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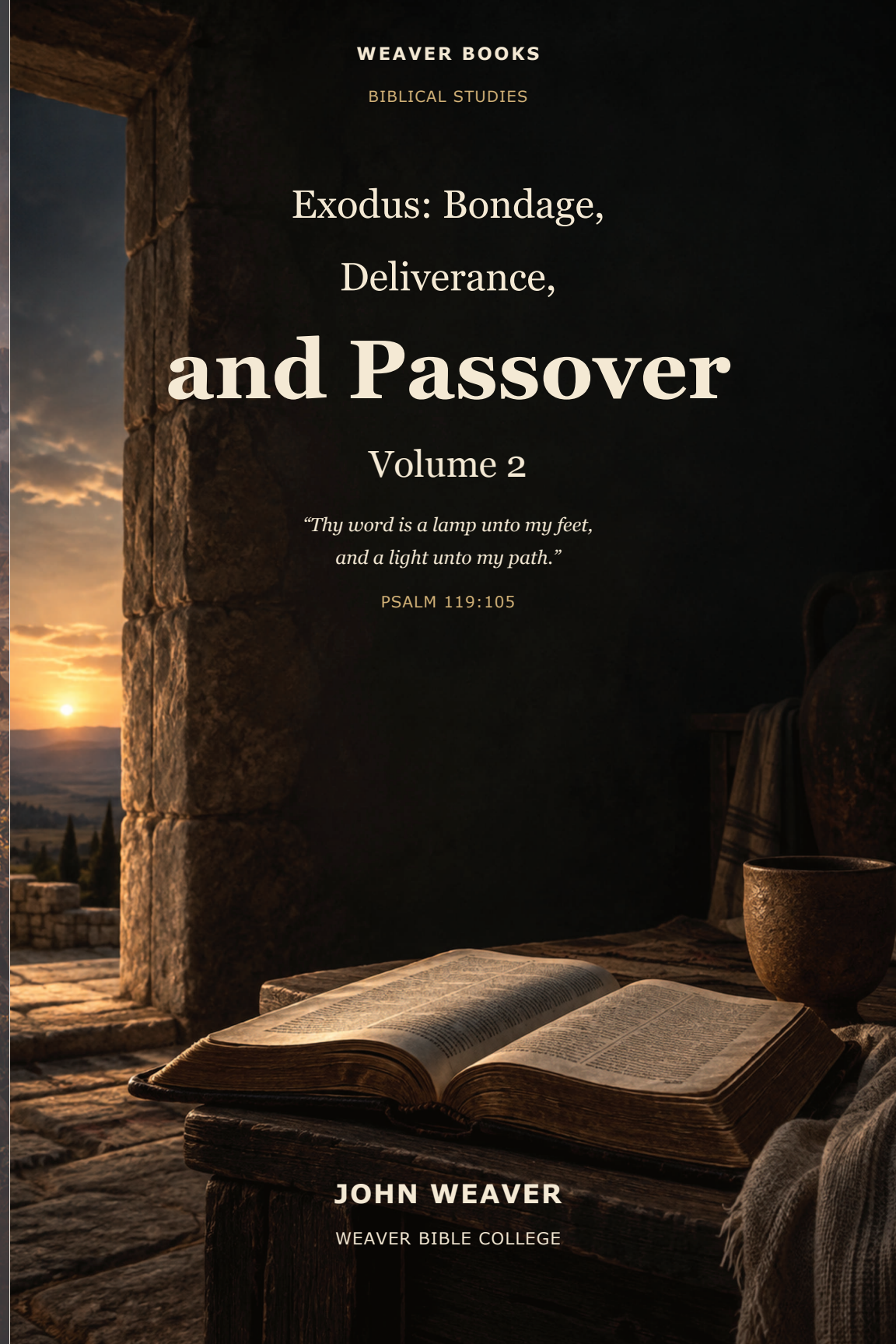
BIBLICAL STUDIES

Exodus: Bondage, Deliverance, and Passover

Volume 2

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

PSALM 119:105

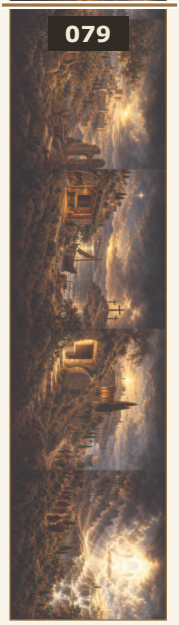


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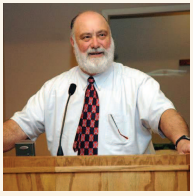
The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

EXODUS 14:14

Drawing on Exodus and related passages, John Weaver considers bondage and deliverance, God's judgment, and the responsibilities of obedience. These sermons bring biblical narratives into conversation with historical examples and the life of the church. Volume 2 is one of two volumes; the complete chapter sequence is preserved across the set. This volume contains corrected chapters 22-44.

“If we truly desire to be saved, to be delivered from our enemies, we must not only learn to pray and to plead; we must learn to be obedient and faithful to Him.”

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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WEAVER BOOKS

Exodus: Bondage, Deliverance, and Passover

Volume 2

Corrected chapters 22-44

John Weaver

Weaver Bible College

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Exodus: Bondage, Deliverance, and Passover

Volume 2

John Weaver

Weaver Books
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Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Corrected review edition - October 4, 2026. Repeated full sermons have been consolidated; chapter numbers, contents, indexes, and study-guide reading ranges follow this corrected edition. Original transcript variants remain preserved in the editorial archive. Final editorial and publisher approval is still required. This is Volume 2 of two, covering corrected chapters 22-44. Both volumes use one matching study guide.

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CHAPTER 22

Great Sins Produce Great Losses

July 21, 2019

Introduction: The Cost of Great Sins

Judges 20:21 says, “And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men.” On the second day, verse 25 says, “And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men. All these drew the sword.” Thus, forty thousand Israelites were killed in two days, not including the Benjamites killed on the third day.

Oftentimes we excuse what are known as little sins. We overlook and ignore them. Yet little sins are exactly violations of God’s law, just like great sins. The Song of Solomon tells us that little foxes spoil the vines. Little sins kill equally as do great sins. Sin is sin in one sense of the word, and yet some sins are far more wicked and criminal than others. Hence, the Bible contains varying degrees of punishment for sin. Theft, for instance, is punishable by restitution

anywhere from twofold to sevenfold, based upon Proverbs 6:31. But sins like murder, rape, and kidnapping are always punishable by death.

The Horrible Sin in Gibeah (Judges 19)

To understand Judges 20, we must understand Judges 19, where an exceedingly wicked, grievous, and horrible sin was committed. It would certainly be classified as a great sin, and it demonstrates the depth of depravity into which fallen man can sink. In Judges 19, a Levite out of Mount Ephraim had taken a wife out of Bethlehem, Judah. She left him, deserted him, and went to her father's house for four months in Bethlehem, Judah. Judges 19:1 says, "And it came to pass in those days when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of Mount Ephraim, and he took to him a concubine out of Bethlehem, Judah."

"And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him into her father's house, to Bethlehem, Judah, and was there four whole months." The word "whore" here is the Hebrew word "zanah," which means to fornicate, to play the whore, or to play the harlot. In this context, it is desertion that is classified as fornication or playing the harlot. She deserted him and went down to her father's house.

Now, 1 Corinthians 7 makes desertion very clear. The interesting thing is that, although she is called his concubine, if you read on in the chapter, you will find that she is also called his wife. Then, in verse 4, we read: "...and his father-in-law, the damsel's father, retained him, and he abode with him three days, and so they did eat and drink and lodge there." Thus, she is referred to as both his concubine and his wife, and her father is referred to as his father-in-law.

She had left him and deserted him, going down to her father's house. He went after her, and the Bible tells us that he spoke friendly to her to restore her and bring her back.

What happened was that the father-in-law, evidently meeting his son-in-law for the first time, said, "Stay with us." He talked him into staying. On the second day, when the Levite got up to leave, his

father-in-law said, "No, no, no, no. Just get comfortable and make yourself at home and let's eat together." They did, so he did not leave that day. The same thing happened on the third day, and it continued until finally the Levite said, "Look, I've got to go. I've got to get away and I've got to return back." By then it was late in the afternoon. His father-in-law said, "Just stay tonight and you can leave early in the morning." But he said, "No. I've got to leave now."

So he and his wife and his servant left. They came close to Jebus, which was Jerusalem. It was called Jebus because the Jebusites controlled it at that time. Judges 19:10 says: "But the man would not tarry that night, but he arose and departed, and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem."

“And there was with him two asses saddled. His concubine also was with him. And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent. And the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn into the city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it. And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel.”

“We will pass over to Gibeah.” And he said unto his servant, “Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night in Gibeah, or in Ramah.” And they passed on and went their way, and the sun went down upon them when they were by Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin. They had turned into Gibeah and were in the street, waiting for someone to invite them into his home.

In those days there were no motels, no Howard Johnson’s, and no Holiday Inns. The custom was that if a stranger came along, you simply invited him into your home. They remained in the street until an old man came along after a day’s work. Judges 19:16 says, “And behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which was also of Mount Ephraim.”

“And he sojourned in Gibeah, but the men of the place were Benjamites. And when he lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city. And the old man said, Whither goest thou, and whence comest thou? And he said unto him, We are passing from Bethlehem Judah toward the side of Mount Ephraim, from thence am I. And I went to Bethlehem Judah, but I am now going to

the house of the Lord. And there is no man that receiveth me into the house."

In other words, nobody had invited him home. Verse 19 continues: "Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses. There is bread and wine for me also, and for thy maid, and for the young man who is with thy servants. There is no want for anything." Verse 20 says, "And the old man said, Peace be with thee. Howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me, only lodge not in the street. So he brought them into his house and gave provender unto the asses, and they washed their feet and did eat and drink." The old man invited them into the house and gave sound advice: "Do not lodge in the street."

Just as they got into the house, were making themselves comfortable, and beginning to eat, some men surrounded the house and wanted the man brought out to them. Judges 19:22 says, "Now, as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him. And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you do not so wickedly, seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly."

Here these men come around, using the euphemism "that we may know him." They actually wanted to attack him. But note that the old man says, "No, no, you're not going to do this wickedness. Do not do this to this man." This Levite had come under the protection of this old man.

The man, the master of the house, went out unto them and said unto them, "Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly, seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly." Then he said, "Behold, here is my daughter, a maiden, and his concubine; them will I bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you. But unto this man do not so vile a thing. But the men would not hearken unto him. So the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them. And they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning."

"And when the day began to spring, they let her go."

Cultures differ. It was certainly a different culture in Bible times. If you took a man, if you took anyone into your home in Bible times, it meant that they were under your absolute total protection. It meant that you were to do everything to protect them, even giving your own life is what it amounts to.

The only way to understand what this old man did and what the Levite did, in one sense of the word, is to understand their culture. When the men demanded that the man be brought out, the old man said, “No, no, do not do this. This is wicked.” Then he offered his maiden daughter and the Levite’s wife: “You take them, do as you please with them, but do not touch this man.” How could any father give his maiden daughter to a bunch of perverts? How could any man give his wife to them? The old man was trying to save his guest, while the man who gave his wife was trying to save himself.

John Gill said that the Levite, not the old man, took his own wife or concubine and put her forth to them, very probably with her consent, hoping that her beauty might pacify them. Gill suggested that some young men of the city had seen her in the street, had been captivated by her beauty, and had come specifically for her. He further said that her husband, perceiving this, laid hold of her by his main strength, as the word signifies, and brought her out, whether she would or would not. In other words, the husband put her out whether she went willingly or unwillingly.

Adam Clarke wrote that the men of Gibeah wished to abuse the Levite’s body; the Levite wished to save his own body at the expense of his wife’s modesty, reputation, and life; and the old man wished to save his guest at the expense of violating his daughter. All these, Clarke said, are characters that humanity and modesty wish to be buried in everlasting oblivion. That is true. Any man, and especially any Christian man, should be willing to fight for his wife, even to die for her. For someone to do this seems absolutely insane. Yet these men took his wife, abused her all night, and actually murdered her.

SCRIPTURE READING - Judges 19:27-30 (KJV)

“And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way. And, behold, the woman,

> his concubine, was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands were upon the threshold. And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going, but none answered. Then the man took her up upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him to his place. And when he was come into his house, he took a knife and laid hold on his concubine and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coast of Israel. And it was so that all that saw it said, There is no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day."
>
> And here is what he said to the twelve tribes: "Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds." He took his concubine, divided her into twelve pieces, and sent a piece to each of the twelve tribes. He said, "This has never happened since we came out of Egypt. What in the world are we going to do about this?"

If this incident happened in our day, the perpetrators—the rapists and murderers—would probably, especially if they were illegal aliens, get off scot-free. The man who divided up his wife would be charged with mutilation of a corpse and go to prison. Consider what happened to the Muslim who raped two women in Canada: they caught him, and the Canadians are sending him to college. What a punishment! The taxpayers are paying his way to college because he raped two women. This situation is totally different from today.

Judges 20 says: "Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together, as one man from Dan, even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the Lord in Mizpah. And the chief of all the people, even all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew the sword." Four hundred thousand Israelite soldiers have come together to avenge what happened in Gibeah.

Israel's Response and the War (Judges 20)

During this short war, in approximately three days, over 66,000 men were killed. None needed to be killed, because all the Israelites asked for were the wicked men who had done this horrible deed, that they might be executed and brought out. Judges 20:11 says: "So all the

men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man. And the tribes of Israel sent men throughout all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you? Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren, the children of Israel. But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities of Gibeah to go out to battle against the children of Israel."

This war is being fought because the Benjamites are willing and desiring to protect the wicked.

If they had simply delivered up the men who deserved death and were worthy of death, this war would not have happened at all. The Benjamites have to bear the blame for the deaths of over 66,000 men. Not all of the Benjamites were Sodomites—only these few in the city of Gibeah. But the sin of the Benjamites was protecting the Sodomites.

Romans 1:32 says that those who, knowing the judgment of God, know that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Some people may not commit such horrible sins, but they have pleasure in those who do. God says that if they have pleasure in those who do such things, they deserve to be judged as well. If someone deserves to be judged with the wicked merely because they have pleasure in the sins of the wicked, how much more does someone deserve judgment who protects the wicked and defends them against that which is right and holy?

So the war breaks out. Men of the tribe of Judah are chosen to go up first against the Benjamites. On the first day, according to verse 21, the Benjamites came out of the city and slew 22,000 Israelites. That was quite a devastation. They lost 22,000 men in one day. They renewed themselves and went out the second day, and the Benjamites came out and killed 18,000 more Israelites—40,000 men in two days. Verse 25 says, "...and Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men."

The Significance of the Number 40

"All these drew the sword." So when you add 22 and 18, you get 40. Have you ever considered the number 40 in Scripture? In certain Scriptures, the number 40 is a number of testing and judgment. In Genesis 7 and verse 4, God said to Noah, "Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living substance which I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth." In Deuteronomy 8 and verse 2, God said, "And you shall remember all the way that I led you in the wilderness those forty years." So the children of Israel wandered 40 years in the desert. In Deuteronomy 25 and verse 3, talking about punishment and judgment, God says, "Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed." So a man could be whipped, a man could be chastened, up to forty stripes, not one more, lest he seem vile to his brothers.

In 1 Samuel 17 and verse 16, Goliath taunted, humiliated, and defied Israel for forty days. In Judges, chapter 13 and verse 1, Israel was in bondage to the Philistines for 40 years. In Jonah chapter 3 and verse 1, what was Jonah's message as he ran through Nineveh? Yet what? Forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. In Ezekiel chapter 4 and verse 6, Ezekiel lay on his right side for 40 days to bear the iniquity of Judah's sin. In Ezekiel 29, God said He was going to judge Egypt for 40 years. In the New Testament, Mark chapter 1 and verse 13 talks about Jesus Christ, and He was 40 days in the wilderness being tempted of Satan and with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto Him.

The number 40 is very significant. So now in two days you have 40,000 Israelites slain. That does not count over 26,000 Benjamites that were slain within the next day or so.

Why Did God Allow Such Losses?

Here is my question, and this is what this sermon is all about: Why would God suffer the Israelites to have so great a loss and so good a cause? Yes, the Israelites finally won the war. That is true. But they lost 40,000 men, while the wicked lost only 26,000 men. Why? Let me remind you of a principle from a message I preached some time ago from this passage, entitled “Clean Hands Doctrine Exemplified.” If you are going to accuse someone of a sin and judge someone of a

sin, your hands must be clean: you must not be guilty of the same sin, for in doing so, you simply condemn yourself.

The Clean Hands Principle

Our Lord enunciated this principle in Matthew chapter 7, verses 4 and 5: “Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” If you are going to start picking motes, you had better make sure there is no beam in your own eye. If you are going to judge and correct your brother, you had better make sure that you are not guilty of the same sin.

Here is the point: most modern-day Christians are exactly like the Israelites in Judges chapter 20. We are quick to denounce, denigrate, and fight against what we know as external and physical wickedness, but slow to fight against that which is internal and spiritual wickedness. We can see something physical or external and quickly say, “That’s wrong,” ready to fight against it; but we are not as quick to fight against something internal and spiritual.

Many years ago, I preached two messages entitled “Spiritual Fornication and Adultery.” In the first message, I showed that fornication, adultery, harlotry, whore, and whoredom were not only interchangeable words, but that, when examined in the contexts where they were used, they very seldom referred to physical sin. Most often, they referred to spiritual sins, particularly idolatry.

Spiritual Adultery as the Root Sin

Let me show you one passage. In Jeremiah chapter 3, verses 8 and 9, we read: “And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce.” “Yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.”

You could multiply passages like this. Here are the words adultery, whoredom, adultery, and harlotry, and all of these refer to what you and I would call adultery. It is spiritual wickedness. Let me put it very plainly: idolatry is spiritual adultery. It is a forsaking of God.

You remember back in Judges chapter 19, what did the Levite's wife do? She deserted him. She played the whore against him. When you get to Jeremiah chapter 3, this is exactly what people are doing to God. They are deserting Him, forsaking Him, turning their back upon Him, turning to idols, to flesh, to self, and to the world.

When you look in Judges chapter 20, the children of Israel are very quick, in one sense of the word, to want to vindicate this Levite and his wife and punish the wicked, yet at the same time they are very slow to do the same thing when it came to spiritual adultery.

You have heard me say, context is everything. You cannot understand Judges 20 without understanding Judges 19, and you cannot understand Judges 19 without understanding Judges 17 and 18. In Judges 17 and 18, the stage is being set for 19 and 20. Look in Judges 17, verse 1: "And there was a man of Mount Ephraim whose name was Micah."

"And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver which were taken from thee, about which thou cursest, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me. I took it." And his mother said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son." When he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, "I had wholly dedicated the silver to the Lord from my hand for my son to make a graven image and a molten image. Now therefore I will restore it unto thee." Yet he restored the money to his mother, and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image, and they were in the house of Micah. The man Micah had a house of gods, had made an ephod and a teraphim, and had consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. Here is spiritual adultery: this man has made all these molten images and has consecrated his own son to be his priest. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes. And there was a young man out of Bethlehem, Judah, of the

family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. And the man departed out of the city of Bethlehem, Judah, to sojourn where he could find a place. And he came to Mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and he sojourned. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem, Judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be a father unto me, and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in." Micah says, "I know God is going to bless me because I have a Levite to my priest."

In other words, Micah says, “I have a real preacher. I have a real teacher. It is not my son. I have somebody who has been ordained and certified. I know God is going to bless him because he is a real Levite.”

Micah has made this false god, and the Levite, whose name is Jonathan, dwells with him. You will find that when you read the Scripture.

When you get to Judges chapter 18, there were men of the tribe of Dan who needed more land. They had not occupied all the land they had been given, so they went out to find a larger place to dwell. “In those days there was no king in Israel, and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in, for to that day all their inheritance had not fallen on them among the tribes of Israel. And the children of Dan sent out of their family five men from their coast, men of valor, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it. And they said unto them, Go, search the land.”

“Who went, and they came to Mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah. They lodged there. When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man, the Levite. They turned in thither and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here? And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest. And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go.”

They went out and looked at the Zidonians, or the people of Laish, and found that no one was there to protect the people. They returned and reported to their brethren that it would be an easy take. The Danites then sent 600 armed men to conquer Laish, and they did conquer it.

But when they came to Micah's house, they stopped. "And they passed thence unto Mount Ephraim and came unto the house of Micah. Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod and a teraphim and a graven image and a molten image?"

"Now, therefore, consider what ye have to do." They turned thitherward and came to the house of the young man, the Levite, even to the house of Micah, and saluted him. The six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, who were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate. The five men who had gone to spy out the land went up, entered the house, and took the graven image, the ephod, the teraphim, and the molten image. The priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men appointed with weapons of war. These men went into Micah's house and fetched the carved image, the ephod, the teraphim, and the molten image.

Then the priest asked, "What do ye?" They answered, "Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?" The priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, the teraphim, and the graven image and went in the midst of the people. So they turned and departed, putting the little ones, the cattle, and the carriage before them.

The priest ended up helping to steal everything that Micah had. His heart was glad because he was getting a promotion. He was going to get more money and be able to minister to more people. He was happy about it.

The tribe of Dan and this Levite had stolen all these false gods. When Micah chased after them, the men turned around and said,

“Why are you bellyaching?” He answered, “You stole my gods.” They said, “Shh, better hold your voice, lest some of these angry fellows run upon you and you lose your life. You know, you're not up to fighting six hundred men.” So Micah went back.

Here are two interesting things. First, this young Levite's name was Jonathan. That may not mean anything to you, but his father was Gershom. If you look in Exodus chapter 18, beginning with verse 2, you will see the significance of Jonathan and his father: “Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, and her two sons, of which the name of the one was Gershom.”

"For he said, I have been an alien in a strange land. And the name of the other was Eliezer. For the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." Jonathan is actually a grandson of Moses, in the lineage of Moses. How quickly apostasy raises its ugly head. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they had not been out of Egypt for four months when they made a golden calf. Jonathan the Levite, then, was in the lineage of Moses.

Judges 18:31 says, "...they had stolen all of these images which were contrary to God and His law." The Bible says, "...and they set up Micah's graven image which he made all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." Can your mind comprehend this? Jonathan, a descendant of Moses, while they were setting up all of these idols and this false religion, even though the house of God was in Shiloh?

The tabernacle was still in existence. What is happening in Judges 17 and 18? Israel is ignoring the worship of God and establishing its own worship, its own idolatrous worship. Sins are sins in one sense of the word, but some sins are greater than others. There are sins against man, and there are sins against God. Ultimately, all sins are against God, as David said, "...against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." But there are specific sins directed at God: idolatry, blasphemy, and unbelief. All of these sins are a direct challenge to God. They are a war against God, an insult to God, and a provocation of God. When you see Judges 17 and 18, you realize what is happening in 19 and 20. Israel was very quick to

deal with physical adultery and remove it from their sight, but very slow to deal

Spiritual adultery was idolatry. The physical adultery actually is the product of the spiritual adultery. This spiritual adultery had not just affected one man; it affected the entire tribe of Dan and probably went throughout Israel as well. When you get to Judges chapter 19 and see what is happening, it is happening because of what happened in chapters 17 and 18.

Physical Sin as Consequence of Spiritual Sin

Hosea 4:10 says, "...for they shall eat and not have enough. They shall commit whoredom and shall not increase." Why? Because they have left off to take heed to the Lord. They are not listening to Him. They have committed spiritual adultery, so now they are going to commit physical adultery. He says, "...whoredom and wine, and new wine take away the heart." Then He says, "...My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them, for the spirit of whoredom hath caused them to err, and they have gone a-whoring from under their God."

"They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good. Therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery." In other words, physical sexual sins are the result of spiritual sexual sins. We commit adultery against God; consequently, there is adultery against us.

Now look at verse 14: "I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery." Why? "For themselves are separated with whores," in other words, your spiritual whores, "and they sacrifice with harlots. Therefore, the people that doth not understand shall fall." God said, "I'm not going to punish your daughters when they commit whoredom. I'm not going to punish your spouses when they commit adultery." Why? Because you have done it. You are the ones responsible for their actions.

Where there is hope, there is always punishment, correction, and chastisement. Where there is no hope, there is no correction,

chastisement, or punishment. Do you remember what God said to Israel in Isaiah 1:5? “Why will ye be stricken anymore? Ye will revolt more and more.”

"The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint." If there was hope, God said, "I would punish you." But if there is no hope, I will not punish you. God in this passage is extremely provoked.

Hebrews 12:5-8 says, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." God is saying, if you do not get punished, you do not belong to Him. You are not His.

He said, "...the people that doth not understand this shall fall." The word "understand" includes those that do not understand and those that will not understand. Matthew Poole says that "fall" means, "you shall be utterly ruined, broken into pieces and scattered, broken at home first by intestine wars, next by foreign invasions, and carried away at last by conquering enemies."

Here is the important thing for us to grasp. Judges 19 demonstrates people who had sunk so low that their sexual perversion was open, public, flaunted, and unashamedly accomplished. Whenever open, flaunted, unashamed perversions are practiced in public, it is indicative of the death of a people, a society, and a nation. All you have to do is read Romans chapter 1 over and over: "wherefore God gave them up."

Modern Parallels and Applications

The physical acts of whoredom, fornication, and perversions are the result and evidence of spiritual whoredom and fornication. The greater the apostasy and spiritual adultery, the greater the physical acts of immorality and wickedness. If you have wondered why we are swamped on every hand with every perversion imaginable, from pedophilia to fornication, adultery, and transgenderism, wonder no

more. All of that is simply the evidence and result of spiritual fornication and adultery. We have forsaken God. We have committed spiritual adultery.

We are reaping what we have sown. I am going to tell you something: if all revelation and documents concerning Jeffrey Epstein come into clear focus and are made public, you and I will be so horrified at who is involved that it will amaze and astound you. If you do not believe that, go back and read Senator John DeCamp's book, The Franklin Cover-up, written probably twenty to thirty years ago, where the same thing took place in the Democratic Party.

Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and an author. He is also the founder and president of the Rutherford Institute. In his article, "The Heart of Darkness: The Sexual Predators Within America's Power Elite," he wrote three short paragraphs. He said, "As I documented in the in-depth piece I wrote earlier this year, child sex trafficking, the buying and selling of women, young girls and boys for sex, some as young as nine years old, has become big business in America. It is the fastest growing business in organized crime and the second most lucrative commodity traded illegally after drugs and guns. Adults purchase children for sex at least 2.5 million times a year in the United States. It's not just young girls who are vulnerable to these predators either. According to a 2016 investigative report, boys make up about 36% of the children caught up in the U.S. sex industry. About 60% are female and less than 5% are transgender male and females."

This helps explain why 40,000 Israelites died in two days. If you are going to judge someone, you had better make sure that you are free of the same sin. In fact, the Israelites were guilty of a far worse sin, because their worse sin produced the physical sin. In Hosea 9:9, God is speaking of Ephraim: "They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah. Therefore, He will remember their iniquity. He will visit their sins. They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the day of Gibeah."

Hosea 10:9 says it again: "O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah. There they stood. The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them." In other words, you did

not really get punished the way you should have gotten punished. God is saying, "I'm going to finish the job. I will deal with you."

The whole point is this: what we are seeing in our land today is a result of spiritual adultery and fornication. Let me make some applications.

God's judgments are a great deep. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, the Bible says, but justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne. We may not understand everything that God does. With only a cursory reading of Judges chapter 20, we wonder how 40,000 Israelites could be killed over something they were trying to correct. But when we see the greater picture, we understand that they were far more guilty of a greater sin against God than these people were of their wicked sin against a woman and a man. We may not be able to understand everything, but we should always know that everything God does is absolutely righteous and in truth.

We should also learn that the race is neither to the swift nor the battle to the strong, and that we are not to confide in our flesh, no matter how great our power is. When we consider 400,000 warriors, men of valor, drawn up against 26,000 Benjamites, we begin to think there is no way those Benjamites can prevail. Yet the Benjamites killed 40,000 Israelites before they were defeated. That was a 10 percent loss of a 400,000-man army in two days.

God is also teaching us that we should not think it strange if sometimes that which is good and righteous suffers setbacks. Christianity is under attack. According to statistics, Christians are the most persecuted people on the planet today. It seems as though Christianity is on the run, Islam is on the gain, and all these other isms and schisms are marching left and right while we are sitting still or being run over. But God is still sovereign and in absolute control. Everything is going wrong just right, and we know that we will be ultimately victorious because Jesus Christ is the victor.

He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and God of Gods. The Bible tells us that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Therefore, we should not be depressed or discouraged because sometimes it looks as though everything is against us. Old Jacob said

that all these things were against him, yet everything he said was against him turned out to be for him. We are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. Here is my last application.

You have to understand that we have sinned as a nation. We have sown the wind, and we are reaping the whirlwind. We must repent. We must turn back to God and to His Word. We must live our lives in obedience to Him and begin the work of repentance individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally.

Call to Repentance and Prayer

If you and I do not begin repentance personally, there will never be family repentance. If there is never family repentance, there will never be church repentance. And if there is never church repentance, there will never be societal or national repentance. Everything begins with the individual.

We have to make sure that our lives are brought into conformity with the Word of God and that we are living in obedience to God. If we continue without repentance, and you think it is tough now, you better tighten your seatbelt and hold on, because it will get worse. God is not mocked. What we are seeing is nothing more than the physical reality of a spiritual reality. The physical evidence of what we have done to God is being exhibited right before our eyes.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We pray, Lord, that You would indeed give us repentance and faith, help us love Thee and live for Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 23

In Honor Of Confederate Veterans And Prisoners

October 31, 2013

Introduction: A Message for Confederate Memorial Day

Since Confederate Memorial Day in April was missed, I preached this message yesterday at a Confederate memorial at Point Lookout in Maryland. In light of the week of July 4, I thought it appropriate today. In the next several weeks, I will bring several messages that are very practical and applicable, and I encourage you to be faithful to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

Biblical Basis for Memorials

We will look in Exodus chapter 3, beginning with verse 13. Moses said unto God, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say to them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?” And God said unto Moses, “I AM THAT I AM.” He said, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me

unto you." God said moreover unto Moses, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations."

Note what God said concerning His name in verse 15: "this is my memorial unto all generations." Has it ever occurred to you that the name of God is a memorial? We should always remember His grace, His mercy, His power, and His person. When we lean upon Him, trust Him, and look unto Him, we do indeed honor Him.

In Exodus chapter 12 and verse 14, God says concerning the Passover, after the children of Israel sacrificed the lamb and He delivered them from Egypt, "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial. And you shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever." Not only is the name of God a memorial, but the Passover was a memorial.

If you turn to Joshua chapter 4—and there are other passages I am skipping, but mainly these three will be sufficient to establish a truth—look in Joshua chapter 4.

You remember that the children of Israel walked across the Jordan River on dry land as well. In Joshua chapter 4 and verse 7, they erected stones. Notice what is said: "Then you shall answer them," when the children ask in the future what these stones mean, "that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever." Three things have already been stated in the Bible to be memorials: the name of God, the Passover, and these stones.

Moreover, in the New Testament, the Lord's Supper is a memorial as well. In 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 26, the Apostle Paul said, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He comes."

I quoted all these scriptures to demonstrate two truths. First, memorials are indeed biblical. God's name is a memorial; the Passover was a memorial; the stones were a memorial; and the

Lord's Supper is a memorial. But secondly, and more importantly, a memorial functions to bring to your mind an entire body of truth. If I tell you the name of God, "I AM THAT I AM," Yahweh, it should bring back to your mind a whole body of truth concerning the doctrine of God. If I mention the Lord's Supper, it should bring back to your mind a whole body of truth concerning the substitutionary and sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whenever we talk about a memorial, it is designed to bring back a whole body of truth. Therefore, when we come to honor our Confederate ancestors, our Revolutionary ancestors, or whoever it is that we are honoring, it should bring back an entire body of truth.

The Suffering at Point Lookout

If you are not familiar with Point Lookout, I encourage you to do a little studying. In the short time that Point Lookout existed, probably around 52,000 Confederates were imprisoned there. The official record of those who died there, according to the Union records, is under 4,000. But that does not count the people who entered at the dead house, which was without the gate, or any prisoner who died outside the gate. Research is still ongoing, but it looks as if as many as 20,000 to 30,000 Confederates may have died just at Point Lookout.

Those men were deliberately starved. It was cold, with wind, ice, and snow. They would give one blanket to three men. A few had tents, and a few did not. They were in swampy saltwater marshes where diseases were rampant. Whenever a black Confederate happened to walk in, the black Union soldiers would immediately shoot him dead. Union guards would fire indiscriminately into the tents and huts of the Confederate soldiers, simply trying to hit someone.

It is unbelievable what these people went through, and you have to stop and ask yourself: Why were those men fighting? Why were they willing to die on the battlefield? Why were they willing to die in prison, suffer such torture, and live through all of that? Why were some deliberately murdered? What was the reason for all this suffering and death? You have to come to this question: What were they fighting and dying for?

Why They Fought: A Constitutional Republic

There are two things that really irritate me when I begin to talk about history, especially Southern history. The first is simply this: "You lost the war, get over it." If losing the war were the only thing, I could get over that very quickly. I could get over losing a fight. If Ed and I got into a fight and Ed beat me up, fine; I could get over that. But you cannot get over tyranny, despotism, and totalitarianism. You cannot get over the loss of family and friends, or the loss of life, liberty, and freedom. You cannot get over this any more than you can get over being Southern, being a Christian, or being biblical.

The second thing that causes me to come up in a fury and an uproar is when someone says, "Well, you fought for a lost cause." Let me put it very bluntly: The causes of truth, righteousness, freedom, and principle are never lost causes. Might does not make right. Just because Ed might beat me into the ground does not mean he is right to do that. Jefferson Davis said it like this: "The principle for which we contend is bound to reassert itself though it be at another time and in another form."

When you look around and see the problems that we now have, the problems that we have had, and the problems that we are now going through—all of the struggles that you and I are having politically, economically, morally, educationally, and theologically—I want to submit something for your consideration: These are the same principles for which our Confederate ancestors fought. Since those principles were never ever settled, we are still having those same battles today. We are still fighting for a limited government. We are still fighting for states' rights. We are still fighting for liberty and freedom.

Another observation that you should know is this: I believe sincerely that our Confederate ancestors were fighting for the very same principles for which our founding fathers fought: liberty and freedom. Why in the world were our ancestors willing to fight and die? What did they really and truly fight for? Let me answer that. Certainly, this is not going to be an exhausted answer, because I believe the answers are inexhaustible in one sense of the word. First of all, our Confederate ancestors were fighting for a constitutional

republic and not for a bureaucratic democracy or an American empire.

After the Constitutional Convention met, someone asked Benjamin Franklin what kind of government we had, and his answer was, "A republic if you could keep it." When you stop and think about that answer, you understand that the form of government itself was something to be preserved.

The fourth section of the fourth article of the Constitution of the United States says, "The United States shall guarantee to every state in the Union a Republican form of government." So the federal government is to guarantee every state in the Union a Republican form of government. The form of government guaranteed was supposedly already in existence and already established. It was the republican form of government our founding fathers established; therefore, the federal government is obligated and duty-bound to guarantee every state a republican form of government.

What is a republican form of government? A republican form of government is a system of government in which the people hold sovereign power.

It is contrasted to a democracy and to a monarchy. The first element in a republican form of government is that the power is derived from the people. The second element is that a republic is always ruled by law. In a republic, the people are the masters and the government is the servant; the people are the lords and the government is the slave. The Constitution, when it was written, was a grant from we the people to form a limited government. The government authorized by the Constitution was to be a limited one, deriving its just powers from the people and the states thereof. The Constitution was a grant of power from the people for the government to do certain limited things. It was the law of the people for the control of the government.

Can you imagine what our founding fathers would do if they heard a politician like Nancy Pelosi say, “We have to pass this law so we can see what’s in it”? Can you imagine what they would do if they heard a congressman like Alcee Hastings of Florida say, “We make up the rules as we go along. There are no rules”?

You know what General Lee said? “If the Constitution and the Union established by our forefathers were restored, then there would be no truer supporters of that Union and that Constitution than the Southern people. Every brave people who considered their rights attacked and their constitutional liberties invaded, would have done as we did. Our conduct was not caused by any insurrectionary spirit, neither can it be termed rebellion, for our construction of the Constitution, under which we lived and acted, was the same from its adoption, and for eighty years we have been taught and educated by the founders of the Republic and their written declarations which controlled our consciences and our actions.”

What did Lee say? “We’re not insurrectionaries. We’re not rebels. We’re fighting for what we understood our founding fathers gave us.” Again, Robert E. Lee said, “This all that the South ever desired was the union as established by our forefathers should be preserved and that the government as originally organized should be administered in purity and in truth.” It could not be plainer. Again, Lee said, “The South has contended only for the supremacy of the Constitution and the just administration of the laws made in pursuance of it.” They were not fighting to establish an empire or some huge bureaucratic democracy somewhere.

Alexander H. Stephens, who was vice president of the Confederacy, said this concerning secession. He said, “The real object of those who resorted to secession, as well as those who sustained it, was not the overthrow of the government of the United States, but to perpetuate the principles upon which it was founded. The object in quitting the union was not to destroy, but to save the principles of the Constitution.”

Now, let me just tell you something very plainly. Here it is, stated very bluntly, like it or lump it: Abraham Lincoln destroyed our Constitutional Republic. He changed the nature of the government from a republic to an empire. I want to read you just several paragraphs written by Joseph E. Fallon. He wrote an article on Lincoln and the death of the old republic.

Lincoln's Destruction of the Republic

Official history venerates Abraham Lincoln as an apostle of American democracy who waged war on the South to preserve the Union and free the slaves. Official history is a lie. Lincoln was a dictator who destroyed the old republic and replaced the federal principles of 1789 with the ideological foundation of today's welfare warfare state. His administration was characterized by paranoia, a lust for power, and rampant corruption. The magnitude of that paranoia was evidenced by Lincoln's Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, who declared that every department of the government was paralyzed by treason. Traitors were to be found in the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Cabinet, the Federal Courts, the revenue, the post office services, the territorial governments, and the judicial reserves. In his bid for absolute power, Lincoln used treason as a pretext to unleash war and shred the Constitution.

Freedom of the press was curtailed. The Chicago Times was one of over 300 northern newspapers suppressed for expressing incorrect views. As late as May 18, 1864, Lincoln ordered his military to arrest and imprison the editors, proprietors, and publishers of the New York World and the New York Journal of Commerce. Lincoln suspended habeas corpus, criminalized speech, and legalized arbitrary arrests. Twenty thousand, some say as high as 40,000, political prisoners were held incommunicado and denied legal counsel. Maryland's legislature was overthrown, and New York City was placed under military occupation.

Alice and I took a few minutes while we were up at Point Lookout and rode into Point Lookout State Park, where many of these men died. There's a mass grave there where they're just pushed into it and covered up. We were looking at a couple of the historical markers. I do not remember all of this historical marker, but I read it and could not believe what I was reading. It was printed in bold letters there for anyone to see, and it was talking about how Marylanders were divided

A historical marker spoke of private citizens being arrested without warrant to protect freedom. How can you protect freedom by destroying freedom? Fallon says 20,000, and some say as high as 40,000, were arrested without warrant. These were northern people,

not southern people. One more short paragraph from Fallon: In his December 1861 lectures in Boston and New York City, Northern abolitionist Wendell Phillips declared, "We live today, every one of us, under martial law. The Secretary of State puts into his Bastille, with a warrant as irresponsible as that of Louis XIV, any man whom he pleases."

You think it was bad under Lincoln? It was. But as it was then, so it is today. Do you realize the Patriot Act, the National Defense Authorization Act, and every conceivable piece of legislation passed since then that destroys life, liberty, property, and freedom is a gift to us from Abraham Lincoln? He was the one who set up this welfare warfare state, and everything we have today follows in his footsteps. Our ancestors fought, suffered, and died to prevent exactly what is happening in Washington, D.C., today. They fought and died to prevent what is happening in our state capitals today.

Why They Fought: States' Rights and Sovereignty

You need to ponder sometimes how different our world would be if the South had won the war. Why were they fighting? They were not fighting for this bureaucratic democracy that we have today or for an American empire. They wanted to preserve that which the founding fathers had given us. The second reason they fought is simply this: They were fighting for states' rights, or states' sovereignty, and not for a centralized, consolidated government.

If you do not understand states' rights, go back to the beginning. In 1781, the second article in the Articles of Confederation stated, "Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled." Thus, the Articles of Confederation clearly stated that each state retained its sovereignty, freedom, and independence. When the war for independence was over, the Treaty of Paris settled or ended it in 1783.

Listen to the first article of the Treaty of Paris. I am not going to read all of it, just enough to give you this idea: “His Britannic Majesty acknowledges the said United States, in other words, New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence

Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, to be free, sovereign, and independent states." He treats them as such.

When George III entered into this treaty, he did not enter it with a consolidated, centralized government known simply as the United States. He entered into it with thirteen sovereign states. They were independent states, and he had to make peace with thirteen different states. When the Constitutional Convention met, the Georgia delegation carried a banner which said, "The state of Georgia, by the grace of God, free, sovereign, and independent."

When the Constitution was written, the states, by a common agreement, united to form what is known as the federal government and to give it limited power and authority. The federal government did not create the states. The states created the federal government, and it was to be federal and not national. The federal government that was created and authorized by the states was only to act as an agent of the states, because the states were the real sovereigns. The federal government could do only that which the states delegated it to do.

The right to decide whether the federal government did anything beyond its power or limitation was reserved to the states. If you allowed the federal government to determine its own power and authority, you would have unlimited and tyrannical powers.

Even New York, when it acceded to the Constitution on July 26, 1788, added these words: "That the powers of government may be reassumed by the people whensoever it shall become necessary to their happiness." New York said, in effect, "We gave delegated power and authority to the federal government, and we can also take it back whenever we like."

When Virginia acceded to the Constitution on June 25, 1788, it added these words: "The powers granted under the Constitution being derived from the people of the United States may be resumed by them whensoever the same shall be perverted to their injury or oppression and that every power not granted"

If you really want to understand the independence and sovereignty of each state, consider the fact that when the Constitution was ratified in 1787, only eleven of the original thirteen states ratified it. Two states did not ratify it right away: Rhode Island and North Carolina. In fact, they did not ratify it until nearly a year later.

The Constitution was not forced upon them. The eleven states did not tell North Carolina and Rhode Island, "Majority rules; you are in whether you like it or not." No. The eleven states that ratified the Constitution treated Rhode Island and North Carolina as independent, sovereign states. Neither was a war mounted to coerce them to ratify the Constitution, because they were free and independent states. They could come in, or they could not come in. It was totally up to the states.

When Rhode Island finally did accede to the Constitution, it did so with this provision: "We the delegates of the people of Rhode Island and plantations, duly elected, do declare and make known that the powers of government may be resumed by the people, whensoever it shall become necessary to their happiness." Every state that acceded to the Constitution understood that, since it gave the power, it could take it back. Secession was understood by every state.

It was Thomas Jefferson and James Madison who wrote the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions. In those resolutions, they said that each state had acceded to the Constitution and could secede, and that each state had the right and power to nullify—that is, to abrogate—any law issued by the federal government that it deemed unconstitutional.

The first paragraph of the Kentucky Resolution states: "Resolved that the several states composing the United States of America are not united on the principle of unlimited submission to the general government. But that by a compact, under the style and title of the Constitution of the United States and of its amendments thereto, they constituted a general government for special purposes, delegated to that government certain definite powers, reserving each state to itself the residuary mass of right to their own self-government, and that whensoever the general government

assumes undelegated powers, its acts are unauthoritative, void, and of no force."

Thomas Jefferson and James Madison wrote, "That to this compact, each state is seated as a state and is an integral party. Its co-states forming as to itself the other party. Each party has an equal right to judge for itself as well of infractions as of the mode and measure of redress." The states were not going to give unlimited submission to the federal government.

They understood that it was delegated power, and power that could be taken back. Each state reserved the right to nullify or abrogate anything that was unconstitutional. South Carolina did exactly that when it nullified the tariffs of 1828 and 1832, known as the tariffs of abomination. When the federal government tried to impose these high taxes and tariffs, South Carolina nullified them.

In fact, South Carolina passed a nullifying ordinance. Its second paragraph declared: "We therefore, the people of the state of South Carolina in convention assembled, do declare and ordain that these acts are unauthorized by the Constitution of the United States, and violate the true meaning and intent thereof, and are null, void, and no law nor binding upon this State, its officers, or citizens, and all promises, contracts, and obligations made or entered into, or to be made or entered into, with purpose to secure the duties imposed by the said Acts, and all judicial proceedings which shall be hereafter had in affirmation thereof, are and shall be held utterly null and void."

They were not going to pay these taxes or allow these tariffs; everything was null and void, and they would not recognize it. The concluding paragraph declared that they would maintain the ordinance "at every hazard" and would not submit to the application of force by the federal government to reduce the state to obedience. Any act by Congress to coerce the state, shut up its ports, destroy or harass its commerce, or enforce the acts declared null and void would likewise be rejected. They went on to say that if pressed, they would withdraw from the Union and establish their own government.

Was South Carolina wrong? The answer is no. South Carolina did not misinterpret the Compact. In fact, James Madison, known as the father of the Constitution, said this: “The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution of the federal government are few and defined. Those which are to remain in the state governments are numerous and indefinite. The former will be exercised principally on external objects as war, peace, negotiation, and foreign commerce, with which last the power of taxation will for the most part be connected. The powers reserved to the several states will extend to all objects which in the ordinary course of affairs concern the lives, liberty, and properties of the people and the internal order improving the prosperity of the state.”

The federal government has such a limited area that it affects the lives of the people chiefly through war, peace, negotiation, and foreign commerce. The states have all the rest. That is why we have the Ninth and Tenth Amendments, especially the Tenth: “the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.” Jefferson Davis made this same argument in the Senate when speaking about the equality of the states.

James Henley Thornwell, whom I will mention again later, was a Presbyterian pastor, author, and theologian. He saw the war for what it really and truly was. Here is what he said: “If they,” referring to the federal government and the North, “if they prevail, the whole character of the government will be changed. And instead of a federal republic, the common agent of sovereign and independent states, we shall have a central despotism with the notion of states forever abolished, deriving its power from the will and shaping its policy according to the wishes of a numerical majority of the people, we shall

We have, in other words, a supreme, irresponsible democracy. The avowed end of this present war is to make the government a government of force. And he was right. That is exactly what we have today, not just in this country, but in every country where our government puts its hands: a government of force.

Alexis de Tocqueville was a Frenchman, and many of those European countries recognized what the Constitution was originally

about. De Tocqueville said state sovereignty was so ingrained in Southern men that when the South seceded, she wrote her own Constitution. Certainly we did: the Confederate Constitution.

Thomas Jefferson said, "I consider the foundation of the Constitution is laid on this ground, that all powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the states are reserved to the states or to the people. To take a single step beyond the boundaries thus specifically drawn around the powers of Congress is to take possession of a boundless field of power no longer susceptible to any definition." When the federal government steps beyond the Constitution, Jefferson said, it has taken possession of a boundless field of power no longer susceptible to definition.

To define is to limit. John C. Calhoun, known as the Ironclad Southerner, said it more plainly: "The Constitution has admitted the jurisdiction of the United States within the limits of the several states only so far as the delegated powers authorize. Beyond that, they are intruders and may be lawfully expelled."

What if the state of Georgia first went to the courts and then went to arms to expel the federal government from areas where it has absolutely no right to be in this state? What if every state did that? Robert E. Lee said they fought not from any insurrectionary spirit nor any rebellious attitude, but to preserve liberty and freedom.

Alexander H. Stephens said it like this: "Depend upon it. There is no difference between consolidation and empire. No difference between centralism and imperialism. The consummation of either must necessarily end in the overthrow of liberty and the establishment of despotism." Alexander Hamilton, in 1788, said, "If the federal government should overpass the just bounds of its authority and make a tyrannical use of its power, the people whose creature it is must appeal to the standard that they have formed and take such measures to redress the injury done." That is exactly what happened in 1793 in my favorite court case, Chisholm versus Georgia.

