leads us, we must follow, even if it happens to be in the battle. If God is leading the charge, what will be the outcome of the battle? Obviously, it must be victorious.

It's got to be very honorable and right and glorious. So if God is leading the charge, we can be absolutely sure of certain victory. Why would anyone want to lag behind if God's leading the charge? Why would anyone want to hold back? Do you know what God does in Jeremiah 48, verse 10? He places a curse upon anyone who will hold back in the day of battle: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of God deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood." In other words, if God is leading the charge, if God is leading the fight, you have to fight. If you don't fight, you're under curse. The point is, when God leads, when it's time to fight, and when it's time to defend, we should never be holding back.

We must have a fighting spirit. We must have a combat mentality. There must be in us a determination to fight and to finish the fight. There must be in us a determination to end the danger. It's not a time to slack up. It's not a time to quit. It's not a time to back up. It's not a time to back out—not if God's leading the charge.

When God is leading the charge and when God is in battle, it is not a time for pity or mercy. Before you challenge me on that, understand this: there is indeed a time for pity. There is indeed a time for mercy. But when that time for pity and mercy is over, there is to be no more pity. There is to be no more mercy. The Scriptures

show us this distinction. I want you to turn, first of all, to Deuteronomy chapter 20. I'll show you several passages. We'll look in Deuteronomy chapter 20.

SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 20:15-20 (KJV)

> "Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not cities of these nations. But of the cities of these people which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth. But thou shalt utterly destroy them, namely the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee, that they teach you not to do after their abominations which they have done unto their gods, so should you sin against the LORD your God. When thou shalt besiege a city a long time in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them, for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down, for the tree of the field is man's life, to employ them in the siege. Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down, and thou shalt build bulwarks against that city that maketh war against it, until it be subdued."

> Now God also tells us that they are indeed to offer an offer of peace, and if they don't accept the peace, then obviously they are to be wiped out. Here was a time when pity was not to be extended. Here was a time when mercy was not to be given. In the very fact when God says you're not to cut down, you're not to cut down trees that are fruitful, trees that are meat for man, what God is saying is we're not to make war against creation, we're to make war against sinners, against the wicked, against the ungodly.

In Deuteronomy chapter 7, beginning with verse 2, God says, "And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them." Again, in verse 16, he says, "And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee, Thine eye shall have no pity upon them,

neither shalt thou serve their gods, for that will be a snare unto thee."

In the book of Zechariah, chapter 11, beginning with verse 6, God says, "For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord. But, lo, I will deliver the men, every one of them into his neighbor's hand, into the hand of his king, and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them."

God says, I am not going to have pity. I am not going to have mercy, not at all. You remember the passage in the New Testament, in James chapter 2 and verse 13: "For he," talking about God, "shall have judgment without mercy, that has showed no mercy, and mercy rejoices against judgment." God says that if you do not offer mercy, then you are not going to receive mercy. The truth of the matter is, when mercy is ended, there is nothing left but justice.

The principle is very simple, and God is telling us this: when pity and mercy are refused, when they are rejected, the time for pity and mercy ceases. When mercy has ended, justice remains.

The Bible says in Psalm 140, verse 7, that David, the mighty man of war, was fighting. David not only said that God had taught him to fight, but also said, "O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." What is he saying? He is saying that God is his protection as well. God is leading him to fight, and he is going to fight.

So the very truth of the matter is this: Scripture tells us three great truths concerning this. The first is that God fights for His people. Turn in your Bibles to Exodus 14, and let us begin with verse 14. The Bible says, “The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.” Look in Deuteronomy 1:30. Watch very closely, because he tells us again how the Lord fights: “The Lord your God, which goeth before you, He shall fight for you according to all that He did for you in Egypt before your eyes.” Again, Deuteronomy 3:22 says, “Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God he shall fight for you.”

Then Deuteronomy 20, which we read, says, “For the Lord your God, he it is that goeth before you, to fight for you against your enemies.” In 2 Chronicles 20:17, here is what God told His people: “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still,

and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you."

Since God is a warrior, and since Scripture tells us that God fights for His people, consider the absolute sin and wickedness of Israel in 1 Samuel 8. What did they do? They asked for a king. Why did they want a king? They wanted to be like other nations, and wanted him to go out and fight their battles for them. If God was their God, if God was their King, and if God was going to fight their battles, why would they trade God for a man?

Yet that is exactly what they did, and that is exactly what we do. Who would you rather have fight your battles, God or man? When God fights, heaven and earth fight against the enemies. Remember what the Bible says about Sisera? The stars in their courses fought against Sisera. That meant God took all of creation and fought against Sisera.

So the very first truth is that God does indeed fight for His people. Here is the second truth: God not only fights for His people; God fights with His people.

God Fights With and Through His People

In 2 Chronicles 13, Abijah, the king of Judah, with 400,000 men, faced Jeroboam, the king of Israel, with 800,000 men. Abijah said to Jeroboam and the Israelites, "And behold, he said, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight you not against the Lord God of your fathers, for you shall not prosper."

But Jeroboam called an ambushment to come around behind them. They were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them. When Judah looked back, behold, the battle was before and behind. They cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. Then the men of Judah gave a shout. As the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

The children of Israel fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hand. Abijah and the people slew them with a great

slaughter, so that there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand men. Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time. The children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers. They were outnumbered two to one, and yet were very successful because they relied upon God.

In 2 Samuel 23, we find a listing of some of David's mighty men. "These be the names of the mighty men whom David had. The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains, the same was Adino the Eznite. He lifted up his spear against eight hundred whom he slew at one time." Here is a man who slew eight hundred enemies at one time. That does not mean he threw the spear and it went through eight hundred. No, he used that spear, and in one battle he killed eight hundred of them.

In verse 9, Eliezer the son of Dodo the Ahohite was one of the three mighty men of David, when they defied the Philistines that were gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away. He arose and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword, and the Lord brought a great victory that day, and the people returned after him only to spoil.

Eliezer fought with such ferocity and determination that his hand clave unto the sword. What does that mean? It means he could not release his grip; they had to pry it out of his hand. Yet Eliezer was doing the fighting and killing the enemy, while the Bible says, "the Lord wrought a great victory that day." Was the Lord fighting? Yes, He was fighting with Eliezer.

After him was Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together into a troop where was a piece of ground full of lentils, and the people fled from before the Philistines. But Shammah stood in the midst of the ground, defended it, and slew the Philistines. "And the Lord wrought a great victory." Over and over, God is not only fighting for His people; He is fighting with His people.

When you read the book of Joshua, and get to Joshua chapter 10, you find that Joshua and his men defeated five kings in one battle. They fought hard, and they did indeed win. But Joshua said in Joshua 10:25, "Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good

courage, for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight." When you understand that the Lord is a warrior, and that He not only fights for His people but also fights with His people, there is a third implication: He also fights through His people.

What do I mean by that? God may fight immediately or mediately. When you use those terms theologically, when you say God may work immediately, that means that God may work without the use of means. When you say God may work mediately, that means that God will work through the use of means. It was just like when we prayed for Sister Deborah this morning. If God reached down and just touched her, that is an immediate act of God. But if God blesses the doctors and heals her through that, that's a mediate act of God. So God may fight for us, He may fight with us, or He may actually fight through us.