In Chisholm versus Georgia, a man in South Carolina went to the Supreme Court to sue the state of Georgia. The Supreme Court of the

United States sent word to Georgia: “Come up here, boy. There’s a case here against you.” The state of Georgia replied, in essence, “Kiss my foot. We’re the master; you’re the servant.”

Georgia refused to appear before the Supreme Court. The justice of the Supreme Court said, “If you don’t come, we’ll have this case without you and rule without you.” Then the Georgia House of Representatives passed a bill making it a felony, punishable by hanging, for any person to carry out the decision of the Supreme Court. Georgia said, “You can make all the decisions you want to. When you send your man here into the state of Georgia to enforce your decision, he will immediately be hanged without the benefit of clergy.”

That led to the passage of the Eleventh Amendment, which corrected the problem. Georgia said, “You’re not going to do this to us.” Can you imagine what it would be like if each state said boldly to the federal government, “You have gone beyond your bounds. You are not going to tyrannize our people. We are taking an interpositionary step, standing between our people and tyranny”? We will not allow it to be done.

Our ancestors fought, were killed, starved, imprisoned, and tortured for believing in states’ rights and states’ sovereignty. They fought for limited government, liberty, freedom, and independence. They also fought for biblical Christianity, not for a humanistic, rationalistic religion.

Why They Fought: Biblical Christianity vs. Humanism

Not everyone in the South was a Christian. However, there were two great revivals in the Confederate armies, and a minimum of 150,000 men were converted. There were also revivals in the churches at that time. The point is that there are theological implications to that war. Ideas have consequences. It is impossible to have a cultural revolution without having a theological revolution. You cannot change culture without changing theology.

I was reminded very definitely this past week of the difference between when I was a boy and today. When I was a boy, if I wanted to see a policeman, I had to go uptown and look around, and it took

me a while to find one. Driving through North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland today, Lord have mercy—speed traps everywhere, cops behind every bush. It is not just one every now and then; we see four and five at one time, most of them in unmarked cars, having someone pulled over.

I could not wait to get out of those states. Why, in the 1950s, could I hardly find a policeman? Today you cannot turn around without seeing five or six of them. Have you thought about that? Back in the 1950s, most people still believed in the Ten Commandments. They still believed in morality, doing what was right, and living what was right. Today, nobody believes anything or cares about anything.

If you are not going to have self-government, you are always going to have someone with a strong arm willing to govern you. Generally speaking, it was the North that turned from biblical Christianity to rationalism, humanism, and transcendentalism. I know that not everybody in the North was an atheist and an infidel. I understand that. But generally speaking, that was the truth. The Bible belt was given to the South as a name for derision because the South held tenaciously to the Bible.

In other words, we were not as educated as those smart, humanistic, rationalistic northerners. They made fun of us by saying, "Well, that's the Bible belt." To show how clearly the theological implications were evident in those days, James Henley Thornwell, who died in 1862, said, "The parties in this conflict are not merely abolitionists and slaveholders." He said, "They are atheists, socialists, communists, red republicans, Jacobins on the one side," that is, the North, "and friends of order and regulated freedom on the other. In one word, the world is the battleground, Christianity and atheism, the combatants, and the progress of humanity is at stake." It was a theological war.

C. Gregg Singer, in his book A Theological Interpretation of American History, said, "After 1830, there was a growing philosophical and theological cleavage between the North and the South. While the North was becoming increasingly subject to radical influences, the South was becoming increasingly conservative in its outlook." As the North was going one way, the South was saying, "No, we're holding on to the Scripture." M. E. Bradford, in The

Southern Partisan in 1991, wrote, "As the war approached, these clergymen more and more tended to view the sectional controversy as a dispute between those who acknowledge the authority of Scripture and those who set their own moral sense above it."

In other words, between Christians and infidels. Once you understand that one's theology determines one's worldview, you must understand how the North was seeking to impose its culture upon the South. Since the North had changed its theology, it had basically changed its culture. Thinking itself superior, it wanted to change the culture of the South; and in order to change that culture, it had to change the theology of the South. Do you understand that this is what Reconstruction was all about? Think about the word: Reconstruction. Richard Taylor has a book entitled Deconstruction and Reconstruction. General Richard Taylor was a Confederate soldier and the son of President Zachary Taylor.

What were they trying to do? Reconstruct us in their theology and in their way of thinking. You cannot act like a northerner unless you believe like a northerner. You can't! One reason so many Southern pastors fought in the war was simply that they believed they were defending the faith against humanism and rationalism. And let me show you how the North understood this as well—not just Southern men.

One Yankee critic said that he believed "the most unmitigated set of villains they have in the South are the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterians, and Episcopalian preachers, all talking secession, drinking mean liquor, and advocating the cause of Jeff Davis and the devil." I suppose there could be no greater compliment given Southern soldiers than the one given by a Yankee chaplain. The Yankee chaplain was talking to his regiment, trying to instill in the Yankee men the zeal, enthusiasm, and courage expressed by Southern men in fighting.

You may call this fanaticism, enthusiasm, or whatever you will. But remember, you're fighting an enemy that comes from the closet to the battlefield, that comes from its knees in prayer to engage in deadly strife, that comes in the belief that its battles are the battles of Jehovah, that His smile is resting upon its banner and will ensure

success. What power to make every man a hero and every hero, if need be, a murderer.

What did he say? The Southern men were fighting for a religious cause, and that religion was biblical Christianity.

Application: Returning to the Foundation of God's Word

You know what the problem is today in most of our patriotic organizations and in most of our historical organizations? Unhappily, a lot of the good and well-intentioned people are just as lost as a hound dog and know nothing of the grace of God. If we want our history and our heritage and our country back, we have to come back and stand on the same foundation that our founding fathers and our Confederate ancestors stood upon. That foundation is the Word of God.

In order to be a genuine Christian, one must indeed repent of his sins and believe savingly upon the Lord Jesus Christ. You will confess Him, acknowledge Him, and bring your life into conformity to His Word. We want our country back, but we will never get it back until we come back to the Sovereign God who gave us this country. God can kick any people out of His country. This is His earth; this is His land. If we do not give God the honor and glory due His name, if we do not pay our land rent, so to speak, He can kick us off, and do so justly and righteously. If we want what our forefathers had, we need to come back to the Lord Jesus Christ, in repentance and faith, and say, "I want what Robert E. Lee had. I want what Stonewall Jackson had. I want what Richard Ewell had. I want what Jeb Stuart had. I want what our Founding Fathers had. I want the courage and the character that comes from being a Christian." I just wonder, if our Founding Fathers were alive today, if our Confederate fathers were alive today, how long would they put up with what we're putting up with?

May God give us godly, Christian, courageous, Southern men—men with character, courage, and grace. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee and ask Your blessing and help. We pray that You'll speak to our hearts and make us what we should be. Help us be thankful for what our founding fathers and our

Confederate fathers have given unto us, and help us see how we've wasted it, thrown it away, despised it, disregarded it, and dishonored it. Give us what we need to stand for Thee and live for Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 24

Will They Ever Learn

July 12, 2020

Introduction: The Self-Exalting Politician

Exodus 9, verse 17. The title of the message is “Will They Ever Learn?” I think you will see how appropriate the title is as we get into the message. Look in Exodus 9, verse 17, and we will certainly come back to this verse. Notice what God says to Pharaoh: “As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go.”

Have you ever noticed that when any politician is running for office, he always wants to serve the people? But once he is elected, service to the people, being of service and representation, is basically over. Usually, the only service done by a politician in office is for himself and for his party.

The idea of being of service and being a representative is indeed a biblical concept and principle. However, it has long been perverted and forgotten. Government is no longer about representing the people; it is about perpetuating itself and increasing its power and control.

Have you ever asked yourself why anyone would spend millions in Federal Reserve notes to get a job that paid only $200,000 in Federal Reserve notes? Have you noticed that those who go in to serve always come out much richer than when they went in? And do you know how many millionaires there are in Congress? I want to give you two short articles.

The Wealth of Modern Congress

Stephanie Condon wrote a CBS News article: “The average Senate campaign in 2010, ten years ago, cost $8,002,726. The average House campaign cost $1,163,231.” Then she wrote, “Congress is a club that consists of 245 millionaires.” The second article, written in April of this year by Carl Evers Hillstrom, said, “The majority of lawmakers in the 116th Congress are millionaires. Congress is an exclusive club.”

It is also a wealthy one. More than half of those in Congress are millionaires. Data from lawmakers' most recent personal financial disclosures shows that, if they were honest, they may be worth a whole lot more. The median net worth of members who filed disclosures last year is just over a million dollars. Much of Congress's wealth is concentrated at the top: the wealthiest ten percent of lawmakers have three times more wealth than the bottom ninety percent. While some lawmakers are still paying off student loans, others are paying off their third and fourth mortgage, which means not three or four houses. The wealthiest include career politicians who boosted their portfolios over decades in Congress and recently elected lawmakers. Senator Rick Scott, Republican of Florida, is the wealthiest lawmaker, with nearly $260 million in net assets. He dethroned Senator Mark Warner, Democrat of Virginia, after winning election in 2018, despite putting nearly $64 million of his own money into his campaign.

Some lawmakers have not yet filed these reports, including recently appointed Senator Kelly Loeffler of Georgia, a Republican estimated to be worth over $500 million. She announced that she would sell all her stocks amid controversy over trades appearing related to the coronavirus pandemic. The leaders of both chambers make up the top-ten list. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Democrat of

California, saw her wealth increase from $41 million in 2004 to nearly $115 million. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky, saw his net worth rise from $3 million to over $34 million during that period. Both leaders are married to affluent individuals who are driving those increases. Two-term Representative Paul Mitchell, Republican of Michigan, saw the largest growth from 2017 to 2018, with his average net worth rising from $101 million to $180 million. He will not seek reelection this November. Sometime long-time members of Congress watched their wealth rise to record levels in 2018.

Representative Colin Peterson, Democrat of Minnesota, was worth an estimated $123,500 in 2008; the House Agricultural Committee Chairman's average net assets stood at $4.2 million in his most recent disclosure. Representative Judy Chu, Democrat of California, was worth less than six figures in 2008; a decade later, her estimated net worth was $7.1 million. Senator Roy Blunt, Republican of Missouri, increased his wealth from $602,000 to $10.7 million over the last decade.

There is a lot of money to be made simply by being a politician. It may surprise you to learn that our original congressman served without pay. For the first several decades of its existence, the United States Congress did not pay salaries to its members. From the inception of Congress in 1789 until 1855, with the exception of one brief period, members of the Senate and the House received no salaries. They were paid only per diem—that is, daily—while Congress was in session, initially at a rate of six dollars per day.

In the eighteenth century, being a legislator, whether at the local, state, or federal level, was generally not a full-time job. Legislative bodies were not in session year-round. They typically met only for a few months out of the year, and sometimes convened only infrequently, irregularly, or when specifically called into session rather than on a fixed schedule. Just because a body was in session did not necessarily mean that all its members were in attendance. Most legislators had other occupations and livelihoods, from which they had to take time out in order to serve. Therefore, per diem compensation for actual service was the standard of that time. Even if you were a congressman and were supposed to be there, if you

were not there, you did not get the six dollars per day. You only got the six dollars if you were present. Things have certainly changed in our day and time.

We no longer have public servants; now we have public masters who basically enrich themselves at the expense of the people they purportedly represent and serve. Moreover, they do not view themselves as bound by law. They only view themselves as being bound by the Constitution. You remember what the Democratic Florida representative Al C. Hastings said: "There are no rules. We make them up as we go along."

When politicians are asked, very rarely, what gives them the right to do such things, most would answer as Nancy Pelosi did when asked whether the Constitution gave Congress the right to force Obamacare on the people. Her response was, "Are you kidding? Are you kidding?" In other words, basically, we can do whatever we want to do.

Pharaoh's Self-Exaltation and Refusal to Obey

Pharaoh did basically the same thing. He did not view himself as bound by law; he was basically a law unto himself. He could not be reasoned with, neither could he be deterred from his personal agenda. When Moses and Aaron and the Hebrew elders asked him to let them go three days' journey into the wilderness, that they might worship the Lord and have a feast unto Him, he said, "No."

The problem, he said, was that they were idle and needed more work. Basically what he said was this: worship of God is non-essential, but obedience to the state, or obedience to his demands, was essential. Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters, "And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and you make them rest from their burdens. And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying, You shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, you shall lay upon them; you shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let there more work be

laid upon the men, that they may labor therein; and let them not regard vain words."

"Vain words," he said. They were crying, "Let us go and worship God. Let us go and sacrifice." That was not essential. What was essential? They must keep making the same number of bricks, and now their burden would be made even worse. God sent many plagues—ten plagues—and it took several of them to get Pharaoh's attention. When the locusts were going to descend upon Egypt, even Pharaoh's servants realized that Egypt was destroyed. They tried to reason with him, but he would not be reasoned with: "And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" Pharaoh refused to listen. He was adamant. It was his will, his way, his word. Nothing or no one else mattered. Thus God charged him with self-exaltation.

In Exodus 9:17, God said to Pharaoh, "As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go."

The word "exaltest" means to lift up, to exalt, to esteem highly, to prize, and to exalt oneself. Pharaoh was the consummate politician. He prized his person, his power, his platform, and his purpose above everyone and everything else. Nothing else mattered to Pharaoh.

The Hebrew word translated "exaltest thou" also means to cast up a way or to cast up a highway. Thus, he was building himself up by trampling God's people down, literally stomping them under his feet, so to speak. Tyrants always destroy the lives of their people. Think of Stalin, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Mao Zedong, and a host of others who murdered millions of their own people just to keep and maintain control.

How did all this begin? In Exodus 5:1, Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." And Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

Why would you obey God if you thought you were God, or at least assumed that you were God? Pharaoh was the head of this nation. He had his gods. He was sovereign. He did not even know who this

God was, and he was certainly not going to obey Him. "Who is the Lord?" He did not know who He was or recognize Him.

John Calvin wrote concerning this verse: "And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord? It is scarcely credible that there should be such madness in a mortal as thus by wantonly scorning God to fly as it were in the face of heaven. But we must observe that the tyrant being devoted to idolatries, and thus insulted the God of Israel, that he might manifest his great piety toward his false gods. For his mockery in scornfully bending back the name of Jehovah must be referred to the words of Moses as much as to say, Why do you bring against me this unknown phantom under the title of an eternal God, as though we had no God of our own?" In other words, Pharaoh believed that they had their own gods, that they did not need this God, and that he was sovereign and could do exactly what he wanted to do.

In Exodus 5:3, Moses and Aaron say, "The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword."

Pharaoh is saying, "Who is the Lord? I don't know Him. You are demanding that I obey Him and let you go three days in the wilderness and worship Him." What Pharaoh is doing is estimating the character and power of the God of Israel by the abject and miserable condition of His worshipers. These people demanding to be let go were slaves; they had been subjugated. Pharaoh reasoned, If this is the god of these people, he cannot be very powerful, because they are not powerful. They have absolutely nothing. They are my servants; they are my slaves.

Therefore, he believed that he was superior, and that his gods were superior as well. I believe this is exactly what has happened to Christianity today. If God is a reflection of the holiness, fidelity, and worship of His people, He must be viewed as powerless and of small significance in the eyes of the world. Look at the condition of Christians in this day and time. We say that our God is omnipotent, omnipresent, immutable, the sovereign God of heaven and earth, and all-powerful—and look where we are and look what we are doing.

The Reflection of God's Character in His People

Has it ever dawned upon you that, as a Christian, your life is a reflection of God's character? If your life is a reflection of God's character, what does your life say about God?

George Gallup, the great pollster, was addressing a national seminar of Southern Baptist leaders. He said, "We find there is very little difference in ethical behavior between churchgoers and those who are not actively religious. The levels of lying, cheating, and stealing are remarkably similar in both groups. Eight out of ten Americans consider themselves Christians, yet only about half of them could identify the person who gave the Sermon on the Mount. And fewer still could recall five of the Ten Commandments. Only two in ten said they would be willing to suffer for their faith's sake."

That's astounding. When Gallup said you couldn't tell the difference because of the lying, stealing, and cheating, Vance Havner said it a little differently: when the Lord's white sheep become dirty gray, the black sheep feel more comfortable. When the white sheep become dirty gray, the black sheep feel more comfortable.

What we've done is make the world very comfortable, and consequently, we've sent the wrong message not only to the world, but also to wicked rulers. Pharaoh believed that he was able not only to control God, but to control the worship of God.

Just this week, Governor Gavin Newsom out in California, who is the nephew of Nancy Pelosi, made an order that there could be no singing in churches because singing might make the coronavirus go a little bit further. One church in Tennessee responded, of course: no Bible, no song books, no singing.

What are you going to do with those verses? "Sing unto the Lord a new song. Sing praise to the Lord. Give glory to the Lord God of Israel." The point is this: just like Pharaoh, modern-day politicians believe that they have power to control God and control the worship of God.

The ten plagues that God sent were not just plagues upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Those plagues were also upon the false gods of

Egypt. If you look in Exodus chapter 12 and verse 12, look what God says.

The Plagues as Judgment on Egypt's Gods

This is dealing with the last plague, but note very carefully. He said, “For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord.” So, God’s plagues were not just against Pharaoh and the Egyptians, but against the false gods as well. It took a number of plagues to get Pharaoh’s attention. If you look back in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 8, you will find that when these plagues began to get serious and affect Pharaoh, he was willing to compromise.

Pharaoh's Four Compromises

One of the first plagues dealt with a swarm of flies. I hate flies. Can you imagine not being able to breathe or move without flies everywhere? It is unbelievable. Pharaoh offered a compromise to get rid of the flies. Notice Exodus 8:25: “And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.” He was willing to let them go and allow them to sacrifice, but only in the land. In other words, he wanted them to sacrifice where he had absolute control. He was willing to be multicultural, diverse, and liberal as long as he was in control.

Dr. Brooks Stockton is a friend of mine. He has a website, Nike Insights, and said concerning this compromise: “In the land, Israel would still be slaves to the government. In the land, Israel would still be subject to governmental laws and statutes. In the land, Israel would still drink from the well of Egyptian culture. In the land there will be no temple, no priesthood, no altar, and no sacrifice of lambs to Yahweh. In the land, Yahweh would be one of many in Pharaoh’s pantheon of gods. In the land, Israel could never achieve its purpose to glorify God.” Pharaoh was saying, “I’m going to let you go sacrifice, but you have to do it in the land.”

Look at verses 26 and 27, because Moses gave an appropriate response. He said, “It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we

sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us."

Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me." The Egyptians hated shepherds. They also hated sheep. Everyone has heard of the sacrificial lamb. The lambs sacrificed in the Old Testament, each one of them, represented and typified the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look in your Bibles to Genesis 43:32. This passage shows how the Egyptians viewed the Hebrews. You must remember that Joseph was second in command in the land of Egypt, second under Pharaoh. Notice what happened when Joseph was about to have food and settle for his brethren as well. Genesis 43:32 says, "And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians."

Joseph and his brethren were served, but they were served separately. The Egyptians would not eat with the Hebrews, and the Hebrews could not eat with the Egyptians. Now look in Genesis 46:34: "That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians."

Moses said, "We can't do this because we'll sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians. We'll sacrifice the lamb." Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is still an abomination to the world and to those who do not believe. It is interesting that Moses said God requires that we go three days into the wilderness. Three days speak of and represent the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but they also speak of a real, genuine separation from the world and its influences.

The Church of Jesus Christ is a totally separate jurisdiction from that of civil government. The very first compromise Pharaoh offered was this: You may sacrifice, only you do it in the land; you do it under my control. That is basically what you have when you have

incorporated churches with a 501c3 tax-exempt status, because they are under the control of Caesar, under the control of the state.

There was a second compromise. Exodus chapter 8 and verse 28 says, “And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me.” The second compromise was that they might sacrifice if they did not go very far away. The hand of God was against Pharaoh and his people. He wanted relief, but he did not want to lose his slaves.

That is exactly the way people are today. You can walk out on the street and ask, “How many of you want to be judged by God? How many of you want to be condemned by God? How many of you want to face the judge of all the earth and receive the sentence of condemnation?” Nobody does, at least no one in their right mind. But although they may not want to face the judge of all the earth and be condemned by God, they do not want that badly enough to give up their sins. What they want is not to be condemned while, at the same time, keeping their sins and rebellion. Pharaoh was saying, “I want these plagues lifted. I want some relief, but I don't want you going very far away. I want you to come back.”

The world does not despise Christians who are like themselves. They despise Christians who are holy, godly, righteous, and obedient. Unhappily, most Christians have not gone very far from the world because the world's siren call always pulls them back in. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:10 concerning Demas, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.”

The first compromise was this: You may serve God and sacrifice to God, but you have to do it in the land. The second was that you could go and do it, but you must not go very far away. In Exodus 10, we see the third compromise: Go, you that are men, and serve Him. Pharaoh's servants said unto him, “How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?”

Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh, and he said unto them, “Go, serve the Lord your God: but who are they that shall

go?" Moses answered, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord."

Pharaoh replied, "Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire." And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

Pharaoh was willing to let them go, but only the men. Stop and think about this compromise. What Pharaoh was endeavoring to do was separate the affections of the people. They had spiritual affections: they wanted to worship God, sacrifice, and be obedient to Him. But they also had natural affections. Pharaoh said, "You may go into the wilderness, but only you men go. Your wives and children stay here."

No matter how spiritual a man is, he is going to miss his wife and children. The women will want their husbands and the children will want their fathers. Pharaoh knew that if he let only the men go, it would be a matter of time before they were all back. Moses said, "No, it is not going to happen like this." Yet consider how many people have truly left their families behind.

Think of fathers who serve the Lord, but whose wives and children do not; wives who serve the Lord, but whose husbands and children do not; parents who serve the Lord, but whose children do not; or children who serve the Lord, but whose parents do not. Divided affections produce divided families. Moses did not take the bait. He knew that God wanted the whole man, the whole heart, and the whole family. True men will lead their wives and children into obedience, righteousness, and holiness.

Here is the third compromise: "You men go. Just leave the women and children behind." No, it will not work like that, says Moses.

Here is the fourth compromise. Look in Exodus 10:24: "And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you." This seems like a good compromise. Pharaoh is saying, "Take your family and your children, but leave your possessions."

This compromise might appeal to pietistic people. There are many who say, “All we need is the Lord.” That is true in one sense of the word. But this compromise appeals to those who are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. What do I mean by that? I understand that God is our all in all. It is certainly true that He supplies our needs, and it is certainly true that He gives us everything we have. But the truth of the matter is that we need wealth and possessions in order to worship Him, to serve Him, and to sacrifice to Him and for Him.

We live on earth, in time and in history. The last time I went to a grocery store, they demanded money; they would not let me out without paying. I am simply pointing out the fact that it is true that we can give back to God only that which He has already given us. That is true. Still, whatever He gives us carries a requirement that we give back to Him.

Wealth is not necessarily the goal for the Christian. But wealth is necessary, not only for our families, but also to serve God. On the one hand, some deny this truth; on the other hand, there are those who do not deny that they must sell their souls simply to accumulate wealth. Whatever we have belongs to God.

Moses certainly did not fall for this bait. After Pharaoh said, “Go and serve the Lord, you and your little ones, leave your flocks behind,” Moses said in Exodus 10:25, “Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither.”

While a man needs wealth to serve his family and his God, the goal of the Christian life is far more than the accumulation of wealth. God requires us to give and to support His work, not because He needs anything, but simply because we have a need to be involved in His service and in His work. As Deuteronomy says it, we may learn to fear the Lord our God.

Hold on to Exodus, but look in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 4 and verse 17. The Philippians regularly supported Paul, and Paul

acknowledged that. He said, "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only." The Philippians were the ones who supported Paul on a regular basis.

"For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." What he is saying is this: all that you invested in me is going to come back to you because it will be spiritual fruit abounding to your account. You were involved in supporting the work of the ministry. That is exactly what the apostle is saying in Philippians 4, and it is exactly what is being taught in Exodus chapter 12. We have to be able to support the work of God.

Modern-day churches can usually be found in one of these four compromises. You just look around. I received an email this week that was almost astounding. I do not know the young man, but he said, "I have been listening to your sermons regularly. I need encouragement. I need help. I just wanted to reach out and see if you're real." I emailed him back and said, "Yes, I'm real. I'm alive and I'm here. And I'll help you any way that I can."

Pharaoh's Forced Release and Request for Blessing

But we have to understand this: when the last plague hit, Pharaoh was more than willing to let the children of Israel go. Remember the death of the firstborn. Exodus 12:31 says, "And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said.

“Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.” Did you notice those last four words? “And bless me also.” Pharaoh refused to obey God. He would not even recognize God. He mocked God, hated God, and ridiculed God. Now, when God had forced him to do what He commanded him to do to begin with, Pharaoh asked Moses to bless him. It is astounding that tyrants think they deserve to be blessed when they allow God's people to do that which is their inalienable right—their God-given

right—to worship Him and sacrifice to Him. Finally, when he was forced to let them go, he said, “Bless me also.”

Those who defy and despise God are not and cannot be blessed. They are cursed. If you hate God and despise God, you are not going to be blessed by God. I can assure you, you will be cursed by God.

Applications: Attacking God's People is Attacking God

Remember where we began, with Exodus 9:17: “As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people.” When one attacks, persecutes, harms, or seeks to destroy God's people, he is attacking God Himself. There is no tyrant, politician, president, or congressman who can reach up and slap God in the face, or stick his hand or finger in God's eye. While they cannot do that literally, they can do it spiritually by attacking and persecuting the people of God.

Remember Zechariah 2:8: “For he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.” The apple of the eye is the pupil. God says that when you touch His people, you are sticking your finger in His eye. Once you start challenging God and poking Him in the eye, you will be in trouble like you have never seen before.

You are stomping My people down. You are trying to build yourself up by tearing My people down. It is not going to work. Here is the second application: it is to the honor and glory of God to destroy His enemies. Was it right and honorable for Moses to kill that Egyptian in saving another's life?

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 14:17-18, 24-31 (KJV)

> And the answer is yes. Was it right and honorable and glorious for David not only to protect himself and his family and the nation by killing Goliath? And the answer is yes.
>
> God is speaking: "And I behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians and they shall follow them and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh and upon all his hosts upon his chariots and upon his horsemen, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh and upon his chariots and upon his horsemen." How did God get honor from the Egyptians? And the answer is by destroying them. Because God is absolutely just. This was the justice of God.

"And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians."

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them."

"But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses."

Warning to Rulers and Call to Holy Living

God says this to Pharaoh in the book of Exodus, and the Apostle Paul quotes it in the book of Romans: “For this cause have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee.” In other words, Pharaoh is to be an example to all tyrants, despots, and rulers who are contrary to God.

Look in Exodus chapter 15, beginning with verse 13, and see the application of what happened to Pharaoh as it is applied to the rulers in Canaan:

“Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall

be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

What happened to Pharaoh is to be a warning to all others. It is this truth that I read several Sundays back from Psalm 2, verses 10 through 12, where God says, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." You remember that passage in Psalm 110, verses 5 and 6: "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries."

So here is why I titled this message, "Will They Ever Learn?" Pay attention to what happened to Pharaoh, to the despots and tyrants in Canaan land, and to what has happened all through the Bible and all through history as well. Now is the time to listen, if they are going to ever listen and learn. You can't. You can't.

Touch God's people without touching God. You cannot try to control God's worship without trying to control God. You cannot do one thing over God, because God is sovereign.

The destruction of God's enemies, especially those rulers who rebel against Him, demonstrates the absolute superiority, sovereignty, and supremacy of God. In Exodus 18:9, Jethro rejoiced. He was the father-in-law of Moses, and Moses had told him "all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh." Jethro rejoiced "for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians." He said, "Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians."

Then he said, “Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.” In the thing wherein they dealt proudly, He was above them. What was Pharaoh doing? Exodus 9:17 says, “As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people.” Pharaoh was acting proudly, and God brought him down.

God is able to abase all that exalt themselves. God is able to protect His people. Our leaders need to understand that they cannot touch God's people or God's worship without assaulting God Himself. When you want to challenge God, you are insane already, because God is sovereign.

Let's make sure that our lives reflect the true character of God in holiness, righteousness, and obedience as we worship Him and give Him the honor and glory He deserves. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth, and ask for Your help and blessings. Teach us, Lord, to love Thee, live for Thee, honor Thee, and glorify Thee. May we understand that Thou art sovereign and will deal with those who hate You in Your time and way, for Your honor and glory. We give Thee praise. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

CHAPTER 25

Do You Want God to Defend You?

September 13, 2020

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 12:1-15 (KJV)

Introduction and Context

Before we begin, let me make a statement concerning these familiar verses. Less than a month ago, I preached from them in a message called "Remember Miriam," based on Deuteronomy chapter 24, where God said, "Remember what I did to Miriam." That message is totally different from this message. The only thing they have in common is the same Scripture. I may mention one or two things, but this will be a totally different message.

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married, for he married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, 'Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?' And the Lord heard it. Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men which are upon the face of the earth.

> And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, 'Come out, ye three, unto the tabernacle of the congregation.' And they three came out. And the Lord came down in a pillar of a cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam, and they came forth. And he said, 'Hear now ye my words. If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches. And the similitude of the Lord shall he behold. Wherefore then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?' And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle, and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow. And Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold, she was leprous. And Aaron said unto Moses, 'Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not this sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.'

Do You Want God to Defend You?

"Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed, when he cometh out of his mother's womb." And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." And the Lord said unto Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again." And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days, and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again. Afterwards the people were moved from Hazeroth and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

Meekness Is Not Weakness

A short time back, I preached from this same text on "Remember Miriam." Her chastisement from the Lord was and is certainly a warning for us today. Our Heavenly Father does not take rebellion lightly. We are not allowed to indiscriminately attack each other, and especially we are not allowed to attack His faithful servants.

In that message, I pointed out verse three, where the Bible says, "Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Moses was described as the meekest man on earth. Meekness is not mousiness, weakness, or walking around with your head down. That is poor posture. The meekest man on earth was a man who not only defended an Israelite when he was attacked by an Egyptian, but actually killed the Egyptian in defending the Israelite's life.

Moreover, Moses confronted Pharaoh and all his minions. Pharaoh was perhaps one of the strongest men, militarily and politically, upon the face of the earth at that time. Yet Moses confronted him and his minions as well.

Then, in Exodus chapter 32, when Aaron and the people had made the golden calf, Moses came down from the mountain and saw them worshipping it. He had a good, what you and I would call a hissy fit: he threw down the tablets and broke them. He took that golden calf, ground it into powder, cast it in the water, and made the people drink thereof. Evidently, some refused to drink.

And so he cried out, "Whoever's on the Lord's side, let him come over unto me." The Bible tells us that the tribe of Levi came over. Moses said, "Gird on every man his sword and go in and out among the camp and slay every man his brother." The Bible said there fell that day of Israel three thousand men. Interestingly enough, none of the other tribes came over; it was just the tribe of Levi. In one passage, God commends the Levites, saying that they did not regard father or mother or brother or sister. They simply obeyed.

In this passage, three thousand people were killed. Colin Dalich, one of the Old Testament commentators, said of the killing of the three thousand: "The severity of the punishment corresponded to the magnitude of the crime. The worship of an image being a manifest transgression of one of the fundamental laws of the covenant was a breach of the covenant and as such was a capital crime bringing the punishment of death or extermination in its train."

Although the whole nation had been guilty of this crime, the guilt of all would not be the same. Many would simply follow the example

of others. Instead of punishing all alike, it was necessary that a separation should be made, if not between the innocent and the guilty, yet between the penitent and the stiff-necked transgressors. To effect this separation, Moses called into the camp, "Whoever is on the Lord's side, let him come over to me." All the Levites responded to his call, and not the other tribes. The refractory had to be punished. Even these had not all sinned to the same extent, but might be divided into tempters and tempted, as they were all mixed up together.

Nothing remained but to adopt that kind of punishment which has been resorted to in all ages in such circumstances. They were killing those who were recalcitrant, who refused to repent. Old John Trapp, the Puritan, said it like this: "The meaning is, slay every principal offender whom you meet without any indulgence or exception, though brother or companion or neighbor." That is exactly what happened in Exodus chapter 32. Since we are in Numbers chapter 12, remember that Numbers chapter 16 has not yet happened.

That was when Dathan, Abiram, Korah, and all that company arose against Moses. The reason for recalling this is that Moses is classified as the meekest man on the earth. When these people rebelled against God and against Aaron particularly, Moses, the meekest man on earth, said, "Lord, let a new thing happen. Let the earth open up and let these people go alive into the pit." And that is exactly what happened. Then God sent fire from heaven and consumed the 250 princes with their censers in their hands.

So Moses is classified as the meekest man on earth. Meekness is not weakness, and meekness is not mousiness, because meekness here challenged wickedness on every hand. However, when Aaron and Miriam attacked Moses, Moses did not respond to them. If you look back in verse one, the Bible says that Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married. The word Ethiopian there is the word Cushite, which meant that this woman was a grandson, a granddaughter, of Noah. She was related through Noah.

Moreover, Genesis 25 tells us that after Sarah died, Abraham remarried and married a woman named Keturah. Keturah had a son

named Midian. Where did God send Moses? He sent him into the land of Midian. So the Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah. Moses married a woman who had been from the grandson of Noah, a Cushite, and also was a Midianite, which meant she was from Abraham and Keturah. Her father, Jethro, sometimes called Reuel, is also called the priest of Midian, and according to Exodus 18, he was a worshipper of the One True and the Living God.

The point is that Aaron and Miriam were mocking Moses because Zipporah was not from Abraham and Sarah as they were; she was from Abraham and Keturah. Spiritual pride was coming up. Moses had spent his life defending God and defending God's honor. When he was attacked by his own brother and sister, he did not respond to their gross accusations and vile insinuations. He knew what God had done for him and the providence of God in his life.

Moses' Silence Before Family

Meekness does not exclude all anger. There is in the Bible that which is called righteous anger or righteous indignation. In fact, the Bible commands you in Ephesians 4 and verse 26, "Be ye angry and sin not."

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." So there is a righteous anger, a biblical anger. I will very quickly confess that most of our anger is unbiblical and fleshly. But there is a righteous anger when someone tries to say, "Well, all anger is wrong." No, because if you say that, then you have real theological problems. In Mark 3 and verse 5, the Bible says, "And Jesus, being moved with anger, looked around upon them because of the hardness of their heart."

Our Lord was angry. There is a righteous anger. Here you have Moses standing up to all of God's enemies and confronting them. On the other hand, you have Aaron and Miriam, his own family, attacking him, and he does not respond.

Hold Numbers 12, but look in your Bibles to Romans 12. Here I am going to show you that meekness is really not easily provoked. The Bible says in Romans chapter 12, beginning with verse 17, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

When he says, "Recompense no man evil for evil," if Joshua stood up and cussed me out in front of everybody, would that give me the right to stand up and cuss him back? The answer is no. I am not to render evil for evil. Just because he does wrong does not mean that I have to do wrong.

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Try as hard as you can to live peaceably with all men. There is an indication that there are some men you cannot live peaceably with, but as much as in you is, do it. Then he says, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath."

"For it is written, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay,' saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirsts, give him drink. For in doing so, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

So, what do you say if your enemy hungers? Feed him. If he is thirsty, give him drink. If he is hungry, that does not mean buying him a table of steaks; if he is thirsty, it does not mean buying a Starbucks latte. If I have peas, he may eat my peas; if he is thirsty, he may drink water like I drink water. You cannot be overcome with evil.

You cannot allow bitterness, anger, and revenge to boil up in your heart. To demonstrate that bitterness and revenge are not there, if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink. We overcome evil with good.

I want you to understand this in light of Moses. He stood up in righteous anger against the Lord's enemies, but when it came to his own family, he did not even respond.

True meekness pays no attention to insults, sarcasms, personal affronts, and obvious ridicule. So Moses was not going to be drawn into a debate with his own family. He was not going to discuss the providence of God in his own life. He knew the fact that God did call him and that God sent him to deliver His people.

True meekness is nothing more than disciplined strength under God. True meekness is being broken to yoke. In Matthew 11, our Lord says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He also says, "Take My yoke upon you and

learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." When He says, "Take My yoke upon you," He is saying, in other words, that you submit to Him. You are under His control.

Everyone in this room has seen pictures, if not real life, of oxen being yoked and plowed together. These oxen are very, very huge. You can take a 3,000-pound animal, put a yoke around him, and now you can control him. All of that strength is under your control. It is the same thing as putting a bridle in a horse's mouth. If we are under the control of the Lord, we are not frothing at the mouth, chafing at the bit, or trying to spit the bit out and do what we want to do. No, we have strength, but it is disciplined strength under God. That is what real, genuine meekness is.

Moses was willing to confront all of God's enemies, but he was not willing to enter into a debate or an argument with his brother and his sister. Although Moses was unwilling to hear and to fight with them, God heard, and God was more than willing. Now go back to Numbers 12; let me set the stage for this.

God's Sudden Intervention

The Bible says in verse 2, “Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not also spoken by us?” And the Lord heard it. Then verse 3 says, “Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” God is telling us about Moses. The Bible says, “And the Lord heard it.” Then verse 4 says, “And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, unto Aaron, unto Miriam, Come out, you three, unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out.”

The Lord heard it, and then the Lord spoke suddenly. The word suddenly is important. The Hebrew word does not simply mean suddenly; it means immediately, instantaneously, straightway. Just as quickly as they got the words out of their mouths while attacking Moses, God spoke to them suddenly. The word sudden is important for at least two reasons.

First, it shows God’s great respect for Moses and for the grace of meekness. Second, it demonstrates that the beginning of sedition

must be taken care of quickly and efficiently. God divinely interposed Himself between Moses, Aaron, and Miriam and said, like Barney, “I’ll nip it in the bud.” That is exactly what He did.

Moses had shown himself jealous for God because he had defended God’s truth over and over. Now God shows Himself jealous for Moses, his reputation, and his testimony. First Samuel 2:30 says, “For them that honor Me will I honor, but those that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.” The principle is that God will honor those who honor Him. Moses had been honoring Him; now God would honor Moses. God divinely intervened and defended Moses.

When it comes to defense, we want all the help that we can get. We certainly do not want to be alone. Ecclesiastes 4 says, “Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellows. But woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat. But how can one be warm alone?” Then verse 12 says, “And if one prevail against him,” that is, he is being attacked, “two shall withstand him, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

The truth of the matter is this: if I am in a fight for my life, I want all the help that I can get. I appreciate the fact that people would be willing to help me. But I will be absolutely honest. If I am in a fight for my life, I want the strongest, the most flexible, the most powerful, and the most knowledgeable person to help me because I want to live. I am sure that you are the same way.

When you stop and think about God, God is omnipotent. He is all-powerful. He may deliver us physically or in any other way that He chooses.

Now, I have a question to ask you, and that is really the thrust of this message: Why did God defend Moses so quickly and so readily? The Bible said that Miriam and Aaron spoke at the Lord’s hearing. Immediately, God said, “Come out you three. Get over here to the tabernacle.” Why did God defend Moses so readily and so quickly? Here is another question: Why are we not defended so readily and so quickly?

Why is it that there are times that our names, our testimonies, and our reputations are drugged through the mud in the mire? I can assure you there have been times in my life that I have been lied about and lied against, not just by Christians, but sometimes even by fellow pastors and, of course, the wicked. And yes, there have been times when God jerked a nod in some of them. That is true.

But it has not been every time. It is the same way in your life. There are times that you endure things and just wonder why God does not intervene. But He did for Moses. So why did God intervene for Moses so quickly?

Why God Defended Moses

God is speaking now to Aaron and Miriam: "Hear now My words. If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream."

"My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches. And the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." What is this question? "Wherefore then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

Moses, like Abraham, was the friend of God. God did not speak to Moses in dreams and in visions the way He did to some of the other prophets. God said, "I speak to Moses face to face. I speak to Moses mouth to mouth. Moses beholds my similitude." He may not have seen God's face, but he beheld the similitude of God. Moses was not simply a friend of God; he was a faithful friend of God.

Look closely at verse 7, because God underlines this truth. He says, "My servant Moses is not so." In other words, he is not like all those other prophets. "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house." When you stop and think about Moses as a servant, he was obedient to his master. He faithfully delivered all the laws, all the statutes, and all the ordinances that God gave him to Israel. He faithfully made all the instruments of the tabernacle and the tabernacle itself according to the pattern that God gave. He faithfully proclaimed all the sacrifices and all the offerings the way God commanded.

In other words, Moses was not self-seeking. Moses was not looking for the praise and admiration of man. Moses was not seeking in vain. No, no, no. Whatever Moses did, he was faithful in all God's house.

I want you to see this. In the book of Exodus chapter 40 and verse 16. Exodus chapter 40. And watch if you would please, verse 16. Then we'll go to Hebrews chapter 3. So Exodus chapter 40 and verse 16. Here's an interesting statement. Remember now, God has said Moses was faithful in all of his house. So in Exodus 40 verse 16, "Thus did Moses according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he." So, whatever God commanded, that is exactly what Moses did. Now, if you will turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 3, because in this passage, we're talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, but, however, He is also here referred to as obedient as was Moses. So, in Hebrews chapter 3, look, if you would, please. Well, let's read verse one, just so you can see that Jesus Christ is in the context here.

He says, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Now watch verse two, "who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all of his house." Now watch verse three. "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house." Now skip down to verse 5. "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." Then if you look in Hebrews chapter 8 and verse 5, Hebrews 8 and verse 5, the Bible says this, "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 thee in the mount.'" And of course that's exactly what Moses did. So the Bible is saying over and over that Moses was faithful in all of his house.

So Moses was not just simply conversant with God, he was not just simply the friend of God, he was a faithful friend of God. Now, go back to the book of Numbers chapter 12. I want you to see this. So, remember now, God has asked Aaron and Miriam, "How is it that you were not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

The Danger of Attacking God's Faithful Servants

Now, watch if you would please at verse 9. In verse 8 he asks, "Wherefore then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" Watch verse 9. "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed."

There are two very important observations we need to make on verse 9. The first is this: if you really and truly wish to anger the Lord and have Him ready to chastise you, all you have to do is attack His faithful servants. I am not just talking about attacking preachers. I know that there are many preachers who are not faithful.

Every Christian is a servant, though not every Christian is faithful. Some are very, very faithful. Usually, when we talk about preachers and hear something about them, we begin to criticize and condemn them based upon what we have heard, what we have been told, what we think, or what we believe. We have never really investigated or checked the facts for ourselves, nor have we spoken to the individual. We simply join in an attack.

What we are seeing here is this: God is asking, “Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” If we really and truly want to anger God, as Aaron and Miriam did, all we have to do is attack His faithful servants. You remember Proverbs chapter 6, where the Bible says, “These six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination unto him.” In verse 19, one of them is “he that soweth discord among the brethren.”

The Bible says in verse 9, “And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them.” It was kindled because they attacked Moses. The second thing we see in verse 9 is this: “and he departed.” God left Moses and Aaron. He was the One who said, “Come out ye three to the tabernacle.” Then He evidently separated Miriam and Aaron. He was angry with them, and then He turned and left them.

It was just like someone full of anger and wrath coming up to you, telling you off to your face, then turning around and walking away. That is what God did. He departed and left them. He not only left them; He left them in anger. In other words, at that moment, they no longer had God's manifest presence. God had manifested Himself, as you remember, in the cloud and in the fire.

First of all, you do not want God as an enemy. Secondly, you do not want God as an angry enemy. Thirdly, you do not want God to walk off and leave you. One of the greatest judgments that can befall anyone is when God leaves us to ourselves. Moses was not simply a friend of God; he was a faithful friend of God.

Faithfulness, Not Success

Do you realize that you can search the Bible in vain to find a command for you and me to be successful? God does not demand success; He demands faithfulness. Just stop and think. Noah preached for 120 years and never had one convert, yet he is in Hebrews 11 as a hero of faith. Think about Jeremiah. Think about Isaiah. Here are men who preached faithfully, though they were hated and despised. No one listened to them, and yet God counts them as heroes of faith.

The point is this: there are many things that you and I cannot do. I tell people, and I am not ashamed to admit it, that I am mechanically challenged and technologically challenged. There are many things I cannot do. But one thing I can do by God's grace is be faithful. Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., used to have a saying, and it is so true: “The greatest ability is dependability.” If you have someone upon whom you can depend, that is a wonderful ability. That is all God asks of us. God asks us to be faithful.

Psalm 101:6 says, “Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me: he that walketh in a perfect” or mature and upright “way, he shall serve Me.” Did you hear what He said? “Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land.” His eyes will not be upon the successful, per se, but they will be upon the faithful of the land.

Now, turn in your Bibles, if you would, to Proverbs chapter 28, and look, if you would please, at verse 20. Just over a few pages. Proverbs 28 and verse 20. Look at it.

Now, I think you can understand this verse in light of what we just read, where God said, "Mine eye shall be upon the faithful of the land." Proverbs 28 and verse 20, the Bible says, "A faithful man shall abound with blessings. But he that maketh haste to be rich shall not

be innocent." "A faithful man shall abound with blessings." Why? God's eyes are upon him. And moreover, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 2, "Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

And each one of us is a steward. God has given us families. God has given us friends. God has given us finances. God has given us goods. God has given us property. And we are responsible to be faithful as stewards in whatever God has given unto us.

Now, here's the point I want to make, and I'm going to show you with two other examples just momentarily. If we want God to defend us, we need to learn to be faithful. That is why God defended Moses so quickly. He Himself said, "He is faithful in all mine house." You remember a man by the name of Caleb? I want you to turn very quickly in your Bibles to the book of Numbers, chapter 14, just a few pages from our text. Numbers, chapter 14.

Examples of Faithfulness: Caleb and Paul

And look, if you would please, at verse 24. You remember Moses had sent Joshua and Caleb and ten other men to spy out the land. Well, it was Caleb and Joshua who brought back an honest report. And in Numbers 14 and verse 24, God is speaking concerning Caleb. And I want you to see what God says about Caleb. He says, "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, hath followed me fully. Him will I bring into the land wherein he went, and his seed shall possess it." So let me go back and read this again. Now watch carefully. "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and he hath followed me fully," wholly, completely, faithfully, "him will I bring into the land wherein he went, and his seed shall possess it." So God now is testifying to the faithfulness of Caleb. So, if you would turn now to the book of Joshua, just a couple of pages over, after Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, look in Joshua chapter 14. The interesting thing is, in Numbers, God testifies to Caleb's faithfulness.

In Joshua 14, Caleb testifies to God's faithfulness: "Forty years old was I when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land. And I brought him word again as was in mine heart. Nevertheless, my brethren that went up with me

made the heart of the people to melt." They told them the Anakims and the giants were there. Caleb said, "But I wholly"—completely, fully, faithfully—"followed the Lord my God. And Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance and thy children's forever, because that thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God.'"

"Now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. And now I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet, I am as strong this day as I was the days that Moses sent me, as my strength was then, even so is my strength now for war, both to go out and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day, as for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that their cities were great and fenced: if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said."

Joshua blessed him and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron, Kirjath-arba. Caleb was eighty-five years old and just as strong as when he was forty-five—for war. There is hope for us. He said, "God is faithful."

Joshua 15:13-14 says, "And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, even the city of Arba, the father of Anak, which city is Hebron. And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak." He said, "If God be with me, I can do it." God was with him, and he did it. Why did God bless Caleb, help him, defend him, keep him alive, and preserve him?

Because he was faithful. He wholly followed the Lord. Let me show you one more. Everyone knows that the Apostle Paul was probably one of the greatest missionaries. He was a mighty man, and he went through so many things. I mean, he was beaten. He was stoned. He was in the deep. Just all kinds of things happened to the Apostle Paul.

But God sent him to Corinth. Corinth was a pagan city. It was a seaport town. In fact, there were three seaports in Corinth. It was so

wicked and so vile. There was one temple in Corinth with a thousand prostitutes for the free use of anyone who went to that temple. And so when Paul went to Corinth, he was fearful. He was afraid. How do I know that?

Well, look in Acts chapter 18 in verse 9. "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by vision. Be not afraid." If God told Paul not to be afraid, obviously he was afraid. But God says, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace. For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee. For I have much people in this city." What did God just say to Paul? "You preach. I got your back. I got your front. I got your sides. I got you all the way around 360. Don't worry about it. You just preach. I can defend you." And He did.

David so many times claimed God as his defense. In Psalm 7, verse 10, David said, "My defense is of God who saveth the upright in heart." My defense is of God. In Psalm 31, verse 2, David says, "Bow down thine ear to me. Deliver me speedily. Be thou my strong rock for a house of defense to save me." In Psalm 59, verse 9, he says, "Because of his strength will I wait upon thee, for God is my defense."

David's Testimony of God as Defense

“But I will sing of thy power. Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning. For thou hast been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble.” Look in verse 17: “Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing. For God is my defense and the God of my mercy.” Look in Psalm 62 and verse 2: “He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense. I shall not be greatly moved.” Look in verse 6: “He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense. I shall not be moved.”

In Psalm 89 and verse 18, he says, “For the Lord is our defense, and the Holy One of Israel is our King.” One more, Psalm 94, verse 22: “But the Lord is my defense, and my God is the rock of my refuge.” Of course, that wonderful passage in Isaiah 33 and verse 16 says that the one who trusts in the Lord “he shall dwell on high. His place of defense shall be the munitions of the rock, his bread shall be sure, and his water shall be sure.” So obviously, God does indeed defend His people.

Applications and Conclusion

Now, Moses was the meekest man on earth, and yet he was faithful and God defended him. Meekness and fidelity will always be honored and respected by God. When we submit to God's providence and wait upon Him, even in our afflictions, and continue faithfully to serve Him, inevitably, invariably, God will avenge us and defend us in His time and in His way.

When you attack God's faithful servants, you attack God. It is impossible to separate the one who is sent from the One who is sending. When we attack God's faithful servants, we are attacking God because we are denying His choosing, His equipping, and His sending. In Matthew 10 and verse 10, when He sent His disciples out, our Lord said, "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me. And he that receiveth Me, receiveth him that sent Me." Again, in John 13, in verse 20, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth you, whomever I send receiveth me, and whosoever receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." If they receive you, they are receiving Me. If they receive Me, they are receiving My Father who sent Me.

The opposite is also true: if they refuse to receive those whom Jesus Christ sent, they are refusing Jesus Christ. If they are refusing Jesus Christ, they are refusing the Father who sent Christ. You cannot separate the sender from those who are sent. To attack God's faithful servants is to fly in the face of God. That is why, when the Lord heard it in verse 2, He spoke suddenly in verse 4 and said, "Get here in front of the tabernacle."

The third application is this: if we want God to defend us, we need to learn to be His faithful servants. If we want Him to honor us, we must honor Him in all our lives. There are many things you and I cannot do, but faithfulness, in one sense of the word, is simple. Yet, unhappily, most pastors and most Christians are not faithful. We need to learn to be faithful. We can be faithful in attending the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, in giving, praying, studying Scripture, worshiping God, teaching others, and obeying. In other words, faithfulness is something very simple in which most of us fail. May I remind you that one of the names of God in Scripture is that He is the faithful God.

Have you ever stopped to think about God's faithfulness? It is God who causes the sun to come up every morning and set every evening. It is God who continues to give us life, health, and food. He is faithful. I love the passage I have quoted so many times, Lamentations 3:22–23: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed. Because His compassions, they fail not. They're new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness."

If our Heavenly Father is the faithful God, His children should take after Him. We should have faithful hearts and faithful lives. We may not be the wealthiest people in the world, or the biggest group of believers, but we can be the most faithful. Faithfulness is that which God demands. If we want God to defend us, we have to be faithful like Moses.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your Word, truth, love, grace, and mercy. Lord, forgive us for our unfaithfulness. Make us more faithful, obedient, holy, and godly. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 26

When You Despise One, You Despise the Other

October 11, 2020

Introduction: The Hidden Hatred of God and His Word

1 Chronicles 10:13–14 reads: “So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired not of the LORD. Therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.”

You will probably not hear too many people exclaim, “I hate God,” and neither would you hear too many people exclaim, “I hate the Bible.” But yet it is true that many people do indeed hate God, and they hate the Bible also. And yet they refuse to come out and state it very bluntly. Instead, what they like to do is to suggest, to question, to insinuate, to denigrate, and to deny both God and His Word in a much lighter way. They do not just come out and say it plainly; they express their opposition in a softer manner.

We speak oftentimes of euphemisms. A euphemism is just simply an easy way of saying something that is very difficult or very hard. For instance, you do not hear too many people say, “Well, my wife died” or “my uncle died.” What they will say is, “My wife passed” or “my uncle passed away.” That is just simply an easier or lighter way of saying that she died.

Moreover, you hear people talk about how so-and-so had an affair. That is just an easy and lighter way of saying so-and-so committed adultery. In other words, you are not going to just come out and say that. Moreover, many people say, “Well, he took a life.” No, no, he did not just take a life. He was a murderer. He murdered. Even though we speak euphemistically at times, that still does not negate the impact of what we actually say.

The Carnal Mind Is Enmity Against God

There is a passage in the book of Romans, which demonstrates very clearly man's natural hatred against God and His Word. Romans 8:7–8 says, "But the carnal mind is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." When the Bible says that the carnal mind is enmity against God, remember that "enmity" is a very strong word for hatred.

Look in Hosea 9 and verse 7. The Bible says, "The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred." Note that phrase: "and the great hatred." Here are two comments on it. John Trapp, one of the old Puritans, said concerning this verse, "For the multitude of thine iniquity and the great hatred." Then he says, "Hebrew, the great satanic hatred that thou hast borne against God and thy neighbor, but especially God's faithful prophets whom thou heartily hatest for their plain dealing, as they have did Micaiah, because he never spoke good of him."

He is referring to that passage in 1 Kings, chapter 22, where Ahab is trying to get Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to go to war with him and recover Ramoth Gilead. Ahab has all of his false prophets prophesying good, and they are saying, "Go up and prosper."

Jehoshaphat asks, "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD that we may inquire of him as well?" In verse 8, the king of Israel, Ahab, says to Jehoshaphat, "There is one yet, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

In other words, he said it very plainly: he hated Micaiah because Micaiah spoke absolutely the truth. Now, he's talking about good-wraith hatred. Let me give you one other quote, and this is by Albert Barnes. He says, "The words stand at the close of the verse as the reason of all which had gone before."

Their manifold iniquity and their great hatred of God were the ground why the days of visitation and recompense should come. They were the ground also why God allowed such prophets to delude them. The words “the great hatred” stand quite undefined, so that they may signify like the hatred of Ephraim against God and good people and his true prophets, or God’s hatred of them. Yet it most likely means their great hatred sense of them.

The prophet uses it again in the next verse. The sinner first neglects God. Then, as the will of God is brought before him, he willfully disobeys Him. Then, when he finds that God’s will is irreconcilably at variance with his own, or when God chastens him, he hates Him. The prophet speaks out plainly: he hates Him greatly. Notice that he talks about the great hatred. There is indeed hatred. It may not necessarily be on the surface all the times, but it is hatred.

You Cannot Separate God from His Word

If you have never grasped this one central fact, I want you to do so today: when you despise the Word of God, you despise God. When you despise God, you despise His Word. You cannot separate God from His Word. The Bible says in Psalm 138, verse 2, “thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” If God’s Word ever fails, then God basically ceases to be God. It is impossible for someone to hold one attitude toward the Bible and a different attitude toward God, or to hold one attitude toward God and a different attitude toward the Bible.

We could say the same thing in different ways. When you neglect the Word of God, you neglect God. When you neglect God, you neglect the Word of God. When you forget God, you forget His Word. When you forget God's Word, you forget God. God and His Word are both immutable. They are unchangeable. That is why the Bible, in Psalm 119 and verse 89, says, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." For years I have preached, taught, harped upon this, exhorted people, besought people, and endeavored to instill this one concept in their minds over and over again: you cannot separate God from His Word. A king rules by his law. God is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and God of Gods, and He has a law, and that law is the way that He rules. He is not going to forsake His Word. He is not going to deny His Word.

Stop and think about this. If God ever denied His Word, He would cease being God. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 13, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." God is not going to deny himself, and He's certainly not going to deny His Word.

David's Sin: Despising the Commandment and Despising God

We are going to look at 1 Chronicles 10, verses 13 and 14. Before we do, consider this same exact truth from the life of David. Everyone is familiar with David's fall into sin, his adultery with Bathsheba, and his murder of Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband. Although David did not kill Uriah directly, he did so indirectly, and God charged him with murder by using the sword of the children of Ammon.

We are also familiar with the story Nathan brought before David to show him his great sin: the rich man with all his stock and animals, and the poor man with one little ewe lamb. When a visitor came, the rich man failed to take from his own stock and herd. Instead, he took the poor man's lamb, killed it, and served it to his guests.

Although we know that story, we may not be quite familiar with exactly what God told David. In 2 Samuel chapter 12, beginning with verse 7, Nathan had confronted David. David was greatly upset and

said, "The man that has done this shall restore fourfold and he shall die." Then Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things." Now look at verse 9: "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight?"

“Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.” Note what Nathan asks in verse 9: “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight?” David did indeed despise the commandments of God. He despised the seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery”; the sixth, “Thou shalt not kill”; and the eighth, “Thou shalt not steal,” because he stole Bathsheba from Uriah. He also despised the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet,” for he coveted her. He despised the first commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” because he placed himself before God. He also despised the fifth commandment, “Honour thy father and thy mother,” because in his actions he dishonored his father and his mother.

The Hebrew word for “despise” literally means to condemn, disdain, scorn, treat as vile, useless, worthless, and contemptible. What David did is what every sinner does when we violate God’s law: we treat that law as absolutely contemptible, useless, worthless, and of no account. We keep scoring upon scoring upon it. We can see that because Nathan said, “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD?” David despised it.

Now look at verse 10: “Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.” In verse 9, Nathan said, “You’ve despised the commandment of the LORD”; in verse 10, he said, “You have despised me.” God charged David with despising Him, treating Him as contemptible, vile, worthless, and useless. The Hebrew word for “despised” is exactly the same in both verses. You cannot separate God from His Word. When you despise the Word of

God, you despise God; when you despise God, you despise His Word. This same truth is stated plainly in 1 Chronicles 10:13: “So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not.”

Saul's Transgression: Rebellion, Rejection, and Treachery

“Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD.” Here it is again, in black and white. You cannot separate the one from the other. Let me say this very plainly. When you transgress against God, you transgress against His law. When you transgress against His law, you also transgress against God. It is impossible to separate the two. First, we need to note the word “transgression.” The Bible says very clearly, “So Saul died for his transgression.”

Now, when you and I think of the word “transgression,” we try to associate the word “trespass.” And in one sense of the word, a transgression is indeed a trespass. So if Gary had placed a sign on his property that said “No Trespassing,” and I walked onto that property, Gary could ask me to leave. And if I refused to leave, he could have me arrested because that would be a violation of his private property rights. So when we think of a trespass, we also think of a transgression and say that a transgression is a trespass.

But let me tell you something. The Hebrew word for “transgression” here means far more than a trespass. It means actually a very sore and grievous falsehood. It means a trespass, an awful trespass, and an act of treachery. You must understand that when God is talking about this transgression of Saul, it is not simply a minor act. It is an act of treachery, so we need to examine and see what this act of treachery really consists of.

Hold 1 Chronicles 10 and turn back to 1 Samuel 15. Notice, beginning with verse 1, what God says. God sends Samuel to Saul: “Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel. Now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek,

and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

The interesting thing is that God very clearly sends the prophet to Saul and tells him to slay all the Amalekites. "I remember that which Amalek did to Israel when he came out of Egypt." If you want to read about what Amalek did, you can go to Deuteronomy 25 and read the latter part. The Bible tells us there that Amalek ambushed Israel. Not only did he ambush them, but he hit them in the rear and slew the feeble, the lame, and those who could not really defend themselves. God says, "I remember this."

Now is the time of justice. God says to kill all the Amalekites and all their animals. It did not matter whether it was man or woman, child, ox, suckling, or ass. Each one was to forfeit his life. Samuel was the one who anointed Saul to be king, and God says to Saul, "Here are your orders." Saul was God's king; he was responsible and accountable to obey God. However, Saul disobeyed.

Look at verse 17. Saul had spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and the best of the oxen and sheep. He did not obey God. The Bible says, "And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?" When Samuel says, "when thou wast little in thine own sight," remember that when Samuel told Saul God had chosen him to be king, Saul said, "But who am I?"

Saul said, "I'm the least in my father's house. And my father's house is the least in Judah. And our tribe, Benjamin, is the least tribe. Who am I?" When they went to crown him king, where was Saul? He was hiding among the stuff. Somebody had to find him. Samuel said, "When you were little in your own eyesight, God made you king." Now watch verse 18:

"And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of

the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal."

Notice what Saul is doing. He is blaming the people: "I've obeyed God." He said the people spared the animals, but it was not the people who spared Agag; Saul himself did that. To whom did God give the orders? To Saul. Saul was king, commander, and commander-in-chief. He was accountable and responsible. He knew God's orders, though the people did not necessarily know them.

Look at verse 19: "Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD"—that is disobedience—"but didst fly upon the spoil"—he was covetous and wanted it himself—"and didst evil in the sight of the LORD." Thus disobedience is called evil in the sight of the LORD. We may think disobedience means only that we have done something we should not have done, but there is more to it.

Skip to verse 22. After Saul said the people had spared the animals to sacrifice them, Samuel said, "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

The disobedience in verse 19 becomes more than disobedience in verse 23. It is called rebellion, and rebellion is the sin of witchcraft. Witchcraft means that you are to be put to death. Notice that the disobedience in verse 19 not only became rebellion in verse 23, but also became rejection: "because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD." Thus disobedience becomes rebellion, and rebellion becomes rejection.

We need to tie these three terms together in our minds, because whenever anyone disobeys God, he is rebelling against God and rejecting the Word of God. He is saying, "It is not for me. I am scorning it. It is worthless, useless, and contemptible. I do not want

it." It is indeed an act of treachery. When you reject the Word of God, you are also rejecting the God who gave the Word. You cannot have one without the other. When you despise one, you despise the other.

Look at verse 24. Saul admits and confesses his transgression: "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." He is saying, "I feared the people above God," which would, of course, be idolatry—a violation of the first commandment. He continues, "Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD."

"And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou." Note what Samuel said: "Thou hast rejected the word of the LORD." Whenever you reject the Word of the Lord, you are rejecting the God who gave that Word.

Go back to 1 Chronicles 10 and look at verse 13: "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD"—that is his person—"even against the word of the LORD"—that is what the LORD spoke—"which he kept not." Obviously, if you are disobedient, rebellious, and reject the word of the LORD, you are not going to keep it. The Bible says very clearly that he would die for this sin. But look at the rest of this verse.

Saul Turns to a Witch: The Folly of Rejecting God's Word

"And also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse."

God says, "Listen, Saul, what you have done is this. You've disobeyed Me. You've rebelled against Me. You've rejected My Word. And consequently, you've rejected Me." You must also remember

that God rejected Saul. Now Saul is going to turn to a witch for counsel. Hold 1 Chronicles 10 and turn back in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 28.

"Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor."

By the way, how many of you remember the television program "Bewitched"? Elizabeth Montgomery starred in it, and it tried to say that there was such a thing as a good witch, which there is not. Do you remember her mother's name? Endora—from the Witch of Endor. This is where it came from.

"And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. Wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice"—in other words, this was not her doing.

The woman was not expecting this. "And the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of

me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek. Therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day."

I want you to see several things in this passage. First, see Saul's absolute ignorance, arrogance, and total rejection of the Word of God. How can I say that? The Bible says in Exodus 22:18, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Witchcraft merits the death penalty according to the Bible. In Leviticus 19:31, God says, "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God."

Look back at verse 10 and see Saul's arrogance: "And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing." Really? God had just said, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," and Saul was saying, "I want you to call me up a man who is dead."

She said, "You know, Saul has put us out of the land. We cannot do this. You are going to endanger my life." Saul answered, "As the LORD liveth, there is nothing going to happen to you."

Really? Did he think he could nullify the law of God and the punishment of God as well? Stop and think about this. This is precisely the attitude and arrogance of modern-day politicians, elites, and rulers who think they have the power and authority to overrule God.

Look around today. Most politicians not only allow and tolerate perversions and wickedness; they subsidize them and say, "That is just your choice. Nothing is going to happen to you. We are going to protect you."

Really? You cannot protect someone from the judgment and wrath of God. You cannot do that. Saul arrogantly says, "As the LORD liveth, there shall be no punishment happen to thee for this thing."

God Can Become the Enemy of His Own People

Samuel said to Saul, “Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?” And Saul answered, “I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.”

This is a very awesome and horrifying truth: when you are disobedient, rebellious, and reject the Word of God, when you are treacherous and depart from God, God departs from you as well. Saul said, “God doesn't answer me by prophets.” Really? Why in the world should God send him a prophet? He wouldn't listen to Samuel, and Samuel was a prophet. Why would God give you any more truth when you refuse to obey the truth that He has already given you? Why should God give him a dream? What is he wanting now—something over and above and beyond the Word which Samuel spoke to him?

The truth of the matter is, if he had had fifteen prophets, he would have still rejected everything they said, because he had already rejected the Word of the Lord.

Then Samuel said, “Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?” If God has departed from you, and if God has become your enemy, you think I’m going to help you? Are you insane? Why should I align myself with you when God has departed from you and God has become your enemy?

May I tell you something that we have failed to realize? God can even become the enemy of His own people. I want to show you that in black and white. Isaiah 63 speaks of Israel, God's people: "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us"—we are talking about God's people—"and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie."

So he was their Saviour. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity

he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." God turned to be the enemy of His own people because they forsook Him and vexed Him.

Now, in 1 Chronicles 10:13, the Bible says, "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it. And inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse."

New Testament Confirmation: Rejecting Christ and His Words

Saul did not inquire of the LORD. How can I say this? In 1 Chronicles 13:3, David says, "And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul." The ark of God was there, but Saul did not inquire of it, neither did anybody else, because Saul had rejected the Word of the LORD. Since he had rejected the Word of the LORD, God rejected him. That is why the Bible says, "and inquired not of the LORD." He went to the witch of Endor, but he did not go to the ark of God.

If you desire to know God, worship Him, honor Him, glorify Him, and obey Him, then you must know His Word. It is impossible to know God, love God, or worship God apart from His Word.

In John 12:48, our Lord says, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” First, He says, “He that rejecteth me.” Do you realize that Jesus Christ is the living Word of God? John 1:1–3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” Verse 14 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.”

Then 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” Jesus Christ is the living Word of God, and the Bible is the written Word of God.

Look again at John 12:48: “He that rejecteth me”—that is the living Word—“and receiveth not my words”—that is the written Word—“hath one that judgeth him.” What is it? “The word that I have spoken,” the Bible, “the same shall judge him in the last day.” You cannot separate God from His Word. When you despise one, you despise the other. Our Lord is the living Word, and the Bible is the written Word.

In Luke chapter 10, verse 16, our Lord says to His disciples, “He that heareth you heareth me.” Those whom our Lord sends, as they preach and teach His words, He says, “If they hear you, they hear Me.” But watch: “and he that despiseth you”—that is, you who are preaching His Word—“despiseth me. And he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.” You cannot say, “Well, I love the Lord, but I don't like His Bible. I don't love His Word.” No, no, no. You cannot say, “Well, I love the Bible, but I don't love the Lord Jesus Christ.” No, you cannot separate them. The authority is not in the preacher himself, but in the Lord whose words he preaches.

If you despise the one, you despise the other. If you love the one, you love the other. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, beginning with verse 3, we are dealing with God's commandments, God's law. This passage concerns sanctification and sexual purity. Years ago, I preached a series of eight messages on this passage on sanctification and sexual purity. Look at verse 3: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.”

Do not violate the Seventh Commandment. Do not violate the Eighth Commandment. Do not violate the Tenth Commandment. In other words, he is talking about his law. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel”—that is, his body—“in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.” We are not to live as the unsaved. “That no man go beyond and defraud his

brother in any matter”—or the matter, that would be fornication or adultery—“because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.” If you despise His law, if you despise His Word, you are despising God at the same time.

You cannot separate God from His Word. Luke 16 is a very familiar passage. Lazarus, the beggar, was laid at the rich man's gate. The rich man fared sumptuously every day, while the dogs came and licked Lazarus's sores. Lazarus died and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments. He asked Abraham, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Abraham answered that this would not happen, because there was a great gulf fixed between them: those there could not come to them, and those there could not go there.

The Rich Man and Lazarus: Sufficiency of Scripture

The rich man then said, "I've got five brethren. And if you're not going to send Lazarus to cool my tongue, send him to warn my five brethren, lest they come to this place of torment." He continued, "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment."

Abraham saith unto him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." The rich man replied, "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Abraham answered, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Notice what Abraham said. When the rich man asked for someone specially to go see his brethren, Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets."

They have the Word of God. Let them hear the Word of God. “No, no, no,” he said, “Father, but if one went to them from the dead, they would repent.” Really? Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Where

are people repenting today? You see what I'm saying? Again, he said, "No, if they will not hear Moses or the prophets, they will not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

When you reject the Word of God, you also reject the God of the Word. When you disbelieve the Word of God, you also disbelieve the God of the Word. It is just that simple. You cannot maintain one attitude toward God and a different attitude toward His Word. When you despise one, you despise the other.

Application: Love for God Demonstrated by Love for His Word

Our love for the Lord is demonstrated by our love for His Word and our obedience to His Word. When someone tells me, "I love the Lord," yet his life is in wicked rebellion against God, no, that is not true. What does 1 John 2:4 say? "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." May I remind you of 1 John 5:3? "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

The proof that we love God is that we love His Word and obey His Word. We bring our lives into conformity to His Word. You cannot separate God from His Word. Whoever sins against the Word of God sins against God. When you despise the Word, you despise the God who gave the Word. If you love the Lord, you will love His Word and do everything you can to bring your life into obedience to that Word.

We are not perfect, but one thing is sure: we will be working, praying, and seeking grace to become more and more obedient if we genuinely love the Lord. Because when you despise His Word, you despise Him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. Help us to see how valuable, how priceless, Your Word really is.

May we understand it, know it, read it, study it, obey it, and apply it, so that we may honor the God who gave it. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 27

Set Your Heart

October 18, 2020

Introduction: The Command to Set Your Heart

I want you to open your Bibles, if you would please, to 1 Chronicles chapter 22. So you have 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and then 1 and 2 Chronicles. So we're in 1 Chronicles chapter 22, and we're going to be looking at verse 19. We will come back and show you the context in just a few moments. The title of the message is, "Set Your Heart." Set Your Heart.

You'll see the command that David actually gave to the people of Israel. He said in verse 19, "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Arise, therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy vessels of God into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord."

So I could begin today by asking this simple question: Is your heart set? And then we could also ask, what does it mean to have a set heart and how do I accomplish the task? We understand such simple directions as "set the clock." We comprehend the implication

of "setting your sights." We grasp the significance of a "set time" or "set season." And everyone has agreed on "set boundaries." When we have to endeavor to convince someone of some truth, and they just simply will not listen or will not hear, we normally say something, "Well, his mind is made up" or "his mind is set."

And certainly that is true. Oftentimes, when one individual will talk constantly and consistently just on one subject, we end up saying, "Well, he's fixated on that subject." And each one of us, even as children, use the old adage, "Ready, set, go." And of course, that was normally in a race. And when the racers are set, they are about to take off and supposed to be ready to run. Interestingly, occasionally some think they are set, and they really are not, because they end up stumbling over their own feet and going face down into the dirt. So it's important not only to really be set, but to make sure that your set is true and accurate as well.

Now, I want you to hold 1 Chronicles chapter 22, and I want you to turn to Colossians chapter 3, and I want you to mark this passage, because we're going to come back to this passage before we close. So if you look in the book of Colossians—Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians—chapter three, verses one and two, you're going to see this pesky word again: "set." Watch it.

The Bible says, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, and not on things of the earth." How in the world are we going to set our affection on things above? How are we going to set our hearts? When you look back in 1 Chronicles chapter 22 and verse 19, David reveals a very important truth. That truth exposes a vital reason why we never really accomplish things as Christians or serve the Lord Jesus Christ as we should: we are absolutely horribly inconsistent.

The Problem of Inconsistency in Christians

Would you keep an alarm clock that you set, but the alarm never went off? Would you keep a scope on your rifle when you had it set, but every time you shot and aimed, you missed? Obviously, you would not keep either one. You would discard them as useless and

worthless, unstable, undependable, and inconsistent. You do not want anything around that certainly would not work.

I believe this is one of the problems David has exposed: we have never really set our hearts. Once we understand this, we can understand why most people are double-minded and unstable. That is why the Bible says in James 1 and verse 8 that a double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways.

When you look at the average professing Christian, he will be faithful for a season and then unfaithful for a season. He will tithe for a while and then stop tithing, or not tithe at all. He will pray for a while and then not pray for a while. He will read and study hard for a certain period, then suddenly quit reading and studying. He will attend church faithfully and then become unfaithful for seemingly no reason. It seems that the only thing most professing Christians are consistent in is being inconsistent.

Context: David's Preparation and Solomon's Temple

In the context of our passage, the Bible is talking about the building of the temple by Solomon. David had made preparations for the temple and provided materials in abundance, but he was not allowed to build it because he was a man of war and had shed much blood. In 1 Chronicles 22:8, the Bible says, “But the word of the Lord came to me saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars. Thou shalt not build a house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.”

David was prohibited from building the temple. However, God promised David a son and specified that it was to be Solomon. Solomon was to be a man of peace and was to build the temple of the Lord. In verse 9, God says, “Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest. And I will give him rest from all of his enemies round about. For his name shall be Solomon. And I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build a house for my name and he shall be my son and I will be his father and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.”

We should also see in this passage the greater than Solomon, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. Solomon was indeed a picture and a

type of the Lord Jesus Christ, but Solomon was going to build the temple.

In 1 Chronicles 22:15, David tells them about the great work that was needed: “Moreover, there are workmen with thee in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work, of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron. There is no number. Arise therefore, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee.” David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon, his son, saying, “Is not the Lord your God with you? And hath he not given you rest on every side? For he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand, and the land is subdued before the Lord and before his people.”

David was encouraging all to help Solomon build this house. Even with all the help—the princes, the workmen, the hewers of stone, the masons, and the cunning men of every craft to make all of the instruments—the work remained great.

It took an entire host to build the temple, and the temple itself was in building for seven years. Now, it was a phenomenal project. It was something that could not be accomplished without what you and I would call dedication, determination, diligence, and discipline. You could not build that temple haphazardly. So the people then were admonished in verse 19 by David.

“Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.” And then he said, “Arise, therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy vessels of God into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord.” So the setting of a heart was absolutely necessary prior to the beginning of the construction of the temple. It was something that had to be done because of all of the complications, of all the problems that may arise in building that temple. Their heart had to be set.

Counting the Cost: Luke 14 and the Tower Builder

David had commanded the people to set their hearts, and this gives us a parallel truth. Clearly, in Luke chapter 14, verse 26, our Lord says, “If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and

wife and children and brethren or sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

Clearly in verse 26, God is not commanding us to hate our father and our mother or our wives or our brethren or our sisters. This is a verse of comparison. We should love the Lord Jesus Christ. We should love our Heavenly Father with so much and so far a greater love that the love that we have toward our parents and toward our wives and husbands and children and brethren and sisters would be seemingly hate by comparison. So obviously he is saying there is going to be a great cost in following him and in serving him.

Oftentimes, when people are real, genuine Christians, their own family turns against them. That is why Christ said, "Whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." There is a cost in following Christ. He explains this in verse 28: "For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he hath sufficient to finish it, lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold him begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish."

No one is going to start building a $150,000 house if he has only twenty dollars in his pocket or a thousand dollars in the bank—unless, of course, he is a politician who can obtain an interest-free, no-payback loan. But Christ's point is that you cannot build a house unless you have the funds to complete it. If you begin building and cannot finish, people will mock you.

Alice and I have seen numerous unfinished houses. One not far from where we live finally fell down. We also passed another one in our travels where a man was building a castle. It had walls and a tower, but evidently he either ran out of money or died; it was never finished. Our Lord says that you have to count the cost.

Then, in verse 31, He says, "Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage and desireth conditions of peace." Then He

says again, “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

He is simply saying that you need to count the cost. That is equivalent to setting the heart. When you set your heart, you have already counted the cost. You are saying, “Nothing is going to deter me. Nothing is going to thwart me. Nothing is going to stop me.” You understand that there will be hindrances and problems, but your heart is set, and you are going to finish the project.

The Meaning of 'Set' and Individual Responsibility

The Hebrew word for “set” in 1 Chronicles 22:19 is nathan. It literally means to dedicate, consecrate, appoint, give, put, set, assign, and designate. So when He says, “Set your heart,” He is saying, dedicate your heart, consecrate your heart, appoint your heart, set your heart, assign your heart, and designate your heart.

It was absolutely necessary for the Israelites to set their hearts before the building of the temple. They had to consecrate and dedicate themselves to this project because it was so vast and magnificent. When the temple came together, there was not even the sound of a hammer, because everything was pre-cut and pre-made and then fit together as it should be.

Setting your heart involves individual responsibility. If you are unwilling to set your heart, you will never function as one dedicated to the Lord or to the work of the Lord.

Do you think that building the temple was a greater work than worshiping the one true and living God? Do you think that working on the building for seven years was a greater work than serving the Lord Jesus Christ consistently and constantly? Do you think that you do not need to set your heart in order to worship God and offer Him the sacrifices He demands?

I must remind you of something. I do not doubt that the temple was indeed exquisitely beautiful. It was a magnificent piece of workmanship. You can read about it in the Bible. Everything was covered with gold. There were precious stones, precious jewels. I mean, it was mind-boggling. But as beautiful and as magnificent as the temple was, listen carefully, it was nothing but a shadow. It was

nothing but an emblem. It was nothing but a type. It was nothing but a pattern.

Old Testament Shadows and the True Sanctuary

The Bible says, "Now the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: We have a high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man." So the sanctuary in the heaven is the true sanctuary. The Lord pitched it, not man.

"For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices. Wherefore, it is of 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." Now watch verse five: "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."

In this one verse, everything is referred to as an example, a shadow of heavenly things, and a pattern. When ladies make dresses, they buy a pattern. Women do not take that pattern and pin it on themselves and say, "Look at my wonderful dress." The pattern is simply a pattern. It is a type, an emblem, a shadow, a picture. You put the pattern on the material, cut the material out, and sew the material together. The material is the real dress, not the pattern. Now, look in Hebrews 10 and verse 1. Here it is again.

"For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect." Let me quote one more passage. In Colossians 2:16–17, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of a holy day or of a new moon or the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come. But the body is Christ."

Everything in the Old Testament was nothing more than a shadow. The sacrifices were shadows as well. Hebrews 10:4 says, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." When Christ came into the world, He said, "Sacrifice and

offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou shalt have no pleasure."

In other words, those animals were merely types. They could not please our Heavenly Father. Verse 7 says, "Then said I, Lo, I come in the volume of this book, it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." He also said, "Sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings, and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law. Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

Everything in the Old Testament—whether the tabernacle, the temple, the sacrifice, the holy days, or the feast days—was a type and a shadow. Obviously, most professing Christians today believe that worshiping and serving the Lord Jesus Christ is effortless, painless, and nothing more than showing up at church every now and then. Most professing Christians never have a set heart as they did in the Old Testament. We simply cruise along: the sun is shining, the wind is blowing in our hair, and all is well.

May I point out that this is exactly why the Church of Jesus Christ today has lost its power, influence, and authority? This is why Christians are dismissed, denigrated, and despised.

Negative Examples: Hearts Set on Wrong Things

Professing Christians who do not have a set heart are no better than Pharaoh. You say, “How can you say that? How can you compare a professing Christian to a reprobate?” Look in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 7, verse 23: “And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. Neither did he set his heart to this also.” What did he not set his heart to? The turning of the river into blood.

He did not set his heart to the miracle when Moses threw down his staff and it became a serpent. The magicians of Pharaoh threw down their staffs, and they became serpents as well, but the serpent of Moses turned and consumed the serpents, or staffs, of those magicians. Pharaoh paid no attention to it. In other words, it was nothing to Pharaoh. He did not set his heart on the work of God or the Word of God. He refused to listen. He himself said, “Who is the

Lord God that I should obey Him? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

When you do not have a set heart, you are not regarding that which God says, that which God demands, and that which God does. Most Christians, unhappily, are no better off than non-believers in the sense that they do not set their heart toward God, toward His Word, and toward His work.

However, their hearts are set on something. Their hearts are set on their hobbies and pastimes, their sins and their iniquities. Look in your Bibles to Hosea chapter 4, beginning in verse 6. God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." That is certainly true. Most people, most Christians, have no knowledge at all of Bible doctrine and no knowledge of all the Word of God. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Then He says, "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee. Thou hast not set thy heart to follow me in my word, thou reject me, I'll also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me, seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

There is the lex talionis, the law of retribution, where God makes the punishment fit the crime. We forget His will, which is His law, and He forgets our children, which are an expression of our will. "As they were increased, what did they do? They sinned against Me. Therefore will I change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of My people, and they set their heart on iniquity." They set their heart on iniquity. "And there shall be like people, like priests, and I will punish them for their ways and reward them for their doings." God says, "I know you set your heart, but it's not on Me. You set your heart on your iniquity." Therefore, God says, "I'm going to punish you."

Multitudes of people are dedicated to their own sins, their own pleasures, and their own desires. They love them, serve them, pamper them, worship them, and are given over to them with a set heart. Our Lord made this very clear in Luke chapter 12 and verse 34: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Wherever your treasure is, that is exactly where your heart is going to be. People set their hearts upon many things, but most usually

upon success, prosperity, riches, or popularity. Their hearts are set upon these things because these are what they treasure.

Consider first a negative example. Psalm 62:10 says, “Trust not in oppression and become not vain in robbery. If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.” We are not to trust in oppression or oppress others. That is wicked, wrong, and a violation of God’s law. We are not to become vain in robbery, because theft also violates God’s law. But there is a possibility of having riches without being wicked or acquiring them in a wicked way. Therefore, if riches do increase, do not set your heart upon them. If you do indeed get rich, do not regard your riches as the ultimate end. Do not trust in your wealth. Do not become a miser or a hoarder. Do not think that you no longer need anyone or anything else because you have wealth, riches, and money. Do not make your riches the object of your heart, your confidence, or your devotion.

You can do as you please. Let me give you an illustration that the older folks would understand. What he is saying is, do not become a Scrooge McDuck. You remember Uncle Scrooge? When he had all that gold and silver, he would dive into it, wash it, and do all that kind of thing. His god was his money. His wealth was his desire. That is what he set his heart upon.

The Bible says in Proverbs 11:4, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivereth from death." Proverbs 23:3 says, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings and fly away as an eagle toward heaven." Anybody who has ever had money understands how quickly it can indeed fly away. It can be gone in a heartbeat.

God says, do not trust in your riches. Zechariah 1:18 says, "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath, but the whole land shall be devoured by fire, the fire of his jealousy, for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land." Your riches are not going to deliver you in the day of wrath.

You look around today and find many wicked people who are exceedingly wealthy. The Puritans used to have a saying: God oftentimes curses his enemies with wealth because they trust in their

wealth instead of him. You look at those who have wealth today, and they actually believe that they are God, that they can change culture, change the world, change His law, and change anything because they are multi-billionaires. But the truth is that God says, if riches increase, whether legally or illegally, do not set your heart upon them. A lot of people do set their hearts upon their riches.

Now, let me give you a couple of positives. The first is found in Daniel chapter 6 and verse 14.

Positive Examples: King Darius and Daniel

The presidents had gotten together, with the exception of Daniel, and asked the king to pass a law that no one could ask any petition of any god or king for thirty days except the king. Whoever did so was to be thrown into the den of lions. When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went in and prayed three times a day, as he did aforetime. The presidents caught Daniel praying, brought him before the king, and said, “O king, this man is violating your law. He is now to be thrown into the den of lions.”

Look, if you would please, at Daniel 6:14: “Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him. And he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.” Note what King Darius did: he set his heart on Daniel to deliver him.

The king understood that he had been manipulated and used, but too late. He was going to do everything he could to deliver Daniel and keep him out of the den of lions. He probably argued with these men, telling them that Daniel was indeed a loyal subject and an excellent ruler. He probably emphasized that they had wrested the decree from him fraudulently, because they said all the presidents had asked, while Daniel was the chief. Daniel had not concurred with that.

So it was fraud to begin with, and it was a malicious act. But the law of the Medes and the Persians could not be changed, and Daniel was to be thrown in the den of lions. When Daniel was thrown in the den of lions, he passed the night in fasting and prayer. Isn't that

amazing? But he had set his heart. How many of us have ever passed the night in fasting and prayer?

When morning came, the king rushed to the lions' den. The Bible says he cried with a lamentable voice, "O Daniel, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the mouths of the lions?" Daniel answered, "O King, live forever. My God has sent his angel and shut the mouths of the lions." Here was a man who had set his heart. He worked diligently and was dedicated. He did everything within his power to deliver Daniel. He could not deliver him, but God certainly did so.

When the king was trying to reason with these wicked men, he found out they were unreasonable. Dr. Bob Jones Sr. used to have a saying: "Good men are always reasonable." That is true, but wicked men are unreasonable.

There was a specific prayer request that the Apostle Paul asked of the Thessalonians. In 2 Thessalonians 3, verses 1 and 2, Paul said, "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you." In other words, pray that the preaching of the Word of God will have freedom and move freely. But there was a second request: "And that we be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, for all men have not the faith." Paul asked them to pray that they would be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. Wicked men are always unreasonable. The king could not reason with these wicked presidents because they were jealous of Daniel. He had spent his time trying to get Daniel free. He failed, but God certainly did not fail.

Now consider the second illustration in Daniel chapter 10. In verse 12, the angel says unto Daniel, "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel.

“For from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and didst chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.” Note what Daniel did. He said, “from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand.” Here were dreams and prophecies that came to Daniel,

but he did not know or understand them, and he really wanted to understand them. How did Daniel set his heart?

Go back to verse 2: “In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.” For three weeks, Daniel fasted.

There are actually three types of fasting mentioned in the Bible. The first is what we call an absolute fast, when a person does without food and water. Usually, the maximum length is three days. If you go three days without water, you are endangering your health and your life. The only time people went beyond three days without food and water was at God’s sovereign direction. Moses did, and Elijah did, but God told them to do so and sustained them. That is an absolute fast.

A normal fast is when you do without food but have a beverage: you drink water, juice, or something else, but you are fasting. You can do without food for up to forty days without harming your body. Beyond forty days, there is harm. Our Lord fasted forty days in the wilderness, as recorded in Matthew chapter 4.

Then there is the partial fast that we read about here. Daniel said, “I ate no pleasant bread.” He did not have bread, cake, or pie. He said, “neither flesh nor wine came into my mouth”: he did not eat meat or drink wine. What did he eat? Pulse. That was probably what he ate then, because it was what he had eaten earlier when the king was trying to feed him all this other food. Daniel and his companions said, “No, we’ll just eat pulse and drink water.” So for three weeks he ate only pulse.

The Bible says that Daniel was in mourning for three full weeks. How was he mourning? He was fasting and praying. Why was he fasting and praying? Because he had set his heart to understand. Most of us have never fasted for three weeks, prayed for three weeks, or set our hearts. There has never been anything we wanted more than our own wills and pleasures, enough to give up food, sleep, and rest for three weeks to pray and seek God's face.

Can you imagine what would happen in this land if real, genuine Christians fasted and prayed for three weeks that God would give us

repentance and turn us? We do not do that because we have not set our hearts. It is necessary to have a set heart in order to understand the things of God. Daniel wanted to understand; therefore, he set his heart, fasted, and prayed.

How to Know if Your Heart is Set

In Ezekiel 40, we read: "And he said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I show thee, for to the intent that I might show them unto thee thou art brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel." Ezekiel was told to observe, hear, and set his heart on this truth. He was to grasp and understand it so that he might deliver it to other people. You will not be able to deliver or communicate truth unless your heart is set upon the truth.

How do I know whether my heart is set? How can I discern whether I have a set heart? A very clear answer is given in the words of our Lord in Luke 12:34: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Ask yourself: Who do I love? Who is first and foremost in my mind? What do I prefer more than anything else in the world? What do I think about more than anything else? Whom would I rather be with? With whom would I rather fellowship and commune than anyone else in the world?

David said in Psalm 5:3, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct my prayer unto thee and look up." Then David said in Psalm 55:17, "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and thou shalt hear my voice."

Three times a day he prayed: evening, morning, and at noon. He said, “I will cry aloud and thou shalt hear my voice.” Then David said in Psalm 73 and verse 25, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth I desire more than Thee.” What was he saying? “Lord, I’d rather commune with Thee, fellowship with Thee, and be with Thee than anyone on the face of the earth.” Then he said in Psalm 137, verse 6, “If I do not remember Thee, let my tongue cleave unto the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem over my chief joy.” If I do not put You first, Lord, if I do not put Your people

and Your work first, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. David really valued fellowship and communion with God more than anything.

The Command to Set Affections Above (Colossians 3:1-2)

The truth of the matter is that we do not value this because our hearts are not set. The first answer is where our Lord said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart be also." In Colossians chapter 3, verse 1, we read: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, and not on things of the earth." Verse 1 says, "Seek those things which are above." How do you seek those things which are above? By setting your affection on things above, and not on things of the earth.

So we have to ask this question: Where in the world are our affections? Are they upon Christ, truth, His Word, His kingdom, or His grace? Or are you simply bound to this earth, looking at earthly things? Here is a good illustration. Are you more like a hog that eats from the ground and never lifts his head toward heaven? Watch a hog eat sometime. It never lifts its head.

That is the way most people are. They take everything God has given them and are never, ever thankful, grateful, or appreciative.

Look again closely at verse 2: "Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth." This is a command. It is a present active imperative in the Greek language. The difference between asking and a command is simple. I could say to Francis, "Would you please shut the door?" That is asking him. But if I said, "Francis, shut the door," that is a command. I am not asking; I am commanding.

This is an imperative in the Greek; it is a command. God is not asking you to set your affections on things above. He is commanding you to do so. It is present, which means it is something you are now doing and continuing to do. Actually, what He is saying is, "I command you to continually be setting your affection on things above." It is active, which means you are active in it and participating in it. You are the one doing it. When you look at a

present active imperative, it means that you are presently and continually setting your heart, actively engaged in it, and obeying the command God has given.

Here is the command: “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Now, you may say, “But I have to make a living. I have to work. I have a multitude of tasks to do.” That is true. Everyone has to work and has a multitude of tasks to do. Each of us has to make a living, interact, and accomplish many tasks, but we can do so with our affections still set on things above.

Whatever we do, we can do with an eye to God’s honor and glory and in obedience to Him, placing our allegiance under His authority. When we work, we work according to His Word and in a way pleasing to Him. The simple answer is 1 Corinthians 10:31: “Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Yes, I have to eat, but I can eat to God’s honor and glory.

I can thank Him not only for the food, but also ask His blessing upon it for my body, giving me energy to serve and obey Him and glorify Him. Whatever I am doing, I can do it with my heart and affections set on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Usually, when one man talks about one subject all the time, we say he is fixated on it. Did you know that a set heart is a fixed heart? David said it like this in Psalm 57:7: "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise."

I’m not going to change. My heart is fixed. My heart is set. I’m not going to change. He said it again in Psalm 108 and verse 1: “O God, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise, even my glory.” So a set heart is equal to a fixed heart, and a fixed heart is equal to a set heart. The reason we are so inconsistent in our lives is because we do not set our hearts.

We let everything disrupt us. We let everything disturb us. We let everything get under our skin. We let everything rattle us. Instead, we should say, “I know I’m going to encounter difficulties. I know I’m going to have problems. But I’m going to handle those difficulties. I’m going to handle those problems in a biblical manner. I’m going to have my affections set on things above. I’m going to

honor the Lord. I'm going to do what's right. And I'm going to trust Him to work it out."

David said, "Set your hearts." You cannot do this work without a set heart. You cannot serve God without a set heart. You cannot worship Him without a set heart. You cannot study or accomplish anything without a set heart. My mind is made up: I'm going to do this.

Application: The Danger of an Unset Heart (Psalm 78)

I want you to turn in your Bibles to Psalm 78 because I'm going to make one application, and I want you to see this application in light of this passage. We are talking about a set heart. Clearly, we need our hearts set. This is my first application; in fact, it is the only application today. I believe that one of the most important messages that I've ever preached in my fifty-six or fifty-seven years of preaching has been the message "Keeping the Heart" from Proverbs 4 and verse 23. I preached that message to so many people, and I preached it myself thousands and thousands of times. I believe that is one of the most important messages that I've ever preached. I believe the one I'm preaching right now is equally important. You may ask why I think this message is as important as the one on keeping the heart. The answer is very clear.

It does you no good to know the truth, hear the truth, or hold the truth unless your heart is set for the truth. Proverbs 23 and verse 23 says it like this: "Buy the truth, and sell it not." Buy the truth. He does not mention the cost; he does not care about the cost. Whatever the cost, buy the truth. Then he says, "and sell it not." No matter what the offer is, no matter how great the offer, do not sell it. This is a buy-and-never-sell proposition: buy the truth and sell it not.

Let me show you why I believe this is so important. Look in Psalm 78, beginning with verse one. Note how God commands us to listen: "Give ear, O my people, to my law. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth," that is, bend your head a little closer so you can hear very well. "I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known and our fathers have told us." We know these things because we have been told them, but that does not mean our hearts are set on them.

"We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord and His strength and His wonderful works that He had done. For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children." Why? "That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, and should arise and declare them their children."

We are talking about grandchildren and great-grandchildren down the line. Why should we keep declaring these things? "That they might set their hope in God. And not forget the works of the Lord, but keep his commandments." That is a good reason. But watch this: "And might not be as their fathers." God says, I want you to hear, listen, hold, teach, and communicate, so that you might not be like their fathers: "a stubborn and rebellious generation. A generation that set not their heart aright and whose spirit was not steadfast with God." When you do not have a set heart, you cannot be steadfast with the Lord.

These people had heard the truth and were to pass it down so their children and grandchildren might set their hope in God, not forget His works, and keep His commandments. But He warned them not to be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation who set their heart not aright and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.

What are the consequences of not having a set heart? When you are not steadfast with God because you lack a set heart, look in verse nine: "The children of Ephraim being armed and carrying bows turned back in the day of battle, they kept not the covenant of God and they refused to walk in His law and forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them."

When your heart is not set, ultimately you will turn back when the going gets tough. When you are facing danger and are afraid and not trusting in God, you will turn back. Why? They kept not the covenant of God, forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them, and refused to walk in His law. If you have bought the truth but do not set your heart, you will end up selling the truth. You will compromise, give in, give up, quit, and turn back.

The only way we can serve God is with a set heart. Each one of us will face difficulties, our own problems, and interactions with people we do not want to have. We will be hurt and may end up hurting someone else. But if your heart is set, you will say, "Nothing is going to stop me from being obedient to God and serving Him. My heart is set. Regardless of the difficulties, regardless of what happens, I will serve Him."

Conclusion: A Call to Steadfastness

I have bought the truth, and I refuse to sell it. I will not turn back in the day of battle. I will not forget the covenant or the works of God. I will keep His commandments. Why? My heart is set. We must have a set heart if we are going to honor God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. Help us understand the absolute need to be steadfast and to have a set heart. We will never buy the truth, hold it, and keep it without a set heart. We will never give Thee the worship, praise, and obedience that Thou dost deserve without a set heart. May we determine by Your grace, power, and mercies that we will serve Thee no matter what. Enable and empower us to set our affection on things above and not on things below, and to seek those things from above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of the Father. We ask for Your grace in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER 28

God Does Not Owe You Anything

January 10, 2017

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 136:1-26 (KJV)

Introduction to Psalm 136 and God's Mercy

Psalm 136. There's only 26 verses there, so we're going to read all of them. The title of the message is, "God Does Not Owe You Anything."