So let me show you what God says in Isaiah 41, beginning with verse 13: "For I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and you men of Israel. I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Look what God's going to do: "Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth. Thou shalt thresh the mountains," that is, the kingdoms, "and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away. And the whirlwind shall scatter them, and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel." What did He say? "I'm going to make you a new sharp threshing instrument."

With that in mind, turn to Jeremiah 51, verse 20. God says to Jacob, "Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war. For with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms." What? "Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war, for with Thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with Thee will I destroy kingdoms." God may fight for us, with us, or through us. Psalm 149 is a passage that everyone needs to recognize. Let us begin reading with verse 5.

The Bible says, "Let the saints be joyful in glory, let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand." Why? Verse 7 says, "...to

execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people, to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute upon them the judgments written, This honor have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord." So God not only fights for us; He fights with us, and often times, He fights through us.

Now, I know that you know that there have been times that God's people have suffered greatly and been persecuted and murdered. But although God's people do suffer, God's people also have victory in time and in history as well. Turn in that passage to the book of Hebrews, chapter 11. Beginning there with verse 32, he asks, "And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah, David also, and Samuel of the prophets, who through faith"—what did they do?—"wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of the lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Wow! Wow!

It is true that God's people have suffered down through the ages, but it's equally true that God has given tremendous victories. Let me show you a passage. I want you to turn in your Bibles, if you would. Where he says, "Do it again, O Lord." Psalm 44. That's where it is. Look at Psalm 44. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days and times of old."

"We have heard with our ears, O God." Our fathers told us what work You did in their days and times of old: how You drove out the heathen with Your hand and planted Your people; how You afflicted the enemies and cast them out. Israel did not get the land by its own sword, neither did its own arm save it, but Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored them.

Then he says in verse 4, "Thou art my king, O God: command deliverances for Jacob." In other words, we have heard what You did in times past. You performed such marvelous, miraculous, wonderful things and gave victory to Your people. Now, do it again. Do what You did in time past. The appeal is to the God whose right

hand, arm, and countenance gave His people victory, not to Israel's own strength.

Make bare Your arm. Raise Yourself up, O God, and let Your people know that You, and You alone, are God. There is a time for mercy and a time for pity, but there is also a time when pity and mercy are no more. It is impossible for anyone to be kinder or more merciful than God Himself. When you think about Proverbs chapter 1, what did God say?

"Because I have called and you refused, I stretched out My hand, and no man regarded." Then what does He say? "I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your destruction cometh as the whirlwind. Then shall you call upon Me, but I will not answer," said the Lord. Why? Because you refused to hear My words. That's why the Bible says in Proverbs 29 verse 1, "He that being often reproved and hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy."

It's impossible to be more kind than God. The church of Jesus Christ today is a weak, anemic, fearful, and despised group of people because we have lost a fighting spirit. We have lost the courage and determination to lift up our voices. We have not been praying those imprecatory prayers, asking God to lead us, guide us, and grant us victory.

How is it possible not to have a fighting spirit when we understand that God is always victorious, that He is a man of war, and that He is the sovereign God of heaven and earth? How is it possible to want to lag behind when we know there is victory? It is astounding.

The Call to Renew a Fighting Spirit

The Bible does not teach pacifism in any realm whatsoever. If you are unwilling to fight for yourself physically—to defend yourself, your wife, your children, and your family—you are probably also unwilling to fight spiritually. We know that there is a spiritual war going on. We have been told to fight the good fight of faith, and we have been told to put on the armor in Ephesians chapter 6. Why would God provide armor if He did not intend for us to fight?

The Apostle Paul said, "I die daily." If you are going to live a holy, godly, obedient life, you better learn to fight. You better fight against every wicked thought that comes into your mind, every unruly, ungodly emotion, every fleshly desire, and any ungodly thought that comes into your mind, even while you are praying. If you don't fight, They will eat you alive. It's just that simple.

I've had people ask me, why do all these thoughts come through my mind? Listen, if you've never had an ungodly thought come through your mind, it's because you've never prayed. You start praying, your mind will start wandering sooner or later, and thoughts will come through your mind like, What in the world is going on? The Christian life is a fight. It is a war. We're at war with our flesh, with our enemies, with anyone who's against God, against the Lord Jesus Christ, against the law of God, the kingdom of God, the ministry of God, and the people of God.

Consequently, we don't understand that, and we've just lost a fighting spirit. We're not willing to fight. What is a fighting spirit? It is a holy determination that you're not going to give in, give up, give out, quit, or slacken. I usually tell people I believe in self-defense. If someone tries to attack me, I'm going to defend myself the best I can. If he breaks my arms, I'm going to kick him. If he breaks my legs, I'm going to bite him. If he knocks my teeth out, I'll try to gum him to death.

I'm simply saying, I'm not going to give up. And I'm not going to give up when it comes to truth and righteousness and holiness and what is just and what is right. We have to determine that we're going to have a fighting spirit. We are not going to quit. Like a mighty army moves the church of God.

You're in an army. The question is, have you gone AWOL? Most Christians are kind of like the Yankees at the Battle of First Manassas. Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers for three months. That's all it's going to take to whip the South: just three months, 75,000 volunteers. People came out from Washington, D.C., in their carriages and wagons, with picnic baskets, waiting to see the Union army defeat the Southern army. And guess what? The Southern army ate their lunch. Then they ran all the way back to Washington, leaving their weapons, mortars, and everything. That's what

Christians have done. We've thrown down our weapons and our determination, put down a fighting spirit, and just left it.

You'll never, ever be holy unless you learn to fight. And that means fighting spiritually, mentally, emotionally, every way possible. If we're going to advance the kingdom of God, we're going to have to fight. We're going to have to stand. We'll probably have to suffer, but we can't give in and we can't give up and we can't give out. Jesus Christ is worthy of all honor, praise and glory. And Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods. And guess what?

When he returns, he'll be on a white horse with a sword, and he'll destroy his enemies. The Apostle Paul said it like this in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, "when our Lord Jesus Christ shall return from heaven with His holy angels with Him, taking vengeance on those that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." If we're a mighty army, we better have a fighting spirit.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. Give us Your grace, Lord. Give us determination. Give us godly courage, Lord. Give us a fighting mentality. May we not give in and give up and give out. May we stand for truth and righteousness and justice. May we, Father, call out the wicked and the ungodly and tell them, Thus saith the Lord. And may, Father, we stand for Your truth. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Wise Hearted Christians

Introduction: The Question of Wisdom

In Exodus 28:3, God says, “And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.” You will understand this verse a little bit later. We will come back to it and explain it in light of the context of Scripture.

Let me begin by asking a question: Are you a wise-hearted Christian? Have you ever asked God for wisdom? Has God ever given you wisdom? We are encouraged to ask God for wisdom, but at the same time He tells us that we must ask Him in faith. James 1:5 says:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth it to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord, that is the one that wavers. A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways.”

So God tells us that if we lack wisdom, we must ask of God. Notice that the Bible tells us God gives it liberally and upbraids us not. In other words, He will not get on to us. He will not rebuke us or admonish us for continually asking for wisdom. God said it will be given to us, but we need to ask in faith. We must not waver, because the person who wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. That person should not think he will receive anything of the Lord, because a double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways.