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. O give thanks unto the God of gods, for his mercy endureth forever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his mercy endureth forever. To him who alone doeth great wonders, for his mercy endureth forever. To him that by wisdom made the heavens, for his mercy endureth forever. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters, for his mercy endureth forever. To him that made great lights, for his mercy endureth forever. The sun to rule by day, for his mercy endureth forever. The moon and the stars to rule by night, for his mercy endureth forever. To him that smote Egypt in their

> firstborn, for his mercy endureth forever. And brought out Israel from among them, for his mercy endureth forever, with a strong hand, with a stretched out arm, for his mercy endureth forever. To him which divided the Red Sea into parts, for his mercy endureth forever, and made Israel to pass through the midst of it, for his mercy endureth forever.
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> "But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, for his mercy endureth forever. To him which led his people through the wilderness, for his mercy endureth forever. To him which smote great kings, for his mercy endureth forever, and slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth forever, Sihon king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth forever, and Og the king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth forever, and gave their land for an heritage, for his mercy endureth forever, even an heritage unto Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth forever, who remembered us in our lowest state, for his mercy endureth forever. And hath redeemed us from our enemies, for his mercy endureth forever. Who giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth forever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven, for his mercy endureth forever."
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> Obviously I think you can tell by this passage that God is indeed merciful. In fact the scripture says repeatedly that his mercy endures forever.

This psalm is wonderful, emphasizing the mercies of God in every verse. Evidently, although it has no title or name ascribed to it, it was written by David. The Bible tells us in 1 Chronicles 16:41–43, “And with them Heman, and Jeduthun, and the rest were chosen, who were expressed by name, to give thanks unto the Lord, because his mercy endureth forever. And with them Heman, and Jeduthun, with trumpets and cymbals, for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God, the sons of Jeduthun were porters. And all the people departed every man to his house, and David returned to bless his own house.” So David evidently wrote this psalm, and it was a psalm to praise the Lord for His infinite mercy.

Solomon his son used this same truth in dedicating the Temple. In 2 Chronicles 7:3 the Bible says, “And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the

house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, his mercy endureth forever." Then, in verse 6: "And the priests waited on their offices, the Levites also with instruments of music of the Lord, which David the king had made to praise the Lord, because his mercy endureth forever."

The Multitude of God's Mercies

These verses are spread throughout all of Scripture. King Jehoshaphat applied the mercies of God to warfare. He consulted with the people and appointed singers to go before the army, singing praises to the Lord. In 2 Chronicles 20:21 the Bible says, "And when he, that is Jehoshaphat, had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, that should praise the beauty of his holiness, as they went out before the army, to say, Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever." I can see that on the battlefield: a bunch of musicians going out first, praising the Lord and saying, "His mercy endureth forever." There are so many verses in the Bible that refer to God's mercies that it would be impossible to quote them all in one message. David, confessing his sins in Psalm 51:1, said, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to thy lovingkindness, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."

David wanted God's mercies as well. The truth is, His mercies are indeed multitudinous. There is absolutely no way that any of us could name all of God's mercies, or even name all of God's mercies to ourselves. Most of the time, we take them for granted and do not even think of them. But God is specifically referred to as the Father of mercies in 2 Corinthians 1:3. The Apostle Paul said, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." So anytime anyone receives any mercies, God is the originator and the source. There are no mercies except originally and initially from Him.

The truth of God's mercies is prominent not only in the Old Testament but in the New Testament as well. Let me give you two verses in the Old Testament. The first is Exodus 34:6, where Moses wanted to see the glory of God: "And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,

long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth." Part of God's glory is indeed His mercy.

Then Deuteronomy 4:31 says, "For the Lord our God is a merciful God. He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of our fathers which he sware unto them."

Psalm 136 has been one of my favorite psalms for a long time. Every time I read it, I envision a pastor with a clear, distinct, deep voice reading the first part of each verse, with a choir standing behind him finishing the verse in unison: "For his mercy endureth forever." One would say, "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good," and then the choir would say, "For his mercy endureth forever." Every verse in Psalm 136 has that refrain. Have you ever paused and contemplated the mercies of God in your daily life?

Taking Mercies for Granted

Have you ever paused just to think how God has provided for you, protected you, preserved you, and been gracious to you in His providence?

Years ago, we had a man in our church by the name of Wayne Coulter. He was an older man who liked to play golf. I went with him several times—not that I cared anything about golf, but I appreciated the fellowship and the exercise as I walked with him. One day, he was driving us to the golf course in Folkston, Georgia. Right before you get there, you have to cross a railroad track. At that particular time, there were no arms. He pulled up to the track and slowed down, though the car was still rolling just a little. I saw Wayne look to the left, and immediately I looked to the right.

What I saw was a train barreling toward us. Somehow, very calmly, I said, "You better woe or go." Thankfully, all he heard was "woe." He slammed on the brakes, and the train went right by. I just sat there while it passed. When we could go, I looked at Brother Coulter and said, "What do you say we just sit here for a few minutes and thank God?" He said, "I believe that would be appropriate."

All of a sudden, I think he had lost his taste for golf at that particular time as well. I could multiply illustrations from my life of how God has been merciful to me. I stand amazed at the mercies

God has given me through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I know that I am a sinner, that I have sinned, and that the penalty and wages of sin happen to be death. As a sinner, I do not deserve anything but judgment. Yet God, in His grace and mercy, has not only saved me but called me into the ministry. He has given me the opportunity to preach and teach His Word, along with a wonderful wife, family, and friends. Just stop and think how gracious God has been unto you.

When you begin to read a passage like Psalm 113:3, where the Scripture says, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" suppose God took His divine pen and began to scribble down every one of our iniquities. If God marked them all against us, who could stand? When you stop and think about this, the question that comes to your mind is, if God marked down all of these sins and iniquities against us, how many times in your life should God have rightly, legitimately, lawfully, and justly killed you? And yet He did not. He is a merciful God.

I cannot ever read this passage or deal with this subject without thinking of Lamentations 3:22-23. I should have adopted those verses as my life verses because I try to quote them every day, and I quote them so often. Jeremiah wrote, "It is the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because thy compassions they fail not, they are new every morning, great is thy faithfulness." Have you ever stopped to think about this? God not only gives us sleep and rest during the night; He also gives us mercies and compassions that are renewed every morning. The only reason we did not die during the night is because of God's mercies and God's compassion. When you awaken every morning, the first thing you ought to do is thank Him for allowing you to awaken.

A lot of people go to sleep and never wake up. My mother went to sleep and never woke up. John Battelle went to sleep one night with no problems and never woke up. John Cain, who was just praying for his family, went to sleep on Saturday and never woke up. If you are able to open your eyes, you ought to thank God that you are still alive. The only reason you are still alive is because of His mercies and His compassions. Our problem is that so often we have been blessed with God's mercies that we take them for granted. We assume that they will always be there.

Hold Psalm 136, but look in your Bibles to Luke chapter 17. Luke 17 and verse 11. Let me show you where we are basically today in our lives. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—the third book in the New Testament—Luke 17. Notice verse 11. The Bible says, "And it came to pass as he went to Jerusalem that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee."

"And as he entered into a certain village there met him ten men that were lepers which stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said to them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks."

"For he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that return to give glory to God save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise and go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole."

Evidently the other nine were Israelites. This one was a Samaritan whom our Lord designated as a stranger, that is, as a foreigner, as an alien. He was the only one who genuinely appreciated the mercies of God. Think about how many times you have been sick and God has healed you, or about those who have been sick seemingly all their lives and yet God has kept them alive. It is absolutely astounding when you pause to think of the mercies of God.

We have become so accustomed to God's mercies that we assume they will always be there. Oftentimes we develop an attitude that God owes us. We take the lesser mercies of God for granted. We may recognize the greater mercies, but overlook the lesser ones. What do I mean by the lesser mercies?

God's Mercies to All Creation

Psalm 145:9 says, "The Lord is good to all and his tender mercies are over all his works." The Lord is good to all. Psalm 136:25 says, "Who giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth forever." Psalm 145:15–16 says, "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them

their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

Notice the statements, "the eyes of all wait upon thee" and "thou givest them their meat in due season." What does it mean that "the eyes of all wait upon thee"? If you have a puppy or a dog and feed him often from your hand, sometimes he will simply sit there and look, waiting and expecting something from your hand. That is exactly what it means: "the eyes of all wait upon thee." God has fed us so often that we simply wait for Him to hand it to us. Psalm 147:9 says, "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry."

The problem is that, even as children, we look to Mom and Dad. Mom and Daddy will feed us. Mom and Daddy will clothe us. Mom and Daddy will buy things for us. Yet we never stop to think: Where does Mother and Dad receive their breath? Where do they receive their ability? Where do they receive their intellect? Where do they receive all of their blessings? We never even stop to think about that. So many times today, after we have eaten so much and enjoyed so much, most of the time we do not ever think about thanking God for our food.

The Bible says in Acts 14:17, "Nevertheless, God left not himself without witness in that he did good and he gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." God, in His providence, does indeed supply all of our needs. Stop and think about this.

The most wicked and the most vile sinner, even the worst in this world, all taste of God's mercy. Even those wicked, vile individuals who fight against God and hate God eat at His table of mercy, because it is God who gives them life. It is God who gives them the ability to eat. It is God who gives them the ability to even fight, the strength. All God has to do is withhold or restrain their breath, and they just simply die. So even the wicked get the crumbs of God's mercies.

That's why the Bible said earlier, "The Lord is good to all." The dew that drops upon the flowers also drops upon the weeds as well. The sun shines upon the just and the unjust. Pharaoh's head was

crowned although his heart was hardened. Many who spurn and hate the grace of God still drink of God's mercies because without them they would not live.

Forgetting Mercies Leads to Sin

Have you considered that one of the reasons for our sinfulness, one of the reasons for our disobedience and our rebellion is simply that we forget all that God has done for us? What do I mean that we forget? Well, like I said earlier, we assume, we take for granted. But I want you to turn in your Bibles to Psalm 106 and look if you would please at verse 7. Psalm 106 and verse 7.

Then I'm going to show you an illustration of it. Psalm 106 verse 7. Look what the psalmist said: "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt. They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." So the fathers did not really understand the impact and the implication of all those miracles and all those wonders in Egypt. And even though God delivered them miraculously, they remembered not the multitude of His mercies. So since they were forgetful of all of His mercies, what did they do? They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Not only did they provoke him at the Red Sea, they provoked him all through the wilderness. You know, it's amazing to me how people could see God smite Egypt with those ten plagues, deliver them miraculously, open the waters of the Red Sea, let them walk across on dry ground, and then turn around and see Pharaoh and his hosts drowned in the sea, and then get

Israel could stand in the wilderness and say to God, “You brought us out here to die. You hated us.” How can you do that? The only way you can do that is that you forget God’s mercies. You do not even think about them.

Jeremiah 5:7 asks, “How shall I pardon thee for this?” God says, “My children have forgotten me and have sworn by them that are no gods.” When He fed them to the full, they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses. “They were as fed horses in the morning. Everyone neighed after his neighbor’s wife. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?”

What did God do? He blessed these people and fed them. What did they do? They turned around and used His blessings to commit idolatry, adultery, fornication—anything and everything their hearts chose. Is it not the height of ungratefulness, unthankfulness, and dishonor to take the blessings of God and turn them into sin, rebellion, and idolatry? Is it not the height of wickedness to take the gifts and mercies of God and use them as strength and energy to rebel against God?

We take advantage of God and use His blessings to sin against Him. God asks in Jeremiah 5:7, “How shall I pardon thee for this?” Then in verse 9 He asks, “Shall I not visit for these things?” That is, shall I not judge for these things? “And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?”

Can God Withhold His Mercies?

In light of Jeremiah 5:7–9—in fact, all of Jeremiah chapter 5—is it possible that we may abuse the mercies of God in such a way that He ultimately withholds them from us? Stop and think about that. Is it possible that we abuse the mercies of God in such a way that He will ultimately withhold those mercies from us?

Let me try to answer that by showing you several passages. Proverbs 3:1–3 says, "My son, forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my commandments. For a length of days and long life and peace shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee. Bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart." Notice what he says: "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee." If he tells us, "Let not mercy and truth forsake us," that means it is possible that mercy and truth may forsake us.

If you would look in Isaiah chapter 63 and verse 15, look what Isaiah says: "Look down from heaven and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory. Where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? Are they restrained?" To restrain is to hold back. So he is asking, "Are your mercies being held back?"

Look in Isaiah chapter 47 and verse 6. Look what God did. He said, "I was wroth with my people. I have polluted mine inheritance

and give them into thine hand," that is, into the hand of the Chaldeans. "Thou did show them no mercy. Upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke." God said, "I delivered him unto you and you showed them no mercy."

If you would look in Psalm 77 and verse 9, David asked a very important question here: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"

And then he says, “Selah.” You know what the word Selah means? It literally means to pause, stop, and think about it. So the question is, “Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?” When you pause and think about that, you have to understand that, yes, God could, in His righteous anger, withhold His mercies.

That is why, in Psalm 40 and verse 11, David prays, “Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord. Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.” David is recognizing that God could lawfully, justly, and rightly withhold His tender mercies. This request indeed teaches us that God may righteously withhold His blessings and His mercies.

So let me put it to you very plainly, very bluntly: God does not owe us anything. God does not owe any individual anything. He does not owe any family anything. He does not owe any church anything. He does not owe any society anything. He does not owe any culture anything. He does not owe any nation anything. God is sovereign, and God cannot be brought into obligation.

A Nation Without Mercy

If God can restrain His mercies, withhold His mercies, and, according to Scripture, shut up His mercies, have you ever wondered what it would be like in a society, a culture, or a nation where God actually did that? If you have never wondered what it would be like to live where God had restrained, shut up, or withheld His mercies, I will show you. Turn in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 16. Jeremiah 16, beginning with verse 1: “The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place. For thus saith the Lord concerning the

sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bear them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land, they shall die of grievous deaths, and they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried, but they shall be

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 16:4-13 (KJV)

as dung upon the face of the earth, and they shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven and for the beasts of the earth. Now watch. For thus saith the Lord, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament or bemoan them. For I, that is God, for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the Lord, even lovingkindness and mercies.

Both the great and the small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried. Neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them. Neither shall men tear themselves for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead. Neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or their mother. Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them, to eat and to drink. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. This shall come to pass, when thou shalt show this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us?

Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God? Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law, and you have done worse than your fathers. Behold you walk everyone after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me. Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that you know not, neither you

nor your fathers, and there shall you serve other gods day and night, where I will show you no

Notice, if you would please, back in verse 5, where God says, “For I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the Lord, even lovingkindness and mercy.” And now in verse 13, God says, “I will show them no favor.”

God's Sovereignty in Mercy

It is not just individuals, families, or churches that need the mercies of God. Societies, cultures, and nations must receive the mercies of God or perish. Go back to Psalm 136 and look at our text. It is true that God is a merciful God, and it is true that His mercies endure forever. But may I remind you of something? God does not owe anyone anything.

Look in verse 10: “To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn, for his mercy endureth forever.” Was God being merciful to Israel in judging Egypt? Yes. But was He being merciful to the Egyptians? No. Look in verse 15: “But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, for his mercy endureth forever.” Was God being merciful to Israel in saving them? Yes. And if you think drowning in the Red Sea is an act of mercy, I do not want that kind of mercy.

He was not merciful to them; He judged them. He did not owe them anything. He does not owe us anything. Look at Sihon and Og. Skip down to verse 17 through verse 22: “To him which smote great kings, for his mercy endureth forever, and slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth forever.” Now He names two: “Sihon king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth forever, and Og the king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth forever, and gave their land for an heritage, for his mercy endureth forever, even an heritage unto Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth forever.”

Did God owe Pharaoh mercy? No. Did He owe Egypt mercy? No. Did He owe Sihon mercy? No. Did He owe Og mercy? No. Did He owe their societies, their culture, their dominion, or their nations mercy? No. And they did not receive mercy. God does not owe America mercy. God does not owe anyone anything.

Turn in your Bible to Romans chapter 9. Look at verse 15. Paul is quoting what God said to Moses: “For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” Continue reading: “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even with this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” Did God owe Pharaoh anything? He answers, absolutely not.

Now turn to Romans chapter 11, beginning with verse 33: “Oh the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” Verse 34: “For who has known the mind of the Lord?” No one. “Or who hath been his counselor?” No one. “Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

Go back to verse 35: “and it shall be recompensed unto him.” The reason you cannot bring God into your obligation is that you cannot first give to God. You say, “Well, I can give Him praise.” You might give Him praise, but He gave you breath, life, and being. You say, “Well, I can tithe.” Wonderful, but everything you tithe, God already gave you. No one can first give to God. It is impossible to bring God into obligation.

SCRIPTURE READING - Nehemiah 9:21-31 (KJV)

Mercy and Judgment for God's People

We can grasp these facts when we apply them to the heathen, to people who hate God and who are fighting against Him. But what about applying them to His professed people? Is it possible for God to withhold His mercies from His professing people? And the answer is yes. And in His faithfulness, when He judges us, He always reserves to Himself a remnant.

“Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing. Their clothes waxed not old, and their

> feet swelled not." So God provided, protected, preserved. "Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners. So they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan. Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land concerning which thou hast promised their fathers, that they should go in to possess it. So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would. And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance. So they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.
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> Nevertheless, after all those blessings and mercies, nevertheless, they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets, which testified against them, to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations. Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them, and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven, and according to thy manifold mercies, there it is, and according to thy manifold mercies, thou gavest them saviors, or judges, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee. Therefore leftest thou them into the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them. Yet when they returned and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven, and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies."

God testified against His people so that He might bring them again into His law. Yet they dealt proudly, did not hearken to His commandments, sinned against His judgments, withdrew the shoulder, hardened their neck, and would not hear. For many years He forbore them and testified against them by His Spirit in the prophets, but they would not give ear. Therefore He gave them into the hand of the people of the land. Nevertheless, for His great

mercy's sake, He did not utterly consume them or forsake them, for He is a gracious and merciful God.

What did God do to His people? He judged them and destroyed them, but He saved a remnant. You remember how Elijah said, "I only am left"? God said to Elijah, "I've reserved to myself 7,000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal."

The very fact that God has not consumed us, destroyed us, or annihilated us is positive proof of His tender mercies. God does not owe us anything, and yet we are not destroyed. God is still merciful. When we cry to Him, begging for help, we must beg for His mercies, for He does not owe us anything. We cannot come to God and say, "Well, Lord, I've done this for you, now you need to do this for me." God is not in our debt. We come to Him begging for His mercies through Jesus Christ. What God does for us is based upon His grace and mercy in Christ.

Applications: Gratitude and Showing Mercy

That is why David prayed in Psalm 44:26, "Arise for our help and redeem us for thy mercy's sake," not because we have done good, or because we are His people, but for His mercies' sake. God does not owe us anything, yet His tender mercies endure forever, and the fact that we are not consumed is evidence of His mercies.

We must acknowledge with Jacob the truth of our undeserving character. Jacob said in Genesis 32:10, "I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies and of all thy truth which thou hast shown unto thy servant." Jacob said, "Lord, I am not deserving of anything." Yet God protected Jacob, provided for Jacob, and preserved Jacob.

It's a miraculous life that he lived. And yet he confessed, "I'm not worthy of the least of thy mercies and of all thy truth which you've showed me." Do you understand that any and everything we receive outside of judgment and justice is mercy? If you really comprehend this, then you ought to apply verse 26 of Psalm 136: "O give thanks unto the Lord, or unto the God of heaven, for his mercy endureth forever." How often should we be thanking Him because of His mercy? We could thank Him not just every day, every hour, or every minute, but every second, every moment, and every millisecond,

because it's only His mercy that allows us to live. If we really understand His mercies, we ought to be continually giving Him thanks.

We need to learn that, if we want to receive mercy, we need to learn to show mercy. In James chapter 2, verse 13, the Bible says, "For he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."

God said that if you want just judgment, show no mercy. If you don't show any mercy, He won't show you any mercy. Remember the man who owed his king so great a price? The king said, "Throw him in prison till he pays the uttermost farthing." The man said, "Have mercy, O king. I'll pay thee all," and the king forgave him. Then he went out and found another servant who owed him ten pence, which is very minor. He grabbed him by the throat and said, "Pay me that thou owest." The servant fell at his feet and said, "Have mercy and I'll pay thee everything," but he would not and threw him into prison. When the king heard what he had done to someone else, he brought him back and said, "I'll do the same to you." If you and I want God's mercy, we must learn to show mercy.

Mercy and Judgment in the Lord's Prayer

You have to understand that when God shows mercy to His people, He destroys their enemies. When God showed mercy to Israel, He destroyed Egypt. When God showed mercy to Lot, He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. When God showed mercy to Joshua and those people, He destroyed all the inhabitants of the land. You really and truly cannot have mercy without judgment. Mercy and judgment go together.

Someone says, “Well, I don’t know that much about judgment, but I’m just going to pray the Lord’s Prayer.” “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Stop. When you pray, “Thy kingdom come,” you’re praying for the destruction of all the other kingdoms: the kingdoms of man and the kingdom of Satan. And when you’re praying, “Thy will be done on earth,” what are you saying? “God, Your will, not the will of the New World Order, not the will of George Soros, not the will of the Illuminati, not the will of all of these

reprobates. No, no. Your will be done." You cannot even pray the Lord's Prayer without praying judgment against His enemies. So mercy and judgment go together.

Living in Light of God's Mercy

I want to emphasize this: You need to learn to thank God as often as possible for every mercy that God has given to you. God, in His mercy, has allowed us to live. The one thing that I do, outside of preaching and studying and whatever else I have to do, is enjoy hunting.

But my wife can tell you, I deer hunt, but I don't shoot babies. I don't shoot little spikes. I don't shoot does. If anybody comes to my place and goes hunting, I say, "Well, you just do not shoot a little one." Why? God has been merciful and gracious to me and allowed me to grow old and mature. I would think that little deer would like to experience life as well—any animal like that. Do you see how, if you understand God's mercies, it is going to apply to every area of your life? In fact, the Bible says, "The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." God has given you truth and grace, allowed you to live, allowed your children to live and prosper, and given you family and His truth.

You ought to apply verse 26: "O give thanks unto the God of heaven for his mercy endureth forever." And God does not owe us anything, but thankfully he's merciful and he gives.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your mercy. We thank you for your truth. We ask, Father, that you would make us more thankful, more grateful, and more appreciative of everything that you've done for us.

We pray for those on the prayer list: Heath, Steve, John Cain's family, Effie's family, and David's family today, Lord. We pray for each one and ask that you would undertake for them. Thank you for sparing us and giving us life and health. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 29

How Easily We Forget

June 8, 2018

Introduction: The Human Tendency to Forget

Deuteronomy 4:9 says, “Only take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life, but teach them thy sons and thy sons' sons.” The truth is, how easily we do indeed forget.

Probably two of the most famous words, or at least two words spoken more often than almost any others, are, “I forgot.” We may use similar phrases: “Well, it slipped my mind,” or “I guess I was just not thinking.” Regardless of what phrase we use, it all boils down to the fact that we simply forget. As we age, the more we forget, and the older we get, the more willing we are to admit that we simply forgot.

I remember when Alice’s mother, Granny Doris, was alive and beginning to become really forgetful. We got her some ginkgo biloba to help her memory. One Sunday, as we were riding to church, she said from the back seat, “I think that stuff is really helping me.” I asked, “Helping what, Granny?” She said, “It’s helping my memory.”

I said, “Well, that’s wonderful. What stuff is that?” She said, “I forget.” We had to remind her that it was ginkgo biloba.

The truth is, we normally forget little things. Many times, we forget big and important things as well. One of my fears all my life was that one day I would slip up and forget a meeting or preaching appointment. Thankfully, I never have, but it used to weigh on my mind. I wrote everything down because I wanted to make sure I did not forget something that important.

One day, just to show you how we forget, Alice and I were at home when our girls began calling to wish us a happy anniversary. We looked at each other because both of us had forgotten it. It would have been bad had I forgotten it alone, but thankfully, she forgot it as well. So we laughed and remarked about how busy we had been.

The Warning in Deuteronomy 4: Remembering God's Works and Covenant

Deuteronomy 4 gives a warning and an admonition: “Only take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen. And lest they depart from thine heart all the days of thy life, but teach them thy sons,” that is, your children, “and thy sons’ sons,” your grandchildren. Specifically, God says, “the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and they may teach their children.”

God says they were not to forget the things they had seen, which would certainly include all the miracles and judgments of God. They were to keep them in their hearts and minds and pass them on to their children and their children’s children. God singled out specifically the day they had heard the voice of the Lord. He said, “Only take heed to thyself and keep thyself diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen.” That would be the works of God. Make sure that you remember the works of God.

Then, in Deuteronomy 4:23, He says, “Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of anything which

the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee." He is now warning about forgetting the covenant of God. Let me put it like this: when you forget the works of God, the next step is to forget the covenant of God. What we fail to realize is that the word testament is the same word as covenant.

We speak of the old covenant and the new covenant, or the Old Testament and the New Testament, because covenant and testament are one and the same. In the old covenant, Israel forgot that covenant. In our day and age, it is Christians who are forgetting the New Covenant. God is saying that we had better beware. So you have to ask yourself: How often do you really think about the Word of God? How often do you think about His promises, His warnings, His admonitions, and His commands?

The Progression of Forgetting: Works, Covenant, God

The truth of the matter is that we easily, readily, and quickly forget many things relating to the Lord. We forget our profession of faith. We forget our promises that we made unto Him. We forget the oath that we took at our baptism. We forget the fact that we said that Jesus Christ is Lord.

God has warned about forgetting the works of God. Then He warns about forgetting the covenant of God. Here is the progression: You first forget the works of God. Then you forget the covenant of God. And then, thirdly, you forget God. It is a wicked, vile, and evil step. But you remember what Paul said about Demas: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present evil world."

When you look around, you will find a lot of people, even professing Christians, who love their addictions, their lusts, and their flesh more than the grace, mercy, and salvation of God. God gives us four passages warning us about forgetting. Deuteronomy 6:12 says, "Then beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage." When you forget His works and then forget His covenant, you forget Him. Here is the warning: lest you forget the Lord.

Deuteronomy 8:11 says, "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping His commandments and His judgments and His

statutes which I command thee this day." If you forget Him, you have already forgotten His covenant, because you will not keep or obey. Deuteronomy 8:14 says, "Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the

"land of Egypt from the house of bondage." Then look at verse 19: "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish." Here are the steps, or progressions, in which we travel in forgetting God: you forget His works, you forget His covenant, and then you forget Him. Forgetting His covenant leads to forgetting Him.

Moreover, when we forget God, we always replace Him with something else. When you forget God, you actually replace God. Anything that is put in the place of God is idolatry. We forget the fact that Scripture says in Colossians 3 and verse 5 that covetousness is idolatry.

God's Mighty Deliverance from Egypt

We also forget what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3 and verse 19, when he talks about these people whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, and who mind earthly things. When you forget God, you replace Him with your own lust, your own desires, and your own covetousness. You may not fall down before a graven image. You may not fall down before something made of silver or gold or brass or wood or stone. But you have replaced God because you have elevated yourself, your desires, and your lust ahead of God.

Do you remember how God delivered Israel out of the land of Egypt? Do you remember the displays of His mighty power in delivering Israel out of the land of Egypt?

I want to show you four passages. I had to be selective because there are many passages that refer to this. As you read through the Bible, you will find how often God talks about His mighty hand, His stretched-out arm, and the miracles that He performed in delivering the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Look first at Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 34. In fact, let us read verses 33 and 34: “Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?” These people heard the voice of God. Now notice verse 34: “Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?” He speaks of the temptations, the signs, the wonders, war, a mighty hand, a stretched-out arm, and terrors; and he says, You saw all of this.

Look at Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 19. God is speaking about how they will conquer their enemies: “The great temptations which thine eyes saw, signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the Lord thy God brought thee out,” that is, from Egypt, “so shall the Lord thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid.” God said, You have to remember what I did—My mighty hand, My outstretched arm, the signs, and the wonders.

Look at Deuteronomy chapter 26, verses 7 and 8: “And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression, and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a”

Deuteronomy speaks of God’s mighty hand, His outstretched arm, His great terribleness, His signs, and His wonders: “mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terribleness and with signs and with wonders.” Deuteronomy 34:11–12 says, “In all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.” These four passages, and a multitude of other passages, speak of God’s mighty hand, His outstretched arm, His signs, His wonders, His terribleness, and His terrors that He demonstrated upon the Egyptians.

He also emphasizes the fact that these people saw this with their own eyes. How long do you think it would take for someone who saw

these things firsthand to forget them? Or would it even be possible ever to forget them?

Let us make this a little more personal. Suppose that you were alive in Egypt at this particular time. You are an Israelite, alive when God comes in mighty power to deliver you out of the land of Egypt. You not only witnessed the ten plagues, but in each one of these plagues, you were exempted. You saw the plagues upon the Egyptians, but they did not come nigh unto you, or your family, or your people.

Hold Deuteronomy, but go back in your Bible to the book of Exodus. Let us begin with chapter 11. God says this several times, but look at Exodus 11:7: “But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.” God says there is not even a dog going to bark. He is not going to move his tongue against any of the Israelites or any of their beasts, so that they would know He had put a difference between His people and the Egyptians when the plagues hit.

The Israelites were unaffected. For instance, the grievous murrain that fell upon the cattle of Egypt killed them, but the cattle of the Israelites were exempted. Exodus 9:4–7 says, “And the Lord shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children of Israel. And the Lord appointed a set time, saying, Tomorrow the Lord shall do this thing in the land. And the Lord did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one. And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.”

Isn't that interesting? When the plague of darkness hit, the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. Exodus 10:22–23 says, “And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.”

You know, there is an old joke that used to be told all the time when I was a kid: “Where was Moses when the lights went out?” The standard answer is, “In the dark.” But he wasn't in the dark; the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. The Bible speaks of a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days.

A number of years back, Alice and I took a couple of our grandkids to Utah. We walked a mile up a mountain and went into Timpanogos Cave. We walked through the caverns and came into one huge room. The ranger said, “Now, I want you to stand still. Do not move. You have to stand absolutely still.” Then she reached over and turned the lights off. We were probably half a mile into that mountain underground. You could have held your hand right here, and you couldn't see anything. It was nothing but absolute, total, thick, black darkness. That is what happened here for three days. They couldn't even move, and the children of Israel were exempted. Wow!

Now, let me ask you this, and I want you to think about it, because I am going to make an application in just a little while. Suppose you were in Egypt. Suppose you were an Israelite. God was going to send these ten plagues and sever His people from the Egyptians. You would see them with your own eyes, but they would not affect you. Let me remind you of the ten plagues.

You were there when the rivers were turned to blood and all the fish died and began to stink in Exodus chapter 7. Secondly, you were there when the frogs came out of the river and enveloped the land. They had frogs in their cooking vessels, frogs in their beds, and frogs everywhere. But there were no frogs in your house. You were there, and you saw it. Then there was a third plague: you saw the dust of the land turned into lice, lice upon man and beast in Exodus chapter 8. You were there and saw that, but there was no lice on you.

When you came to the fourth plague, you saw the swarms of flies. Everybody hates a fly. They are dirty; they corrupt everything. I read this years ago, and I do not know whether it is true or not, but I heard and read that every time a fly lit, he spit. Whether it is true or not, I do not know, but that is what I read anyhow. Now look in Exodus chapter 8.

Notice, if you would please, Exodus chapter 8, beginning with verse 22: “And God said, And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen,” where the Israelites were, “in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: tomorrow shall this sign be.” Out of all those corrupt, dirty, filthy flies that were in Egypt, they were not in the land of Goshen.

You saw the grievous murrain upon your enemy's cattle. You saw their cattle die while your cattle prospered. You saw the boils and the blains breaking out upon man and beast in Exodus chapter 9, and yet you were spared and your animals were spared. You saw the thunderstorm with fire and hail destroying everything. Exodus 9:24 says, "So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation."

You saw the plague of locusts in Exodus chapter 10, how they totally darkened out the sky and destroyed everything. You saw the darkness that fell upon the Egyptians, and yet you were spared because you had light in your dwellings. Then you saw the anguish and heartache, and heard the cries and screams of everyone in Egypt who lost their firstborn child, while your firstborn lived.

You not only saw all of this; you understood something else about these plagues. Look in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 12 and verse 12: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord."

These plagues were not simply against the Egyptians; they were against all the false gods. Even Pharaoh claimed to be a god, but he could not save his own child. All the gods of Egypt were proven to be worthless, useless, helpless, and no gods.

Having seen all these mighty miracles and exhibits of power and greatness, you know there is only one true and living God, revealed as the great I Am. There is no other God. You were also there when Pharaoh thought you were bottled up at the Red Sea. He chased you

and was going to destroy you. Look in Exodus chapter 14, beginning with verse 26.

Please remember you were there. The Egyptians were chasing you. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.”

You saw the waters divided. You walked across on dry ground. When all your friends and all your people had crossed safely, you turned and looked. Moses raised his rod, the waters came in, and every soldier of Pharaoh, including Pharaoh, drowned in the sea. You saw their dead bodies on the shore.

How Quickly Israel Forgot

So here is my question: How long would it take you to forget this? Or how could you forget this?

Go back to Exodus chapter 12. This is the Passover, where God was delivering the children of Israel out of the land. “And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month,” which happened to be Abib, “this month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.” Abib had to be the first month on their Hebrew calendar every year thereafter. “Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls;”

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 12:4-6, 11; Exodus 13:3-10 (KJV)

"Every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." Notice, Abib 14. That is the date of the Passover. That is when the lamb was killed. That is when the blood was applied to the lintel and the doorpost.

God says, "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, with your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover." So they killed it on the 14th and they left then on the 15th of Abib. They had killed the lamb, applied the blood, and were leaving on Abib 15 because they ate the Passover with their shoes on their feet, their loins girded, and their staff in their hand. They were ready to leave.

"Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. This day came ye out in the month Abib. And it shall be when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord. Now watch, unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year."

God brought them out on the fifteenth. He said they were to commemorate this because their eyes had seen what He had done. Here was a demonstration of God's mighty power, miracles, signs, wonders, terribleness, and terrors. How long would it take you to forget all of this? If God had done this for you personally, surely you could not forget it. You could not forget God's deliverance, His protection, and His power—or could you?

Look in Exodus chapter 15, beginning with verse 22: “So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them.”

Three days, and they were already complaining and whining: “Well, we are going to perish out here. I mean, we don't have any water.” Look at everything God had already done to get them out of Egypt; in three days they were complaining.

In Exodus 16, “they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.” They left on the fifteenth day of the first month, so this was thirty days, one month, later. “And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

In one month, they were saying, “Would to God we had died in Egypt.” Notice what they were talking about: they thought they had it made in Egypt. They had the flesh pots, the leeks, the onions, and the garlics. They loved it there in Egypt. They would rather die as slaves in Egypt than be the Lord’s free men in the desert. Three days

they were complaining; in thirty days they had forgotten everything. Wow.

Look in Exodus 17. “And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.” Let me just stop. In Exodus 14, God killed all the Egyptians. In Exodus 15, you have the war song of the Lord. In Exodus 16, thirty days later according to the context—and if we took the time to read all of Exodus 16, we would find that Exodus 17 happens one week later—the people again complain. “Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou”

“Hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?” Can you believe this? Three days, thirty days, thirty-seven days. How easily we forget. You would think that something like the Passover, all of the plagues, and the destruction of Pharaoh and his armies could never be forgotten.

Let me show you something. Do you remember when Moses got to Sinai, how God came down on the mountain with smoke, thunder, fire, and lightning? Look in Exodus chapter 19 and verse 16: “And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.”

Now, understand that Moses goes up to get the law. He is up supposedly forty days. Hold Exodus chapter 19, but turn to Exodus

chapter 32. What happens while Moses is up in the mount? We are going to come back to Exodus chapter 19. Remember, it really had not been three months. Exodus chapter 32, verse 1: “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; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.”

And Aaron said unto them, "Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me." And all the people brake 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 graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made 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 to drink, and rose up to play," literally to commit fornication. 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, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

When Moses came down out of that mountain, he was very angry and very upset, and of course he broke the Law. He threw down those tablets that the Lord had written with His own finger.

In Exodus chapter 19, "In the third month," 90 days, "when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto

the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine."

Note what he said: "in the third month." So here are three days, then 30 days, and now 90 days, and Moses is up in the mountain—he does not even get to finish the 40 days. In less than four months, these people have made a golden calf, are worshiping it, and saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, that have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Modern Forgetfulness and Lost First Love

You cannot explain that to me unless you explain it like this: They forgot the works of God. They forgot the covenants of God. They forgot God, and then they replaced Him. Anytime you forget God, you replace Him. Stop and think. If you had been there, would not the mighty power of God and the judgments of God have made an impression upon you, so that you thought you could never forget? And look how easily and quickly they forgot.

That is exactly what has happened in our day and time. We have forgotten the works of God, the covenant of God, and God Himself, and we have replaced Him with all kinds of things. Have you ever noticed how easily and quickly we forget our promises, our profession, and our obedience? I have preached for 53 years. I suppose if the Lord lets me make it until May, it will be 54 years.

I have been called to bedsides where children, husbands, and wives were dying. I have heard people say, "Brother Weaver, please pray. Please ask God to spare my child, my wife, or my husband. If the Lord will be pleased to do that, I will serve Him. I will be faithful to Him. I will worship Him. I will do this. I will do that."

And I pray, and somehow God miraculously spares that child, husband, or wife. And guess what? They are faithful for about two weeks, and then it is over. Isn't that amazing? How quickly we forget what God has done for us.

There is a passage that I try to quote every day. I will not say I have been successful every day, but I probably have; and if I have not, I usually make it up by quoting it two or three times a day anyhow. Lamentations 3:22-23 says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

I cannot even pass a cross on the side of the road where someone has died in a wreck without thanking God for life and health, and thanking God for His protection and preservation. I am simply pointing out the fact that we forget how gracious, kind, good, generous, and blessed we are by the grace and goodness of God.

In Revelation chapter 2, God is dealing with the church of Ephesus. He says, “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;” He tells the church, “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.” Those are some good things. But notice this last one: “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee.” Why? “Because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”

Do you remember when God first saved you? Do you remember the zeal you had, the desire to pray, to read and study the Scriptures, and to witness? Do you remember how you could not do enough, you thought, to serve the Lord and help His people? You remember all those things. And now we do not have them. What does He say? You need to remember, and then you need to repent: “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do thy first works.”

How quickly we forget, how easily we forget all that God has done for us, all the promises, all the love, and all the energy we used to have in serving Him. As you turn back in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 2, I want to show you a verse. I hope it will really break your

heart. My question is this: Would you want God to treat you the way you treat Him?

Years ago, Alice and I saw a movie entitled "Cromwell," about the life of Oliver Cromwell. I think Richard Harris played Cromwell. He was fighting for liberty and freedom in England against Charles I. One scene I remember showed Cromwell on horseback, riding back and forth and marshalling his forces to fight the forces of Charles I. As he rode, he prayed this prayer.

Conclusion: A Plea for Remembrance and Repentance

"Lord, I shall be busy this day about many things. Lord, if I forget thee, do not thou forget me."

I do not want God to treat me the way I treat Him. Jeremiah 2:32 asks, "Can a maid forget her ornaments?" No woman is going to forget her jewelry. "Can a bride forget her attire?" No bride is going to forget her wedding dress or veil. God says, "Yet my people have forgotten me days without number."

Deuteronomy 4:9 says, "Take heed to thyself. And take heed diligently to thy soul, lest thou forget." When you forget the works of God, you end up forgetting the covenant of God. When you forget the covenant of God, you forget God. You end up replacing Him with the idol of self, flesh, pride, and anything else that you put before Him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your love, Your grace, and Your mercy. We admonish ourselves and admit and confess that we have forgotten Thee, oftentimes days without number. We forget Thy works, Thy covenant, and Thy person. We ask divine forgiveness, mercy, and repentance. We ask, Lord, that You'd help us to turn to Thee with all of our hearts.

Thou hast said, “Thou shalt seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all of your heart.” Lord, help us to do that. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 30

The Sin Of Supposing

May 17, 2020

Acts chapter seven, verses 20 through 28. The Bible says, "In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons."

Introduction: The Common Use of 'I Suppose'

We use the phrase "I suppose" very frequently, and the context determines its meaning. Usually, it means something that we assume, believe, or take for granted. I could say that I suppose something is true without really committing myself to it. I have heard something and simply say, "I suppose that's true," without necessarily investigating it for myself. We can also half-heartedly agree with someone by using that phrase. David could say, "Pastor, did you know the moon is made of green cheese?" I can say, "Well, I suppose so."

All I am trying to do is avoid an argument. I know it is not made of green cheese. We use that phrase so often, and we normally get ourselves in trouble by supposing that others will agree with us, help us, or come to our aid. We have forgotten the dictum, "No one is coming to save you. Everything is your responsibility."

Modern Suppositions and Government Trust

It is easier to suppose than it is to prepare, perform, and produce. In our predicament, in this day and time, with the coronavirus, I have already heard numerous people say, "The government will help us. The government will come to our aid. The government will work everything out." I usually want to shout, "Government is not the solution. It is the problem. Government is not God. Government cannot save." In fact, whenever government gets involved in anything, it is usually made worse, and we end up losing more and more of our liberties and freedoms.

In light of this current situation, you may be ready to receive your stimulus check, but may I remind you that whatever the government gives to someone, it has to take from someone else? There is no such thing as a free lunch. Someone says, "Well, the government really doesn't have to take from someone. All they have to do is print more money." That is all they have to do: print more money. The more money they print, the less valuable is that which you already possess. The more money they print of a fiat currency, the more they reduce the value of the currency already in circulation. They are taking not from just somebody, but from everyone. We can suppose, in light of our current situation, that everything is going to work out and return

to normal. Then we will find that our supposition is truly wrong, because individuals will have lost fortunes, families, freedoms, and, in some cases, faith as well.

Biblical Examples of Wrong Supposing

There may be another normal, but it will be a new normal, not the old normal. We are not the only ones guilty of supposing. Many in the Bible supposed. For instance, in Matthew chapter 20 and verse 10, you remember when the owner of the vineyard went out and found people standing idle. He said, "Go work in my vineyard, and I'll give you what is right." He went out at the ninth hour, the eleventh hour, and the next-to-last hour.

And when everyone came out, he gave them a penny. But in Matthew 20 and verse 10, those that worked all day, the Bible said, "They supposed that they should have received more." But every man received a penny that already agreed for a penny, but they supposed because the others got a penny as well, that they would get more, which was not true. And may I point out the fact in Mark chapter six and verse 49, when the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, they supposed him to be a spirit.

They supposed that he was a ghost. Now, if you will, hold Acts chapter seven, but I want you to look in your Bible to Luke chapter two. Luke chapter two. And notice, if you would please, beginning there with verse 43. Luke chapter two and verse 43. We're going to see some other people that did some supposing, and they were really, really wrong. Look in Luke chapter two and verse 43.

Mary and Joseph had gone up to Jerusalem for the feast and there to worship. And the Bible says in verse 43, "And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him." So note, if you would, verse 46: "And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple." So they'd gone a day's journey. Now they have a day's journey back. It takes them three days to find him. Now they've got to do another day's journey

just to get back where they were. Why? Because they just supposed he was with the kinfolk, but he really and truly was not.

Years ago, we had a family who attended our church and they had five children. And so one Sunday night after service, they packed up their children and they went home. They supposed that they had all of their children. But when they got home and started putting their children to bed, they realized they had left a child in the church building asleep on the pew. So they had to drive back, open the church doors, go in and pick up the child and take her home. Thankfully, the child never woke up. Never woke up to an empty church building or a dark building. And we laugh now because the child is grown and has children and all this kind of stuff. But they just simply supposed they had all their children, found out they did not.

In Luke chapter 3 and verse 23, we see some other people who did some supposing: “And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph.” He was actually the Son of God, but most people simply supposed Him to be the son of Joseph.

One of my favorites is found in Acts chapter 2 and verse 15. You remember the day of Pentecost, when all the disciples were preaching and every man understood each one in his own language. Peter had to say, “For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.” They supposed that the disciples were all drunk, which, of course, they were not.

Moses' Supposition in Acts 7:25

The thought struck me, as I was reading through Acts chapter 7, that many Christians today, and many people, are in the same predicament that Moses found himself in, simply because of his supposition—because he supposed something to be true when it was not true. There are many Christians today who suppose they know the will of God, but in reality they do not. They suppose that they are in tune with Him, but in reality they are not. They suppose that their determination is the same as His, but it is not. They suppose that their timing is His timing, but it is not.

Acts 7:25 says concerning Moses, “For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.” When the Bible says, “he supposed,” it is an imperfect active of nomizo, which literally means to deem, to think, or to suppose. He deemed it true; he thought it true; he supposed it true. So the question must be asked: What led him to this supposition? What led Moses to suppose that his brethren would understand?

There had to be some foundation, some factual evidence, that enabled him to suppose they would understand that God was going to use him in their deliverance. Moses is never condemned in Scripture for attempting to deliver his people here. Moreover, he is never condemned in Scripture for killing the Egyptian while defending another’s life. In fact, his actions are explained in Scripture as holy and righteous; it would be deemed a holy, righteous act of self-denial. You must remember that Moses was in line to be Pharaoh.

Moses was to inherit all the riches of Egypt. He would have inherited the throne and had more power than you could ever conceive. If most of us had been alive when Moses was alive and were in his position, here is how we would think: “Wow, just wait till I get to be Pharaoh. I’m gonna have all this power, and then I’m gonna really help God’s people. I’ll have all this money, and I can really promote the kingdom of God.” In reality, what most people really want is the power and the money for themselves. But Moses refused it.

Now look at two passages: Exodus chapter two and Hebrews chapter 11. We will go to Hebrews 11 second. Do not forget to mark Acts 7; we are certainly coming back there. In Exodus chapter two, let us begin reading with verse five.

You know the story: Moses had been born and kept in the house for three months, until he could no longer be kept there. Then his mother, Jochebed, made an ark of bulrushes and put him in the river. “And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river’s side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.

And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept."

"And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister"—that would be Miriam—"to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother." Now watch: "And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it." So Moses's own mother got the child back, then got paid for doing what she wanted to do anyhow.

That is the sovereignty of God. Notice what happened: "And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water. And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren."

I am going to tell you about this word "smiting" a little later, but note that he spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. "And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand."

"And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well."

Hebrews 11:24 says, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith

Moses, when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

He turned his back on the power. He turned his back on the riches. "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

When you go back to Acts 7:25, the Scripture says that Moses supposed that they would understand that God would deliver them by his hand. What were the foundational reasons? What foundational facts would lead him to suppose such a thing? I believe the answer is not only given in the context, but also in Scripture in general. Let me give you several things that led him to suppose this. First, all of the Israelites undoubtedly knew of his extraordinary deliverance from death.

Foundations for Moses' Supposition

He was hidden three months in his own house by his mother and father. When they could no longer hide him, they put him in an ark of bulrushes in the river. Pharaoh's daughter saw him and rescued him, and his own mother raised him. When other Israelites were murdering their own children, Amram and Jochebed refused to murder their child. They refused an abortion. They refused infanticide. They refused to murder. Moreover, Amram the father and Jochebed the mother disobeyed the law. They would not obey a law that violated the Word of God. They were unafraid in their disobedience.

Look back in your Bibles to Acts 7:19. This is absolutely astounding, but here it is in black and white. In fact, verse 18 shows that Pharaoh was involved: "Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph."

"The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live." So here were Israelites who were having children

who were throwing them out to die. Amram and Jochebed said, "Nope, we're not doing that. That's not right." Hebrews 11:23 says, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." The king said to kill him. "I'm not going to kill my child. He's not making me kill my child. I'm unafraid. I'm going to obey God and I'm not going to obey man."

Undoubtedly, all the Israelites knew of this miraculous deliverance. And undoubtedly it had to have some prophetic significance, because he was indeed miraculously delivered. Secondly, you must also consider his willingness to defend and protect his people. Here was a man who was raised as an Egyptian, educated as an Egyptian, and extremely knowledgeable as an Egyptian. Here was a man who was mighty in words and deeds.

He was known. Everybody knew who Moses was. Acts 7:22 says, "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." So obviously, Moses not only had a miraculous deliverance; he was exceedingly well-known.