Now let me ask a strange question: Has God given you wisdom, and you simply do not know it, or have not yet recognized it? You see, when we think of wisdom, we normally think of Solomon and all the wisdom that God gave him.

Solomon's Wisdom as a Model

I want you to turn to 1 Kings chapter 4. In fact, we're going to look at several passages there. But 1 Kings chapter 4, and look at verse 29. 1 Kings 4 and verse 29. 1 Kings 4 verse 29, the Word of God says, "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore." Now that's a lot of wisdom. That's a lot of largeness of heart. That's a lot of understanding. If you'll look in 1 Kings chapter 10, beginning there with verse 23, the Word of God tells us something about Solomon's wisdom. 1 Kings 10, and notice verse 23, the Word of God says this, "So King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to hear Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart." Now Solomon certainly excelled in wisdom. If you are unfamiliar with this truth, I will give it to you, but Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon are all known as wisdom literature.

And Solomon wrote three of those books. He wrote, of course, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. By the way, let me tell you, sometimes you are reading and you will see Canticles 5:2. And you think, what in the world is Canticles? Canticles is just another name for the book of the Song of Solomon. So the Song of Solomon and Canticles are one and the same. But Solomon wrote

three of the six wisdom literature books. Now we know that God gave Solomon wisdom.

If you would turn again to 2nd Chronicles chapter 9 and look at verse 23. And let me show you again how clearly this is stated in scripture. 2nd Chronicles chapter 9 and verse 23. Again once this demonstrates the superiority of Solomon's wisdom. Notice 2nd Chronicles chapter 9 verse 23. "And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon." Why? "To hear his wisdom that God had put into his heart." Now, has God ever placed wisdom within your heart? Have you ever considered that the gifts, abilities, and skills, and knowledge that you have is wisdom from God? You see when we think of wisdom we tend to think that somehow here's this super abundant or supernatural wisdom that is reserved only for a few special individuals and we common Christians could never ever attain any of that wisdom. Now we have to confess and we have to acknowledge that God is the fountain of all knowledge and of all wisdom.

Wisdom and the Spirit's Filling

Let me ask this question a different way. Has God ever given you wisdom? Has God ever placed wisdom in your heart? Has God ever filled you with His Spirit? You might ask, what in the world has the filling of the Spirit got to do with wisdom? Let me try to answer that. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 34 and verse 9: “And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom. For Moses had laid his hands upon him and the children of Israel hearkened unto him and did as the Lord commended Moses.” Note that Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him.

Now turn to Isaiah chapter 11, where we find a prophecy concerning Jesus Christ. Notice particularly what is said in verses 1 and 2: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots,” Jesus Christ. “And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.” “And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither approve after the hearing of his ears, but

with a righteous judgment shall he judge." He goes on, but notice again in verse 2: "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, and the Spirit of wisdom and understanding."

Now let me ask a special question. Each one of us understands that God gave Solomon wisdom exceedingly. But do you know specifically why God gave Solomon wisdom? You say, "He asked for it," and he asked for it instead of riches and instead of the lives of his enemies. Yes, he did. But turn back to 1 Kings chapter 3, beginning with verse 5, and note carefully exactly why Solomon asked for wisdom in the first place: "In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night and God said, Ask what I shall give thee."

Solomon said, "Thou hast showed unto Thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before Thee in truth and in righteousness and uprightness of heart with Thee. And Thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that Thou hast given him a son to sit on the throne as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, Thou hast made Thy servant king instead of David my father.

"And I am but a little child. I know not how to go out or to come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad, for who is able to judge this so great a people?"

Solomon told God truthfully that he did not have enough sense to come out of the rain. God had made him king over all His people, and he needed wisdom. He asked for wisdom, and God gave Solomon wisdom for service to God. Solomon was given wisdom that he might rule justly, judge righteously, and be a blessing to God's people. Wisdom is required for God's service, God's worship, and God's honor; we cannot serve God acceptably apart from godly wisdom.

Bezalel and Aholiab were given special and particular wisdom as well. But it was not just Bezalel and Aholiab, because other men and women were given wisdom that they might serve the Lord Jesus Christ, the one true and living God. He gave them this wisdom

particularly that they might make the garments for Aaron and his sons, the tabernacle, and all of the instruments inside the tabernacle.

Wisdom for Tabernacle Construction

When you stop and think about everything that was involved in the making of the tabernacle—the gold, the silver, the precious stones—everything had to be made by hand. God gives the details to make the priestly garments, the tabernacle, and all the instruments in Exodus chapters 28 through 30. Wisdom was required in order that those who worked in the service of God might make everything exactly the way God demanded.

I want to show you two passages, because when we begin to think of the tabernacle and all of those instruments, we have to remember one particular thing. Exodus 25, verse 9, says, "According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall you make it." God gave Moses a pattern. God gave him details as to how everything was to be made, down to the minutest detail. He told Moses, "You make sure that you follow the pattern that I give you." There was no free-willing when it came to the tabernacle, to the garments, or anything.

Hebrews chapter 8, verse 5, says, "...who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle, for, See saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount." So while Moses was in the mount, God gave him exactly what was to be made. He told him exactly what was to be done.

Here is the amazing thing. Although God gave the pattern to Moses, and although Moses was the head and Moses was responsible for the tabernacle and all of its furniture, God did not leave Moses alone. God gave Moses men and women to help in the construction of the tabernacle, in the making of the garments, and in the making of all the gold and all the silver. Those who worked on the priestly garments and those who worked on the tabernacle had to have knowledge. They not only had to have knowledge; they had to have wisdom that they might make everything exactly. And here is what God did: God placed the wisdom in the hearts of men and women.

When God gave wisdom to Bezalel, Aholiab, and all these people, it was a very practical wisdom, and it related to skills, abilities, and knowledge. God gave them the know-how, and God gave them the ability to do exactly that which He wanted done.

Do you have skills? Where did you get those skills? Who chose those skills for you? Why was your bent and your inclination toward the skills that you have? Go back to Exodus 28, verse 3. Look at it, because I am going to expand this and show you this. Exodus 28, verse 3—that is our text.

God tells Moses, “And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.” That is why I named this message “Wise-Hearted Christians.” There are some who are wise-hearted.

Why were these individuals wise-hearted? Well, the answer comes back: because God had filled them with the Spirit of Wisdom. Why did God fill them with the Spirit of Wisdom? The answer is so they could do that which He wanted done—that is, so that they could serve Him in making all of these garments and making the tabernacle. In other words, the filling of the Spirit and the giving of wisdom were for service to His Kingdom.

So that brings me to this question: Have you ever thought or have you ever considered that the skills and the abilities that you have are God-given, and that they were given to you that you might serve Him in a specific way or in a specific area?

God-Given Skills in All Vocations

Have you ever considered why some people are attracted to certain fields, have definite propensities toward those fields, and end up spending their entire lives in those fields? Just stop and think: why did Doc become a doctor? Why did I become a preacher? Why did Dr. Holmes become a doctor? Why did Rebecca become a doctor? Why does Ron have skill in leather and in other things as well? There are so many people who can do multitudinous things and have skills beyond imagination. Why have you those skills?