Here was a man who was considered to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Here was a man of rank, a man of power, and a man with much to lose by associating himself with the slaves—his own people. Here was a man who not only associated with these Hebrew slaves, but sided with them; and not only sided with them, he physically defended them.

Therefore, here's another reason for a supposition. They not only knew of his miraculous deliverance; now they saw this man of rank, this man of power, and this man of wealth, not only associating and siding with them, but actually fighting for them. Moses then was assuming and presuming and supposing that they were going to understand that God was going to use him to deliver them, because God had used him to deliver that one Israelite out of the hand of the Egyptian. Here's the third reason: the time for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt was drawing near.

I believe this also illustrates the heartache and the discouragement and the sorrow and the unbelief that existed in the hearts of the Israelites. In fact, they had basically totally forgotten

about the promise of deliverance. I mean, these people were just trying to keep their nose above water. They were trying to keep from drowning. I mean, their life was one of heartache and sorrow and discouragement and depression. They were just doing everything they could just to stay alive.

But I want you to see this. I want you to look in your Bibles. Hold Acts chapter 7, but go in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 15. Then we'll go to the book of Exodus. But look in Genesis chapter 15, and let's begin reading there with verse 13. Genesis 15 and verse 13. Watch carefully. God has entered into a covenant with Abram, and he tells him this in verse 13: "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Actually, they were in Egypt 430 years. If you would look in Exodus chapter 12, Exodus 12 and verse 40, Exodus 12 and verse 40, look what the Bible says. Exodus 12, verse 40: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." So they spent four hundred thirty years in Egypt.

Now, you have to remember, not all of those years were in bondage. Not all those years were in servitude. Not all those years were in slavery. In fact, they had it made living in the land of Goshen up until another Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph. So you have the opportunity to understand because here's a miraculous deliverance. Here's this man defending. And also here is the promise of deliverance drawing nigh. And then I might point out fourthly, the very fact that Moses was associating with and defending his people should have enabled them to suppose that he was going to be their deliverer.

Acts 7:23 says, “And when he”—that is, Moses—“was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.” There are two thoughts here. First, notice that Moses was a full forty years old. It is easy to divide the life of Moses by three forties: forty years he was raised as an Egyptian, forty years he was in the desert, and forty years he was leading and delivering his people out of Egypt and leading them toward the promised land.

The Bible says in Deuteronomy 34:7, “And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died.” Listen to this: “His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” At 120 years old, he could still see without glasses. He could still work. He could do whatever he wanted to do. Notice the 120—three forties. Obviously, it is very significant that his life was divided into three forties.

The second thought is this: The Bible says that when Moses was a full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren. Have you ever asked yourself this question? Why did it come into his heart at forty? Why did it not come into his heart at twenty or thirty? You could also ask, how did it come into his heart when he was forty years old? The answer is that God put it in his heart. It is like asking, “How did it come into your heart to go to church one time so you can hear the preaching of the gospel and be converted? How did it come to your heart?” The answer is Proverbs 16:1: “The preparations of the heart in man... are from the Lord.” God prepared his heart. It is like Proverbs 21:1: “The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water.”

"He turneth it whithersoever he will." And then, in Isaiah 26 and verse 12: "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." Philippians 2 and verse 13 says, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." So when Moses was forty years old, with all of his education, opportunities, and everything he could acquire, God put it in his heart to visit his brethren. Please understand this: anytime we do anything that is righteous, holy, and godly, God puts it in our hearts.

By nature, we are depraved and sinners. By nature, our flesh craves sin and wickedness. Therefore, if there is anything good in our hearts, God had to put it there.

Now look again at verse 25: "For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not." Moses supposed that they would understand that God would deliver them by his hand. The phrase "by his hand" means by his means and by his ministry. He supposed that they would understand that God was going to use him to deliver them. But they understood not.

There is a great deal of significance in this one little statement: "but they understood not."

The Israelites' Failure to Understand

I have just given you four reasons why Moses supposed his brethren would understand, but they did not put those four things together. They did not think about them or analyze them. They were blind, senseless, and even hostile to Moses.

We err greatly when we suppose that others understand what we understand. We err greatly when we suppose that others believe as we believe. We often get ourselves in trouble by confiding in someone whom we suppose thinks as we think. Later, after they stab us in the back, we discover that they really do not think the way we think or understand the way we understand.

Moses was acting righteously, biblically, and obediently, yet they did not understand. I see the same pattern in professing Christians today. Look at pastors who are taking a bold stand against sin, wickedness, and tyranny. Most professing Christians consider them hard, unloving, unkind, and intolerant. In fact, I do not know if you read about it, but the pastor in Louisiana who continues to hold services said, “This is a violation not only of the Bible; it is a violation of our Constitution. It is a denial of our liberties and our freedoms.” I understand that an online petition, signed by 3,800 people, asked the authorities to arrest him. We are today where those people were with Moses at that particular time. Instead of standing with Moses, instead of helping Moses, they criticized him and rejected him.

They refused his interposition. That is exactly what happens today. You let a pastor stand, and he is criticized and condemned. The next thing you know, he is ostracized; he is just put out.

Acts 7:26–28 says: “And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?” This was after Moses had intervened to save one Hebrew.

The one mistreating his brother viewed Moses as nothing more than a murderer. He did not understand interposition. He did not understand self-defense in the defense of another's life. He basically accused Moses of simply being a murderer: "Wilt thou kill me the way you killed the Egyptian yesterday?" There was a refusal of Moses' interposition, and a refusal of Moses' hand in their deliverance.

When he asked, in verse 27, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" he was, in essence, denying the providence of God in providing Moses to be a deliverer. There was a refusal to recognize Moses as God's man.

Matthew Henry makes this statement: "Proud and litigious spirits are impatient of check and control. Rather would these Israelites have their bodies ruled with vigor and rigor by their taskmasters than be delivered and have their minds ruled by reason by their deliverer. The wrongdoer was so enraged at the reproof given him that he upbraided Moses for the service he had done to their nation in killing the Egyptian." Unhappily, the refusal of God's man has not been confined to this occasion; it has been throughout the Bible and history.

Rejection of God's Man Throughout Scripture

Consider an illustration in Numbers chapter 12. Moses' own family—his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam—condemned and criticized him. "And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?" Who does Moses think he is? That is what they were asking. "And the Lord heard it. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out."

When God got them there, He was very angry. He told them, in essence, "I will choose whom I will choose, and I will use whom I will use. I will speak to my servant face to face. I am not going to speak to him as in a dream; I will speak to him face to face. Leave him alone." About that time, God smote Miriam with leprosy. Aaron began

crying out and praying, asking Moses to forgive them and pray for Miriam. And do you know what God said as Moses prayed for her?

God said of Miriam, “If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.” She was put out of the camp and quarantined for seven days, to show that God was very displeased with what she had done. Evidently, she was the ringleader in encouraging Aaron as well.

But that was not all. Korah, the son of Izhar, with Dathan and Abiram and On, took men. The Reubenites had never been involved with the Levites, but now they thought they could be. They rose up before Moses with two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown. They gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron, saying, “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?”

This was the same attitude as that of Aaron and Miriam. When Moses heard it, he fell upon his face. God sent fire from heaven and consumed those two hundred and fifty men with their censers. Then the earth opened and swallowed Dathan, Abiram, Korah, and their families alive into the pit.

What were they doing? They were challenging the man whom God had indeed chosen. It seems that people never understand that to challenge the man who is serving God according to God's Word is the same as challenging God. Whether you are a believer or an unbeliever, you cannot strike out at God. The only one you can strike out at is the one who represents Him, whom you can see. Do you follow that?

That is why our Lord said in the New Testament, “If you receive him that I send, you receive me. If you receive me, you receive him that sent me.” The opposite is also true. If you reject the one Jesus Christ sends, you reject Jesus Christ, and you also reject the Father who sent Him. Moses supposed that they would understand, but they did not understand. That is exactly where most people are. They

do not understand, nor will they understand because of their sin, rebellion, and wickedness.

Applications: The Danger of Supposing Upon God

Here is really the crux of this message. When folks do not understand, they not only criticize; they mistreat. It is impossible to help those who do not understand, those who will not understand.

Do you know what our Lord said? Matthew 13, verses 57 and 58, in reference to Jesus Christ, begins like this: “And they were offended in him.” They were upset, angry, and mad at Jesus Christ. They were offended in Him, but Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.” And listen to this: “And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” You just cannot help folks who do not understand.

Then He said the same thing in Mark 6 and verse 4: “But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”

I have relatives who, I know for a fact, have had problems and issues. Hardly any of them will ever call me, though they know me. Of course, that may be why: they know where I stand, and I am not necessarily going to condone their sin and wickedness. Yet I receive calls for help from people all over this country and from outside the country. Alice can tell you, and anybody around the house can tell you, that I am on the phone an awful lot—not just with other pastors, but with other Christians. Two pastors, perhaps three, called me this week about some of the situations we are facing right now. All I am saying is this: our Lord understands and knows when He said, “A prophet”—the man who stands for truth—“is not without honour, save in his own country, in his own home, among his own kindred.”

So these Israelites in Moses’ time were poor, blighted, and unenlightened in mind. The only thing they could do was continue to suffer and do without. It did not matter how badly Moses wanted to help them or how desperately he wanted to deliver them. They did not want to be delivered; they did not want to be helped. You just cannot help people who will not understand.

Did God use Moses? The answer is yes. Did God use Moses when he slew the Egyptian in saving the Hebrew? The answer is yes.

As we read Exodus chapter two, I told you that I would come back and comment on the word "smite." Moses spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew. The word "smiting" literally means to kill, to slaughter. The Egyptian was not just having a little wrestling match with the Hebrew, nor was it merely a few punches. He was trying to murder the Hebrew. Moses then killed the Egyptian in defending the Hebrew.

Now, did God use Moses to deliver Israel at that time? The answer is no. Moses was forty years too early. Moses was not yet qualified to be used by God. What do I mean? God does not use Pharaohs; He uses shepherds. David was a shepherd. Our Lord sent Moses into the wilderness for forty years to learn to be a shepherd. He had to learn meekness, submission, and obedience. It took him forty years in the wilderness to learn to lead the people.

Let me say it very plainly: God is not going to use a proud, arrogant, haughty, self-willed man. God does not use men who want to have and follow their own agenda. He is not going to use men who are going to do things their way or who will not submit to Him. The truth of the matter is that we often run ahead of God. We are so impatient and so desirous of having our wills and our way that we are unwilling to wait upon Him.

One of the simplest lessons that you need to learn is also one of the most difficult lessons: God is not in any hurry. He has everything under control. We look around and say, "Whoa, everything's falling apart." We really need to read Psalm 2. The kings of the earth gather themselves together against the Lord and against His anointed, trying to overthrow God and His Word. What is God's response? "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."

Pastor Bob McCurry used to say, and it is absolutely true, "God is the slowest person you'll ever get hooked up with." That is the reason why God is not in any hurry. He has everything under control.

Do I want to see O Babylon fall? The answer is yes. Do I want to see the wicked fall into the pit which they have dug for others? The

answer is yes. However, I cannot force God's hand. I cannot make Him adhere to my schedule. Neither can I make God follow my timeline. I can say, "Lord," like the woman who understood impatience was a sin and was asking God for patience: "Lord, I want patience and I want it now."

That is the way we are. We want God to do something, and we want Him to do something right now. Most of us try to run ahead of God. We do not need to run ahead of Him, and we do not need to run behind Him. We need to run with Him. When we run with Him, we are always going to be successful. We will always have victory, because God is going to perform His will in His way and in His time. If we wait upon Him, we are going to accomplish everything that He has ordained for us to accomplish. Our problem is that we suppose upon God.

I could say, if I visited Steve and Lorraine and it was supper time, I suppose that Lorraine would fix supper for me. Now, she may not. That was just my supposition. I was deeming that, thinking that, and I might go away hungry. But if I went away hungry, I could stop somewhere and buy something. It is one thing to suppose upon someone's generosity and grace when there is no real outcome. But when you start supposing that God wants you to do something powerful and life-changing, like Moses, and you are too early, there are horrible consequences. Moses supposed that the time was right for deliverance. It was not. Moses supposed deliverance would be by his hand and by his means. It was not. Moses supposed that his brethren would understand. They did not. We get in trouble when we suppose upon God.

What we need to do is study His Word, find out His principles, promises, and precepts, live by them, and wait upon Him for leadership, guidance, and direction. There is a sin in supposing that we are on God's time and timetable when it is our time, timetable, and schedule that we truly want and desire. Do not suppose upon God.

Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we bow to You this day. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, and all Your grace. Give us Your Word, Your precepts, and Your promises. Help us to live by Thy Word and direction. Thank You for Your grace in the

Lord Jesus Christ, for the bodily resurrection, and for life eternal in Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 31

Do You Want To Be Saved?

January 20, 2021

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 3:1-8 (KJV)

Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 3. Since it is a very short psalm, we will read all eight verses. Also mark 2 Samuel, because we will be looking at several passages there later.

“Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God. Selah.”

Every time you see the little word Selah, it is a Hebrew word that literally means pause. Stop and think about what has just been written.

“But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone; thou hast broken the

> teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah."

Introduction: The Question Repeated

> So here is my question: Do you want to be saved? I want you to think about that question. Your response would be, "Well, Pastor, I'm already a Christian." So I will ask it another way: Do you want to be saved? You might respond, "Well, I've already told you I have been regenerated and converted." So I will ask you one more time: Do you want to be saved? By now, you are probably confused and wondering why I keep repeating this question over and over.

There is a real reason for that. When the average Christian hears the word salvation or saved, he immediately thinks of what you and I would call soul salvation or spiritual salvation. But salvation does not necessarily need to be spiritual or soul salvation in order to be salvation. Neither does the word saved, as it is frequently used in the Bible, refer to what you and I would call spiritual or soul salvation.

What we have done in our day and time is reverse the thinking of the first-century Judahites. For instance, if you happened to be in Judea around Jerusalem, say around 50 or 60 A.D., and asked one, "Do you want to be saved?" the response would be, "Well, yes, of course." But when they said yes, they were referring to a military salvation, because they did not want to be under the control of the Roman empire. If you asked them, "Well, do you want to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved? Have your sins forgiven?" they would answer, "Well, of course not. We don't recognize Jesus Christ as Lord."

So what we have done today is reverse the thinking of those Judahites. We now tend to think that every time we hear the word salvation or saved, it has to refer to spiritual or soul salvation. That is not true, because the words salvation and saved are used in many different ways in the Bible.

Biblical Examples of Non-Spiritual Salvation

Hold Psalm 3, but turn to Philippians chapter 1. In Philippians 1 and verse 19, the apostle Paul said, “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ.” Paul said, “I know that this shall turn to my salvation.” Was the apostle Paul unsaved? Was the apostle Paul a lost man? Was he unconverted?

And the answer is, of course not. He was saved. He was converted. How, then, could he say in verse 19, "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer"? You have to understand the context. The apostle Paul was in prison. In verse 12 he says, "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel"; his bonds in Christ were manifest in all the palace and in other places, and many brethren, waxing confident by his bonds, were much more bold to speak the word without fear.

"Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

The salvation Paul was talking about in Philippians 1:19 was deliverance from prison. He said, "I know this will get me out of prison." Salvation in this context is simply a deliverance from prison.

In Exodus 14, Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt, but they were hemmed in: the Red Sea was in front of them, the wilderness on either side, and Pharaoh and his army behind them. Moses said, "Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show you today. For the Egyptians whom you've seen today, you shall see no more forever." When he said, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," he was talking about a military salvation, because God was going to destroy Pharaoh and his armies.

So very clearly, the word salvation had nothing to do with what you and I would simply refer to as a spiritual or soul salvation. The same thing is found in 1 Samuel chapter 11, verse 13, where the Ammonites had been defeated by the Judahites. King Saul said, "There shall not be a man put to death this day. For today, the Lord has brought salvation in Israel." What salvation? A military salvation. The Ammonites had been defeated. The statement, then, refers to a military salvation.

The same thing is true in 2 Chronicles, chapter 20, verse 17, because the Ammonites and the Moabites and some others had attacked the people of God. God said to Jehoshaphat the king, "You shall not need to fight in this battle. Set yourselves, stand you still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you. O Judah and Jerusalem, fear not, nor be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them for the Lord will be with you."

When they went out the next day, the Ammonites and the Moabites and the others had turned upon each other, killed themselves, and killed each other. They were there for about seven days, just stripping the slain. But what did God say? "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," which was, in that instance, a military salvation.

In Psalm 14, verse 7, a passage also found in Psalm 137, you actually read about a political salvation: "Oh, that the salvation of Israel will come out of Zion. When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad." When he says, "Oh, that the salvation of Israel will come out of Zion," he is talking about a political salvation—that is, being delivered from the wicked and from the enemies ruling over them.

In Psalm 91, salvation refers not just to political or military salvation, but also to a prosperous, profitable, and healthy salvation, referring to a long life and good things with the blessings of God: "With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

What is he talking about? He is going to live a long time. He is going to be blessed, have a good life, and be prosperous. His life will be profitable. Salvation here simply refers to that. Now look back to Psalm 74, verse 12, to see how broad the term salvation is: “For God

is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth." When the Bible says that God is King and is working salvation in the midst of the earth, it does not necessarily refer only to spiritual or soul salvation, but to all different kinds of salvation. There is political salvation, military salvation, economic salvation, and all kinds of salvation.

We can be saved from our enemies, from anything and everything that oppresses us. So I can ask my question again: Do you want to be saved? When you stop and think about that, the question is very appropriate for today. There is personal, political, military, economic, and spiritual salvation, as well as what you and I would call salvation from ill health and a number of other evils.

Context of Psalm 3: David Fleeing Absalom

Now, I want you to understand Psalm 3 and look back at it, because you must understand the context. Once you begin to see the context, you will see how applicable this Psalm is for today. If you want to know why David wrote this Psalm, you need to look at the heading. Most of you will have headings. Right under Psalm 3, it says, "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son." This Psalm was written when David was fleeing from Absalom. Clearly, the salvation spoken of in this Psalm refers to political salvation and military salvation. Again, when you read the word salvation in this Psalm, it does not refer to what you and I would normally think of as spiritual soul salvation. Now look at verse 1, but first find 2 Samuel chapter 15 and hold 2 Samuel, because we will return there several times in order to understand this Psalm.

In Psalm 3:1, David begins, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me." That verse is explained in 2 Samuel 15:12-13: "And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices." Then, "And the conspiracy was strong and the people increased continually with Absalom. And there came a messenger to David saying, the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom." Thus, when David says, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me," the reason is obvious: there was a conspiracy to overthrow him. Many were

indeed rising against him, and this caused many people to castigate David. Verse 2 says, "Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God." In other words, people were saying it was over for David. He was done for, out of the kingdom, going to be killed and overrun.

Remember the animosity, sarcasm, downright vulgarity, and hatred hurled at David and his family as he fled Jerusalem. In 2 Samuel 16:5-8, we see one illustration. "And when the king, when King David came to Bahurim, behold, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera. He came forth and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David and at all the servants of the King David and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. And thus said Shimei when he cursed, 'Come out, come out, thou bloody man, thou man of Belial.'" A man of Belial is a man of the devil. He continued, "The Lord has returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned. And the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son, and behold, thou art taken in thy mischief because thou art a bloody man."

David's Enemies and His Trust in God

Shimei was cursing David and, I might add, lying through his teeth. David had spared King Saul and Jonathan; he had spared Mephibosheth, and he did not even slay Ishbosheth, who took the throne. Yet Shimei called him a bloody man.

And wrongly so, I think, but that shows how much hatred and vulgarity was being cursed upon him and placed upon his head. Other passages of Scripture also demonstrate this fact. For instance, in Psalm 42:3, David said, "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" In other words, if you are God's man, why are you running? Why is He not helping you? Why are you not in the palace?

He said it again in Psalm 42:10: "As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; saying unto me daily, Where is thy God?" In other words, if you are right with God and God is right, He ought to be doing something to deliver you. When you look at the

first two verses, you understand that the nation is basically rising up against David and cursing him.

Now pay close attention to verses 3 through 5. David says, "But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory and the lifter up of my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." In spite of the vast conspiracy, and in spite of the fact that David's own counselor, Ahithophel, had joined the rebellion with Absalom, David's own son had run him from the throne, endeavoring to steal the kingdom and murder his father and undoubtedly the rest of the family as well. It is astounding that David could sleep at all. Yet he said, "I laid me down and slept. I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." Can you imagine David sleeping well with such turmoil going on?

The reason for David's beneficial sleep was, first and foremost, the mercy, goodness, and grace of God. Secondly, David had undoubtedly asked for such rest because he was under intense pressure. Thirdly, involved in this rest was his acquiescence to the will of God. His submission was this: "Lord, if you want me off the throne and out of Jerusalem, wonderful. If you want me in the wilderness, wonderful. Lord, I'm willing to be wherever you want me to be." David also sensed and understood that this was part and parcel of the consequences of his sin. God had told him in 2 Samuel 12, "You did this thing secretly, but I'm gonna do this before all Israel under the sun. Everybody's gonna see, everybody's gonna know." David understood, in some sense, that this was part of his reaping what he had sown.

Evidently, he had a good night's sleep, and he said, "I laid me down and slept and I awaked for the Lord sustained me." Then he said, "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about."

Consider the counsel that Hushai gave to Absalom in 2 Samuel 17: "Therefore, I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee from Dan even to Beersheba." Dan was the northernmost tribe, and Beersheba was the southernmost city. Hushai counseled that all Israel be gathered from Dan even to Beersheba, "as the sand that is by the sea for multitude and that thou go to the battle in thine own

persons.” Then he said, “We’ll come upon him as the dew will destroy him and everybody there. If he’s got into a city, we’ll pull it down.”

The entirety of the nation, from Dan even to Beersheba, was gathered together against David. No wonder David said, “I’m not going to be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.” Yet he was not cast down.

When you understand the context of Psalm 3, consider the uneasiness and distress caused by having a child who was seeking to murder you and destroy everything you had ever raised. David had that, with a whole lot more power arrayed against him.

Years ago, I was talking to a man whose son had gotten into drugs and was a dopehead and a drunkard. The father told me, "My wife and I, his mother, have to sleep with a loaded pistol by our beds to protect ourselves from our own son, who has threatened to murder us not once, but on numerous occasions." He had been arrested and thrown in jail innumerable times. The father said, "If something doesn't happen, I'll probably end up having to kill my own son."

Think about this, because this is what David is facing. It is not only his own son; the nation has turned against him as well. Clearly, David is in a great deal of difficulty. So look what he praises in verses 7 and 8: "Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord. Thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah."

It is important to note and emphasize again that, in the context of Psalm 3, the salvation referred to is a political and military defeat of David's enemies. Absalom and all his cohorts were not only David's enemies at this point; they were also the enemies of God. They were seeking to overthrow the man God had ordained, the man God himself had picked and placed upon the throne to lead Israel at that particular time.

The War for the Kingdom

Everything explained from Psalm 3 makes it almost impossible to miss its application to our present day. In this country, we are in a

state of turmoil, upheaval, chaos, and violence—not only in our nations and states, but in our communities as well. The enemies of life, liberty, freedom, and economic stability abound on every hand. It seems as if ten thousands have gathered themselves together against the people of God. It is men of great wealth and power, in positions of authority, who are seeking to overthrow and overturn everything this country was ever built upon.

We are living in a time much like the time David was going through at this particular point. Let me emphasize this: Psalm 3 reveals a very important truth. The war between Absalom and David was a war over the kingdom. It was a fight to determine who would control the kingdom, a fight for dominion.

The issue is exactly the same today. It is a war between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil, a fight between that which is good and that which is evil, a battle between God and the enemy. So let me ask this question again: Do you want to be saved?

Now that we understand salvation can be far more than soul and spiritual salvation, I could ask you another way: Do you want to be delivered from under the heel of the wicked? Do you want to be delivered from under the control and dominion of the wicked? Do you want to be delivered or saved from the persecution, prosecution, and oppression of the wicked? If you answer yes, then we need to look more closely at Psalm 3, because David is rejoicing in God's salvation. I want to show you two things, and then I am going to make some applications.

Learning to Pray: Desperate and Imprecatory Prayers

First of all, if we really and truly understand the battle and the fight, we need to learn to do two things. Number one, we need to learn to pray. Look at verse 1. David makes a declaration: "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me?" He is already praying; he is already talking to the Lord. "Many are they that rise up against me?" Skip down to verse 4. Look what he said: "I cried unto the Lord with my voice." "And he heard me out of his holy hill." So David is praying.

When I say we must learn to pray, I do not mean that we pray something like, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul

to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." There is certainly nothing wrong with that little prayer. I was taught it as a boy, and most children were taught it as little kids. But that is not the kind of praying we need. Neither am I talking about praying some small, insincere, insignificant mumbo-jumbo and calling it praying. Desperate times and dangerous situations call for desperate praying. You get desperate and begin to do like David. David said in verse 4, "I cried unto the Lord." I screamed unto the Lord. I let my voice be loud unto the Lord.

When you stop and think about desperate people and how they prayed, think about Peter sinking beneath the waves. He did not say, “Now, Lord, in this situation, I would like to ask you.” No, he cried, “Lord, save me,” because he realized that if the Lord did not help him, he was a goner.

How about the Philippian jailer? He was about to fall on his own sword, supposing those prisoners had fled, and ran in crying, “What must I do to be saved?” How about the man with the demon-possessed boy, who cried, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief”? How about the Syro-Phoenician woman? “Lord, help me.” Our Lord turned and said, “It’s not fit to cast the children’s bread to dogs.” She answered, “But Lord, the little dogs eat of the scraps from under the table.” Our Lord said, “O woman, great is thy faith.”

What about the lepers? They cried to the Lord. I like blind Bartimaeus. When our Lord was passing by, he heard all the noise and asked what it was. They said, “Jesus is passing by.” He began to cry, “Lord, thou son of David, have mercy upon me.” They told him to be quiet, but the Bible says that he cried even louder. Why were these people crying? Why were they shouting out? Because they were desperate. They realized that if the Lord Jesus Christ did not help them, they were goners. It was over. That is what I am talking about: desperate praying.

In desperate praying, we have to learn to pray the imprecatory prayers listed in the Bible. I have four messages on imprecatory praying. I am not going to preach those messages today, but I will tell you what an imprecation is: a curse. An imprecation is an invocation—that is, a prayer of judgment, calamity, or curse upon one’s enemies or the enemies of God.

Look at what he said in verse 7. He prays, “Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.” To break the teeth is to destroy. To break the jaw is to destroy. You cannot eat if you have a broken jaw; you cannot talk if you have a broken jaw.

You usually cannot even fight; you cannot do anything if your teeth are knocked down in your throat and your jaw is broken. This is what David is asking God to do. Psalm 58 is an imprecatory prayer, and its final verse says, “So that a man shall say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous: verily, there is a God that judges in the earth.” Truly, there is a reward for the righteous, and truly there is a God who judges in the earth.

In other words, David says, “I want everybody to see that it does pay to live a godly life. And God does judge the wicked, and he does so in time and history as well.”

Look in Psalm 9 and verse 16. Here is an interesting truth: “The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.” The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth. Men are going to know God either in salvation or in condemnation. They will either know him in grace, mercy, goodness, and kindness, or they will know him in wrath, anger, and justice. God is known by the judgment which he executeth.

“The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.” In other words, he thinks he is laying the snare for the righteous, or even to catch God, but he falls into his own snare. God says he shall bring his plans down upon his own pate, that is, the top of his head. Obviously, God is a judge in the earth.

When we are talking about praying these imprecatory prayers, we are talking about praying out of desperation, realizing that if we do not have deliverance, if we do not have salvation, we are the ones who will suffer. We are the ones who will be condemned, oppressed, and persecuted.

Psalm 69 is a good illustration of imprecatory praying. This passage is applied to our Lord and to Judas in the New Testament, but David was praying this here as well. In verse 21, it was applied to

our Lord: “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink,” which they did on the cross. Then comes the prayer: “Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.” Whatever is good for them, let it entrap them. “Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not,” so that they fall into every pit and stumble over everything in the way, “and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold on them. Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents,” that is, take their lives. “For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness.” Wow. Do not save them.

“Let them be blotted out of the book of the living,” take their lives now, “and not be written with the righteous.” That is a prayer. I do not think you will find this one prayed in too many churches today. Psalm 104:35 says, “Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more.” Then, “Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord.” When was the last time you heard a preacher pray, “Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more”? What is he praying? He is praying for their destruction. That is exactly what he is praying for.

So many people will try to say, “Well, all that's Old Testament.” We have one Bible, not two Bibles. The Old Testament is just as much the word of God as the New Testament, but I will show you imprecatory praying in the New Testament as well. In 1 Corinthians 16:22, the apostle Paul writes, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.” What in the world does that mean? Most of us have heard the word Maranatha. It refers to the coming of Christ. Christ is returning. Christ is coming. But what about the word Anathema? It is a Greek word that means to be set apart for certain and sure destruction. It means to be doomed. It means to be damned.

So here is what he actually prays in verse 22: “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be doomed and damned and marked and set aside for certain destruction at the coming of Christ.” That's

what he said. In Galatians 1:8, you see how Anathema is translated: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

Let him be Anathema. If anybody preaches anything other than what you have already received, let him be cursed of God. Let him be set aside for certain destruction. Let him be doomed. Let him be damned. And he repeats it in verse 9: “As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” Let him be doomed, damned, set aside, marked for certain destruction. Wow. That's imprecatory praying, and the apostle Paul is praying that.

So when I say, based upon Psalm 3, that we need to learn to pray, I mean we need to get serious with God. We need to get down to business, and we need to start asking God to do what needs to be done, because God can take care of the situation. The very first thing we need is that we must learn to pray. We must learn to pray the imprecatory prayers. Now go back to Psalm 3, because here is the second thing, and I am going to tie these together and, Lord willing, make some applications.

Learning to Plead: 'Arise, O Lord'

Already in verse 1, David is praying; in verse 4, he is praying. So we must learn to pray. The second thing is that we must learn to plead. In verse 7 he says, "Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly." So David pleads, "Arise, O Lord." What is David asking God to do when he asks Him to arise?

J. A. Alexander says, "This is a common scriptural mode of calling upon God to manifest his presence and his power, either in wrath or in favor by natural anthropomorphism." Anthropos is the Greek word for man. Morphe is the Greek word for form. So anthropomorphic simply means man-form speaking. That is all it means. It is a form of speech placed in our way of thinking so that we can understand it.

He continues, "by a natural anthropomorphism that is asking God to arise, He describes the intervals of such manifestations as periods of inaction or slumber out of which he is besought to arouse himself. Save me, even me, of whom they say there is no help for him in God. Save me, O my God, mine by covenant and mutual engagement to whom I therefore have a right to look for deliverance and protection."

"This confidence is warranted, moreover, by experience. For thou hast in former times smitten all mine enemies, without exception, on the cheek or jaw, an act at once violent and insulting." Thus, asking God to arise means asking Him to manifest Himself either in favor or in wrath. It is an anthropomorphic expression when there has been a period or time of inaction, such as when one goes to sleep. You are not doing anything but sleeping; it is a period of inaction, a period of time when you are just lying there.

But there is more to this phrase than simply thinking of a time of inaction. We know that God is the Judge of all the earth. In fact, Abraham asked, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do that which is right?" Everybody understands that when a judge comes into the courtroom, he walks in, and usually most people stand. Why do most people stand when the judge walks in?

He used to, the judge walked in carrying the Bible, and they stood out of reverence for the Bible. Then, of course, the Bible was kicked out, and now they want people to stand in reverence to them, is what it amounts to. But when the judge comes in, he sits down and listens to the case. He does not arise until he issues the verdict. It is over. So when you consider that God is the Judge and you are saying, “Arise, O Lord,” you are saying, “Issue the verdict.” And, Lord, execute the verdict. Let us get it on.

Now, let me show you. When God arises, He comes to our aid by defeating our enemies. Turn back in your Bibles to Numbers chapter 10. We are going to go through several verses very quickly and show you the implication of asking God to arise. Here is what we are pleading: “Arise, O Lord.” Notice Numbers chapter 10 and verse 35: “And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, ‘Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee.’”

When the ark was settled in the tabernacle, there was inaction, so to speak, because God was there simply protecting and looking over the people. But now they are marching through the wilderness. As they march, they pick up the ark, and Moses says, “Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee.”

Now look in your Bibles to Psalm 7 and verse 6. Again, David prays, “Arise, O Lord, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies, and awake for me”—there is inaction—“awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.” Now watch: “Arise, O Lord, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies.”

I have told people that I am not going to go over all of it, but I only saw my father ready to fight two times in his life. One time, when I was a child of eight or nine, we were in a packed courtroom because something was going on that had all the farmers upset. My father and I were sitting toward the back of the courtroom, and the county agent was speaking. By name, he called my father a liar.

My father stood up, stepped by me, and started walking straight to the county agent. He never said a word, just kept walking. As he got within about six feet, the county agent backed up, started apologizing, and said, "No, Mr. Weaver didn't lie. I'm the liar. I'm lying." When he admitted that he was the liar, Dad simply turned around, came back, and sat down.

What I am trying to say is this: look at what he is saying here in Psalm 7, verse 6: "Arise, O Lord," watch, "Arise, O Lord, in thine anger." I am sure my dad was kind of upset. You mess with a man's wife or a man's child, and if he is sitting, when he gets up, you had better be ready to fight or flee, because that is exactly what David is praying. He is saying, "Arise, O Lord."

Look again at Psalm 7:6: "Arise, O Lord, in thine anger. Lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies. Awake for me. Watch to the judgment that thou hast commanded." In other words, we are asking God to do that which He has already determined to do.

Psalm 44:23 is one of the passages where Mr. Alexander would get his definition of asking God to arise. It says, "Awake, why

sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off forever." David is asking God to do something after a period of inactivity. Now look at the wonderful passage in Psalm 68, beginning with verse 1. It says, "Let God arise," or, "Arise, O God"—it is one and the same. What will happen when God arises? "Let his enemies be scattered. Let them also that hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away." It is easy to drive smoke away with a fan or with any air movement.

“As wax melted before the fire.” If you do not think wax will melt, put it in front of the fire. “So that the wicked perish at the presence of God, but let the righteous be glad and let them rejoice before God. Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.” So he says, “Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered.” What is going to happen when God rises up, when God issues that verdict, when God arises in anger to execute that verdict? His enemies are going to be scattered.

Now turn to Psalm 94, beginning there in verse 1. Watch carefully: “O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth.” Here it is: “Lift up thyself”—that is, arise—“thou judge of the earth.” What is God going to do when he arises? “Render a reward to the proud. Lord, how long shall the wicked? How long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things?”

"And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves. They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger and murder the fatherless. Yet they say the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." What is he asking God to do? "Lift up yourself, rise up, O God. Execute your wrath upon the ungodly."

In 1 Chronicles chapter 16, verse 35, the Bible says, "And say, 'Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks unto thy holy name, and glory in thy praise.'" What did he say? "Save us, O God of our salvation, gather us together and deliver us from the heathen." That is what he said.

Psalm 17, beginning with verse 6, says, "I've called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my

speech. Show thy marvelous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of thine eye. Hide me under the shadow of thy wings." Then he says, "From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about." Verse 7 says, "Show thy marvelous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand." Salvation in this context is deliverance from the oppression of enemies and from the wicked who are trying to destroy us.

In Psalm 18, verses 1 through 3, David says, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust, my buckler and the horn of my salvation in my high tower. I will call upon the Lord who's worthy to be praised. So shall I be saved from mine enemies."

Salvation can be a military salvation, a political salvation, or a physical salvation. It can be any type of salvation.

One last passage before the applications is Joel chapter 2, verse 17. This is a tremendous prayer, a prayer that we need to really be praying.

The Bible says, "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep before the porch and the altar that is in the temple and let them say, ‘Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach that the heathen should rule over us. Wherefore should they say among the people, ‘Where is their God?’" They are saying, "Lord, don't give your heritage to the heathen. Don't let the wicked rule over us. Don't let them reproach us by saying, ‘Where is thy God?’" Show them where our God is by overthrowing and defeating them.

Applications: Look to God, Obey, and Cry Out

Look in Psalm 3 and notice the difference between the beginning and the ending of the song. It begins with complaints about the strength and malice of David's enemies, but concludes with exaltation in the power and grace of God. Verse 1 says, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise against me." The conclusion is, "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people."

Here is the principle: If we want to be discouraged, downhearted, depressed, and defeated, all we have to do is look at our enemies. They are multitudinous and mighty; they have the money and the power. But if we want to be encouraged and strengthened for the battle, we need to look at our God, because he is omnipotent— all powerful; omniscient— all knowing; and omnipresent— everywhere at once in the totality of his being.

There is absolutely none that can defeat, overthrow, or stop him. He cannot fail. David began this Psalm by complaining about all the wicked men gathered against him, and ended by saying, "Lord, salvation is in your hand." There is no reason to be disheartened when we look at the Lord, his grace, and his mercy, because we always triumph in the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the greatest truths to learn from Psalm 3 is simple: salvation belongeth unto the Lord. Whether we are talking about spiritual salvation, economic salvation, familial salvation—the salvation of the family—or ill health, salvation in any shape, form, or fashion belongs to the Lord.

It is in His hands. Here is the second application: if we truly desire to be saved, to be delivered from our enemies, we must not only learn to pray and to plead; we must learn to be obedient and faithful to Him. God is not going to bless a disobedient people. He is not going to bless a disobedient child. Neither would you. We have to learn to be obedient.

Here is the third one. I want you to listen carefully. I believe that one of our problems in this country is that we have not been oppressed sufficiently. We have not been persecuted enough. What do I mean by that? The Christians in this country do not yet have their backs up against the wall. They still have just a tiny little bit of freedom, just a tiny little bit of fortitude—not much—but we have not learned that God hears His people when they pray and when they plead.

In Luke chapter 18, verse 1, we read: “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” Why should we always pray and not faint? Here is why: “Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man.” So, you look at the ruling in the Supreme Court this past week. Evidently they do not regard God; therefore they do not fear man,

except maybe the riots. They have no regard for God. If you have no regard for God, you will have no regard for that which is right or holy. This judge did not.

“And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, ‘Avenge me of mine adversary.’” That is, give me justice. Do what is right. “But he would not for a while. But afterward, he said within himself, ‘Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’” In other words, I am going to give her what she wants—justice—just to get her off my back.

Now, our Lord makes this application Himself: “Now, the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unjust judge said. Do you think God is like that unjust judge?’” Of course not. “‘And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.’”

The problem is we're not crying, we're not praying, we're not pleading. God is more than willing to deliver us. But we don't have our backs up against the wall. We're not desperate enough yet. Some may be, but the average Christian is still just floating along.

In Psalm 35, David isn't only pleading; he's asking God to plead. "Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive against me." Lord, you take it up for me. I've been pleading with you now, Lord; you plead my cause with them that strive against me.

"Fight against them that fight against me." Look what he asked him to do. "Take hold of shield and buckler and stand up for mine help. Draw out also the spear and stop the way against them that persecute me. Say unto my soul, 'I am thy salvation.'" Again, it is a personal and military salvation. "Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let them be as the chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the Lord chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the Lord persecute them. Why? For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hid catch himself: into that very

destruction let him fall. And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in his salvation."

Salvation can be political. It can be military. It can be economic. It can be personal. It can be spiritual. But in this passage and a multitude of others, salvation is deliverance from the enemies of Christ. "Plead my cause." We need to learn to pray. We need to learn to plead.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before thee this day. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. Help us, Lord, to love thee, to live for thee. Teach us to pray. Teach us to plead. And plead our cause, we pray, O Lord, through the mercies of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, amen.

CHAPTER 32

Superstition, Luck, and Idolatry

November 19, 2023

Introduction: The Question of Superstition

In Judges 17, beginning with verse 1, we read: “And there was a man of Mount Ephraim whose name was Micah, and he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursest and spakest also of in mine ears. Behold, the silver is with me. I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son. And when he had returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I have wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord from my hand for my son to make a graven image and a molten image. Now, therefore, I will restore it unto thee. Yet he restored the money to his mother, and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to the founder who made thereof a graven image and a molten image.”

“And they were in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod and a teraphim, and consecrated

one of his sons to become his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

The Biblical Definition of Superstition

Are you superstitious? Do you believe in luck, chance, fate, or fortune? Many professing Christians have not realized that all such is nothing less than idolatry. Let me show you. In Acts 17, verses 22 and 23, the apostle Paul is on Mars Hill, and he says to these Athenians: "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For I passed by and beheld your devotions. I found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God, whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

Interestingly, the Greek word for superstition is almost impossible to pronounce: δεισιδαιμονεστέρους. It literally means a reverencing of the gods, or to be pious and religious. Thus, what the Apostle Paul told the Athenians was that they were too religious, or too superstitious in a bad sense. They worshipped so many false gods, just in case they had ignorantly left one out, that they even had an altar to the unknown God.

The truth is that this is the God the average professing Christian worships today: the unknown God, the God of his own imagination, the God of his own education, instead of the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible through the Lord Jesus Christ. The only God who exists is the God of the Bible, the God who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. All others are false gods.

The Greek word for superstitious is made up of two Greek words. The first is δειλός, which refers to what we would call fearfulness or timidity. The second is δαίμων, from which we get the biblical words demons or devils. Literally, according to Acts chapter 17, a superstitious person is one who is fearful of devils and demons; hence, he does uncommon and senseless things.

Years ago, I read about one man asking another whether he was superstitious. The man said, "Of course not." When asked what he would do if a black cat crossed his path, he replied, "I'd just throw

salt over my left shoulder and keep walking." Obviously, he was superstitious. The truth is that many people today are superstitious.

Idolatry as Fellowship with Demons

Two passages should come to mind when considering what the word superstitious means. In 1 Corinthians 10:20–21, the Apostle Paul says, "But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, or the unsaved, they sacrifice to devils and not to God. And I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils or demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. Ye cannot be partaker of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." He is saying that those who are ignorant of the one true and living God are doing nothing but worshiping demons and devils.

First Timothy 4:1 says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils or doctrines of demons." It may shock you to find out that there is a devilish doctrine.

In fact, the Greek word is διδασκαλία, which literally refers to teaching, to that which is taught or instructed. It is doctrine. So the Scripture is telling us that there is indeed a devilish or demonic doctrine that is contrary to the Word of God.

With that in mind, consider what God says to His people in Deuteronomy 18:10: "There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire"—that would be dedicating or offering his child for sacrifice to Molech—"or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer."

God's Prohibition of Occult Practices

Do you know what a necromancer is? The Greek word νεκρός means dead. A necromancer is someone who talks to the dead, or at least says they do. Necrotic tissue is dead tissue. Necrophilia means someone who is in love with the dead or loves the dead. Here is the necromancer. God says they are not to be among you.

Verse 12 says, “For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord, and because of these abominations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God, for these nations which thou shalt possess hearken unto observers of times and unto diviners, but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.” Isn’t that amazing? The only reason we are not in idolatry and wickedness like that is that God has certainly not allowed it.

Horoscopes, charms, the planets, the stars, the animals—all of these things are mere superstitions. They do not define our lives, determine our lives, or determine our actions. Let me say this again very plainly: there is no such thing as luck, chance, fate, or fortune in a world ruled by God. God is absolutely sovereign, and the only thing that comes to pass in time is God's sovereign decree, which He determined before the world ever began.

When you say that the stars in their courses determine how you act, no, they do not. If you say, "I'll do like the king of Assyria, and I'll kill an animal and look into the liver and see what the liver says," that is all hogwash. That is all idolatry. If there is anything outside of God, anything over which God does not have control, then God is not God. That thing outside of God over which He has no control would be God himself. So just put her down. God is absolutely sovereign.

Micah's Idolatrous Household

When you talk about luck, chance, fate, and fortune, you are talking about things that really and truly do not exist. By the way, Fortuna was a Roman goddess. We are not talking about fortune, fate, luck, or chance; we are talking about the providence of God.

Judges 17 and 18 are, in one sense, exceedingly comical and funny, and in another sense, exceedingly sad and serious. They are comical because of the stupidity and senselessness of the actors, and sad because of their consequences. Judges 17 begins with an unusual theft: a son has stolen 1,100 shekels of silver from his own mother. He comes to her, confesses, and says, "Look, the 1,100 shekels is with me. I took them."

What made him confess? That is an interesting thing. Since this message deals with superstition, luck, and idolatry, look in Judges 17:2: "And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursest, and spakest also in mine ears, Behold the silver is with me; I took it." She had placed a curse upon anyone who had taken the silver. Since we are dealing with idolatry and superstition, which you will find in this chapter, in all probability that prompted him to confess, "I've taken this money. I've taken it." Of course, she said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son."

We should look in verses 3 and 4, because the mother now makes an astounding confession. "And when he restored the 1,100 shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord from my hand for my son to make a graven image and a molten image. Now, therefore, I will restore it unto thee. Yet he restored the money unto his mother and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to the founder and made thereof a graven image and a molten image. And they were in the house of Micah."

She said, "I had wholly dedicated silver unto the Lord." The word Lord is in all caps. Anytime you see Lord in all caps in our Bibles, it is the sacred personal name of God, Yahweh, which is translated as Jehovah or Jehovah in our Bibles. She knew the personal sacred name of God. Then, in the same breath, she said she had taken this silver that was dedicated to Him to make a graven image and a molten image, which was absolutely contrary to God and contrary to His Word.

Exodus 20:3–6 makes this exceedingly plain. God said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Now watch it. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them."

"For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." So God says you are not to

make any graven image of anything that is in heaven, anything that is in the earth, or anything that is in the water. Yet this is what she dedicated the money for: to do that which is absolutely contrary to God.

Notice verse 6: “In those days there was no king in Israel. But every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” That is basically the theme of this book. You will find the same verse occurring again in Judges chapter 21 and verse 25. Anytime we do things that are right in our own eyes, especially when contrary to Scripture, we are guilty of idolatry. We see this same contradiction in professing Christianity today.

Look at the politicians. How many politicians confess to be Christians until they get in office, and then all of their legislation is contrary to Christ, contrary to the Bible, and contrary to Christianity in general? When you look around at the church, you see the same thing. People profess to be Christian who live as if God had never spoken, as if God does not exist. You go into the average church, and you do not really hear the Word of God proclaimed. You might hear a good program, good music, or entertainment, but you do not truly hear the Word of God.

The Worthless Levite as a Good-Luck Charm

Verses 5 and 6 say, “And the man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

The Bible says that Micah had a house of gods. This phrase may be interpreted in one of two ways. First, Micah may have been a polytheist. He believed in many gods, not just the one true and living God. Second, some scholars say the verse means that he had a house for God. If so, he was still an idolater, because he had a house in contradiction to the tabernacle. He had a place where he would worship God in opposition to the tabernacle that God ordained.

Moreover, the Bible tells us that he had an ephod. An ephod was part of a priestly garment; in fact, it was a major part of that

garment. If he had an ephod, then he probably had everything necessary for a priest.

The Bible also says that the man had a teraphim. What is a teraphim? In Genesis 31:19, when Laban went to shear his sheep, Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's. The word images is teraphim. Teraphim were images of household gods. These gods were looked to for earthly prosperity and as oracles—that is, to tell people how to live and what to do. Micah had a house of gods, an ephod, and a teraphim.

He also consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. Neither Micah nor his son was a Levite, and Micah had no authority to ordain his son as a priest. I had just finished four messages on the foundations of rebellion. The whole background was chapter 16, where Dathan, Abiram, and Korah rebelled because they wanted the priesthood. They were jealous that only Aaron and his family had the priesthood. Abiram and the others were sons of Reuben, not even Levites. Korah at least was a Levite. Clearly, what Micah was doing was an absolute contradiction of the law of God and the Word of God.

This is why it says, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Anytime we do what we think is right without consulting the Bible, especially when it contradicts the Bible, it is idolatry. One can do a right thing in a wrong way and still be condemned.

Micah may have been attempting to worship the one true and living God, which I really doubt, although his mother knew the correct name of God. But anytime you try to worship God in a way which God has not ordained, it is idolatry, period.

This shows why I title this message "Superstition, luck, and idolatry." Judges 17, verse 7, says: "And there was a young man out of Bethlehem, Judah, the family of Judah, who was a Levite. And he sojourned there. And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehem, Judah, to sojourn where he could find a place. And he came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem, Judah, and I go to sojourn where I

may find a place. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in, and the Levite was content to dwell with the man, and the young man was made unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite, which he had no authority to do so. And the young man became his priest and was in the house of Micah. Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest."

Do you see anything wrong or wicked with this passage? First, Micah did not have authority to ordain anyone a priest. It is true that God had set the Levites aside. It is true that Moses and Aaron were Levites. But it is also true that God chose Aaron and his family to be priests, and God ordained the Levites and the priesthood.

Secondly, this Levite was a young man. Micah ordained him, the Bible says, to be a father and a priest unto him. When you read what follows, the young man was in no position to be a father and, in reality, a priest either. He certainly did not have fatherly wisdom.

Thirdly, here's the kicker. If you look in verse 13, here's what Micah said: "Then said Micah, Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest." The Levite was his lucky rabbit's foot, his four-leaf clover, his charm, his good luck trophy. "I know God is going to bless me because I've got this Levite." Do you realize modern-day Christians are just as guilty as Micah?

Many view their Bibles as charms. They view church as a charm. They view prayer as a charm. The average person, when they really, really want something from God, when they really, really need Him, will start reading their Bible, go to church, and pray. They keep praying, and then God answers. When they get what they want, they quit praying, quit studying their Bible, and quit going to church. What did they do? They just used God. He's just a tool. He was a good luck charm, that's all. When they don't need Him, they can put Him back on the shelf like one of these false gods.

The Ark as a Rabbit's Foot in 1 Samuel 4

This shows how idolatrous Israel really was, because there is another good illustration of it. Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 4, beginning with

verse 1. I'm sure that you can pick up on it, but watch this: “And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.”

Israel went out against the Philistines to battle and pitched beside Ebenezer, while the Philistines pitched in Aphek. The Philistines put themselves in array against Israel, and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines. About four thousand men were slain in the field. When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.” So they sent to Shiloh for the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. When the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, “What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?” They understood that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp, and they were afraid, saying, “God is come into the camp. Woe unto us! For there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us!” They asked, “Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.” Then they urged one another, “Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Quit yourselves like men, and fight.”

The Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten. Every man fled to his tent, and there was a very great slaughter: thirty thousand footmen of Israel fell.

Now, here is the thing. Look back at verse four: “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.” Why did they bring it? Look at verse three: “Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh, it may save us.”

What were they looking for? They were looking for the ark to save them. They were not looking for the God of the ark. In other words, the ark to them was a lucky rabbit's foot, something to be used. They wanted that ark to save them, but it would not happen. They trusted in the ark instead of the God of the ark.

The Danites' Theft and the Levite's Betrayal

The Levite that Micah has turns out to be absolutely, perfectly useless and worthless. Look in chapter 18 of the Book of Judges and read the first six verses:

"In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in. For unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coast, men of valor, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to go search it. And they said unto them, Go search the land. Who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. Now watch. And when they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man, the Levite."

They turned in there and said unto him, "Who brought thee hither? And what makest thou in this place? How much money do you make? And what hast thou here?" He said unto them, "Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and he hath hired me, and I am his priest." They said unto him, "Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous." And the priest said unto them, "Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go."

Evidently, the Danites knew of this Levite. They had come to search out Laish because they wanted to conquer it and have it for their own. They realized that here was a Levitical man who was a priest, and they asked him whether their mission would be successful. Look at verse six of his answer: "And the priest said to them, Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go."

To demonstrate the absolute absurdity of the answer the priest gave, let me pose some questions and apply his answer. Should I marry this woman or should I marry this man? Go in peace: before

the Lord is your way wherein ye go. Should I go to Mexico? Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go. How about this question?

Should I endeavor to be rich at the expense of others? "Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go." How about this question? Should I divorce my wife of sixty-one years and marry a younger woman? "Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go." Do you see how ridiculous that answer is? Once he gave that answer, you are free to place your own interpretation upon it. You can say, "This is what I want," and thank God that God agrees with you. Just go and do it.

Absolutely, totally worthless, because you could make that answer fit just about any question, and you could deduce whatever you wanted to deduce from it. Now, in spite of that answer, the Danites did discover that they could conquer the land. So look at verse 7: "Then the five men departed and came to Laish, and saw the people that was therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and there was no magistrate in the land that might put them to shame in anything. And they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man. They were by themselves." And they came unto their brethren, to Zorah, to Eshtaol, and to their brethren, and said, "What say ye?"

And they said, "Arise, that we may go up against them. For we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And are ye still? Be not slothful to go, and to enter into and possess the land. When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land. For God hath given it into your hands, a place where there is no want of anything that is in the earth."

"And there went out from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war. And they went up and pitched in Kirjath-jearim, in Judah. Wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan unto this day. Behold, it is behind Kirjath-jearim. And they passed thence unto the house of Micah, and came to the house of Micah." They made it as far as Micah's house.

Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, “Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and a teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? Now therefore consider what ye have to do.” What does that question imply? “Consider now, therefore, what ye have to do.” It implies that what they have to do is steal and terrorize. In other words, they want it, and they are going to take it.

“And they turned thitherward and came to the house of the young man, the Levite, even to the house of Micah and saluted him. And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate. And the five men that went up to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image, and the priest stood in the entering of the gate, with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war. And these went into Micah’s house and fetched the carved image, the ephod, the teraphim, the molten image.”

Then said the priest to them, “What do ye?” They said unto him, “Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth and go with us. And be thou as a father and a priest. Is it better for thee to be a priest in the house of one man, or that thou mayest be a priest in a tribe and a family in Israel?” And the priest’s heart was glad. He was happy and excited because he was getting a promotion.

In the Old Testament, the priest always received a portion of the sacrifice. One man would be sacrificing very little, but now an entire tribe would be sacrificing a great deal. This was not merely a promotion; it was a tremendous increase in pay. Remember, this young Levite was totally worthless and useless.

Look back at verse 20: “And the priest's heart was glad and he, the priest, took the ephod and the teraphim and the graven image and went in the midst of the people. So they turned and departed and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them.” The five men had started out as thieves. When they told him, “We want you to be a father to us and a priest to us,” he went with them. He stole the ephod, the teraphim, and the graven image and departed among the people.

This young Levite was a thief. He took the teraphim, the ephod, and the graven image, and he was happy. What about his commitment to Micah? He never even talked to Micah or said one word. He simply stole Micah's property, went into the midst of six hundred armed men for protection, and left.

When the Danites began to steal, he finished the work. A similar incident happened in Osceola, Missouri, in September 1861. I have a message—in fact, several messages—dealing with the war in Missouri. Senator Jim Lane, a United States Senator, and Jennison were leaders of the Kansas Red Legs. They stole, burned, and did everything. Those who have watched the old movie The Outlaw Josey Wales know that it was the Kansas Red Legs who burned him out. That is history.

A little article records what happened: In September 1861, with a smart little army of about fifteen hundred, Senator Jim Lane started forward along the Missouri line. His avowed objective was not to pursue General Price, a Confederate general, but to clear out the valley of the Osage and attack the towns of Butler, Harrisonville, Osceola, and Clinton. On September 12, he reached Trading Post, Kansas, and from there turned eastward into Missouri.

As soon as they crossed the border, his men began to loot, burn, murder, and rape. The climax of Lane's march occurred in Osceola on September the 23rd, after exchanging a few shots with some Confederates on the outskirts. It was not a military town. There were just a few men there who happened to be Confederate soldiers. Lane's men entered the town and proceeded to ransack it.

They robbed the bank, pillaged stores and private houses, and looted the courthouse. Captain Thomas Moonlight bombarded the last building with a cannon, and others set fire to the town, almost totally destroying it. Before this rampage, there were 800 buildings in Osceola, Missouri. When the Redlegs left, there were three buildings left standing. Many of the Kansans got so drunk that, when it came time to leave, they were unable to march and had to ride in wagons and carriages.

They carried off with them a tremendous load of plunder, including Lane's personal share, a piano, and a quantity of silk

dresses. The sack of Osceola henceforth was a prime cause of bitter hatred of Lane and Kansans by the people of West Missouri. During the raid, the regimental chaplain, Hugh Fisher, stole altar furnishings from the Osceola church to furnish his own unfinished Kansas church. The murder, rape, robbery, and arson did not seem to bother him. He used it as a cover to loot the churches for his own benefit. I wonder how he dealt with the Eighth Commandment: Thou shalt not steal.

Micah's Powerless Gods and the Identity of the Levite

Now we have the answer to one of the questions posed in the beginning of this message. In Judges 18:22, we read: "And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together and overtook the children of Dan. And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces and said unto Micah, What aileth thee that thou comest with such a company?"

Micah answered, "Ye have taken away my gods, which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away. And what have I more? And what is this that ye say to me, What aileth thee?" The children of Dan replied, "Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life and the lives of thy household." And the children of Dan went their way. When Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back into the house.

Was Micah a polytheist? The answer is yes, because he said, “You’ve stolen my gods, which I’ve made.” The only thing you can think about is this poor Micah: he could not protect his gods; his gods could not protect him; his gods could not even protect themselves. Yet they were his gods. He made them. They were useless and worthless, just like the worship he professed to give to the one true and living God.

Here is a good illustration of the difference between a real, genuine Christian and an idolater. A real, genuine Christian is made by the one true and living God, who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, while an idolater makes and is made by his own gods.

Now I want to show you what I consider the two shockers in these passages. Throughout Judges 17 and 18, the Levite is referred to as "the Levite" or "a young man." No name is given to him until Judges 18:30. Watch the verse: "And the children of Dan set up the graven image and Jonathan, that was the young Levite, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests of the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land."

You need to remember this passage, because in a few weeks, when I bring another message, it will answer a very vital question for you. Who was Jonathan? Manasseh was the son of Moses. Gershom was the son of Manasseh. Jonathan was the son of Gershom. Jonathan, the young Levite, was the great-grandson of Moses.

The Bible says in Hebrews 3 that Moses was faithful in all his house—that is, his immediate house over which he had control. But here is his great-grandson, who was an idolater. It is astounding to me how you can have a godly man like Hezekiah and an ungodly son like Manasseh, or have an ungodly king and yet turn out a godly son. You cannot control your lineage. This young Levite was the great-grandson of Moses, unlike Moses, who was faithful in all his house. Depravity is hereditary; grace is not.

Here is the second shocker: all of this that happened in Judges 17 and 18 did not even need to happen.

The True Worship at Shiloh and Final Applications

As far as the idolatry is concerned, look in verse 31 of Judges 18: "And they set up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." What? All they had to do was go to Shiloh and worship. There were truly Levites. There was true sacrifice. That was where the tabernacle of God was. Yet Micah would rather make his own gods.

Let me make some applications. Whenever you do that which you think best, whenever you do that which is right in your own eyes, whenever you do that in which you delight in worship, you are an idolater.

I've had people tell me, "I go to such and such church because it makes me feel good." You do not go to church to feel good; you go to

church to worship the one true and living God. Your feelings really do not count in the matter. “I go to this church because they've got a great youth program.” Wonderful! But what about the truth? “I go to this church because they've got great music.” Wonderful! But what about the truth? It is astounding to me how far men will go to destroy, deny, and denigrate the true worship of God.

You can do a right thing in a wrong way, and it is still condemned. Look at Amos chapter 5, beginning at verse 21. Israel was supposedly worshipping God, but not really, not truly. God says, “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.” Did not God appoint the feast days? Did He not appoint the solemn assemblies? Yes. But God said, “I hate it. I won't have it.”

Verse 22: "Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings or meal offerings, I will not accept them, neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts." God said, I don't want anything that you give me. Verse 23: "Take away from me the noise of thy songs. It's just noise to him. For I will not hear the melody of thy viols." Why is God hating and despising the worship of this people? He says in verse 24, "But let judgment run down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream." The Lord is saying, you're living ungodly, disobedient lives. I don't want anything that you offer me. I won't take it. I hate it. I despise it.

Then He says in verse 25, "Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch, and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts." All superstition is idolatry. All belief in luck, charms, fate, and fortune is idolatry. It's only God who directs our paths and orders our steps. All this other is idolatry because it places merit and power in things that have no merit and things that have no power.

You say, “I’ve got a lucky rabbit’s foot.” It wasn’t lucky for the rabbit; you have it, and he doesn’t. When you think about what happened in Judges 17 and 18 and in 1 Samuel 4, you can see the same thing today: people have not changed. The psalmist said in Psalm 62:11, “Once have I heard this; yea, twice, that power

belongeth unto God." God alone is sovereign. God alone has providence, and God alone brings things to pass in our times.

Whenever you attribute anything to luck, chance, fate, or fortune, you are guilty of idolatry. I do not care if you find $100,000; it was not luck. It was God's providence. I do not care if a rattlesnake missed you by one thousandth of an inch; it still was not luck. It was the providence of God. He deserves all the honor, praise, and glory.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Thy grace and mercy. Help us not to be superstitious or to believe in luck, chance, fate, or fortune, but to recognize that Thou art sovereign and, in Thy divine providence, You bring things to pass in our lives for our good and Thy glory. We may not understand or like some things that come to pass, but they are for our good whether we like them or not. We give Thee praise for being the sovereign God of heaven and earth. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

CHAPTER 33

Tactic Of Flight

August 16, 2021

The Tactic of Flight

Introduction: The Tactic of Flight Defined

In 1 Timothy 6:11–12, Paul says, “But thou, O man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” We will come back to this text, but note that he says, “But thou, O man of God, flee these things.” Flight is the equivalent of fleeing, getting away, running from, and avoiding certain things.

One objection to flight must be immediately dispelled. Many tend to think that if one runs, flees, or seeks to escape, it is because he is fearful, afraid, or basically a coward. That is not true, not by a full or a long stretch of the imagination. Flight or avoidance is a tactic that has been used for centuries. It is a legitimate biblical and historical tactic.

Biblical and Historical Examples of Flight

In Genesis 19, Lot fled out of Sodom. Was he a coward for obeying God and seeking to save his life? The answer is no. In Exodus 9, Pharaoh's servants feared the word of the Lord when Moses said that a grievous hailstorm would fall upon the land and kill anything outside. The Bible says that those Egyptians who feared the Lord got their servants and animals inside, while the servants and animals of those who did not fear the word of the Lord were killed. Were they cowards for obeying the word of the Lord? Certainly not.

In Exodus 21, Joshua 20, Numbers 35, and a number of other passages, we find that when someone killed a man accidentally, he had to flee to the city of refuge. Was that man a coward for fleeing to that city as God commanded? Or was he a coward because he did not want to be killed by the avenger of blood? He had to flee there in order to have justice done, to have a court date and a court trial. Certainly, he was not a coward for doing so. In Joshua 8, you will find that Joshua and the people fled before the inhabitants of Ai.

Were they cowards for doing that? The answer is no, because what they were doing was a ruse. They pretended to flee in order to draw the men out of the city. Once all the men were out of the city, the liers in wait went into the city, captured it, set it on fire, and then the ones who were fleeing turned around and destroyed the men of Ai. You will find that same tactic used in Judges chapter 20. Clearly, these people were not cowards simply because they exercised the tactic of flight.

There are many reasons sometimes to flee. Flight is a non-violent way to prevent violence. It is a sane, rational, and logical response to danger and tyranny. Would you be considered a coward if you looked up and saw a car rushing toward you at a high rate of speed, out of control? Would you be a coward for running and trying to save yourself? Absolutely not. You would be insane not to run.

Flight Commanded by Christ and God

Many people never stop and think about all the commands that we have in the Bible, even to flee. For instance, in Matthew chapter 10

and verse 23, our Lord said, “But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another city.”

When our Lord said, “Flee ye to another city,” it is a present active imperative, which means it is a command and something that you should be continually doing. If you get persecuted in this city, flee to another city. If you get persecuted in that city, flee to another city. In other words, our Lord is saying, use the tactic of flight to avoid persecution, tyranny, and destruction, if at all possible. If you still think that all flight equals fear and cowardice, then consider Matthew chapter 2 and verse 13: “And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word again: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.”

No one in his right mind would say that the sovereign, omnipotent God of the universe was a coward. Neither would He be afraid of a puny king named Herod. Why did God tell Joseph to take Mary and the baby and flee into Egypt? The answer is because it is a non-violent way to prevent violence by wicked men.

Most people have heard of what we call the three F's when faced with danger. Usually, people respond in one of three ways: they freeze, they flee, or they fight. Unhappily, many people freeze. When a person freezes, he is simply the recipient of whatever is coming his way. It is like a deer in the headlights. Blinded, the deer does not know which way to turn or run, and so he freezes and is killed by the oncoming automobile.

Certainly, flight and fighting do not always work or prevail, but at least those last two give what we would call a fighting chance for survival. My emphasis is to use this tactic of flight to demonstrate that it should be applied spiritually as well as physically and militarily. Often, we refuse, or do not even think about, taking these military and historic tactics and making a spiritual application from them. But the truth is this: if we want to successfully avoid sin, wickedness, and corruption, we must make use of this tactic particularly.

Three Enemies and Their Tactics

Interestingly, most Christians know that the Christian has three main enemies. There are more, but these are the three main enemies: the world, the devil, and the flesh. Most importantly, when we read through the Bible, God gives us the tactic to overcome each of these enemies. The world is our enemy; it does not love us. Our Lord said, “If the world hated me, you know, it's going to hate you.” Yet our Lord tells us the tactic to overcome the world, and that tactic is faith. The Bible says in 1 John 5 and verse 4, “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” It is faith, then, that we fight with to overcome the world. One can never discount faith. Faith in our Lord and faith in His Word is used to defeat all our enemies; that is sure.

When the world is involved, the specific tactic for overcoming the world is faith. When it comes to Satan, the tactic is to fight. James 4:7 says, “Submit yourselves therefore unto God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” First Peter 5:8-9 likewise says, “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith.” Twice God tells us that we must resist.

The Greek word for resist is anthistemi, meaning to resist, to withstand, to set oneself against, to oppose, and to fight. When we fight, we must fight in faith. Even Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil about the body of Moses, “durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke thee.’” Yet whenever we are tempted, tried, or attacked by him, we must fight.

If you have never read Pilgrim’s Progress, I encourage you to read it. If you have read it, go back and read the section where Christian meets Apollyon. There is a battle there, and Christian fights and overcomes.

When it comes to the world, faith is the victory that overcomes the world. When it comes to Satan, we must fight; we must resist. That is why Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, “And the God of peace

shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord be with you all. Amen."

This message centers upon the last truth: What tactic are you and I to use when it comes to fleshly lust, the temptations of the flesh, and the temptations of the body? The answer is the tactic of flight. We are to flee, run from, and endeavor to escape the temptations of the flesh. We cannot foolishly, or stupidly, stand around while we are being tempted and act as though nothing is happening, when in reality it is happening. Our desires are nothing more than the lust of our flesh. Let me explain that word, lust.

Every time we hear the word lust, we think of something carnal. But lust can have a positive meaning or a negative meaning. It comes from the Greek word epithumia. Epi is a preposition meaning upon, and thumos means passion. Your lust, then, is whatever you set your passion upon. You can lust after a new automobile, a fine home, a man or a woman, money, or an animal. You can lust after many things.

But we have to understand that these are all temptations of our flesh. I want you to hold 1 Timothy, but turn in your Bibles to the book of James. Look at James 1, verses 13 through 15. I want to take time to explain these verses. Look in verse 13: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

The Process of Temptation from James 1

Since God is infinitely holy, and He only is holy, God cannot be tempted with evil. He would never consider doing anything wicked, wrong, or ungodly. Moreover, since God is infinitely and perfectly holy, He is not going to tempt anyone else to sin either.

Yes, He will test you. Yes, He will try you. But He is not going to tempt you or try to seduce you into doing that which is wicked and wrong. So let us get this clear: "Let no man say when he's tempted, I'm tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

If God is not the one tempting us, where do all our temptations arise? Look in verse 14: "But every man is tempted when he is drawn

away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Now let us analyze these verses and make an application so that we can understand them. First, look at verse 14: "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away." The words drawn away come from the Greek word exelko, and literally mean to be drawn away or to be drawn out.

It is a metaphor taken from hunting and fishing, where the game is lured out of its hiding place. In other words, the game may be in a safe and secure location. But what you have to do in order to get to that game is lure it out, draw it out from its place of safety and security, in order that it may be taken, captured, or killed.

He says, "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."

The Greek word for enticed happens to be deleazo. Taken from a metaphor of hunting and fishing, it means to bait, to catch by a bait, to beguile, to allure, and to entice. "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away, drawn out, when he is baited, lured, and enticed." Look in verse 15.

That is where the lust comes in: “Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.” The word conceived is from the Greek word sullambano, and it means to take, to capture, and to conceive as a woman. Every man is tempted when he is drawn out, drawn away from a place of safety and security by his own lust, baited, and lured. Then, when lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin.

The verb translated bring forth is the Greek word tikto, which literally means to bring forth, to be delivered as a woman giving birth. Thus, “But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed, and when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” The interesting thing is that in verse 15, the last two words—actually, the last three words—are “bringeth forth death.” The words bringeth forth are one Greek word, apokueo, which literally means to cease being pregnant. It means to produce or to bear fruit. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed; then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is

finished—that is, when it ceases being pregnant—it now brings forth death.

I want to take these words and this picture and put them together so that we can understand what is happening. Suppose I go down to the pond, and as I step on the dam, all of a sudden I see a nice four- or five-pound bass take off out of the shallow water and head for the deep water. I am hungry and would like to have a fish supper, but the bass has now gotten into the deep water. He has gotten under a rocky shelf, and there are lily pads everywhere.

Now I have a choice. I could dive in and try to catch that bass, but obviously I cannot swim as fast as he can. He can maneuver much more quickly than I can. Moreover, he can stay underwater a lot longer than I can. So that is out.

The next thing I want to do is get a pole with a line and a hook on it. I want to take a big, fat, juicy worm, put it on that hook, hold it down in front of that bass—two or three feet, four or five feet away from him—and let the little worm do its thing. I want you to watch this. There is a desire inside that bass to have a nice, big, fat, juicy worm. On the outside of that bass, there appears something that will satisfy that inward desire. Although he is in deep water under a rocky shelf among lily pads, where I cannot get to him, I have now enticed him. I have now seduced him. I am drawing him out, and he rushes from his place of safety. He bites that big, fat, juicy worm, and I have fish for supper.

This is the picture that God is giving us right here. Let me ask you this question: When I dropped that big, fat, juicy worm in front of that bass, and he saw it, if he had turned his head and slowly swum away, would there have been a different outcome? The answer is yes. I would be hungry, and he would still be alive.

David's Failure to Flee

Now turn your Bibles to 2 Samuel chapter 11. Look at verses 1 and 2. You know this story. The Bible says, “And it came to pass after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David

tarried still at Jerusalem." Notice that it was the time for kings to go forth to war, but David did not go forth to war; he tarried at Jerusalem. Now look what happens in verse 2: "And it came to pass in the evening tide that David arose from off his bed and walked upon the roof of the king's house. And from the roof, he saw a woman washing herself."

Now the woman was very beautiful to look upon. One cannot help what he sees initially. When I turn my head, I have no idea what I am going to see until I turn it. So David arose from his bed, walked on the roof, and saw this woman washing. Evidently Bathsheba was indeed very beautiful.

But would there have been a different outcome if David, when he saw her, had immediately turned his head and said, "I must get about my kingly duties. I do not need to be looking at that woman. I have wives and concubines. I do not need that woman"? He might not have been able to flee, but he could have left the city and gone to Joab to see how the war was going. He could have done many things.

Instead, he sent and inquired who she was. She was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of his mighty men. That should have told him something right there: this was a married woman. But you know the truth. David took her.

The point is this: he may not have intentionally walked on the roof looking for a beautiful woman to view. He simply happened to see her. But it would have been totally different if he had turned his head and walked away. He did not.

Let me emphasize a principle. When God forbids any sin—whether adultery, fornication, murder, theft, or whatever it is—at the same time, He forbids any attitude and any actions that would lead up to that sin. Think about this carefully: when God forbids any sin, He also forbids every attitude and action that would lead to it.

The Principle: Fleeing Includes Attitudes and Actions Leading to Sin

In 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 11, Paul writes to Timothy, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness,

godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." What are the "these things" from which Timothy is commanded to flee? They include just about everything in chapter 6, from verse 1 through verse 11.

For instance, in verse 3, Paul says, "If any man teach otherwise, and he consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the doctrine which is according to godliness." If someone is not teaching and preaching the truth, flee from him; get away from him. He is ignorant and has no idea which end is up. Leave him.

In verse 5, Paul speaks of "perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." Get away from anyone who is not biblically oriented, whose thoughts center on money, money, money, supposing that gain is godliness—the bigger, the better. Not necessarily, but that is what he is saying.

Discontent is also something from which we must flee, according to verse 8: "And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." Then verses 9 and 10 say, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Then he says, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things." He is speaking of fleeing all these things.

The word flee comes from the Greek word pheugo, meaning to flee, escape, get away from, seek safety by flight, avoid, shun, and get away from danger. Everything mentioned that is contrary to God—flee it, run, and get out of the way.

The same word used in 1 Timothy 6:11 is used throughout the Bible, in the New Testament particularly, when we are talking about fleeing certain sins. In 1 Corinthians 6:18, our Lord says, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." There is the same word, flee—pheugo: escape, seek safety by flight, get away from it. The command is not merely to resist or debate the sin, but to flee from it and seek safety by getting away from it.

Remember how Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife. He left his coat and got out of the room. He obeyed this principle. He fled, and what he said as he fled, or before he fled, reinforced this principle. When Potiphar's wife sought to seduce him, he said, "There is none greater in this house than I. Neither hath he, that is Potiphar, kept anything back from me but thee, because thou art his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" He literally obeyed. He fled; he got out of the room. He did not remain there to see how close he could come to sin without committing it.

In Matthew 5:27-28, our Lord said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." So the point is that looking and lusting are connected. The inward attitude is already related to the outward sin.

Let us return to the principle: when God forbids any sin, at the same time He forbids any attitude and all actions that would lead up to that sin. The command to flee fornication therefore includes fleeing everything that would lead up to it, including looking, lusting, pornography, fantasizing, and even dissatisfaction with your spouse. Read Proverbs 5:15-21 and 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, and you will understand that there should never be any dissatisfaction with your spouse whatsoever.

Dissatisfaction will lead, therefore, to vain thoughts and wicked thoughts. Fleeing fornication means that you flee from anything and everything associated with it, including most modern-day movies, many television programs, and even the kiddie programs. Can you believe all the trash they are putting on those things? It is insane. Flee fornication.

In 1 Corinthians 10:14, the word pheugo still means to flee, to escape, to save yourself by flight: "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." When he says to flee from idolatry, he is talking about fleeing in all forms, anything associated with idolatry.

Unhappily, so many people think idolatry refers simply to bowing down to an idol, but that is not the only thing that is idolatrous. Anytime we place our thoughts above God's thoughts, that is

idolatry. When we place our will above His will, that is idolatry. When we place our way above His way, that is idolatry. Covetousness is idolatry.

If I covet that fine gray vest that Steve has on, I am an idolater. If I covet that umbrella, I am an idolater. If I covet a man's wife, I am an idolater. If I covet a man's money, I am an idolater. Covetousness is idolatry.

Anytime you have unbiblical thoughts, ideas, or concepts concerning God, it is idolatry. God is not who you think He is. God is not who you wish Him to be. God is not what you have heard all your life. The only God that is, is the God revealed in Holy Scripture, and He is exactly as He has revealed Himself. When you and I harbor unbiblical thoughts concerning God, we are idolaters. We have to learn something: idolatry begins in the mind.

Romans chapter 1, beginning with verse 21, says, “Because that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.” Where did it begin? In the vanity of their imaginations, in their mind. So anytime you begin to think unbiblical thoughts concerning God, it is idolatry.

Let me put this again for your consideration: when God forbids any act, at the same time He forbids any attitude and all actions that would lead up to that act. We have to learn that we cannot harbor in our minds unbiblical thoughts concerning God.

There is an interesting verse in 1 John 5 and verse 21: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” The word keep is from the Greek word phulasso, which means to keep, to be aware, to guard, to watch, to protect yourself, to avoid and to shun and to flee from. So it is, “Little children, flee from idolatry, avoid idolatry.”

There are some scholars that say 1 John was the last book written, not the book of Revelation. If 1 John is the last book written chronologically speaking, that would be interesting, because Genesis 1:1 begins, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,”

and then the last verse in the Bible would be, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” Still, regardless whether it is in the Bible, whether it is in the beginning, middle, or ending, it is a command of God: Keep yourselves from idols.

In 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 22, Paul writes to Timothy: “Flee also youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

Again, the word flee is a present active imperative. As an imperative, it is a command, and since it is present active, it means that you are to be doing this continually. You are to be continually fleeing from youthful lust. The word flee is pheugo again, which means to flee, to escape, to get away from, to run from, to seek safety by flight. Paul tells us to flee from youthful lust. When Paul wrote this to Timothy, Timothy was in his forties.

May I tell you a truth? One does not need to be a youth to be enticed by youthful lusts. Youthful lusts can entrap a middle-aged man and an old man. The tactic is to flee. I have known middle-aged men, with grown children, leave their wives and run off with some little 20-year-old teeny-bopper. I have known 70- and 80-year-old men do the same thing.

Years ago, there was a country music show called Hee Haw. One of the men there was Grandpa Jones. They had little skits, and occasionally Grandpa Jones would come up with some little piece of something that was pretty good. I was somewhere, and that show was on television. They said, “Now Grandpa Jones,” and I stopped because I was going to listen. It showed him in his overalls and hat, with a cornfield behind him. Suddenly, a beautiful young woman in short shorts stepped out of the cornfield, and Grandpa Jones let out a wolf whistle like you would not believe. One of the fellows said, “Why, Grandpa, you old coot, you ought to know better than that.”

Here is what Grandpa said. You have heard the old saying: “You’re never too old to yearn.” Not too old to learn—too old to yearn. When Paul wrote Timothy and said, “Flee youthful lust,” you do not have to be a youth to be seduced and enticed by youthful lust. You are to flee.

Flight is not only needed and necessary; it is commanded. Flight is a nonviolent way to prevent violence from evil men. Moreover, it is a way to escape the lusts and temptations of the flesh, especially when there is an overpowering temptation. God says that in that instance, you had better run, flee, escape, and get out of there.

In 1 Timothy chapter six, verses 11 and 12, Paul says, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

Fleeing and Following: The Positive and Negative

Out of all the temptations of the flesh, there is an escape route. That escape route begins with flight. You flee. But there is a negative and a positive. If you are fleeing from something, that means you should be fleeing to something. If an oncoming car is out of control and headed straight toward me, I am fleeing from the danger, but I am actually fleeing to a place of safety and security. You flee all these things: fornication, idolatry, and youthful lust. But where do you go when you run from those things?

You follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness. The word follow is from the Greek word dioko, and it literally means to make a run for. It means to press on, indicating someone in a race running swiftly to reach the goal. He is saying, You flee these things, and you follow, you run swiftly, after these things. There is a negative and there is a positive.

He says, "But thou, man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, fight the good fight of faith, lay hold of eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." If you do not flee temptations, you cannot follow after righteousness and godliness and faith and meekness and patience. And if you do not follow after righteousness and grace and mercy and patience, you cannot fight the good fight of faith. These things go together. You must learn to flee, learn to follow, and learn to fight. Fighting is absolutely necessary. It may be mental, emotional, or physical, but it is always spiritual, especially when you are fleeing from temptation

and endeavoring to follow after righteousness. Let me tie this together for you. I want to make three applications.

If you do not flee from sin, evil, wickedness, and temptation, you cannot follow after righteousness, goodness, faith, love, patience, and meekness. If you do not flee and follow, you certainly cannot fight. Your ability to fight depends upon your fleeing and following. Your ability to fight spiritually depends upon your fleeing from temptations and following after righteousness.

Applications: Mental Flight Precedes Physical Flight

I want to submit something for your consideration. I believe that this is one reason why we have so many impotent, compromised, and apathetic preachers and Christians: they are not fleeing from wickedness. They are not following after righteousness; therefore, they cannot fight, and they will not fight. Why would you fight against something when you are engaged in it? Why would you fight against it when you are doing it yourself, or if you are enjoying it and benefiting from it? We will never be able to fight until we learn to flee and follow.

Here is the second application. We have full encouragement to flee from sin and to be faithful with God. When we flee from sin and temptation, follow after righteousness, and fight the good fight of faith, we cannot fail, because we are obeying Him and trusting in Him for deliverance. The world can either frown or smile upon you; it does not matter which. That which overcomes the world is faith.

The enemy may attack and persecute you. In that instance, the tactic is fight. But when it comes to the sins of temptation, the tactic is flight. The safest place for a sheep to be is right smack dab in the middle of the flock. The wolf always catches the stragglers, the laggers. Make sure that you are in the middle of the flock. We have to learn to flee and flee to the middle of the flock. Follow righteousness, godliness, patience, faith, and meekness, and then fight.

Now, I want you to turn in your Bibles to one last passage, Genesis chapter 39, which I quoted earlier. I am going to quote it again, but I want you to see this. I think this is probably the main truth. Remember how Potiphar's wife sought to seduce Joseph. Joseph left

his coat and ran out of the room. He said in Genesis 39, verse 9, "Look at it."

He said, "There is none greater in this house than I. Neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife." Now watch this question: "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Joseph had already fled in his mind. His mind was already made up. He knew what sin was. He knew what wickedness was. He knew they would displease God.

So here is the principle: You cannot flee from temptations physically unless you have first fled from them mentally. I believe it's Proverbs 23, verse 7, where the Bible says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Our first flight, the first use of the tactic of flight, has to be in our minds. You cannot move or do anything without thinking. If I say, "I'm going to pick up my Bible," I've already thought about it before I did it. Whenever an ungodly or wicked thought comes into your mind, you must learn to flee, get away from it, refuse it, put it aside, think about that which is holy, righteous, godly, and biblical, and follow after that. I hear Christians say, "I'm so tired of fighting." Really?

The Apostle Paul said, "I die daily." Sometimes it has to be hourly, sometimes minute by minute. But may I remind you of something? Your flesh is the enemy of God. Your flesh doesn't care one thing about the Scripture or Jesus Christ. Your flesh only concerns itself with itself. That's why the Bible says in the book of Galatians chapter 5, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and they're contrary, the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

So you better make up your mind. You will be fighting against the temptations, the lust of the flesh, until you are dead. The way to fight against them, first and foremost, is to flee. Refuse to entertain them in your mind, and then you will refuse to have them in your body. Because as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word. We thank you for these tactics that you've shown us. I pray, Lord, that you would teach us and enable us to apply them and use them in our everyday life, for Your honor, Your

glory, and our good. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 34

Insanity, Stupidity And Apostasy

November 6, 2021

Introduction to Insanity, Stupidity, and Apostasy

Judges chapter 18.

“In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days, the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in, for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen to them among the tribes of Israel. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coast, men of valor from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it. And they said to them, Go, search the land. Who, when they came to Mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man, the Levite. And they turned in thither and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? And what makest thou in this place? And what hast thou here? And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest. And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.

And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go."

Jeremiah's Indictment of Idolatry

If you were to take the time to read Judges chapter 18, you would have to come to the conclusion that insanity, stupidity, and apostasy ruled and reigned supremely in the minds of the children of Israel at that particular time. The truth is that stupidity and insanity precede apostasy and are actually the cause and motivator of apostasy.

Hold Judges 18, and turn to Jeremiah chapter 2. Mark this passage, because we will come back there before we end. There are a couple of passages in Jeremiah. Look in Jeremiah chapter 2, beginning with verse 11. Jeremiah 2 and verse 11. Look at what the Word of God says.

"Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods?" Have you changed from the one true, the living God to no gods? He says, "But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord." Now watch verse 13: "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." One has to be either stupid or insane, probably both, to trade the fountain of living water for a bucket with holes in it, or for some container that is cracked and would never hold water to begin with.

Why in the world would anyone leave the place of blessing to go to a place of cursing? Why would one trade the one true and living God for a bunch of idols? Why would you choose destruction over protection and blessing? Someone must be absolutely stupid or insane to do so.

In Jeremiah chapter 18, beginning with verse 13, he says, "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things?" Even the wicked had not heard anything like this. "The virgin of Israel hath done a horrible thing. Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? Or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be

forsaken? Because my people have forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity"—and vanity is another word for idols and idolatry. He says, "My people have forgotten me, and they have burned incense to idols."

"And they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths in a way not cast up." In other words, they have left the safe way and are now walking in a way that is not cast up; there is no protection. I have been on mountains driving in cars and riding horses, and you look down on the other side and see such a steep drop-off that it is unreal. Usually there are guardrails if you are in a car, and sometimes with the horses there are rocks piled along the way. But you are trading a safe place for a place that is absolutely unsafe.

Forsaking God's Law Leads to Idolatry

When you look back in Judges chapter 18, this chapter demonstrates very clearly that the outcome and consequence of turning away from God and His law always involves apostasy and idolatry.

It is impossible to forsake God and His law without, at the same time, apostatizing and turning to idolatry. Anytime you forsake God and His law, you always turn to man and his law. Consider the passage in 2 Kings 17, verses 7 and 8, in light of this context.

The children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and had feared other gods. That was verse 7. God brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And what did they do? They turned from Him, and the Bible said they feared other gods.

What was the evidence that they feared other gods? What was the manifestation? How could you know that? Verse 8 answers: “...and walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel that they had made.” They walked in the laws and the statutes of the heathen. That is, they forsook God and His law and began to follow the laws and the statutes of the heathen. And, he said, “of the kings of Israel

which they made." The kings of Israel were all in the northern kingdom. They were all apostate.

Jeroboam was the first one, and he made the two golden calves, putting one in Dan and the other in Bethel. All of the kings of Israel, basically, after that, followed Jeroboam and worshiped those calves as well. So the only alternative that you have to God's law is the law of man. When you refuse to worship and obey God and His law, inevitably, the result is that you end up obeying man and basically worshiping the state. In other words, you become a little state. This is what it amounts to.

In order to understand chapter 18, you have to see chapter 17. Judges 17:6 gives the theme of the book of Judges. You will also find this exact same verse in Judges chapter 21 and verse 25. If you look in Judges 17 and verse 6, here is the theme of the book of Judges.

The Theme of Judges: Every Man Did Right in His Own Eyes

"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." The truth of the matter is that there was a king in Israel, but they did not acknowledge God as king. In 1 Samuel chapter 8, when they demanded a man for a king, God said to Samuel, "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." The choice of man and man's law must be seen as a rejection of God and His law. Samuel said the same thing in 1 Samuel chapter 12 and verse 12: "And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king." They had rejected God as king. At this point in their history, they did not have a man over them as king.

However, they did have a king: each individual. They were rejecting God's law and turning to self-law. That is why the Bible says, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Consequently, this is the exact point where we are today in our nation and where most of us are in relationship to Christianity. Most Americans and most Christians find themselves today in nothing less than total rebellion against God, because they have rejected God, rejected His law, and are doing

what is right in their own eyes—according to their feelings, their emotions, what they think best, and what they believe is best for them.

Micah's Idolatry and Self-Made Religion

I want to show you the insanity and the stupidity. Look in Judges chapter 17 at the first six verses. Before we get to chapter 18, consider this: "And there was a man of Mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee"—or stolen from thee—"about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it." That is, I stole it. "And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son. And when he restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image."

"Now therefore, I will restore it unto thee." Yet he restored the money to his mother, and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. The man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim. An ephod is a priestly garment. Teraphim would simply be a family god, an image of some type.

He consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes. To begin with, Micah stole from his mother. He stole these eleven hundred pieces of silver. In one act, he violated the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal"; the fifth commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother"; and the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." He certainly violated the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," because he elevated himself above God and stole.

When he restored the money, it was a restoration without genuine repentance on his part. Notice what his mother said when he gave her back the money: "And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly

dedicated the silver unto the Lord from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image."

Here is the first instance of insanity, stupidity, and apostasy. The money was dedicated to Yahweh, or Jehovah. The word "Lord" is totally capitalized, which means Yahweh or Jehovah. The money had been dedicated to Him, and she was going to take it and make a molten image and a graven image, contrary to the first and second commandments: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."

How can you use something that is holy in an unholy manner, and it still be pleasing unto the Lord? The word "dedicated" is qadash in Hebrew, meaning to be hallowed, sanctified, consecrated, and holy. She was going to take what was holy and consecrated to God and use it for an unholy and ungodly purpose.

Modern Church Parallels to Micah's Insanity

May I point out that this is exactly where we are in the church today? When you look around at the average church—and I understand there are exceptions—the money God has allowed it to have is often used for unbiblical as well as purely wicked purposes.

Many local churches have youth programs. I am not against helping the youth; I am certainly for them. But these programs are often nothing more than sensationalism, entertainment, and appeasing the flesh. By the way, nowhere in Scripture does the Bible tell us that entertaining is one of the purposes or missions of the church. We are to educate. We are to teach. Yet we are failing to give young people biblical discernment, godly counsel, and godly teaching as well. Usually, in the average youth group—and often in the average church—you cannot tell where the world ends and the church begins.

They are literally meshed together. Look at the average church today and how it has responded to and embraced the LGBT agenda. Churches have allowed sodomites to pastor and lead them. You need to pay careful attention to the church's stance on critical race theory, political correctness, and social justice. In the average church, we

have everything but the Word of God being preached and expounded.

The truth of the matter is this: There is a denial of God's law in the average church. There is a failure to exegete the Scripture, explain it, and apply it. There is also a refusal to stand for the absolute truth of the Word of God.

Here is another illustration of how church music has changed. We no longer have choirs; now we have bands. We no longer sing psalms and hymns and sacred songs. Instead, we sing choruses and tunes that elevate man. Years and years ago, I heard some songs that were absolutely outrageous. For instance, they used to sing, "I'm Building a Bridge." You can build your bridge all you want; it's going to collapse, and it's not going anywhere. Another song included this line: "I feel a feeling stealing over me." Really? "I feel a feeling stealing over me."

Compare the hymns to what we are singing today. Take "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," and look at the doctrine being taught. All music teaches doctrine. It is not necessarily biblical doctrine, but it is teaching something. Alice and I have been around little children, and I remember one of them singing, "When you're out of Schlitz, you're out of beer." The child was three or four years old; it was simply a catchy tune. At another festival, a Mule Days festival, a woman was pushing her little baby, about two or two and a half years old, and he was singing, "Outback Steakhouse, Outback," that little catchy tune. You can teach doctrine with music. It will be either biblical doctrine or worldly and unbiblical doctrine. Even the beats of the honky-tonks and saloons have now come into the church.

Here this woman was going to take something holy and use it for an unholy purpose. Here is the second instance of insanity, stupidity, and apostasy, found in verses 4 and 5: “Yet he restored the money unto his mother, and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod”—a priestly garment—“and teraphim”—a family god—“and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.”

Micah had, first of all, a house of gods. Moreover, he made an ephod, a priestly garment. Did he make it according to Scripture, according to the way God demanded that the ephod be made in His Word? Then he consecrated one of his sons to be his priest. Go back to verse 1 in Judges 17: “And there was a man of Mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.” Micah was an Ephraimite, which means his son was an Ephraimite.

He was not a Levite or of the priestly caste of Aaron. Micah had taken it upon himself not only to make gods, but also to consecrate one of his sons as his own priest. Evidently, he had not learned from Numbers chapter 16, when Dathan, Abiram, Korah, and others intruded into the priesthood, and God killed them in a very unusual manner.

When you are a law unto yourself, doing what you think is right, biblical requirements do not get in your way. You can make yourself a god, a garment, or a priest; you can do whatever you wish. You simply do what is right in your own eyes, which is the theme of this book.

Micah's False Assurance of Blessing

Look in Judges chapter 17 at verses 7 through 13. “And there was a young man out of Bethlehem-judah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehem-judah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to Mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man: and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. Then said Micah, Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.”

Here is an obviously insane, stupid, and apostate statement: “Now I know that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my

priest." In reality, Micah had systematically denied and disobeyed God in His law. He made images contrary to God's law, consecrated his own son to be a priest contrary to God's law, and now thinks God will bless him because he has a Levite whom he has also consecrated as a priest. He has this Levite to assist him in his idolatry. So he says, "God's going to bless me."

Do you realize that this same insane, stupid thinking is prevalent among modern-day Christians? We take the attitude, "God's going to bless me. I've got a lucky rabbit's foot." Well, it wasn't lucky for the rabbit, was it? He lost it. "I know God's going to bless me. I found a four-leaf clover." "I know God's going to bless me because of that fortune in my fortune cookie at the Chinese restaurant." "I know God's going to bless me because I've got my grandpa's Bible, and my grandpa read the Bible every day." "I know God's going to bless me because I prayed for fifteen minutes straight today." "I know God's going to bless me because I've been to church two Sundays in a row."

Our lives can be in absolute, total disarray and disobedience and rebellion to God, and we do something that we think might be pleasing to God, saying, "God's going to bless me now because I have done this." Really? That is insane. That is stupidity. That is apostasy. Blessings always follow obedience, and curses always follow disobedience. Someone's subjective thinking does not change God's objective truth.

Matthew Poole, commenting on Micah's statement, "Now I know that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest," said: "So blind and grossly partial he was in his judgment to think that one right circumstance would answer for all of his substantial errors in making and worshipping images against God's express command, in worshipping God even in a forbidden place, and that he, being an Ephraimite, presumed to make a priest." It is true that this young man was a Levite.

But not all Levites were priests—not in the sense that Aaron was a priest. Only Aaron's family could actually be the real priest; you had to be a descendant of Aaron's family. The Levites did priestly service, but that does not mean they were the ones who went to the Holy of Holies or performed certain things. Only Aaron could do that. Yet here was Micah, an Ephraimite, consecrating this young Levite to be

his priest. He thought this would be a meritorious act, through which he would acquire and receive God's blessing because he had a Levite and made him a priest.

Learn this: There's no right way to do a wrong thing. There is no right way to violate the law of God. Steve has a million dollars. How can I steal that and honor God at the same time? It's impossible. There's not a right way to do a wrong thing or to violate the law of God.

This is the background of Judges chapter 18. Micah is here with his house of gods and now this Levite. The children of Dan, one of the twelve tribes, needed more land, so they sent five men to scout out Laish and its surroundings and see whether they might conquer the people there. These five men came to Micah's house.

They hear the voice of the young man who is now the priest. The five men ask him, "Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous." And the priest says, "Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go."

Before this, they wanted to know how he got there, how much he made, and what he had going for him. When he told them, they said, "All right, now you ask of the Lord as to whether or not our way should be prosperous." His answer was, "Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go."

Do you realize that I can answer any question like that? I can, and I will always be correct. Brother Gary could ask, "Pastor, I'm thinking about getting a new car. Should I buy that new car?" I could answer, "Go in peace. Before the Lord is your way wherein ye go." Carol could ask, "Should I buy a new house?" I could say, "Go in peace. Before the Lord is the way wherein ye go."

Is that not true? I want you to go in peace. Is not the Lord eternal, infinite, and omniscient? He knows everything, and He knows every way that you are going to go. How these people could derive any consolation or instruction from this answer, I have no earthly idea.

At any rate, these five men go and check the surroundings around Laish. They determine that the people will be easy prey and that 600 men will be sufficient to take care of the business; they are not going to make everybody work. "And there went from thence of the family

of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war." Six hundred men are now going to conquer this land. The first thing they do is come to the house of Micah. The five men who scouted out the land are now with them.

The Danites' Theft of Micah's Gods

The Danites made up their minds what needed to be done before they ever arrived. They determined to steal Micah's gods, the ephod, the teraphim, and the priest. Judges 18:14 says, "Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? Now therefore consider what ye have to do."

This would be absolutely hilarious if it were not so insanely stupid. They were going to steal another man's gods. Those gods could not protect the other man; they could not even protect themselves or stop themselves from being stolen. What made these Danites think that such gods would do them any good whatsoever?

I had a pastor friend for years who is now dead. I preached in his church many times. He lived in the Atlanta area and had a fenced-in backyard with three huge German shepherds. When I asked about them, he said they were for protection; they protected him and his property. A few months later, I returned to preach there, and the dogs were gone. I asked, "Earl, what happened to your dogs?" He said, "Oh, they were stolen." They were not very good watchdogs or much protection if they could be stolen.