The answer is because God gave them to you. I have talked to people and heard them say, “I like my work. I enjoy it.” Wow! I remember years ago, when I turned sixty-two, Henry told me, “Boy, you can retire now, can’t you? Live on social security,” teasing me, of course. The honest thing is, I have never really thought about retiring. I do not plan on it. Why? Because I enjoy teaching and preaching. It is my life. I like it.

Some people say, “My work is my hobby.” That is wonderful when your work is your hobby. But have you ever wondered why you enjoy doing what you do, or why you like doing it? Who was it that placed the desire in your heart? Who was it that put the want to in your heart to learn and then gave you the ability to apply what you know?

I know, and you know, that God calls specific men for specific tasks. I understand that. But the truth of the matter is, God calls all of us for specific tasks. I do not care if it is cleaning houses. I do not care if it is gardening. I do not care if it is washing dishes. God calls us all.

Have you ever wondered why some people like engineering, or why some people really love math? Is that not amazing? Who would not want to love math? But a lot of people do, and they are good at it. They are wonderful at it. In 1 Corinthians 7, beginning with verse 20, notice what he said: “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.” We are talking about a vocation here. Then he says, “Art thou called being a servant or being a slave? Care not for it. But if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord being a servant or slave is the Lord’s free man. Likewise also he that is called being free is Christ’s servant.”

“You are bought with a price, being not the servants of men.” Isn’t that interesting? Then he says, “Let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God.” Here is a man with a gift or skill who is a slave, and another man with a gift or skill who is free. What does God say? Abide in the calling wherein you are called. If you are a slave and can be free, use it rather—in other words, get free.

But it really does not matter, he says, because the slave is God’s free man and the free man is God’s slave. The important thing is that you do what you are doing for His honor and glory. God gave us our

vocations. In that sense, it does not matter whether we are bond or free; we owe everything we are to the Lord, and we are obligated to serve and worship Him.

In Ephesians 4:1, Paul says, “I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” I realize that, in context, the vocation or calling here really refers to our calling as Christians, our effectual calling under Christ in salvation. Yet there is still the implication that we are to walk worthy in all that we do. We have been commanded, in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. Colossians 3:17 says, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him.” Therefore, if you are an engineer, you must be the best engineer you can be for God’s honor and glory. If you are a carpenter, you must be the best carpenter you can be for God’s honor and glory.

I was once with a man who had great carpentry skills. I had a problem and said, “I can’t figure it out. I don’t know how to do it.” He began to tell me how, then said, “Just get out of my way. I can do it quicker than I can tell you how to do it.” And he did it.

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 31:1-11 (KJV)

Because he had that skill, he had that ability. I think of Melvin Stringer. Melvin was a carpenter, a plumber, an electrician, and a mechanic. He could do anything. I often told him, “You know, I just hate you. Just stop and think.” When you read about Aholiab and Bezalel, you will feel that way about them. They could do anything. But you know why? God gave them wisdom. The people who have that ability, God has given them special wisdom. Let me show you about Bezalel and Aholiab.

We are still talking about the tabernacle and all of the instruments in the tabernacle. Look particularly at Exodus 31, beginning with verse 1. I want to emphasize certain things about Bezalel and Aholiab. Notice what God says. “And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur of the tribe of Judah. And

> I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and silver, in brass, in cutting stones, to set them, in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship."
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> Can you stop and think about all the skills and abilities that Bezalel has? Then he said in verse 4, "to devise cunning works, to work in gold and silver and brass, and in cutting of stones to set them, and in carving of timber to work all the manner of workmanship."
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> Verse 6 continues: "And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan, and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom that they may make all that I have commanded thee. The tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, and the table, and his furniture, and the pure candlestick, with all his furniture, the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offerings, with all his furniture, and the laver, and his foot, and the clothes of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons to minister in the priest's office, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense for the holy place. According to all that I have commanded thee, shall they do."

God said, "I've given you Bezalel and Aholiab, Moses. I know you're responsible, and I know you're going to oversee and supervise this. But these men can do it. I've given them wisdom and understanding and knowledge." Although Bezalel and Aholiab were probably the two head honchos under Moses, even God did not leave them alone. God gave help to Aholiab and Bezalel through others whom He had equipped. Exodus 35:10 says, "And every wise-hearted among you shall come and make all that the Lord hath commanded." It then lists the tabernacle, its tent and coverings, taches, boards, bars, pillars, sockets, the ark and its staves, the mercy seat, the veil, the table and its staves, all the vessels, the showbread, the candlestick, its furniture and lamps, and all the oil.

The command is repeated: “And every wise hearted among you shall come and make all that the Lord hath commanded.”

So God put wisdom in the hearts of other people as well. Exodus 35:25 says, “And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands and brought that which they had spun, both of blue and of purple and of scarlet and fine linen. And all the women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom spun goat’s hair.” Here God put in the hearts of these people not only a willing heart but a knowing heart. Their hearts stirred them up to use what God had given them.

They made everything demanded for the tabernacle. When it came to being a seamstress, or setting precious stones and ouches of gold, everything had to be absolutely perfect, because this was not for man; this was for God. When you stop and think of the abilities that God gave these people, it is absolutely astounding.

Exodus 36:1 says, “Then wrought Bezalel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary according to all that the Lord had commanded.” Moses called Bezalel, Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man whose heart the Lord had filled with wisdom, everyone whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it. They received from Moses all the offerings that the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it with them, and they brought free offerings every morning.

“And all the wise men that wrought all the work in the sanctuary came every man from his work which they made. And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offerings of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much. And every wise-hearted man among them that wrought the work of the tabernacle made ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue and purple and scarlet with cherubims of cunning work made he them.” Then you go on through everything that they made. Over and over these passages speak of

every wise-hearted man. Here were people who were given skills and abilities to do the work of God, and those skills and abilities continued with them even after the work of God was over.

God had given them knowledge, and they made everything exactly the way God demanded. We can understand the need for wisdom and extraordinary ability when it comes to such detailed work as the tabernacle, the garments for Aaron and his sons, and all those works of gold, silver, and precious materials. That requires special wisdom and special skills. But does God give wisdom and skills in what we would call the ordinary, the mundane, and the simple? The answer is yes.

There are some women who can clean house better than others, cook better than others, or nurse and care for patients better than others. Some doctors can doctor better than others. Would you take this so far as to say that God gives skills for plowing, planting, gardening, and farming? You better believe it. Not everybody can be a gardener, and not everybody can be a farmer.

Isaiah 28:24 says, “Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? Doth he open and break the clods of his ground?”

Isaiah describes the farmer preparing the ground, planting the fitches, cumin, principal wheat, barley, and rye in their appointed places. The crops are not all handled alike: the fitches are beaten with a staff, the cumin with a rod, and the bread corn is bruised. The farmer does not thresh everything endlessly or use the same instrument for every crop. This also comes from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. “For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.”

Do you realize that knowing how to plant, when to plant, where to plant, and what to plant is a gift from the Lord? Knowing how long each crop needs to mature and what it needs in order to mature requires knowledge and wisdom. The Bible says that God gives discretion and wisdom and instructs those whose livelihoods depend upon their abilities in farming.

My father was a farmer, and he had extraordinary knowledge, skills, and abilities when it came to farming. Consequently, he taught many young men how to farm. He also avoided debt when many

others were plunging headlong into debt because the federal government was advertising programs that were supposed to be a boon and a blessing to farmers. My father was suspicious, and he stayed out while others plunged in. They ended up losing everything. Dad knew, and Dad survived when many did not. Why? Because God had given him skill, wisdom, and knowledge.

Farming is not an easy vocation. It requires a great deal of skill and knowledge simply to survive and make a living. If you do not believe that, try it sometime. I never will forget my dad telling me how angry he became when he saw a bumper sticker on a car. Later, he began laughing because it proved true in reality. The bumper sticker said, "Legalize gambling. Farmers shouldn't be the only ones to have all the fun."

When you stop and think about it, farming would be a gamble, humanly speaking, because you do not know when the rain is coming. You are plowing in faith, trusting God to bless. If God does not bless, you lose everything. Matthew Henry, commenting on Exodus 28:3, said, "Eminence, even in the common arts, is a gift from God."

"It comes from Him, and as there is occasion it ought to be used for Him. He that teaches the husbandman discretion, teaches the tradesman also. Both therefore ought to honor God with their gain. Ingenuity in arts and sciences, even those of the ornamental kind, come from God." Truthfully, everything we are, everything we have, and everything we know comes from God.

Adam Clarke said, "Every man should be permitted as far as possible to follow the bent or direction of his own genius when it evidently leads him to new inventions and improvements on old plans. How much has both the labor of men and cattle been lessened by the improvements in machinery? And can we say that the wisdom which found out these improvements did not come from God? No man by course of reading or study ever acquired a genius of this kind. We call it natural, and say it was born with the man."

"Moses teaches us to consider it divine. Who taught Newton to ascertain the laws by which God governs the universe, through which discovery a new source of profit and pleasure has been opened

to mankind through every part of the civilized world? The principle that God is the author of all the arts and sciences is too little regarded. Every good gift and every perfect gift, says James, comes from above, from the Father of lights. Why has God constructed every part of nature with such a profusion of economy and skill, if he intended this skill should never be discovered by man, or that man should not attempt to examine his works in order to find them out? From the works of creation, what proofs, astonishing and overwhelming proofs, both to believers and infidels, have been drawn of the nature, being, attributes, and providence of God."

What the Word of God teaches is this: all of our skills, abilities, and knowledge, as well as our graces, are derived from God. You may be an engineer, doctor, nurse, homemaker, dentist, preacher, teacher, house cleaner, or ditch digger; whatever skills you have, God gave them to you. Whatever knowledge you have, God gave it to you. It was God who gave you the desire to know, the mind to comprehend, and the ability to apply that which you learned.

Sources of True Wisdom

Are you a wise-hearted Christian? Has God ever given you wisdom? Obviously, He has. Would you like to have more wisdom—indeed, all the wisdom that you could possibly get? I know I would. We know and understand that God is the source of all knowledge and all wisdom. Proverbs 2:6 says, "For the Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." For the Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Let me tell you what we have overlooked: how simple and how easy it is to obtain wisdom. Most of us tend to think that getting wisdom is some esoteric work that only a few special people know anything about, and that the rest of us could never ever discover wisdom. No, the truth of the matter is that God wants us to be wise. In fact, He commands us to be wise. God wants us to have wisdom. From where do we derive wisdom? We know that God is the source of wisdom.

But how can we obtain wisdom easily, even quickly? There are two sources for wisdom. First, we must understand that the Bible is the written Word of God and God's revealed wisdom. Principles,

precepts, commands, directions, warnings, and promises are given to us in His Word. It is this book that separates us from other people. We are to be men and women of the Book. We are to know God's law and how to apply it.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 4, and first of all at verse 6. In fact, let us read verse 5. God says, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land whether you go to possess it." Moses said, "I've taught you." Everything that God told him—watch verse 6, Deuteronomy 4:6.

“Keep therefore and do them.” Do what? Those laws, statutes, and judgments. “Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all the things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which I set before you this day?”

Did you hear what God says? When we have His law, know His judgments, and know His statutes, everyone is going to say, “Where did you learn those things?” God says, “This is your wisdom, and this is your understanding in the sight of everyone else, in the sight of all the other nations.” What is it that has set us apart? It is God's law. God's law makes us wise.

We understand those precepts and apply them in our lives. Isn't that simple? Just stop and think how simple God's law is. I don't have to look for another woman; I've got the one God gave me. God said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife or his daughter.” It is simple. I have what I have because God gave it to me. Therefore, “Thou shalt not steal.”

Why should I desire that which Doc has? I don't. When we use His law and apply it to our lives, it is absolutely simple. If we followed God's law, we would avoid multitudinous sins and heartaches in our lives.

Ezra was a student of the law and had the opportunity to set magistrates and judges and to teach them the law of God, which was to be the standard. Artaxerxes said to Ezra, “And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand set magistrates and judges which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not.” Look at the verse again: “And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand.” So Ezra had some wisdom in his hand.

There is one way that you could interpret this. You could say, first of all, that the hand refers to power or strength. So the king could be saying, “after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thy power.” He could have been saying that. Some have suggested that you could read it, “after the wisdom of thy God which God had placed in thy heart which appears in thy hand.” In other words, he was doing it.

But to me the easiest and simplest way to interpret that is this: Ezra had a copy of the Torah in his hand. He had a copy of the law. The word Torah, by the way, means authoritative direction or authoritative instruction. So he is saying, “Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God in thy hand”—that is, thy book, thy law—you establish judges and magistrates and teach them. Because you have the authoritative instruction, you have the authoritative direction.

Luke 11:49 verifies this: “Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles and some of them they shall slay and persecute.” It is interesting here that the Bible is referred to as the wisdom of God. The reference is undoubtedly to Proverbs 8, where Jesus Christ is wisdom personified. It could also refer to Matthew 23:34: “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men and scribes, and some of them you shall kill and crucify. Some of them you shall scourge in your synagogues and persecute them from city to city.”

The Bible is the wisdom of God. Where do we get wisdom? From the Bible, because the Bible is God’s revealed wisdom. When we understand God’s law and apply God’s law, that is wisdom. Secondly, we receive wisdom from the Lord Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God.

If you will look in your Bibles, to 1st Corinthians chapter 1. 1st Corinthians chapter 1. You have to remember, I've told you this in times past, that the Bible is the written word of God. Jesus Christ is the living word of God. But just as the Bible is the written word of God, it is also the written wisdom of God. And Jesus Christ is the living word of God, is also the living wisdom of God. So in 1st Corinthians, Chapter 1, if you would look there please, at verse 24. Notice what the Bible says, 1 Corinthians 1 verse 24. "But unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God incarnate. Skip down to verse 30. He says, "but of Him that is of God the Father are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made in us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." So Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God. Turn right over to the book of Colossians chapter 2.

Colossians chapter 2. Notice if you would beginning there with verse 2. Colossians 2 and verse 2. Look what the Apostle Paul writes. Colossians 2 verse 2, "...that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and in all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Jesus Christ is wisdom personified. So if you and I will wisdom, let me clarify this. If we will biblical wisdom, if we will godly wisdom, we must seek it from the word of God and from the son of God.