Somebody simply went in, picked them up, and walked off with them. These gods were just there, and the Danites went in, took them, and walked out. You think about it: the gods had no power, no life. They could not fight or protect themselves; they could not protect Micah. How insanely stupid is something like this?

Now look at Judges 18:17–20. It even gets worse. "And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war."

The Levite is being detained and is talking with the six hundred men while the five are inside stealing everything. “And these went into Micah’s house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye?” What are you doing? “And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?”

Watch: “And the priest’s heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.” Originally, only the five men were stealing. When the priest discovers that they want him, he takes the idols and goes with the people. It is as though he says, “Okay, boys, I’m your leader. I’ve got everything now. You just follow me.” It was not merely the five men stealing; the Levite, the priest, was stealing as well.

This incident reminds me of another incident that happened in America—indeed, unhappily, over and over during the War of Northern Aggression. You can check it out for yourself by studying the raid on Osceola, Missouri. Senator Jim Lane and James Montgomery, with the Kansas Jayhawkers, or Kansas Red Legs, raided Osceola, Missouri, which had absolutely no military connection whatsoever.

There were no soldiers in that town. There was no military significance in that town. And yet Jim Lane and James Montgomery raided Osceola, Missouri. The men there were brought into the town square, court-martialed, shot, and hanged, and the town was burned to the ground. Out of 800 buildings, only three were left standing when Jim Lane, James Montgomery, and the Kansas Red Legs left. Three thousand people were left homeless and without food. All their mules, horses, goods, and anything of value were stolen and taken back to Lawrence, Kansas. In fact, Lawrence, Kansas, had a nickname: it was known as the City of Stolen Goods. Let me show you how devastated this town was. In 1861, the town had 3,000 residents. In 1865, there were only 183 residents.

Oddly enough, the chaplain of the Kansas Red Legs under Jim Lane and James Montgomery was Reverend Hugh Fisher. Reverend

Hugh Fisher looted the churches before putting the torch to them, burning them to the ground, and taking everything to furnish his church in Kansas. That's a fact. That is a reality. And so that's exactly what this young man is doing. He's stealing everything from Micah, and he's doing it with energy.

Of course, he is obviously ready to go. Now look, if you would please, at what they said to him in verse 19: “And they said unto him, when he questioned them what they were doing, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?” Wow.

Stop and think about this. They are telling this young man that he is about to receive a tremendous promotion and a tremendous increase in his provision and monetary needs. Biblically, the priest always received parts of the sacrifice and, many times, the first fruits. Everything that the priest would receive biblically was now going to be given to this man, not merely from one man in one family, but from a whole tribe in Israel. I remember hearing years ago about a man who went to see the pastor. He knocked on the door, and the little boy answered. He said, “Son, may I speak to the pastor, your father?”

He said, “I'm sorry, sir, I cannot interrupt him.” He said, “He's in the study praying. He's been offered a larger church with a much larger salary, and he's in there praying about it.” Well, he said, “Son, I don't have to talk to him. I can talk to your mother.” He said, “Oh no, she can't come either.” “So why not?” “Well, she's in the back room packing right now.”

In other words, the point I'm trying to make is, larceny was in the heart of this young man anyhow. He had no character. He had no moral integrity. In other words, Micah had not defrauded him. Micah had evidently kept his word to him. In fact, the Bible said he was as a son unto Micah. But he's willing to steal from Micah now, and he's willing to go with these people and help them steal as well.

Now, obviously it would be foolish for him to have disagreed with six hundred armed men, that is for sure. But when he heard about the promotion, he was more than willing to go with them. You know,

the Bible tells you in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 10 that the love of money is the root of all evil. And then the Bible warns about Balaam, the false prophet who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

Now, the two verses I'm going to quote are from the New Testament. But you have to remember that Balaam was in the Old Testament. He was in the book of Numbers. Then there was Deuteronomy, Joshua, and now Judges. So everything to this Levite did not know anything about Bible history. But the Bible says in 2 Peter 2 and verse 15, “Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.” Balaam was a false prophet, and he was willing to go against God for money. And then Jude 1, verse 11, says, “Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.”

Now, while we understand that the love of money is the root of all evil, there's a vast difference between knowing and needing funds to live on and just loving money for the sake of loving money. I know one man—in fact, he just recently died, this month. He told me years ago, “My hobby is making money. I just love to make money.” Well, it didn't do him a bit of good when he died, but I'm just simply saying.

Judges 18:20 records what happened to the young man when he learned that he would be priest to an entire tribe: “And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.” In other words, he was willing to steal. He became the leader in the theft and proudly took what did not belong to him.

When Micah discovered that his gods had been stolen and the priest was gone, he gathered his men and some neighbors and pursued the Danites. In verse 22, he caught up with them: “And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan.” Then they cried unto the children of Dan, who turned and said unto Micah, “What aileth thee?”

Micah's Powerless Confrontation

What was wrong with him that he came with such a company? Was he trying to start a war? Micah answered, “Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee?” He was saying, “You have stolen my gods. You have stolen everything. I made these; they are mine.”

Insanity, stupidity, and apostasy ruled and reigned. That is all there is to it.

Verse 25 says, “And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his own house.” In other words, Micah recognized that although they were his gods and he had made them, he could not defeat six hundred armed men, and therefore he would lose them. This is insanity, stupidity, and apostasy. Now you may ask what the point of all this is. First of all, look at verse 30.

Apostasy's Reach and the Presence of Truth

"And the children of Dan"—that is, the tribe of Dan—"the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land." Israel went into captivity in 722 BC. For a number of years, the Danites were not only apostates, but idolaters.

What is so important about this verse? "And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan the son of Gershom." Gershom was the son of Moses. Jonathan would either be a grandson or a great-grandson. Now, verse 30 says, "the son of Manasseh." Consider two quotations.

Albert Barnes said: "In the Hebrew text, the name here rendered Manasseh is written M-N-S-H, without the N, the Nun, suspended over the line. The word may be read Moses, whose son was Gershom (Exodus 2:22), whose son or descendant Jonathan clearly was." John Trapp, the old Puritan, said: "Of Moses by nature, but of

Manasseh, that notorious idolater, by imitation." Manasseh was the most wicked, vile king in Judah. Thus, Jonathan was of Moses by nature, but of Manasseh by imitation. Trapp continued: "To save the honor of Moses, lest it should reflect upon so good a man to have so bad a grandson as would rather have been steamed Manasseh than Moses. Manasseh is written in the Hebrew with the nun elevated above other letters, and this mark O upon the top and a note in the margin."

Here is the point: apostasy is no respecter of persons. The godliest may have an ungodly descendant. Look at the kings of Judah: a godly king may have a wicked rebel and apostate for a son, while a wicked rebel and apostate may have a godly son. Here apostasy affected even the family of Moses. Now look in verse 31.

This is absolutely astounding to me: “And they set up Micah’s graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.” It is insanely stupid to apostatize when you have truth. Do you remember when Joshua and the people came into the land? They set up the tabernacle in Shiloh. You could worship God there and offer sacrifices there. The true priesthood was in Shiloh. Everything was there, and yet the people were doing that which was right in their own eyes. Why? They were following the subjective standard—their own thinking, emotions, feelings, and opinions—rather than what God had said.

Call to Return to God's Objective Standard

Now go back in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 2. We are almost through, but I want us to read again the passage from the beginning of this message. Beginning with verse 11, think with me and look at the question: “Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods?” Look at what our country has done. This country was founded on biblical Christianity. Have we changed gods?

The answer is yes. Now we are worshiping the god of political correctness, the god of convenience, and the god of Molech—power and state religion. He says, “But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.” We have changed the glorious God of heaven and earth into that which is worthless. “Be astonished, O ye

heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils."

"They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." When you forsake God and His law, you're going down the drain. That water starts leaving that broken cistern; anything in it is going out. Don't be stupid. Don't be insane. Don't apostatize. Don't leave the pure, true Word of God for feelings and emotions, circumstances, political correctness, or anything else. Stay faithful and be obedient to the Word of God.

Proverbs 3, verses 5 through 7, says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil." Now take, in your mind, a broad overview of this country. Think about Chicago, New York, Atlanta, Tallahassee, and Washington, D.C.

Now think about the state of the churches in which we are. Most churches hardly ever expound or exegete the Word of God or apply the truth of God. Most people cannot even quote the Ten Commandments—most Christians.

Go back and look at Judges chapter 18, verse 31: "And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time the house of God was in Shiloh." This is what is astounding to me: all the time that our governments are apostatizing, we have the truth. All the time that our churches are wicked and apostatizing, we have the truth. And we've turned from the truth.

We have to come back and worship God in spirit and in truth. The true worship of God is bounded on two sides. On one side, it is bounded by spirit: it must be spiritual worship in the Holy Spirit, in our spirit. On the other side, it must be in truth. If you do not have spiritual worship, you can run into the ditch on that side. If you do not have truth, you will run into the ditch on that side. If you have neither, it does not matter where you are; you are still in the ditch.

How did they become insanely stupid and apostates? The answer is that they rejected the objective standard, God's Word, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes. We must come back to

this truth. We are in more trouble than you can shake a stick at. We know we are in deep trouble, but we really do not comprehend how deeply we have sunk.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We pray, Lord, that You would help us to be sane. Help us, Lord, to be truthful and honest. Give us integrity and character. Enable us, Lord, to stand for Thee and not to be stupid, and not to apostatize, and not to turn from Thee or Thy Word. Give us grace, Lord, that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear, and may we hold fast Thy truth. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 35

The Dark Winter

March 12, 2022

Introduction: The Dark Winter in Scripture

In Matthew 24:20, our Lord says, “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.” Isn’t that interesting? “Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the Sabbath day.” I am not going to expound this verse per se, but I am going to tell you a lot about it, and you will understand its connection to the message.

For most folks, winter is a foreboding time: darkness, lack of sunlight, cold, ice, and snow. It is also strange how winter becomes, for some, a time of apathy, lethargy, and depression. I suppose one reason for the depression is that you are usually shut indoors and do not get outside to receive the vitamin D you need. Probably another main reason is that the only entertainment available is watching TV. Honestly, I think that is enough to depress about anyone. Personally, I think TV is a waste of time. It is not entertainment; it is conditioning.

The news is not news; it is propaganda. The sitcoms have nothing to offer but canned laughter and that which is absolutely not funny at all. Winter is usually the favorite time of year only for those who enjoy sledding, skiing, ice skating, and ice fishing. Most people prefer warmer climates. That is why we have so many snowbirds, and why folks from New York and Pennsylvania come down here. It is much warmer and nicer, and winter is easier to endure outside when all you need is a short-sleeved shirt, a long-sleeved shirt, or occasionally a light jacket.

Winter is more enjoyable when you can not only work outside but garden. Many northern folks, and folks in other countries, do not know that we in the Deep South can have gardens twelve months out of the year. Clearly, I like the time down south without snow and ice, because that means I do not have to cut firewood all year long.

Now, the winter that our Lord refers to in Matthew 24, verse 20, the dark winter, actually refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. War was coming. Judgment was coming. It was unavoidable. And what our Lord is saying in verse 20 is that these people may pray for mitigation, that is, their flight should not be in the winter or on the Sabbath day, but judgment was coming and there was nothing they could do about it. They just need to make sure to pray that that flight did not occur in the winter or on the Sabbath. Now when you think about the winter just for a moment, you have to think about the hardness and the harshness of the season, the badness of the roads.

And if you've ever lived up north, when you look at the roads, I'm talking about even the turnpikes, the interstates, since all of that pavement contracts and expands, you have bumps, you have holes, you have crevices, you have cracks, and they are constantly and consistently working on the roads. But even in Bible times, in dirt roads, you have all the rain, you have all the mud, you have all the holes there. And when you stop and think about the shortness of the days and the length of night, the badness of the roads and all the snow, sleet, ice and cold, you have to consider if you're trying to flee or escape danger with a family and especially with little children or lots of children or

older and elderly people, it's going to slow you down to a large degree. And so our Lord says we need to pray that if we have to flee, especially here around the destruction of Jerusalem, He said that the flight be not in the winter. Then He says nor on the Sabbath day. Why did He mention the Sabbath day? Well, if you look in your Bibles to the book of Acts chapter 1 and verse 12, Acts chapter 1 verse 12, notice if you would what is said in this particular passage. Acts 1 verse 12, the Bible says, "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey." Notice, if you would, there was a limitation as to how far you could travel on the Sabbath day. Now, when you look at the law of God in Exodus chapter 16 and verse 29, God is giving direction concerning the gathering of manna on the sixth day. He says this, "For that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, and therefore he giveth you on the sixth day bread for two days.

“Abide ye every man in his place. Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” Even while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they were confined basically to their tents on the seventh day.

When you get to Nehemiah 13, especially verses 19 through 22, pagans were coming to the walls of Jerusalem, doing business, selling, buying, bartering, and trading. Nehemiah said, “No, this is not going to happen. This is a violation of the Sabbath.” So he shut the gate. When they shut the gate a couple of times, those pagans still came up and lodged by the wall, trying to sell. Nehemiah said, “If you come again, I’m going to lay hands on you. I’m going to whip you. I’m going to have you beaten up.” Of course, they quit coming. Then he told the Levites to sanctify themselves and guard the gates.

The point is this: clearly, journeys were limited on the Sabbath. God’s law did not specify the distances that people could travel on the Sabbath day. However, the rabbis limited travel to seven furlongs, nearly a mile. This is why our Lord said that they should pray their flight would not be in winter or on the Sabbath. If they could not flee more than a mile, it would be impossible to get out of the realm of danger on the Sabbath day.

Albert Barnes wrote: “The distance of a lawful journey on the Sabbath was not determined by the law of Moses, but by the Jewish

teachers, and they had fixed it at 2,000 paces. This measure was determined on because it was a tradition that the camp in the Israelites, when coming from Egypt, no part of the camp was more than 2,000 paces from the tabernacle. And over this space, therefore they were permitted to travel for worship." Perhaps this was also supported by the extent of the suburbs of the Levitical cities in Numbers 35:5. Other commentators suggested that the Sabbath day's journey was the distance between the Ark and the people as they circled Jericho at its fall—about 2,000 paces. Obviously, there was a limitation on travel, not because God's law demanded it, but because the rabbis said so; and the Pharisees, intent on their traditions, made sure the people observed it.

Modern Usage of 'Dark Winter'

We are talking about a dark winter. Politicians and the news media have used that phrase. Operation Dark Winter was the code name for a senior-level bioterrorist attack simulation held on June 22 and 23, 2001. It was designed as a mock version of a covert and widespread smallpox attack on the United States. The code name Dark Winter could apply basically to any conduct or attack planned during the winter. Recently, even the White House issued a warning about this winter.

The White House COVID response coordinator told unvaccinated Americans to be prepared to die: "You're looking at a winter of severe illness and death. For the unvaccinated, you're looking at a winter of severe illness and death for yourselves, your families and the hospitals you may soon overwhelm. So our message to every American is clear. There's an action that you can take to protect yourself and your family. Wear a mask in public indoor settings. Get vaccinated, get your kids vaccinated and get a booster shot when you're eligible."

That came straight from the White House. They were saying that unvaccinated people were facing a winter of disease and death. But what the truth is, if you are doing any reading, it is not the unvaccinated who are dying; it is the vaccinated. They are coming down with blood clots, strokes, heart disease, and all kinds of heart problems. They are the ones overwhelming the hospitals and

suffering various medical ailments. One article I saved showed pictures, illustrations, and personal testimonies of individuals whose limbs had been amputated because of this gene therapy shot.

It is indeed a winter of disease and death, but not for the unvaccinated; it is for the vaccinated. I began reading about those who were hospitalized. In one instance, 75 percent of those in the hospital were vaccinated. Then it went up to 83 percent. Just this week, I read that 93 percent of those in the hospital with serious illnesses, COVID, and whatever, were those who had received at least two shots.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., in The Real Anthony Fauci, said: "Dark Winter, Atlantic Storm, and Global Mercury were only three of over a dozen of germ games staged by military, medical, and intelligent planners leading up to COVID-19."

Each of these exercises—which he describes with a German word I cannot pronounce, meaning nightmarish, complex, bizarre, or illogical—became an uncanny predictor of a dystopian age that pandemic planners dubbed the new normal. Their consistent feature is an affinity among the simulator designers for militarizing medicine and introducing centralized autocratic governance.

The Dark Winter at Valley Forge

Since the term dark winter is being bandied about not only by politicians but also by the news media, I want to tell you about a dark winter of disease and death. Think with me, because there are many applications that we can make from this truth. The dark winter of disease and death actually happened in the winter of 1777 and 1778, when the Continental Army endured the winter at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

General George Washington and his army lost the Battle of Brandywine on September 11, 1777, and were forced to retreat toward Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Before considering the history of Valley Forge and its application to us today, I want to tell you something about George Washington and his character. Washington often said that he would rather be at his home in Mount Vernon. Yet

when he took command of the Continental Army in 1775, he went home only one time before the war ended in 1783—once in six years.

Washington remained with his army under every trying condition. He endured all the hardships and everything they endured. Another general followed Washington in both his footsteps and his character: Stonewall Jackson. During the War of Northern Aggression, from 1861 to 1865, Stonewall Jackson never took a furlough or a day off.

He loved his wife and his daughter, but he was constrained to stay with his men. He wrote, "I can't be absent, as my attention is necessary in preparing my troops for hard fighting, should it be required. And as my officers and soldiers are not permitted to visit their wives and families, I ought not to see mine. It might make the troops feel that they are badly treated, and that I consult my own comfort regardless of theirs. Every officer and soldier who is able to do duty ought to be busily engaged in military preparations by hard drilling, in order that, through the blessing of God, we may be victorious in the battles which in His all-wise providence may await us. If the war is carried on with vigor, I think under the blessing of God, it will not last long."

His wife, Mary Anna, and Julia did visit him some, but he never left. He never went home.

Mrs. Washington and others visited George, but they came to the encampment, not their home. The Revolutionary Forces—the Continental Army under George Washington—had secured a great victory at the Battle of Saratoga in September and October. However, Washington's army suffered defeats at Germantown, Paoli, and Brandywine, Pennsylvania, and Philadelphia, the capital, fell into British hands. By the time the Continental Army entered Valley Forge on December 19th, it was already suffering from cold, hunger, fatigue, and exceedingly low morale. George Washington described Valley Forge as “a dreary kind of place and uncomfortably provided.” If it was such a place, why did he choose Valley Forge?

He led 11,000 men into this encampment, and 500 to 600 women plus children followed them. Why did he choose Valley Forge? There were three reasons. First, the valley was a natural fortress, with hills

and plateaus where the men could camp. There was also a huge valley where they could drill and practice.

They lived in tents and huts. Alice and I have been there, and if you could see some of the huts, I do not think they would keep out any cold whatsoever. But that is where they lived. The parade ground was in the middle, and that is where they drilled. Secondly, Valley Forge was far enough away from the rich farmland in Pennsylvania that it would not disturb the crops. Thirdly, Valley Forge was only 25 miles from Philadelphia. Thus, he could keep an eye on the English, who had captured Philadelphia at that time, secure the area, and prevent widespread depredation and confiscation by the British.

The dark winter of 1777 and 1778 was very, very dark—darker than any of us could possibly imagine.

Before I get into this, I want to ask you several questions. How much does freedom mean to you? What would you be willing to endure to preserve your freedom and the freedom of your children and grandchildren? I am going to be absolutely honest with you: once you hear what I am going to tell you today, I really doubt that any patriot, believer, or Christian man today has the character, backbone, and determination to endure what these men endured to preserve freedom. I am serious. I do not think any of us really understand what these men went through.

If there had not been some professional rivalry between the British generals, there would never have been a dark winter experience for Washington and the Continental Army. Why? Because Washington and the army would have been destroyed. British General Johnny Burgoyne, known as Gentleman Johnny—I do not think he was a real gentleman—had a plan. He was going to come down from Canada, bring his troops, and enter New York, while General William Howe, already in New York, was to come up. Together they would catch General Washington and his Continental Army in a pincer movement and destroy them.

General Howe decided that perhaps he would rather capture Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, than help Johnny Burgoyne. He set sail on the river for the port of Philadelphia so that he could capture the capital at that particular time. Consequently, Burgoyne came down,

Washington met him, and at the Battle of Saratoga, Washington and the Continental Army won. They captured 6,000 English soldiers, which was indeed a morale booster for Washington and his army.

Why then did General Howe forsake General Johnny Burgoyne's plan, leave him holding the bag, and go to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania? Here is the answer: in European warfare, when the capital was captured, the war was over. In other words, there was an automatic surrender. But General Howe did not count on the Continental Congress disbanding and evacuating, taking the Liberty Bell with them so that the English would not melt it down and use it for musket balls.

Before they left, they gave this order. They effectively laid everything on the shoulders of George Washington: "Congress shall otherwise order. General Washington shall be possessed of full power to order and direct all things relative to the operations of the war." Howe captured Philadelphia, but he did not capture the Continental Congress.

Washington attempted to fight the British at the Battle of the Clouds, but torrential downpours dampened the powder on both sides, and so there was no fighting there particularly. After this, Washington led his 11,000 men into Valley Forge on December 19, 1777. Remember, Valley Forge was only 25 miles from Philadelphia. Meanwhile, while these 11,000 were at Valley Forge, another 11,000 at the same time were perishing and dying on British starving ships. The British took their captured patriots, Continental soldiers, put them on British ships, and allowed them to starve. Such ships were the Scorpion, the Hope, the Falmouth, the Stromboli, the Hunter, and the Jersey.

Ezra Stiles was a pastor, a theologian, and president of Yale University. Timothy Dwight was the son-in-law of Jonathan Edwards. Stiles wrote in 1783, just as the war ended: “Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for the thousands of our brethren that have perished in prison ships, in one of which the Jersey, then lying at New York, perished above 11,000 the last three years, while others have been barbarously exiled to the East Indies for life.” Thus, Ezra Stiles says that in just

three years, 11,000 perished on one ship, while all these others were named as well.

Interestingly, the soldiers in Washington's army varied in age from twelve to sixty. Other notable men in Washington's army included Marquis de Lafayette—not de La Vallette, who had another battle, but Lafayette—Colonel Mad Anthony Wayne, future Chief Justice John Marshall, and the Lutheran pastor turned Major General, John Peter Muhlenberg. Lafayette was specifically distinguished from de La Vallette, whose battle was another one.

Although there were some wonderful men there, they could not head off everything that was happening. Washington went into this encampment with 11,000 troops. Lacking food and supplies, the soldiers died at a rate of twelve per day. Over 2,500 froze to death in bitter cold or perished from hunger, typhoid, jaundice, dysentery, and pneumonia. Hundreds of horses also perished in the freezing weather. A committee from Congress reported on the soldiers: "feet and legs froze till they became black." These deaths therefore included both those who froze in the bitter cold and those who perished through hunger and disease.

Wives and children who followed the army mended clothes, did laundry, scavenged for food, and cared for the sick. An estimated 500 women also died at Valley Forge. These women were referred to as camp followers, but they were not floozies by any stretch of the imagination. They were organized by Martha Washington, George's wife; Lucy Knox, the wife of Colonel Henry Knox; and Katie Green, the wife of General Nathaniel Greene. Mrs. Westlake described Martha Washington this way: "I never in my life knew a woman so busy from early morning until late at night as was Lady Washington, providing comforts for the sick soldiers." President Calvin Coolidge told the Daughters of the American Revolution on April the 9th, 1926, "We have been told of the unselfish devotion of the women who gave their own warm garments to fashion clothing for the suffering Continental Army during that bitter winter at Valley Forge. The burdens of the war were not all borne by the men."

A surgeon from Connecticut, Dr. Alva Jentz Waldo, wrote in his diary on December the 25th, Christmas Day: "Christmas, we're still in tents. We ought to be in huts. The poor sick suffer much in tents

in this cold weather. But we now treat them differently from what they used to be at home. Under the inspection of old women, and Dr. Bolus Linctus." Dr. Bolus Linctus was not a man. Bolus is a big pill, and so it's something they took. He continued, "We now give them mutton and grog and a capital medicine once in a while to start the disease from its foundation at once. We avoid piddling pills, powders, Bolus Linctus cordials, cough lozenges, and all such insignificant matters, whose powers are only rendered important by causing the patient to vomit up his money instead of his disease." Some of this, he said, was simply a waste of money and time.

Remember that over 2,500 of these 11,000 froze to death or died from disease. Two days before Christmas, George Washington wrote, "We have this day no less than 2,873 men in camp unfit for duty, because they are barefooted and otherwise naked." He added, "Unless some great and capital change suddenly takes place, this army must inevitably starve, dissolve, or disperse in order to obtain subsistence in the best manner that they can." Washington sent a desperate plea for help to Virginia Governor Patrick Henry: "For several days past we've experienced little less than a famine in the camp, and have had much cause to dread a general mutiny and dispersion."

“From every appearance there's been hinder for so astonishing an efficiency in providing that unless the most vigorous and effectual measures are at once everywhere adopted, we shall not be able to make another campaign.” Outraged, Patrick Henry wrote the Continental Congress: “I'm really shocked at the management of Congress.” I wonder what his idea would be today.

On April 21, 1778, George Washington wrote Lieutenant Colonel John Bannister: “No history can furnish an instance of an army suffering such uncommon hardships as ours has done and bearing them with the same patience and fortitude. To see men without clothes to cover their nakedness, without blankets to lay on, without shoes by which their marches might be traced by the blood of their feet, and almost as often without provisions, marching through frost and snow and at Christmas taking up their winter quarters within a day's march of the enemy, without a house or hut to cover them, and

submitting to it without a murmur, is a mark of patience and obedience which, in my opinion, can scarce be paralleled."

Years ago—and I am going to mention him a little later—there was a Prussian baron, von Steuben, who came and stayed at Valley Forge and taught Washington's men how to be real soldiers. But there was a cartoon that I saw, I suppose it was supposed to be funny, but it really wasn't funny. It did demonstrate what was happening at Valley Forge. A number of men were lined up, very poorly clothed, with rags wrapped around their feet. The rags were bloody, and there was blood on the snow. Von Steuben, the Prussian officer, was looking at them and saying, "And when I say tongue, let me hear those rags snap." He wanted discipline: "When I say attention, let me hear those rags snap." But how can you pop your feet together when they are freezing and bleeding and have cracks in them? No, you cannot.

All I am trying to show you is this: Valley Forge was indeed a dark winter. Continental Army Private Joseph Plum Martin wrote that their winter quarters left them in a truly forlorn condition—no clothing, no provisions, and as disheartened as need be. Years ago, I read that when Martha Washington, General Washington's wife, came to review the troops, they had to rearrange the men to cover their nakedness because some of them did not have sufficient clothing. Their clothing had worn out and torn and was absolutely rotten. They simply had to arrange themselves so that when she walked by, she would not be embarrassed.

It was Hessian Major Carl Leopold Burmeister. A Hessian was one who fought for the English, not for the Continental Army. But Burmeister said that the only thing that kept the American Army together was the spirit of liberty.

Why was the Continental Army put in such desperate and dire straits? How could such neglect and mismanagement take place in such an important cause? If Washington and the Continental Army were defeated, so was freedom. If they went down, so did independence, and the colonies would be back under George III. It was George III who had sent the armies to subdue the colonists. After all the expense that the war cost George III, do you think he would be very forgiving?

Corruption and Politics as the Root Cause

The answer would be no. He would put all kinds of pressure upon the colonies. Why did this happen? The answer to the problems that existed in 1777 and 1778 is the same answer to the problems of 2021–2022. What was the cause of all this suffering? Corruption and politics. It was discovered that there was mismanagement by the Continental Army's quartermaster, General Thomas Mifflin. There was also controversy as to whether this mismanagement came about from incompetence or whether, as some suggested, Mifflin was waylaying supplies bound for Valley Forge to his own warehouses, where he might sell them to the highest bidder. At any rate, when Mifflin was confronted, he resigned. Now why would Mifflin do that? Was he that covetous? Was he that greedy?

Did he want money that much? The truth of the matter is that he was also caught up in what was known as the Conway Cabal. The Continental Congress had talked of replacing George Washington with General Horatio Gates, of Battle of Saratoga fame. It was called the Conway Cabal because it was orchestrated by Thomas Conway, whom Washington had passed over for promotion. Conway was trying to gather everyone together to get rid of George Washington and give leadership of the army to Horatio Gates.

They made a huge mistake. They sent a letter to Patrick Henry, Governor Patrick Henry, trying to include him in this secret deal. He immediately sent the letter to George Washington and warned him of what was about to take place. Thankfully, the quartermaster was replaced, and a new quartermaster was installed: General Nathaniel Greene. Within days, Valley Forge had clothing, food, and other supplies.

That ought to tell you what was happening there. Overcoming the freezing conditions, the soldiers prepared to fight, beginning in February 1778. Then there arrived at camp a Prussian baron, Frederick von Steuben. Von Steuben had been a member of the elite general staff of Frederick the Great, king of Prussia. Baron von Steuben was also recommended by Ben Franklin, and he was indeed a soldier. He helped discipline Washington's troops and get them into fighting condition.

At the same time, the Marquis de Lafayette, a French officer, provided another addition to Washington's camp. He endured all the sufferings at Valley Forge as well, and he endeared himself to the men because he suffered with them. He went through all their hardships and helped teach, drill, and discipline them. Everybody loved Lafayette because he was a friend to George Washington, brave, willing to suffer, and a friend of the American cause.

Washington's Faith and Prayer

Let me read you something about Washington. This is from Lutheran pastor Henry Muhlenberg. His sons, Peter and Frederick, served in the first United States Congress, and he wrote in the Notebook of a Colonial Clergyman: “I heard a fine example today, namely that His Excellency, General Washington rode around among his army yesterday and admonished each to fear God, to put away wickedness, and to practice Christian virtues.” Muhlenberg continued, “from all appearances General Washington does not belong to the so-called world of society, for he respects God's Word, believes in the atonement through Jesus Christ, and bears himself in humility and gentleness.”

Therefore the Lord has also singularly, yea, marvelously preserved him from harm in the midst of countless perils, ambushes, fatigues, and has hitherto graciously held him in his hand as a chosen vessel.

To show you the Christianity of Washington, Washington not only successfully kept the army intact through the devastating winter of Valley Forge, but on April 12, 1778, he wrote: "The Honorable Congress, having thought proper to recommend to the United States of America to set apart Wednesday the 22nd to be observed as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, that at one time and with one voice the righteous dispensations of providence may be acknowledged and His goodness and mercy toward our arms supplicated and implored. The general directs that the day shall be most religiously observed in the army, that no work shall be done therein, and that the several chaplains do prepare discourses."

Then, on May 2, 1778, Washington ordered: "The commander-in-chief directs that divine services be performed every

Sunday. While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of patriot, it should be our highest glory to laud the more distinguished character of Christianity."

Everyone has seen the picture of George Washington praying in the snow at Valley Forge. That is not just a painting. "The Prayer at Valley Forge" is a painting by Arnold Friberg, one of the best-known paintings of the American Revolution. In it, George Washington is kneeling in the snow by his horse, Nelson, and prayed during this encampment at Valley Forge.

The story originated with a Quaker Tory named Isaac Potts. A Tory was someone who supported the British, and Quakers were usually Tories. Isaac Potts told this story to Reverend Nathaniel Randolph Snowden, who wrote it in his diary and remembrances. Snowden said, "I knew personally the celebrated Quaker Potts, who saw General Washington alone in the woods at prayer. I got it from him myself. Weems mentioned it in his History of Washington, but I got it from the man myself." He said, "I was riding with him, Mr. Potts, in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, near the Valley Forge where the Army lay during the war of revolution. Mr. Potts was a senator in our state and a Whig. I told him I was agreeably surprised to find him a friend of his country, as most Quakers were mostly Tories."

He said it was so, and I was truly once a rank Tory, for I never believed that America could proceed against Great Britain, whose fleets and armies covered the land and ocean. But something very extraordinary converted me to the good faith.

There, said he, lay the army of Washington. It was the most distressing time of the war, and all were for giving up the ship but that great and good man. In those woods, I heard a plaintive sound as of a man at prayer. I tied my horse to a sapling and went quietly into the woods, and to my astonishment, I saw the great George Washington on his knees alone, with his sword on one side and his cocked hat on the other. He was at prayer to the God of the armies, beseeching Him to interpose with His divine aid, as it was the crisis

and the cause of the country and of humanity in the world. Such a prayer I never heard from the lips of a man.

I left him alone praying, went home, and told my wife what I had seen and heard. We never thought a man could be a soldier and a Christian, but if there is one in the world, it is Washington.

She was also astonished. We thought it was the cause of God, and America could prevail. He then put out his right hand and said, “I turned right around and became a Whig.” In other words, he came to the side of the Americans. And the truth is, God answered the prayer of George Washington, because America then became free from the tyranny of George III.

Contemporary Tyranny and the Need for Vigilance

One problem that I perceive, existing not only in the minds of Americans but in the minds of Christians as well, is that we tend to think tyranny is a thing of the past and does not affect us now. We tend to think there are no more tyrants, or we think in personalities. In other words, we think of a tyrant as simply one man: Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, or Idi Amin. They were tyrants indeed, but tyranny can also arise from an aristocracy, a democracy, or a monarchy. It can arise from parties, Congress, presidents, or the judicial system. Tyranny can come from any source. What we are witnessing today is the absolute and total corruption and tyrannical influences of both our political parties.

We are witnessing firsthand the unbiblical, unconstitutional, and undeniable effort by a global elite not only to enslave America but the world. We are almost at our own Valley Forge in 2022. Thomas Jefferson said, "Our legislators are not sufficiently apprised of the rightful limits of their power; that their true office is to declare and enforce only our natural rights and duties and to take none of them from us." He said they do not understand the limits of their power. We need to keep the pressure on them and apprise them of the limitation of their power.

Senator Everett Dirksen, who is now dead, said, "When I feel the heat, then I see the light." Unless our representatives feel the heat,

they will never see the light. They need to feel the heat on a constant, consistent, and regular basis.

John Taylor, a great patriot and basically one of the founding fathers as well, lived from 1753 to 1803. Listen to his definition of tyranny and see if it might fit our position today: "Tyranny is something which takes away our money, transfers our property and comforts to those who did not earn them, and eats the food belonging to others." If that's tyranny, we've got it up to our eyeballs.

It should not be counted strange to understand that corruption, cabals, and political intrigues took place even before this country was formed. The Mifflins, the Conways, and others are still with us, only under different names. The root cause, of course, is total depravity. Men today are just as depraved as they were in the 17th and 18th century.

Psalm 118 and verse 8 is the middle verse of the Bible: "It is better to put confidence in the Lord than to put confidence in man." The next verse is clear, too: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." Anytime we begin to put confidence in man, we tend to think, well, our government wouldn't do anything to hurt us. Oh, yes, they would. They have done it, and they're still doing it. Our confidence in man is displaced.

Samuel Adams said, "If ever a time should come when vain and aspiring men shall possess the high seats in government, our country will stand in need of its experienced patriots to prevent its ruin." We have those vain and aspiring men in the high seats of government today. John Philpot Curran, who died in 1870, said this in 1790: "It is the common fate of the indolent to see our rights become a prey to the active. The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance, which condition if he break, servitude is at once the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt."

Thomas Jefferson said, "God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God?

“They're not to be violated but with His wrath. Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot

sleep forever." Did you know that this quote is engraved on the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C.? He said, "I tremble for my country when I think that God is just."

George Washington said it is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and without the Bible. Washington was reiterating what David said in 2 Samuel, chapter 23, verses 1 through 3: "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, The man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel said, The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The Lord God of Israel said, The rock of Israel spake to me. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

Biblical Diagnosis of National Sin

Four times David claims direct inspiration for that one simple statement. Our dark winter is being brought to us by men without faith, politicians without law, judges without righteousness and justice, and people that love sin and wickedness and rebellion. It is also being brought to us by the righteous and just judgment of a sovereign God who will let it all acquit the wicked.

Isaiah 59 explains clearly where we are today in time and history: "For our transgressions are multiplied before thee." God knows the words. "And our sins testify against us." We cannot hide them. "For our transgressions are with us. As for our iniquities, we know them." In other words, even in this country, we know where we are wrong. Our politicians know where we are wrong. The people know where we are wrong. "In transgressing and lying against the Lord," that is what we are doing, "and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood."

Look what happens when verses 12 and 13 become a reality. Here is what happens in verse 14: "And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off. For truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth. And he that departed from evil," that is, from the politically correct stance, "he that departed from evil maketh himself a prey. And the Lord saw it,

and it displeased him that there was no judgment." May I point out a simple truth?

Any society, community, state, or nation that seeks to circumvent, deny, and destroy God and His law is inevitably destroying itself. That is where we are. Truth is falling in the street. There is no justice. There is no judgment. So what can we do?

Call to Action and Trust in God

Sam Adams made a tremendous statement. He said that the revolution was already in the hearts and minds of the people before the war ever began. What did he mean? They were already thinking biblically. They were already thinking liberty, freedom, and independence. You did not have to convince them of what was right; they knew what was right.

Remember that, in those days, pastors preached in the election sermons. They told the rulers what God demanded of them, and they told the people what God demanded of them. In the founding of our country, no one could take an office of authority without having the Word of God and his responsibilities declared to him in light of that Word. That is why the people knew what was right and were willing to fight.

No one is going to fight today because they do not know what is right. By fight, I do not necessarily mean taking up arms, though that may be included. You will not fight mentally, emotionally, financially, or in any way if you do not know the truth. We must make sure that the Word of God and its principles are spread freely.

We need to pray that God will open the eyes and minds of the people, that He would be pleased to grant us repentance, and that He would be pleased to turn us, as David said, and we shall be turned, to quicken us, and we shall call upon His name. So the question comes back: How much do you love freedom? What are you willing to sacrifice for your freedom, and for the freedom of your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren?

If God does not sovereignly intervene, we will be facing one of the darkest winters that we have ever faced because we are not only going to be suffering at the hands of man, we will be suffering at the

hands of God as well, because God is just. And as Jefferson said, "I tremble for my country when I think of the justice of God." What can we learn? We can learn that we cannot trust in man.

We must trust in the Lord, fulfill our responsibilities and duties, do so in faith, do for God's honor and glory, and do everything that we can to perpetuate His Word and His truth. For our Lord Himself said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free."

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and for the lessons of history. We thank You, Lord, that You did hear the prayer of George Washington, that You did deliver us and grant us a time of liberty, freedom, and independence. But Lord, we are more enslaved now than ever before. We need to return to the foundation of the Word of God. Give us Your grace and mercy. Help us, we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 36

Dying For Another Man's Sins

February 2, 2023

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Samuel 24:1-13 (KJV)

2 Samuel chapter 24. The title of the message is "Dying for Another Man's Sins."

2 Samuel 24, beginning with verse 1:

"And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people. And Joab said unto the king, Now the Lord thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, a hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? Notwithstanding, the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains

> of the host went out from the presence of the king to number the people of Israel.
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> "And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city that lieth in the midst of the river of Gad, toward Jazer. And they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi; and they came to Dan-jaan, and about to Zidon, and came to the stronghold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah, even to Beersheba. So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.
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> "And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men. And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. For when David was up in the morning, the word of the Lord came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and say unto David, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land?"

"Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man. So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men."

Introduction: The Provocative Title

The title of this message is "Dying for Another Man's Sins." It is designed to make you think and listen well as we consider this

provocative statement, because we see this almost daily in many areas. Do you want to die for the sins of another man? Obviously, the answer is no. However, many people do die because of the sins of others.

For example, a drunk man may drive down the road, veer out of his lane into that of an oncoming car, and cause a head-on crash in which an entire family is killed. In one sense, that family died because of the sin of another man, who was clearly drunk. Think also about deranged murderers who murder so that their names will go down in history as leading mass murderers. These people were absolutely, totally, completely insane, and people died simply because of the sin of such a maniac. Consider also the hundreds of people—husbands, wives, and children—who die either accidentally or intentionally due to drug use and drug overdose on some people.

I remember a good friend from my high-school years. After we got out of high school, I lost track of him because he went into the military and later came out. Many years later, I heard that he was dead. He and another friend had gone out and gotten drunk. In a drunken stupor, his friend picked up a rifle and emptied it into my friend's chest. The man who shot him was so drunk that he did not even know he had done it. Here was one man, clearly a sinner, dying at the hand of another man because of that man's drunken stupor. Now, here is my question.

Biblical Tension: Individual Responsibility vs. Corporate Consequences

How do we reconcile some of these illustrations that I just gave you, and how do we reconcile 2 Samuel 24 with a number of other leading Scriptures? Let me show you. In Deuteronomy 24:16, God says, “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” Every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

In Ezekiel 18:4, God says, “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Now skip down to verse 20. God says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the

father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

While it is certainly true that we normally think of such instances as tragedies, the truth of the matter is this: each person that dies deserves to die. And that would include you and me as well. I am not trying to be unloving, unkind, or unsympathetic. I am simply speaking the truth. Each of us dies because of sins—our sins. That is why the Bible says, in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Universality of Sin and Death

The drunk that caused the wreck was a sinner. The people who died because of the drunkard's sin were also sinners. Their sin may not have been drunkenness, but they were sinners. The truth of the matter is this: we die because of our sins. There was no death until there was sin. It only takes one sin for an individual to be a sinner. It only takes one sin for an individual to deserve death. Moreover, it really does not even take one sin committed in our lifetime, because we are born totally depraved. We are born sinners, and therefore we are born with enough sin that would kill us. That is why infants die.

In fact, the Bible says in Psalm 58, "They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." It goes on to talk about even infants. So the truth of the matter is, each of us die because of our sins. You are going to see David sinning against God, and the end result is 70,000 men dying.

There are many illustrations in the Bible concerning the brevity of our life. You can read Psalm 90, which will give you a number of good illustrations, but let me give you one that is very plain and easily grasped. Look in your Bibles to the book of James, chapter 4, beginning with verse 13. Look what God says:

"Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then

vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."

Note that he says, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Each of us has watched kettles boil and seen the vapour; once you take the kettle off the eye of the stove, the vapour disappears. You have been driving down the highway, looked up ahead, and seen water on the road. When you get there, there is no water. It was a mirage, a vapour—something that appeared, and then was gone by the time you arrived.

The Word of God is telling us that our lives are like vapors. They are here just for a little while, and then we are gone. Stop and think how easily and how quickly a vapor disappears.

Here is a truth that we do not like to think about: none of us really deserve to live. When you stop and think about the sins that each of us has committed against God, and that each sin deserves death, this is why it is so absolutely astounding to me when I read Lamentations 3:22–23: “It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.”

Really and truly, when we awaken each morning, the very first thing we should be doing is thanking God for those new compassions and thanking Him for allowing us to live through the night and just to see the new morning. Then we should ask Him to protect us and carry us through the day, so that we can see more new compassions on the next day as well.

God's Sovereignty Over Life and Death

The truth of the matter is that none of us actually deserves to live. It is one thing for you and me to think about a drunk going down the road, swerving into another car head-on and killing an entire family. It is one thing for you and me to think about a maniac murderer who shoots five or six people. It is quite another thing when you and I consider one act that causes seventy thousand people to die.

That is exactly what happened in 2 Samuel chapter 24. We must remember another truth in light of this, and that is that God is the

giver and the taker of life. The Bible tells us that He holds our souls in life. The Bible also tells us that our times are in His hands. Here is the truth: God has not only appointed the day of our birth; He has also appointed the day of our death.

God has not only appointed the day of our birth; He also appointed where we were to be born and how we were to be born. He has not only appointed the day of our death; He has also appointed where we are to die and how we are to die.

Job 14:1 says, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” No matter how long we live, it is still just a few days.

"He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." There are two great illustrations of the brevity of life. Then he asks, "And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?" In other words, man is nothing. Verse 4 says, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one."

Now notice what Scripture says in verse 5: "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." God has appointed our bounds. He knows exactly where we are going and how far we are going. Just as God said to the ocean, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," so God tells us this: none of us will live one second longer than God has ordained. We will die exactly when, where, and how God has ordained.

Now, with that in mind, look back in your Bibles to 2 Samuel chapter 24, because there are two truths that have to be pointed out before expounding the chapter. The first truth is found in verse 1: “And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.” Note the words, “and again, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.” In other words, God’s anger was not necessarily against David per se; it was against the entire nation. The nation had done something that sorely displeased God and provoked Him to anger.

The Dual Cause of David's Sin: God's Anger and Satan's Provocation

John Trapp, the old Puritan, said this: “Again, after the late three years’ famine for Saul’s sin, and the slaughter of 20,000 for rebelling with Absalom, the plague of pestilence is sent, as they seldom go sundered, for the injury to Uriah, who is named in the last verse of the former chapter.

“But more likely it was for some general sin of the whole land, whether it were their recently revolting from David, or their putting too much confidence in their king and his worthies, or the abuse of the present peace and plenty, or whatever else. God was displeased, and David so far abandoned and left to himself that he yielded to the satanical suggestion which brought the people’s ruth and ruin.” The word “ruth” is an old word meaning grief and sorrow.

Trapp is saying that it could have been related to Uriah. Verse 39 of 2 Samuel 23 says, “Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all.” Uriah is the last man named—the husband of Bathsheba, whom David had killed with the sword of the children of Ammon. Thus, Trapp is saying it could have been for Uriah. It could have been for a number of reasons, including some general sin of the people. There is no way of knowing why God was angry with Israel, because it is not specified in this chapter. But we can be assured of one thing: whatever displeased God, He was absolutely righteous and holy in His displeasure, and absolutely righteous and holy in judging the people. The sin was not just on David’s part, although that was the main sin; God was already angry with the entire nation. This should teach us that God does indeed get angry with nations.

Stop and think about that. The second truth that I want to emphasize is found in 1 Chronicles chapter 21. The same incident is referred to there. Look back at 2 Samuel 24 and verse 1: “And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.” Now, in 1 Chronicles 21 and verse 1, we read, “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.” So the very first question we have to ask is this: who was it that did the moving and the provoking? Was it God or was it Satan?

The truth of the matter is that the answer is both. God, in His sovereignty, allowed Satan to provoke David, and David, in his pride, allowed Satan to succeed because David sinned against God in doing exactly what he did. You have to remember something: God is absolutely sovereign, and Satan is not God. Satan is a created being. In the book of Job, every time God gave Satan permission to touch Job, there was always a limitation. In other words, he could go so far, but he could go no further.

Do you realize that Satan cannot do one thing apart from God's permission? In fact, Satan cannot even exist apart from God, because God is sovereign and Satan is a created being. Just as you and I are dependent upon God for life, breath, health, and our entire existence, so likewise Satan is dependent upon God Himself. He must have God's permission even to exist.

Now let me show you something about temptation. The Bible says that Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David. He pushed David; he tempted David. Yet the Bible says that God moved David. We must distinguish temptation to sin from God's sovereignty over what occurs. James 1:13 addresses temptation to sin: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Listen carefully: God is not the author of evil. God is not the infuser of evil. God is not the instigator of evil. God is not the agitator of evil. But God is indeed the controller of evil. I'll show you.

But look in verse 13 again: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." You want to know where sin comes from? "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

The Bible tells you in Psalm 76 and verse 10, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." If you would like to know how much evil is going to come to pass in this world, here it is: there will be just enough evil to ultimately redound to God's honor and glory. How can evil redound to God's honor and glory?

Without sin and evil, we would know nothing of God's justice, love, compassion, holiness, or righteousness. Everything about God is absolutely pitted against that which is evil. Therefore, only that which will ultimately redound to God's honor and glory will come to pass. The rest He will restrain; He will not allow it to happen.

A good illustration is found in Genesis 20. When Abimelech took Sarah, Abraham's wife, God came to him and said, "If you touch her, you're dead, man, because that's a man's wife. You give her back." Abimelech answered, "Lord, in the integrity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this." God said, "I know that, therefore I suffered thee not to touch her." God withheld him from sinning because He did not want the lineage of Jesus Christ messed up. So God restrained him, just as the Bible says.