Contrast with Worldly Wisdom

There is an alien wisdom, a humanistic wisdom, and a wisdom contrary to biblical and godly wisdom. A man may be wise, but not necessarily wise in the way of God. He may be wise in sin or wise in humanistic philosophy. The reason to consider 1 Corinthians 1 and then James 3 is to see this contrast clearly: God contrasts the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of the devil with godly wisdom.

In 1 Corinthians 1, beginning with verse 18, he says, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness. But in us who are being saved is the power of God. Watch, for it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will bring to

nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Jesus Christ crucified to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Notice how God specifically says that He is going to destroy the wisdom of the world. The wisdom of the world is against the wisdom of God. In James 3, beginning with verse 13, God asks, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness."

CHAPTER 5

Where To Meet God

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 25:10-22 (KJV)

Introduction: The Question of Meeting God

And they shall make an ark of shittim wood, two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it. And thou shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof. And two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings of the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. The staves shall be in the rings of the ark. They shall not be taken from it. And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee.

And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold; of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy

> seat. And make one cherub on the one end and the other cherub on the other end; even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings. And their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, and between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.
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> Note particularly verse 22: "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee." One of the best-known retorts for someone who has been saved, who has been converted, when the question is asked, "What happened to you?" is, "Well, I met the Lord." Or someone says simply, "I met the Lord."

We use that phrase constantly and frequently. The greatest example of this would be Saul of Tarsus. In Acts chapter 8 and verse 1, the Scripture says: "And Saul was consenting unto his death"—that is, the death of Stephen—"and at that time there was a great persecution against the church which is at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." Saul was the one who held the garments while Stephen was slain, and he was consenting to his death.

Verse 3 shows how desperate Saul was: "And as for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and haling men and women, committed them to prison." Saul then was leading the persecution.

Acts chapter 9 begins: "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying

unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." And he trembling and astonished said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And the Lord said unto him, "Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man, but they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

He was there three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. There was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Behold, I am here, Lord." 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 he 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 priest to bind all that call upon 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 show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

Ananias went his way, 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."

Here was a known persecutor and blasphemer, and God changed him by the simple fact that he met the Lord. When Ananias said, "Lord, I've heard of this man," the Lord was saying, in effect, "Do not worry about this; I have him tamed. Behold, he prayeth." He was now a changed man.

Paul later said, "And I was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ. But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which he once

destroyed. And they glorified God in me." What was true of Saul of Tarsus is equally true of everyone who has genuinely met the Lord: we have been changed by His grace and mercy.

So I could go further and ask you several questions. First of all, have you met the Lord? Since you are going to answer yes, my next question would be, where did you meet Him? And upon what grounds did you meet Him? If you have met Him once for salvation, then obviously you want to continue to meet Him for fellowship, communion, and worship. But I could ask, do you meet Him daily? I could also ask, do you meet Him each Lord's Day in corporate and public worship as well?

So let me try to explain the rationale behind these questions. In order to understand them, you have to understand the context of Exodus chapter 25, but you also must clearly understand the pictures that are being presented in the text. God is instructing Moses in this passage on the building of the tabernacle. In fact, he was admonished by God on several occasions that he was to make everything according to the pattern which was shown him.

The Pattern of the Tabernacle

In Exodus chapter 25, verse 9, He says, "According to all that I show thee after the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall you make it." Verse 40 says, "And look thou that thou make them after their pattern, which was shown thee in the mount."

Now I do want you to turn over to the book of Hebrews chapter 8. Mark this passage because we are going to be coming back to Hebrews chapter 8 and 9 shortly. Hebrews 8:5 says, "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things. As Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle, for see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

So obviously God has given Moses an absolute pattern, not only for the tabernacle, but for every instrument in that tabernacle as well.

When you look at Hebrews 8:5, the word "pattern" there in the Greek is the word tupos. It is where we get our English word "type." Literally, everything in the tabernacle, as well as the tabernacle itself—all of its furniture, everything about the tabernacle—was a type. Everything in the tabernacle represented something or someone. Everything that we read about in the tabernacle, and later in the temple, is a picture, a representation of an absolute truth.

Hebrews 8:1 says, "Now the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: We have such a high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens."

Now look what it says about Christ: "A minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices. Wherefore it is a necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law, who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things. As Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle, for see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern"—or the type—"showed to thee in the mount."

According to Hebrews 8, the tabernacle and all of its furniture, and later the temple and all of its furniture, was not reality. It was merely a shadow. It was a picture, a representation. It is like the real tree and the tree's shadow. If you are standing in the shadow, you are not standing in the tree. The shadow is a picture or symbol of the tree. The true tabernacle, the Bible tells us, was pitched by God, and everything here on earth was simply a shadow or a type. Hebrews 9 continues this truth in its first ten verses.

The Tabernacle as a Figure and Shadow

Hebrews 9 says, "Then verily, the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made, the first wherein was the candlestick and the table and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle, which is called the holiest of all, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna and Aaron's rod

that budded, and the tables of the covenant, and over it the cherubims of glory, shadowing the mercy seat, of which we cannot now speak particularly."

"Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God, but into the second went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while as the first tabernacle was yet standing."

It was "a figure for the time then present," in which were offered gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience. These stood only in meats and drinks, divers washings, and carnal ordinances imposed upon them until the time of reformation.

Neither the tabernacle nor the temple could have been reality. First, they were not pitched by God; they were pitched by man. Secondly, neither could bring everyone into the presence of God. Moreover, they could not truly forgive sin, because every sacrifice had to be repeated continually. It was a covering for sin, but it was not a real dealing with sin.

The word "figure" is the Greek word parabolae, from which we get our English word "parable." It means placing something beside another thing so that there may be a comparison. Thus, it deals with a likeness or a similitude.

What God is telling us is that we can take the Old Testament shadows, place them side by side with the reality, compare them, and see which is real and which is a shadow. Consider again Exodus chapter 25, verses 21 and 22: “And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I've given thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.” Notice what God said: “And there will I meet with thee.”

The Ark and Its Contents

The ark was nothing more than a box, chest, or coffer. It was a special box, but it was still just a box. It was divinely ordained, made with divinely ordained materials, and built according to a divine plan. On top of that box was the mercy seat. On top of the mercy seat were two cherubim facing each other, their wings touching and overlooking the mercy seat.

We need to comprehend the contents of the ark. First, it contained the law of God. God said, “You’re going to put in it the testimony that I give thee.” The tables of law are called the testimony because in them God testified concerning His will. He gave His law to His people as a favor unto them, and their acceptance of that law indicated their subjection to God and obedience to Him.

The tables of law are therefore called the tables of testimony because the law was a testimony to direct us in our duty and responsibilities. It would also be a testimony against us if we transgressed that law. Thus, the ark itself is called the ark of the testimony in Exodus 30:6, and the tabernacle is called the tabernacle of witness in Numbers 10:11 and Acts 7:44. The very first thing in the ark was the tables of the law.

The second thing you had in that ark was Aaron's rod that budded. You remember the rebellion of Korah in Numbers chapter 16, where Korah and then the sons of Reuben wanted to become priests themselves. God told Moses, “You get me a rod of every tribe and you take Aaron's rod and you put them up before me and I'll show you who I choose.” When Moses went in to get the rods, Aaron's rod had blossomed and bloomed and bore almonds. The rest of the rods were absolutely barren. So what God is saying is, “Look, I am sovereign in choosing who serves me and who approaches me.”

In Numbers chapter 17, verse 10, the Lord said unto Moses, “Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.” That rod then was also put in the ark. In Hebrews chapter 9, verse 4, the Bible says the ark contained the golden censer, the ark of the covenant, the golden pot with manna, and it also contained Aaron's rod that budded.

You have to ask this: what about the golden pot filled with manna? This was the manna that God provided for the children of Israel while they were in the wilderness. I will talk about that in just a moment. Stop and ask yourself some questions. What is the significance of the ark? What is the significance of the mercy seat? What is the significance of the cherubim upon the mercy seat? What is the significance of the contents of the ark?

You have to remember that everything that you read concerning the tabernacle and later on the temple are pictures. You have heard the old expression, “A picture's worth a thousand words.” God is drawing a picture; He's giving us a picture so that we can understand. Why did God choose cherubim to set upon the ark? There are seraphim, and then there are angels. Why did He not just choose an angel? Or why did He not just choose seraphim? It seems as if the cherubim not only represent God's rulership and power, but also His justice. Do you remember when Adam and Eve sinned against God, that God drove them from the garden?

The Cherubim and God's Justice

In Genesis 3:24, the Bible says, "So He drove out the man and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." The cherubims then have to do with God's justice and God's power. Seraphim, in Isaiah chapter 6, are different creatures altogether. They have to do with God's holiness. When Isaiah saw the Lord, the seraphim had six wings: with twain they cover their faces, with twain they cover their feet, and with twain they do fly, and they cease not saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." The seraphim then basically have to do with God's holiness. There is none as holy as the Lord.

In the Bible, God is known as He that dwelleth between the cherubims. He's not known as He that dwelleth around the seraphim or around the angels, but He that dwelleth among the cherubim. In 1 Samuel 4:4: "So the people sent to Shiloh that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God." In 2

Samuel 6:2: "And David arose and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims." In 2 Kings 19:15: "And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwelleth between the cherubims, thou art God, even thou alone, of all the kings of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth."

Psalm 80:1 says, "Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth." Psalm 99:1 says, "The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble. He sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth be moved." Isaiah 37:16 says, "O Lord God of hosts of Israel, that dwelleth between the cherubims, thou art God, even thou alone." In every one of these passages, God is referred to as He that dwelleth between the cherubims. The cherubims then have special significance, especially in relationship to the justice and the power of God.

Secondly, consider the tables of the law. I have already told you that the law was a revelation of God's will for His people. It is that law that will either bless us or curse us. The tables of the law were carefully preserved inside the ark to teach us that we are to make much of the Word of God and hide it in our hearts and our innermost thoughts, as the ark was placed in the Holy of Holies. The ark was the chief token of God's presence, which teaches us that the first and greatest assurance and evidence of God's favor to us is writing His law in our hearts.

Listen to Hebrews 8, verses 10 through 13: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people, and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest, and I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." One of the greatest blessings of the new covenant is that God writes His law in our hearts.

The Mercy Seat and Propitiation

Thirdly, consider the mercy seat. The mercy seat was the cover over the ark and the place where the visible cloud of God's presence abode. That mercy seat, with the cloud upon it, was a symbol of God's presence. It was that same mercy seat that the high priest entered once a year on the Day of Atonement and sprinkled the blood seven times upon it. Leviticus 16, verse 14, teaches us: "And he shall take the blood of the bullock and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward, and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle the blood with his finger seven times." Here is the mercy seat, and the blood is sprinkled upon it.

Fourthly, there was the manna—the golden pot that contained manna, which the Israelites tried to preserve in their own houses, contrary to God's law. When they tried to do it, it putrefied and stank. But when God said, "You take a sample, and you put it in the ark of the covenant," it was always pure and sweet, and there is a reason for that. Fifthly, I have already mentioned Aaron's rod that budded. This was the rod with which Aaron had done all those miracles in the land of Egypt. It was the only one of those rods that budded, blossomed, and brought forth fruit.

Each of these pictures that God gives us in the Old Testament teaches us the reality of what it means to meet with God. It also teaches us the reality of the only place where we may meet with God, because each one pictures Jesus Christ. The only way that we can ever meet with God is through the mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him alone.

God is a God of justice. Those cherubim represented God's justice. God will not sacrifice His truth, His power, or His law. God will not save anyone contrary to His law. God is absolutely just, and the cherubims were over the mercy seat to picture the absolute power and justice of God.

In Romans 3 and verse 26, the Bible says, "To declare, I say at this time His righteousness"—that is God's righteousness—"that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." You have to ask yourself this question: How could God be absolutely just in forgiving a sinner? If His justice demands satisfaction, and if His

justice demands death, how can God be just and true to His law, and forgive sinners?

The mercy seat was placed on top of that ark that contained the law of God. Since we have not kept the law of God perfectly, we have all violated that law. The curse of God's law is upon every sinner. The death sentence is upon every sinner. The just penalties of that violated law hover over the head of every sinner. The Bible says in Galatians 3 and verse 10, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in those things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

The mercy seat was over the ark that contained the law. Once a year, Aaron went in and sprinkled the blood seven times on that mercy seat on the Day of Atonement, because of satisfaction: mercy rejoiced against wrath.

The manna in the ark also spoke of Christ. Manna was fed miraculously to the children of Israel while they were in the desert. Do you know what the word “manna” actually means? “What is it?” They did not know, so they called it manna. It literally means, “What is it?” They described it as small and white, like a coriander seed, and small as hoarfrost, but they did not know what it was, so they simply called it manna.

Our Lord wanted that pot of manna in the ark to signify that we should never forget the signal favor He shows His people—not only in the past, but in the present and in the time to come. We may be looking at difficult times ahead. Everybody is talking about the economy crashing and food being scarce. But David said, “I’ve been young, and now I’m old. And yet I’ve not seen the people of God forsaken, nor His seed begging bread.”

That golden pot of manna signifies God’s miraculous provision for His own. Moreover, it pictures Jesus Christ, who is the true bread of life. Therefore, the pot of manna in the ark was always pure and fresh, because Jesus Christ is always the nourishment and sustenance of His people.

Our Lord said, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down

from heaven that a man may eat thereof and not die." He continued, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eateth this bread, he shall live forever. And the bread that I shall give, or 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 you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you 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. As the living Father hath sent me, and as I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead, but he that eateth this bread shall live forever."

What is our Lord doing? He is drawing a picture. He is saying, "Here is the manna which your fathers ate, which was a symbol, it was a picture, it was a type, it was an emblem, but they are dead. But I am the true bread. I am the living bread. You live of me." You get your nourishment, your sustenance; you will never ever die. Everything in the ark, everything about the tabernacle, pictures Jesus Christ.

What about Aaron's rod that budded? If you would turn in your Bibles to the book of Zechariah, which is right before the book of Malachi, the next to the last book in the Old Testament, Zechariah chapter 6, and I could multiply passages, but I want you to see this one. Let us begin reading with verse 12 concerning Christ: "And speak of him saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the Branch"—that is Christ, the rod, the branch—"and he shall grow up out of his place,"

"And he shall build the temple of the Lord. Even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and he shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of his peace shall be between them both." Here the branch is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He is also called the rod and the stem that grew out of Jesse. Aaron's rod not

only budded and blossomed and brought forth fruit; it also speaks concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, very obviously, is the branch as well.

Christ is the ark. Christ is the mercy seat. Christ is the manna. Christ is the rod or the branch. Christ is the propitiation.

Christ as the Fulfillment of All Types

In the Old Testament, the seat above the ark is always called the mercy seat. It was there that Aaron went once a year and sprinkled the blood of atonement. Therefore, it became a propitiatory seat, or a seat where propitiation was made. It was the seat where God was divinely seated, symbolically. When the blood was sprinkled upon that mercy seat, it showed the means whereby God would be merciful unto sinners. God would only be merciful through the application of the blood. The Scripture says in Hebrews 9, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission.

Everything here pictures Christ. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, often symbolized as LXX, or 70, the mercy seat is called by the Greek word hilasterion, which is the word propitiation. The Septuagint was quoted not only by Christ, but by the Apostles as well, and was present when Christ and the Apostles were upon earth. The mercy seat was where the propitiation was actually made.

Now, I do want you to turn to Romans chapter 3. I told you I was going to come back to this passage. Look in Romans chapter 3, and let's begin reading there with verse 25. Watch carefully. Romans chapter 3, verse 25: "Whom God"—we're talking about Christ—let's go back to verse 24: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say at this time, His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." But I want you to notice the Bible says that God hath set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation. Remember I told you in times past that the word "propitiation" actually means to placate, to satisfy, to appease.

So when the blood of atonement was sprinkled on that mercy seat, the wrath and the anger of God was appeased and satisfied temporarily because they had to keep doing that every year. But when Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God, the true sacrifice came, He made one sacrifice for sin and He, in His perfect obedience, in His sacrificial death, perfectly appeased and placated and satisfied the wrath and the anger and the absolute justice of God. So Christ here is set forth as our propitiation.

You know what the Bible says in 1 John 4 and verse 10? Listen to this: "Herein is love. Not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent forth His Son to be a propitiation for our sins." So Jesus Christ is the propitiation.

Now, I want you to turn right over to Hebrews chapter 9. Hebrews chapter 9. And let's look at verses 11 and 12. Hebrews 9, verses 11 and 12. Watch carefully. "But Christ, being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not in this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Now notice what the scripture says: "by a greater and more perfect tabernacle," one not made with hands, one not like that old tabernacle or that old temple, "neither by the blood of bulls and goats, but by his own blood enter into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." So let me try to spell this out. Christ is the true tabernacle. Christ is the perfect tabernacle, the one made without hands. Christ is also the covering for his people, for his righteousness clothes us and we're covered from our sins by his righteousness.

He is secured for us freedom from the curse and condemnation of the law and wrath to come. He has made reconciliation for us, and now God is propitiated toward us. Jesus Christ, therefore, is our mercy seat. He is the grounds upon which God will have mercy to sinners. He is the grounds whereby God will meet with sinners. He is the grounds, He is the foundations whereby God will now commune with sinners. Jesus Christ is our propitiation. It is Jesus Christ now who encourages us to come to God the Father. It is Jesus Christ who gives us and promises us enjoyment and fellowship and communion

with God the Father through Himself. It is Jesus Christ who has made peace for us. It is Jesus Christ who makes us draw nigh.

Let me show you something else, because I have just made the statement that Christ is our tabernacle. I know that you can see this spiritually, but I want you to see it from the Scripture. The word "tabernacle" is used not only literally in the Scripture; it is also used metaphorically. Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles first of all to 2nd Corinthians chapter 5, and then we are going to 2nd Peter, just a few books over from Hebrews. Look in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 1 at what the Apostle Paul says: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." What is Paul talking about when he speaks of "our earthly house of this tabernacle"? What is he referring to? Our bodies.

Skip down to verse 4: "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened. Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon that mortality might be swallowed up of life." When he speaks of "we that are in this tabernacle," what is he talking about? Our bodies. The Greek word is skene.

Now, turn to 2 Peter chapter 1 and look at verse 13. Watch carefully. Peter writes: "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I'm in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." What tabernacle is Peter talking about? His body while he is alive. Now, look down to verse 14.

Peter says, "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me." He is saying, "I'm going to die. I'm going to put this body off."

The word "tabernacle" is the Greek word skene. It can be used literally or metaphorically. John 1:14, referring to Jesus Christ, says, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The word "dwelt" means, "He tabernacled among us."

Jesus Christ said in John 2:19, "Destroy this temple, and I'll raise it up in three days." Even His enemies said in Mark 14:58, "We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will raise up another made without hands." He is

the tabernacle. He is the temple made without hands. Jesus Christ is our all in all. He is the tabernacle on account of the body in which He dwelt.

He is the table, because He is the bread of life. He is the ark, which the law of God encloses within, because He is the living Word of the Father. He is the candlestick, because He is our spiritual light. He is the altar of incense, because of the sweet-smelling savor of sanctification. He is also the altar of our burnt offering, because through His sacrifice on the cross He became an offering for the sins of His people. He also is our Passover, for He is the Lamb of God. He is our Great High Priest, for His ministry never ceases. He is the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the God of Gods, the Great I Am, the Prince of Peace, the Counselor, and the Everlasting God.

He is the fulfillment of every type, every emblem, every shadow, and every picture in the Old Testament. Therefore, if you wish to meet with God, if you wish to have communion with God the Father, you must do so through His Son, Jesus Christ. Our Lord said it like this in John 14:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” In Ephesians 2:18, He says, “For through Him”—that is, through Jesus Christ—“we have access in one Spirit unto the Father.”

Application: Meeting God Through Christ

And I do want you to turn to Hebrews chapter 10, and let me show you this passage in relation to what I am showing you. Hebrews 10, beginning with verse 19: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is His flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of

Faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised. The high priest entered the holiest of all only once a year.

Through Jesus Christ, through a new and living way, we may come boldly to the throne of grace at any time. The picture has become a reality. These are two simple applications. First, have you met the Father? If so, did you meet Him through Jesus Christ? Christ is the only meeting place: He is the ark, the mercy seat, the propitiation, and the Passover.

Second, if we continue fellowship with God the Father, we must do so through Jesus Christ. Have you considered that through Him we may have uninterrupted fellowship with the Father? When God told Moses about the ark, the mercy seat, the cherubim, the law, Aaron's rod that budded, and the pot of manna, He said, "There, there will I meet with thee." No other place. "If you want to meet with Me," He said, "you've got to meet with Me right there." The only place anyone can meet with God the Father today is through Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of every type, emblem, symbol, and picture in the Old Testament.

If you want to meet with the Father, come through Jesus Christ.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank Thee. We acknowledge Thy greatness, love, mercy, and kindness. Lord, I pray that You would indeed help us today, not only in observing the Lord's table, but in baptism and fellowship. Help us appreciate the great work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

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Chapter 2: Truth About Andersonville Prison
JW00839 | SermonAudio

Chapter 3: Christ Leading His Army In Advancing God's Social Order on Earth
JW00202 | SermonAudio

Chapter 4: Wise Hearted Christians
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Chapter 5: Where To Meet God
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