God allowed Satan to tempt David, David yielded to that temptation, and therefore the sin was David's. In 2 Samuel 24:17, David admits that it is his sin: "And David spake unto the Lord when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house." David is saying that the sin is his. Satan may tempt us, but when we yield to temptation, the sin becomes ours. It is not a sin to be tempted. Our Lord was tempted—read Matthew chapter 4—but He did not yield to temptation.

The Nature of David's Sin

We must also acknowledge that God has the absolute right to test us, try us, prove us, and attempt us in that sense of the word, to show us what is in our hearts. In James chapter 1, the word "tempt," "temptation," or "tempted"—the noun and the verb—may be used in either a good or a bad sense. The Greek noun is peirasmos.

The good sense appears in James 1:12: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation"—there is peirasmos. Here, "temptation" means affliction, a test, or a trial: "for when he is tried"—tested and proved—"he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Thus, in verse 12, peirasmos is used in a good sense.

But in verse 13 the same word appears in its verbal form: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” There it is used in a bad sense, referring to seduction to sin. It is the same word, but there is a good sense and a bad sense. God does indeed test us, and He has an absolute right to do so because we are His creatures. He does test us, and it does try us. You remember Genesis chapter 22 and verse 1: “Now it came to pass that God did tempt Abraham.” How did God tempt Abraham?

He said, “Take thy son, thine only son Isaac, get thee up to that mountain, and offer him to me for sacrifice.” God was testing Abraham’s faithfulness, faith, and love. Abraham passed the test with flying colors. Of course, he did not slay Isaac, but before he ever went up to the mountain, he told his servants, “Tarry ye here while the child and I go yonder and worship, and we will come back again.” God has an absolute right to test us and to try us.

But here is the other side of that coin: we have absolutely no right to test and to try God or to put Him on trial. Our Lord, in Matthew chapter 4 and verse 7 and in Luke chapter 4 and verse 12, said, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” You are not to try to prove God. You are not to say, “Lord, here I am on this high building; if You really exist, God, I’m going to jump off. Catch me before I hit the ground.” That is not only insanity and stupidity; it is a provocation. It is tempting God. God says, Do not do that. We have no right to test God or to tempt God.

We must believe Him, and we must submit to Him. I want us to consider David’s life for a short while as we read 2 Samuel chapter 24. This is the last chapter in 2 Samuel; the next book is 1 Kings, chapter 1. Look at 1 Kings chapter 1, verse 1: “Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat.” Note that King David was old and stricken in years. When you read 2 Samuel chapter 24, understand that this incident took place when David was old, at the culmination of his reign. David reigned for forty years. He was also a warrior, a valiant man and fighter, and he led his armies in and out many times.

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Samuel 24:2-4 (KJV)

David is old; it is the end of his life and the end of his reign.

> "For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan"—which would be the northernmost tribe—"even to Beersheba"—the southernmost town—"and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people. And Joab said unto the king, Now the Lord thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, a hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?"
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> "Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host." There were other men opposing what David was suggesting and commanding as well. "And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king to number the people of Israel."

How could numbering the people be a sin? We number the people here in America. We have what is known as a census, and that census takes place once every ten years. The census is supposed to be for representation. The only authority that Congress possesses, and the only authority that the Census Bureau has, is to enumerate the people—that is, they have the authority, constitutionally, to count the people. They have no authority to ask you how many bedrooms you have, how many bathrooms you have, how many square feet are in your house, or how many times you go to the bathroom. That's none of their business.

Here's Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3, known as the Enumeration Clause or the Census Clause in the Constitution: "The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct." Notice, "the actual Enumeration," the actual counting.

All the census forms I've ever answered in my entire life, I would just put the number of people that lived in the house and would send it back. I wouldn't put anything else. I was approached by one census taker, and she started asking me a question, and I said, "Two." She asked me another question. I said, "Two." Finally, she said, "What are you saying?" I said, "Well, Congress shall have the power to enumerate. That means to count. There are two people. That's all

you need to know." She said, "I'll have to send a supervisor out here to see you." I said, "Send whomever you want. I can quote the Constitution to them as easily as I can quote it to you, too." Of course, no one ever came to see me.

I'm saying that to say this: David was not taking a census. David was not interested in how many people were actually alive and living in the land. You have to remember that David was a warrior. David had developed a very wonderful and fine fighting machinery. He had a fighting force that was absolutely astounding. David had been prosperous in everything that he touched—economically, militarily. So when David gave the command to Joab and these other captains, what David was wanting to do was to number the fighting men in Israel. He wanted to know how many soldiers he had. Please understand something now: David

This is the end of David's life, and he is asking these men to go out and number the soldiers. Joab was a wicked man and a murderer. He murdered two people, his own cousin Abner and Amasa. Joab certainly would not be known as a spiritually minded individual. But when David wanted to do this, Joab said, "Whoa, whoa, wait, wait. May the Lord increase Israel a hundredfold, and may your eyes live to see it. But why would my lord the king do this thing?"

Joab knew it was wrong. All the other captains knew it was wrong, and they protested as well. Nevertheless, the Bible says that the king's word prevailed against them. Joab understood that this was sinful, that David was grieving God and doing that which was absolutely contrary to God.

So how could David's counting his fighting men, numbering and mustering the people, be counted as a sin? Sin is a transgression of God's law. First John 3:4 says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." You cannot sin against God without violating His law. How, then, could David's numbering these men be counted as a sin and as a violation of God's law? In three ways.

First, you must understand that the army did not belong to David. The army was God's army. In fact, if you will hold 2 Samuel 24, look back in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 12 and verse 41. God was

bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt. Note specifically what is said: “And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.” As you read through the Bible, you will find that one of the names of God is the Lord of Hosts, the God of Hosts, or the Lord God of Hosts.

The word "host" refers to an army or armies. When He is called the Lord God of hosts, He is being called the Lord God of the armies. So in verse 41, the Bible says that when God brought them out, "the hosts"—or the armies—"of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." In fact, God brought them out in military formation. They came out as an army. This was God's army from the beginning.

In Joshua chapter 5, beginning at verse 13, we read: "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Joshua had to be brave, because here was a man with a sword already drawn.

Joshua went to him and said, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" Verse 14 says: "And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

This is a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearing of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. Notice: "as captain of the Lord's host am I now come." Wow. Let that sink in.

In 1 Samuel 15:2, God came to King Saul and told him to make war against the Amalekites: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts"—the Lord of the armies—"I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up out of Egypt." Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies.

In 1 Samuel 17, when David was fighting Goliath, he said, "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the

Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." The God of the armies of Israel. Then, in 2 Samuel 5:10, the Bible says, "And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him."

When David gave a command to go out and number the fighting men, he was assuming that the army was his. He was taking the captain's place as the head of the army. Look at verse 9, which shows that this was not a census: "And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men." So there were a million three hundred thousand in the army. Joab was not giving David the number of people in Israel, but the number of the fighting men. In commanding them to number these men, David assumed that the army was his and that he was its true captain.

He had no authority to do that. The second and third parts of his sin occurred simultaneously. The army was not to be mustered or numbered except in a time of war. And when they were numbered, the half shekel of the atonement money had to be taken for each soldier. This was not done in 2 Samuel 24.

Exodus 30:11–16 says, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the Lord. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the Lord. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls.”

So, number one, it was not David's army. Number two, it was not a time of war. Number three, when they were numbered or mustered, no half shekel was taken. David had no orders from God to do what he did. There was no occasion to number the people because there was no war, and there was no atonement money being taken.

David's Repentance and the Consequences

Look back at 2 Samuel 24:8: "So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days." It took almost ten months to count these fighting men—ten months of wasted time.

When Joab gave David the number in verse 9, David learned that there were 800,000 in Israel and 500,000 in Judah, or 1,300,000 fighting men. Look at verse 10: "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."

We are just like David. Oftentimes, we recognize that we have sinned too late. It is already done. God may forgive our sins, but we do not escape their consequences. I have used this before, but let me show you what I mean. Suppose that Steve and I go into a bar, get drunk, and get into a fight. He knocks one of my teeth out, and I knock his eye out. Will God forgive us for getting drunk? Yes. Would God forgive us for getting into a fight? Yes. Would that restore my tooth or his eye? No. I am going to be toothless, and he is going to be without an eye, unless it can be reattached somehow. Although we may be forgiven, we still bear the consequences of our sin.

And here is what God said: "You take this atonement money, lest there be a plague." That money was not taken by David whatsoever. His heart smote him.

Beginning with verse 12, God comes to Gad, who is a prophet, or a seer—the same thing as a prophet. He says, "Go and say unto David, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and told

him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me."

Here is the wisest thing David did: "And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." David basically said, "I am not going to make the choice. Let God make the choice."

David did wisely in leaving the punishment to God. God then sent the plague, and 70,000 men died. David was assuming full responsibility for the plague before God: "And David spake unto the Lord when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done?"

Pride and Our Helplessness

Lessons: Pride and Corporate Responsibility

"Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house." There are some valuable lessons that we need to learn from this. The first one is this: pride is in each of our hearts. We have a tendency to be proud of our accomplishments. But it is a sin to allow pride to control our lives, our emotions, our decisions, and our determinations. David very clearly was proud of his fighting machine.

He had led these armies in and out to victory so many times. Remember now, David is old. This happens right before he starts literally dying, at the end of his reign. And what do old people normally do? We think back: "Well, I've raised a mighty good family." "Well, I made a good fortune." "Well, I've got a beautiful house." "Well, I've got 400 acres of land."

We begin to glory in everything that we have accomplished. We never stop to think that if God had not allowed us to live, to have our being, to have our mind, to have our health, we could not have done

one thing—not one. I usually jokingly tell people, especially when I see someone who has multiple skills, "Well, the Lord's only allowed me to do two things. I can preach and I can shoot."

But have you ever stopped to think about this? I can't preach without Him. If He doesn't give me understanding, breath, and health, there is no way in the world that I can preach or teach. The very fact that I've preached for all these years doesn't mean one thing for me except that it is God who enabled me and empowered me to do that.

It doesn't take much to remove this finger. It doesn't take much to remove the eyesight. We are absolutely helpless without God. Now, let me show you. I want you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 1. Let's begin reading there with verse 27: "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." Why has God chosen the foolish things, the despised things, the simple things? Here's why.

"That no flesh should glory in his presence." "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Go back in your Bibles to 2 Samuel chapter 24. Look at verse 15. What was David doing? David was glorifying himself and assuming that he was captain of the Lord's host. He was glorying in the fact that he had 1,300,000 fighting men.

Verse 15 says, "So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand." What? Men—not women and children. The men were soldiers; they were warriors. God said to David, "David, you want to glory in your fighting machinery? You think you've got a lot? I can reduce it for you."

You are a multi-millionaire, says God. You want to glory in that? I can reduce it for you. You want to glory in the fact that you've got a fine big family? Fine, says God, I can reduce it for you. Why? That no

flesh should glory except in the Lord. Whatever we have, whatever we are, God gave us.

In Him, we live and move and have our being. Without Him, we are nothing. Without Him, we can do nothing.

Now, one last application. Look in your Bibles to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 15 and verse 4. Here is the second application we must learn: when our rulers sin publicly and we do not stop them, we suffer the consequences with them for their sins.

When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, David alone was judged. When David numbered the people, even wicked Joab knew it was wrong. The other captains knew it was wrong, but nobody stopped him, and 70,000 died.

Jeremiah 15:4 says, "And I will cause them"—that is, the people—"and I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem." God said, "I'm gonna send the people into captivity for that which Manasseh did." What did Manasseh do? He did all kind of crazy, idolatrous, wicked, perverted things. Everyone knew it was wrong. Nobody lifted a finger to stop him. God judged the people with the rulers.

In one sense of the word, it is possible to die for the sins of another man; yet, in another sense, when we die, it is because we are sinners ourselves. The older we get, the more we need to be aware of the pride of our hearts. It was pride that allowed David to be tempted. Proverbs 16 says, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” Guard your hearts, especially as God allows you to age.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word and your truth. We pray, Lord, that you would indeed protect us and keep us safe. May we learn to glory only in thee and ascribe unto thee all honor, glory, and praise. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask these things. Amen.

CHAPTER 37

The Marks Of A Tyrant

February 2, 2023

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 28:6-19 (KJV)

Introduction: Understanding Marks

And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said unto him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. And Saul disguised himself and put on another raiment, and he went in two men with him, and they came to the woman by night. And he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by thy familiar spirit, and bring me up him whom I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off from those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

Wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And Saul swore to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he

> said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice. And the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid, for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.
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> And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, an old man cometh up. He is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed himself. And Samuel said to Saul, why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore, if I call thee that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do, then, said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?

"And the Lord hath done to him as he spake by me, for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David. Because thou obeyest not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover, the Lord will deliver thee, Israel, with thee into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me. The Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines."

So the message is dealing with the marks of a tyrant. Do you understand that marks are identifiers? We all have marks in one way or the other. Many times we talk about physical marks and think about birthmarks particularly. Years ago I saw a cartoon, I think it was from The Far Side. It showed two big buck deer with nice antlers. One was standing beside the other, and he had zero targets on his chest. One looked at him and said, "Bummer, a birthmark, Al."

When we think of marks, there are birthmarks. Those are physical. But there are also mental, emotional, political, and economic marks—not necessarily birthmarks, but marks by which individuals can be identified, grouped, or singled out. There are

marks in which we glory, and there are some marks of which we need to be ashamed.

The Apostle Paul had his marks, and they were marks of a Christian and marks of a true servant of Jesus Christ. He said in Galatians 6 and verse 17, "From henceforth let no man trouble me for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Usually, when we think about marks, we also need to connect the Greek word for mark. It is the Greek word stigma. It refers to a mark usually pricked into the skin or branded. Originally, slaves were branded or had their owner's name etched in their skin. Oftentimes, soldiers had their commander's name either burnt or etched into their skin.

There were also those so devoted to false gods that they would etch or burn the name of the false god into their body. I suppose that is one of the reasons why the Word of God says, "Thou shalt not make any cuttings in your skin," because it would have reference to a false god. But when Paul spoke of his marks, undoubtedly he had reference to everything that he had suffered.

For instance, in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 23 through 28. Paul asks this question: “Are they the ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool, I more, in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I've been in the deep, in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, and in perils of the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care for all the churches.”

So undoubtedly, Paul did indeed have a lot of marks on his body, not just from being beaten, but being stoned as well. And the truth of the matter is, Lord Jesus Christ also had marks.

If you look in John chapter 20, beginning with verse 24: “But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have

seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them, Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."

So our Lord Jesus Christ had his marks as well. Now the marks that were on the Lord Jesus Christ are usually referred to as the stigmata. Of course, the word stigmata is from the Greek word stigma as well.

The word stigmata, as a dictionary would define it, refers first of all to a mark of disgrace, a mark of infamy, or a stain upon someone's character or reputation. It may also refer medically to a physical or mental mark that is characteristic of a certain defect or disease. Certainly, when we think of Alzheimer's, we can think of the mark of forgetfulness.

There are medical applications as well, but originally even that still referred to the marks that were in Jesus Christ. In the Roman Catholic realm, they would say that someone who ended up with marks supernaturally, as Christ did, had the stigmata. In other words, it would be supernaturally imposed upon someone, which, of course, would just be in that particular area.

But let me say this concerning the stigma: There is a stigma to biblical Christianity. Those who obey the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully, believe His Word, and follow Him are stigmatized, that is for sure. Our Lord recognized that, and He said so in John chapter 15, verses 18 through 20: "If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own, but because you're not of the world, but I've chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hated you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they've kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

Clearly, our Lord said there is a stigma to being a true follower of Jesus Christ. Hebrews chapter 13, verses 12 and 13, says, "Wherefore Jesus also that he might sanctify the people suffered without the gate. Therefore," he goes on to say, "let us who are the followers of Jesus Christ do what? Let us go forth therefore unto him, bearing his reproach."

There is a stigma to being a real, true, biblical Christian. I had much rather be a believer and a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, hated, mocked, ridiculed, and despised by the world, than to be praised by a wicked, wicked, ungodly world and then be hated by the sovereign God of heaven and earth. There is going to be a stigma either way you go, and I would much rather have a stigma concerning Jesus Christ.

Everyone bears marks. You may be marked as a Christian, a sinner, an adulterer, a murderer, or a thief. But the truth of the matter is, even politicians have marks. The leftist, the liberals, and the Democrats have their distinctive marks, most of them evidenced by mental instability, especially when they try to say that a man is a woman, and that a man who claims to be a woman can have babies. That is sheer lunacy, sheer insanity, as well as ignorance. That lunacy is a mark. I suppose wokeness would be a mark as well, but everyone has marks. Even tyrants have marks, and many tyrants do not want to appear to be tyrants, although they are in reality.

Our Lord gave us some good counsel in Matthew chapter 7, verse 20, when He said, “Wherefore by their works ye shall know them.” Now, when someone thinks of a tyrant, he usually thinks of someone who is cruel and oppressive, someone who has unrestrained power. In fact, if you would take the time to look up the word tyrant and the word tyranny in a dictionary, here are some of the definitions you would come up with. First of all, a tyrant is a sovereign or other ruler who uses power oppressively or unjustly. Here is another definition: any person in a position of authority who exercises power oppressively or despotically. Then, here is the word tyranny: arbitrary or unrestrained exercise of power; despotic abuse of authority; and government by a ruler or a small group of people who have unlimited power over the people in their country or state and use it unfairly and cruelly.

Defining Tyranny

Let me correct one thing about that definition. There is no individual and there is no group that happens to have unlimited power. Only God is sovereign. Only God is infinite. They may think they have unlimited power, but that is not true.

Tyrants are not always cruel and oppressive in the sense that they do not always appear to be so. Stop and think about this. A tyrant may view himself as a benefactor. He may view himself as a benevolent dictator, ruling and determining what he believes is, in reality, in the best interest of his people. And yet he is still a tyrant.

Now let me point something out, and I need you to think about this. A tyrant is also someone who uses lawful power unlawfully. When you stop and think about lawful authority and the abuse of lawful authority, you could spend all day long on illustrations. Husbands do indeed have fatherly authority over their children and husbandly authority over their wives, and yet there are men who abuse that authority and that power.

There are pastors who have authority over the churches they pastor, but some exceed that authority and demand that everyone do everything exactly as they do. This is lawful power or lawful authority turned around and used unlawfully.

The same is true of politicians. A politician may be elected lawfully, yet, once in office, use the power of that authority unlawfully. Consider our Congress: each member has taken an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States. Although many may have been elected lawfully, they are using their power unlawfully because they are totally ignoring the Constitution they took an oath to uphold.

Thus, a tyrant can be someone who is simply using lawful authority unlawfully. King Saul was a tyrant. He had a very humble beginning, yet the truth of the matter is that he became a horrendous tyrant.

The First Mark of a Tyrant

His tyranny actually begins in 1 Samuel chapter 15. Now we read 1 Samuel 28, and I am going to come back to that, but 1 Samuel 28 is actually the end result of his tyranny. It is the culmination of his tyranny. When I show you a certain verse or two in 1 Samuel 28, I hope that you will be absolutely astounded, because it shocked me when I realized what Saul actually said. So, to understand this, let us go back in our Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 15, because I want to give you six marks of a tyrant. We are going to get all six of these, at least five of them, before we get to 1 Samuel 28, and the sixth one out of 1 Samuel 28.

Mark 1: No Regard for God or His Commands

The very first mark of a tyrant is that he has no regard for God or God's commands. Now, I want you to remember this because you are going to see this in several places. Look in 1 Samuel 15, beginning there with verse 1. “Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel.” Now here is a lawful authority. God anointed him. God appointed him. Now look what the Bible says.

“Now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord.” In other words, you are God's ordained authority; therefore, you must listen to what God says. Now watch verse 2. “Thus said the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not;”

“but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox, sheep, camel, and ass.” Note, if you would, he was actually to slay everything. What did Saul do? He disobeyed God. He spared Agag, the king, and he also spared the best of the sheep and the best of the oxen, and then he blamed this disobedience upon the people. If you look in 1 Samuel 15:15, “And Saul said, They, that is, the people, have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.” So now he is blaming it on the people, and you will see this again. Then, in verse 20, Saul said unto

Samuel, “Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.”

“But the people took of the spoil, sheep, and oxen, and chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.”

Now, what is the truth? God did not give His orders to the people. He gave His orders to the king whom He had anointed and appointed. Saul knew that everything was to be destroyed. The people may or may not have known, but he certainly had a responsibility to tell them. Why, then, were the best of the sheep and the best of the oxen spared?

Once Saul claimed that he was obeying God, look what Samuel said: “And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed thee king over Israel. And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.” Then Samuel asked, “Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?” Notice what he did: he flew upon the spoil.

He wanted it for himself. He really did not care about obeying God, about God, or about the people. Saul was for Saul. He wanted what he wanted, desired what he saw, and forsook God and the Word of God.

“Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, God is speaking. It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king. For he has turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night.”

Remember that our Lord said in Matthew chapter 7, “By their fruits you shall know them.” How do we know that Saul forsook God? What was the evidence? He gives it to us: “for he has turned back from following me and hath not performed my commandments.” When Saul disobeyed, violated the Word of God, and forsook God's commandments, that was evidence that he had

turned back. So here is the thing: I do not care how piously, graciously, or benevolently a ruler talks; if he will not obey God and His Word, he is a tyrant. Why?

Because he views himself as independent of God, he views himself as a law unto himself and as the source of his own authority. That is why, in 2 Samuel 23, David, claiming direct inspiration four times from God, said, "a man must be just ruling over men in the fear of God." If men are not ruling in the fear of God, then basically they are tyrants because they are saying, "I am my own authority, I make my own law." Disobedience is evidence of rejection of God and His authority.

In verse 26, Samuel said unto Saul, Saul wants him to return to worship with him. And Samuel said unto Saul, "I will not return with thee. For thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected thee from being king over Israel. And Samuel turned about to go away, and he, Saul, laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine that is better than thou. And also the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent for he is not a man that he should repent."

Here is a biblical principle: in this exact and biblical sense, a tyrant is an individual who arrogates to himself authority without having the right to that authority. Thus, a tyrant is one who rules without God, apart from God, and views himself as an absolute source of authority. First Samuel chapter 15 is just the beginning of Saul as a tyrant. It all begins when someone rejects God and His Word.

Mark 2: Concerned Only with His Own Rule and Power

The second mark of a tyrant is that a tyrant is concerned only with his rule, power, and kingdom. Please put two plus two together while I preach this. Our modern-day politicians, once they get in office, have as their main goal staying in office. It does not matter what it takes. A tyrant has no concern for innocence and truly has no concern for the will of God. His main concern is that his rule, power,

and dynasty continue, and he is willing to do anything to make that right.

For instance, consider, if you would please, David, who was mercilessly driven from his home into the wilderness by Saul. Twice David was almost killed by Saul. Saul threw a javelin at him twice, and twice he escaped. He had to fight off attempts of assassination by Saul, the king. Driven into the wilderness, he was pursued by spies whom Saul employed to discover his haunts, track him down, and destroy him.

Now let me show you why Saul was so intent on destroying David. Look in your Bibles at 1 Samuel chapter 20. Saul had had David before him, and David and Jonathan had entered into a covenant. I am going to explain that momentarily. David already knew that Saul would try to kill him again, so he asked Jonathan's permission to go down and visit his parents. But he did not visit them; he was hiding. Saul asked where David was. "And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem. And he said, let me go, I pray thee, for our family hath a sacrifice in the city. And my brother, he hath commanded me to be there. And now if I have found favor in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not to the king's table."

Now watch what Saul does. "Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, And he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse, rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and to the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now sin, and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. And Jonathan answered Saul his father and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? What hath he done? And Saul cast a javelin at him, at his own son, to smite him, whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David." Why was Saul so anxious to put David to death? He said, "Jonathan, you'll never be king as long as he's alive. He must be killed."

The same attitude was exhibited by Jeroboam, who happened to be the first king of Israel, in 1 Kings chapter 12. Because it was Jeroboam who said in his heart, once he was established, “Now shall

the kingdom return unto Rehoboam if this people go down to Jerusalem and worship, and they shall slay me. What am I going to do?" He took counsel and made him two calves of gold, put one in Dan and one in Bethel, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of Egypt." Jeroboam did not care anything about God. He did not care anything about truth. He did not care anything about his people. All he wanted was to maintain his power, his kingdom, and his rule.

Now, I want you to see how prevalent this is. In John chapter 11, our Lord had been healing many people, and this was after He had raised Lazarus from the dead. The Bible says, "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council and said, What do we? For this man doeth many miracles." Oh, what were they going to do? Look what they say: "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and our nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, You know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and the whole nation perish not."

Caiaphas spoke this prophetically, yet he did not necessarily mean it prophetically. But what Caiaphas was saying is this: We need to get rid of Him. Why did they need to get rid of Jesus Christ? Go back and look at verse 48: "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place"—that is, their station in life, their power—"and our nation."

A Willingness to Distort Facts and Reality

In other words, we'll lose everything. Here is an innocent man, the Lord Jesus Christ. He just needs to be sacrificed; He needs to be killed in order that we can maintain our power base. A tyrant is only interested in his power, his position, and his control. All tyrants place themselves above everyone else, believing that everyone else is at their disposal because they are the only ones who count. A tyrant has no care for God and His Word. He is concerned, secondly, about his ruling power.

Mark 3: Willingness to Distort Facts and Reality

The third mark of a tyrant is a willingness to distort facts and reality for his own benefit. Look in 1 Samuel chapter 22. I wish I had time to read this entire chapter, but I will take a few verses at a time. This shows you again a tyrant. Notice 1 Samuel 22:7: “And Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, you Benjamites. Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards and make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, that all of you have conspired against me and there is none that showeth me that my son had made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me to lie in wait, as it is this day.” Saul, who is a Benjamite himself, talks to these other Benjamites and says, “Do you think David's going to make you all captains of thousands, captains of hundreds?”

You think he's going to give you 40 acres and a mule? You think he's going to do all this for you? He's not going to do any more for you than I'm doing. I'm your own flesh and blood.

If Saul had a race card, he would have played it. But he didn't have a race card; he did have a pity card. He lays it on thick: "Nobody loves me. Nobody appreciates me. No one is sorry for me. No one is going to give me information. Why is everybody against me?" I don't think that's so strange. We hear that all the time today. Everybody's playing a pity card: I want what I want, and I want it right now.

Saul said, "Why hasn't anybody told me that my own son is entered into a league with David?" Yet in 1 Samuel chapter 20, Saul threw a javelin at his own son because of the covenant Jonathan had made with David. In 1 Samuel chapter 17, David kills Goliath, cuts his head off, and brings it to Saul. Then, in chapter 18, we read, "And it came to pass when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that is, David had made an end of speaking to King Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

Saul took David that day and would not let him return home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant because Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Jonathan stripped himself of

his robe, his garments, his sword, his bow, and his girdle, and gave them to David, all in front of Saul. Saul already knew about this covenant.

When we get to 1 Samuel chapter 22, Saul is saying, "Nobody told me. I'm the last one to find things out. Why didn't somebody tell me?" Really? Then he said, "My own son has stirred up my own servant against me." Saul didn't stir David up, and David was not even against Saul. Why was David running? Because he didn't want to fight Saul. When God twice, sovereignly and providentially, delivered Saul into David's hand, David refused to kill him.

So everything is a total, absolute lie. What is Saul doing? He's distorting the facts. He's distorting reality.

There is a vast difference between facts and the interpretation of facts. Everyone interprets facts from his own perspective. I have counseled married couples for years. I have had a husband and wife sitting in front of me, and I would say, “Sir, would you please tell me what the problem is?” He would tell me. Then I would look at the lady and say, “Ma’am, would you please tell me what the problem is?” She would tell me exactly the opposite of what her husband had said.

Which one is lying? The answer is, neither. They are interpreting the facts from their own perspective. So when you hear someone say, “Well, this is a fact,” you had better check and see whether it is a fact or an interpretation of a fact. Saul was interpreting facts and distorting them for his own benefit. I do not guess January 6th comes into anybody’s mind, does it? I do not guess COVID comes into anybody’s mind. Vaccines come to anybody. Distorting of facts.

Mark 4: Willingness to Receive False Witness and Shift Blame

Here is the fourth mark of a tyrant: his willingness to receive false witness and to shift blame to others for his own failures.

Let us begin looking at 1 Samuel chapter 22, verse 9: “Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And he, that is Ahimelech, inquired of the Lord for him,”

which was a bald-faced lie. “And he inquired of the Lord for him, and gave him vittles,” which is the truth, “and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine,” which is the truth; it was David’s anyhow. “Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all of his father’s house, the priests that were in Nob, and they all came to the king. And Saul said, Hear now thou son of Ahitub, and he answered, Here am I, my lord.

“And Saul said unto him, Why have you conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me to lie in wait at this day? Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David? Who is the king’s son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honorable in all thine house? Did I then begin to inquire of God for him?”

“Be it far from me. Let not the king impute anything to his servant, nor to all the house of thy father. For thy servant knew nothing of all of this, less nor more.” And that is the absolute truth. When David came to Ahimelech, Ahimelech asked him, “Why are you alone?” David said, “Well, the king has sent me on a mission and it was urgent. And I didn’t have time to get my sword or food or anything.” Ahimelech knew nothing other than that David was the king’s son-in-law. He gave him bread from the showbread table and Goliath’s sword, but did he inquire of God? No, he did not.

So here is what is happening: Saul is accusing Ahimelech of conspiring with David, which he absolutely did not do. Ahimelech, his family, his priesthood, and the whole priesthood were entirely and completely innocent in the affair. Even if Ahimelech had been complicit—which he was not—none of the other priests or people were involved. Here is the point: innocence does not matter to a tyrant. Any false narrative, any bald-faced lie, or simple innuendo is enough if it allows the tyrant to escape responsibility and put the blame on someone else.

Think about the last two years in this country and all the lies told to we the people, the false narratives given, and how everything is someone else’s fault—or our fault. It is never the fault of those elected as leaders. Have you noticed that? But that is a tyrant. Now, here is the fifth mark of a tyrant.

A Willingness to Murder

Mark 5: Willingness to Murder with Ease of Conscience

The fifth mark of a tyrant is a willingness to murder and to do so with ease of conscience. Since we are in 1 Samuel chapter 22, begin reading in verse 16: “And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou and all thy father's house.” Ahimelech was innocent. What had his father's house to do with it? Saul accused him of inquiring of God for David, which he had not done. Yet Saul said, “You're going to die and all your father's house.”

“And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn and slay the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David,” which was not true, “and because they knew when he fled and did not show it to me,” which was also not true. “But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord. Then the king said to Doeg, Turn thou and fall upon the priests of the Lord.”

“And Doeg the Edomite turned, now watch, and he fell upon the priests and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear the linen ephod.” He murdered eighty-five priests. “And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen and asses, and sheep with the edge of the sword.” He not only murdered eighty-five priests; he murdered the women, the children, and the animals. He murdered everyone and everything.

At least the Israelite soldiers had a little conscience. When Saul commanded them to fall upon the priests, they refused: “We're not going to murder these priests.” But there was Doeg the Edomite. When a tyrant is raging and people with conscience refuse to obey wicked and vain commands, there will always be a Doeg who will do what the tyrant wishes in order to ingratiate himself with the kingdom, the tyrant, and the empire.

This is the progression of tyranny. See how Saul started out in 1 Samuel 15, then 1 Samuel 20, and then 1 Samuel chapter 22.

The Sixth Mark of a Tyrant

Mark 6: Willingness to Usurp God's Position and Nullify His Word

The sixth mark of a tyrant is that he is willing to usurp the position of God and declare His Word null and void. Saul started out by denying the Word of God, the commandments of God, and ignoring God, refusing to obey Him. But now he ends up usurping the position of God and declaring God's Word null and void.

In 1 Samuel 28, we read: "Then Saul said unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her and inquire of her. And his servants said unto him, Behold, there's a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. And Saul disguised himself and put on another raiment, and he went in two men with him, and they came to the woman by night. And he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up whom I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits and wizards out of the land. Wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life to cause me to die? And Saul sware to her by the Lord saying, As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up for thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice and spake to Saul saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid, for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth."

What has happened because of all of Saul's rebellion, wickedness, and disobedience? God has cast him off. The Philistines have gathered together for battle, and Saul is anxious—yea, desperate. He does not know what to do. God does not answer him by dreams, prophets, or seers. Nobody is talking to him. God does not answer him by the Urim and the Thummim, which the high priest wore in his vest. When a question was asked, he would pull out one and there would be an answer. But God was simply not speaking to Saul. In desperation, Saul says, "Seek me out a woman that has a familiar spirit," and they tell him there is one at Endor.

Does anybody remember the television show Bewitched, with Elizabeth Montgomery? Do you remember what her mother, who was a witch, was called? Endora—from the Witch of Endor.

The woman said, "You're laying a snare for me. Saul has banned us from the land." Let me hasten to say this: banning these people from the land was unscriptural and unbiblical. How can I say that? Exodus 22:18 says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

They were to be executed; they were to be put to death. Had they been put to death, there would have been no witch for this man to go to. But Saul simply banned them. He did not execute them. Everybody wants to argue over whether or not this woman actually brought up Samuel. The truth of the matter is that she did not. She could not have. She did not have that power.

To show you how absolutely shocked this woman was when Samuel did come, look at verse 12, in 1 Samuel 28: "And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice. And the woman spake to Saul and said, Why dost thou deceive me? For thou art Saul." She was not expecting Samuel. She knew she had no power to bring Samuel up, and yet Samuel came up.

It was when he appeared that truth broke in on her. She knew that she had been set up. Here is the point that most people overlook. Everybody wants to argue over whether or not this woman brought up Samuel. Obviously, she did not. But here is the culmination of tyranny. Look at verses 9 and 10.

This is, to me, just appalling. “And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land. Wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And look what Saul said. And Saul sware to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.” What? Pardon me, did you hear what Saul just said? “As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.” Really?

Now let us see. God said, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” Saul may not be going to execute her, but God certainly will execute her. And what did he say? “There shall be no punishment.” “There

shall no punishment be unto thee." Here is the tyrant with a tyrannical attitude that believes that he has the power and the authority to subvert and overthrow the judgment and the punishment of God, and he even does so in the name of the Lord, "as the Lord liveth." He swears by God! Wow!

Did you know that modern day tyrants do exactly the same thing? They seek to promote that which God condemns, and at the same time, they believe that their political and legal acts make void the judgment of God. All you have to do is look at all of the immorality, the wickedness, and rebellion that has been legalized and made acceptable, which is against God, against His law, and against society.

Look in your Bibles to Psalm 94, verses 20 and 21. I have given you this verse a number of times, but I want you to see it in light of what I am now saying. In Psalm 94, verse 20, the Bible asks this question: "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee which frameth mischief by a law?" A throne of iniquity is a wicked civil government. It is a throne, a power, and an authority, but it is a throne of iniquity. Shall it have fellowship with God? No, when that wicked civil government frames mischief by a law. Mischief is another word for sin in the Bible. So it says, "Shall the throne of iniquity, shall a wicked civil government have fellowship with thee which makes sin legal?" Now watch verse 21: "They," that wicked civil government, "gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous and condemn the innocent blood."

Applications to Tyranny

Modern man, or rather fallen man, believes that sins are not sins if they are declared legal. Since sins have been made legal, there is therefore now no punishment and no judgment for those sins. Look at abortion, sodomy, and all that is going on in our land. It is just like Saul when he said to the woman, "As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing." He thought he could simply declare that God would not punish her.

Modern man, or fallen man, thinks that his pronouncements and legal acts make void the judgment of God. Wickedly and foolishly, he believes that his legal and political acts are the epitome of freedom.

What he means by freedom is freedom to sin and freedom to escape the punishment that God has demanded for that sin.

Conclusion: God is the Enemy of Tyrants

Rushdoony gave a wonderful quote: “Statism assumes that its law, rather than God's regenerating power, is the principle of freedom. As a result, it legislates against biblical law. The end result is the enslavement of all men.” And that is true.

In 1 Samuel 28:16, Saul is telling Samuel, “God won't speak to me.” Here is an important truth, especially for tyrants: God is not going to direct tyrants. God does not establish tyranny. Tyranny is not a biblical form of government. Samuel answered, “And the Lord hath done to him as he spake by him.” Then he said, “Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?”

God is the enemy of tyrants. He fights against them, overthrows them, and destroys them. Consider all the judgment that modern-day politicians will face when God makes bare his arm. Somehow they think they are going to escape, but they will not escape. Deuteronomy 32:35 says, “To me belong vengeance and recompense. Their foot shall slide in due time, for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that come upon them make haste.” God said their foot would slide. He will take care of it. Mark it down: the tyrant is not going to escape.

All of those who have caused the murder of countless people, not just in America but throughout the world, will be held accountable by God. I just read where the death rate among young people from eighteen to thirty-nine who took the Moderna and Pfizer vaccination is up 84 percent—84 percent among that one group. I am simply saying they are not going to escape or get away with it. Samuel said that God had become the enemy of Saul, and He is thus the enemy of all tyrants.

Here is one last quote. Ludwig von Mises, from the Mises Institute, the Austrian economist, said, "The worship of the state or the worship of government is the worship of force. There is no more dangerous menace to civilization than a government of incompetent,

corrupt, or vile men. The worst evils which mankind ever had to endure were inflicted by bad governments. The state can be, and has often been in the course of history, the main source of mischief and disaster." I would add rebellion against God and evil toward man.

The marks of a tyrant: You do not have to be a single individual reigning and ruling cruelly, oppressively, and despotically to be a tyrant. Whenever you begin without God, you will not only end up being a tyrant, but you will end up with tyranny and the enslavement of mankind. We need to know the marks, and we need to watch.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Thy Word and Thy truth, and we ask for Thy blessing. May we be awakened by Thy Word, understand the situation in which we are, and prepare our lives and hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 38

The True Prophet

February 3, 2023

Moses says, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die."

Introduction: False Prophets Then and Now

There have been many in both the Old Testament and the New Testament who claim to be prophets of the Lord. Many of them, of course, were not prophets of the Lord. Likewise today, there are

individuals who claim to be a prophet. I have even met one woman who claimed to be a prophetess. That is a sermon in and of itself and a wonderful illustration, but obviously she was not a prophetess as well.

I find it amusing, in one sense of the word, that many preachers refer to themselves as a prophet. Of course, they could be accurate if you spell the word P-R-O-F-I-T, because obviously there are many who are in it for the profit. Balaam, for instance, was a false prophet in the Old Testament. He is not only condemned in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament. Balaam was an individual who sold his services.

Balak, the king of Moab, tried to hire Balaam to curse Israel. The Word of God speaks of him in several places. First of all, in 2 Peter 2:15, the Bible says, "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Then, in Jude 1:11, it says, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."

It is interesting, as you read through the New Testament, that our Lord Jesus Christ also warned us against false prophets. In Matthew 24:11, the Bible says that many false prophets shall rise and deceive many. Then, in that same chapter, verse 24 says, "And there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Thankfully, it is not possible. In 2 Peter 2:1 we read, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." Just as there were false prophets in the Old Testament, there were false prophets in the New Testament and false teachers as well.

The interesting thing about a false prophet is this: they do not always have to prophesy something that is wicked, mean, or vile. In fact, usually just the opposite is true. Usually they are trying to prophesy something good, soothing, desirable, acceptable, and something that everyone wants anyhow. Jeremiah 28 gives an

illustration in Hananiah, who was a false prophet. He was prophesying in the temple, saying that God was going to bring back Jeconiah the king and his family, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken captive. He also said that God was going to bring back all the furniture and all the vessels that had been stolen from the temple. This was something everyone wanted, and Hananiah said it was going to happen within two years.

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 28:1-13 (KJV)

Biblical Examples of False Prophets

"And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the Lord: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the Lord, even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the Lord do so: the Lord perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the Lord's house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place. Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people; The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him. Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it. And Hananiah spake in the

> presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way. Then the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the prophet, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood;"

"But thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also." Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, "Hear now, Hananiah; The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord." So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

Here was a man prophesying something that everyone wanted and desired, and yet it was absolutely, totally, completely false. In Jeremiah 29:30–32, we find another false prophet, Shemaiah. "Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie: Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the Lord; because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord."

Why Christians Are Deceived

I am surprised—in one sense of the word, though I am not surprised—at how many people, yea, how many professing Christians, are so easily persuaded by false prophets and false teachers. I find it absolutely astounding how many professing Christians believe the lies of preachers and the bad theology that so often comes from them. Yet I am not surprised, because most

Christians do not even read their Bibles, much less study them. Stop and think about that: most Christians do not even read their Bibles, much less study them.

Years ago, I read about a pastor who was visiting a home and had left his Bible in the car. Before he left, he asked the lady of the house.

She was there with the children. He said, “If you don't mind, before I leave, I'd like to read the Scripture and pray.” She said, “That'll be perfectly fine.” He continued, “But I left my Bible in the car. May I borrow yours?” She said, “Yes.” Then she looked at the little daughter and said, “Would you please go back in mother's bedroom and get that book that mother loves so much and reads and looks at so often?” The little girl ran into the bedroom and came back with the Sears and Roebuck catalog.

Well, that's about the way it is in most homes. Here is a second reason: Most people do not even think in theological terms or biblical terminology because of their ignorance of biblical truth. Third, if one does not know the truth, he is very easily led astray by emotions, oratory, peer pressure, and many other things. Fourth, most people have never discerned that anything absolutely contrary to the Word of God is a lie, a falsehood, a delusion; it is not true. How can you expect someone to recognize that which is contrary to the Word of God if he does not read and study the Word of God? You remember Hosea 4:6, where God said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me.”

Perhaps a question is forming in your mind: Are there prophets today? The answer is no—and yes. Let me explain. The Hebrew word for prophet is nabi. In the strictest sense, a prophet does two things. First, a prophet is someone who foretells: God has given him information and revealed something to him, and he foretells what is going to happen before it ever happens. That is, God has revealed something to him, and he foretells what is going to happen before it ever happens.

Are There Prophets Today?

In the strictest sense, there is absolutely no need for prophets today. Why? Because we have the fully inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God. We have the full and final revelation of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation has ceased. In distinguishing revelation, inspiration, and illumination, revelation is the act of God whereby He revealed truth to the human mind that had never been known before. Revelation was the act of God whereby He revealed truth to the human mind never known before.

For instance, how did Moses know what happened at creation? He wasn't there. How did Moses know what happened at the flood? He wasn't there. How did Moses know what happened at the Tower of Babel? He wasn't there. And the answer is because God revealed it to him.

So the point I'm trying to make right now is revelation has ceased. God is not giving new information or additional information over and above the Word of God and over and above His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So when someone tells me, “Well, I just had a revelation,” or, “God showed me this,” what they're trying to say is this: I now have truth. I now have information over and above the Word of God, over and above the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews chapter 1. Hebrews chapter 1, and notice the first three verses. Hebrews chapter 1, beginning there with verse 1. Notice what is said very clearly. Hebrews 1, verse 1: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” He did in times past in the Old Testament speak by dreams, trances, by the Urim and the Thummim. That's how He did it in the Old Testament. But watch verse 2.

This same God “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the

right hand of the Majesty on high." Jesus Christ, then, is the full and final revelation of God. God has spoken through Him in these last days.

In John 1:17, the Bible says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Of course, there was grace in the Old Testament. Anyone who has ever been saved was saved by grace. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. All of the Old Testament is truth. How, then, can it be said that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ? It means the fullness of grace, the apex of truth, the highest part. The fullness and finality of grace and truth came to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The very first thing that a prophet did in the Old Testament, and even in the New Testament, was foretell. In that sense, there are no longer any prophets. There is no one giving additional or new information over and above the Word of God. The second thing a prophet did was tell forth: he actually spoke the Word of God. He declared what was going to happen based upon the truth God had shown him.

Are there prophets today in this sense? The answer is yes, if you understand what I mean. Suppose I preach a message on the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is a future event. Suppose I preach a message on the judgment of sinners. That is a future happening. I would be foretelling what is going to happen, but it would be based upon the revelation that is already complete, the truth that has already been revealed. I would be telling forth that which is going to come to pass in the future. In that sense, you might say yes, there are prophets, but all of it is based upon the full and final revelation of God given us in His Word and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 23:23-28 (KJV)

Dreams Are Not Prophetic

I believe I must add this very important point: Dreams today are not prophetic—nope, not by any stretch of the imagination. We now have the completed, full, and final revelation of God. I will be honest with you: I do not trust your dreams, and I do not trust my dreams. I will show you why momentarily. Usually, of course, the Bible tells you that dreams come through a

> multitude of business. Usually, you end up dreaming about what your mind has been on all that day or all that week. I would imagine Gary is going to be dreaming about building and working in Idaho because he is thinking about that. There is nothing wrong with that. However, why in the world would God give someone a dream when all he has to do is read the Bible or study the Scripture? In other words, someone is trying to say, "Well, I must be special. God has given me this dream. God has given me this vision." No. All you have to do is pick up the Bible, read it, and study it.
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> Jeremiah 23:23: "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully."

"What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord."

So God is very straightforward when it comes to dreams. There are many false prophets, but there is only one true prophet. The true prophet is the Lord Jesus Christ. False prophets will always depend upon dreams, omens, events, stars, signs in the heavens, and many other things. But the true prophet always speaks the Word of God.

In Deuteronomy chapter 18, Moses said to the people, “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.” Then, in verse 18, God says, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”

Notice, first of all, that the true prophet is going to be from among the brethren of Moses. In other words, he is going to be an Israelite. Of course, Jesus Christ was an Israelite. He was born in Bethlehem of Judah, in the land of Judea, but was raised in Nazareth, which is the northern kingdom. It is important to note that in both verse 15 and verse 18, Moses said, “The Lord's going to raise you up a prophet like unto me,” and God said, “I'm going to raise up a prophet like unto thee.”

Moses as Prophet, Priest, and King

Here is a legitimate question: How is Jesus Christ the true prophet like Moses? First of all, you must understand that Moses was a prophet. That is why he said in verse 15, “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me.” Moses was specifically called a prophet. If you look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 34 and verse 10, you will see that Moses is specifically called a prophet. The Bible says, “And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” So first of all, Moses was a prophet.

The second thing that you must note is this: Moses was also a priest. There is no verse that I can think of right now that specifically says that Moses was a priest. And yet he was. Moses was the one who installed and anointed Aaron and his sons. He was the one who anointed all the tabernacle, and he offered all the sacrifices for Aaron and his sons.

For instance, look in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 28. Look at all these garments that God commanded Moses to make for Aaron and his sons. Exodus 28:4 says, “And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the

priest's office." Now skip down to verse 41 in the same chapter. Here is what God instructed Moses: "And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office." Moses is the one doing all the sanctifying. Look in verse 1 of Exodus chapter 29: "And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office:"

God told Moses what sacrifices were to be offered for Aaron and his sons: "Take one young bullock, and two rams without blemish." Moses was instructed to gird Aaron and his sons with girdles, put bonnets on them, and consecrate them; the priest's office was to be theirs for a perpetual statute. Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands upon the head of a bullock, which was brought before the tabernacle of the congregation and killed before the Lord by the door of the tabernacle. Moses was to take the blood of the bullock, put it upon the horns of the altar with his finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar. Moses was doing everything that the priests themselves did. If Moses was the one anointing Aaron and his sons and offering the sacrifices, he had to be a priest as well.

In fact, remember Exodus 4:14, when Moses was trying to give all of the excuses why he could not go and deliver Israel. One of them was that he could not talk plainly; he could not talk well. God said, "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well." Aaron was Moses' brother, the Levite. If Aaron was his brother and was a Levite, that means Moses was a Levite also, and the priesthood came from the Levitical tribe. First Chronicles 23:14 says, "Now concerning Moses the man of God, his sons were named of the tribe of Levi." Moses was not only a prophet; he was also a priest.

Now this one may surprise you: Moses was also a king. Deuteronomy 33:4–5 says, "Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together." He was king when all the tribes came together and the heads of the people. Moses therefore held the offices of

prophet, priest, and king. The Lord Jesus Christ, the true prophet, is a prophet, priest, and king.

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 7:1; Hebrews 3:1-3; Hebrews 9:11-14, 23 (KJV)

Moses sanctified the tabernacle and all of its furniture. Everything. The Bible says that Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein and sanctified them. Leviticus 8, verse 10. Numbers 7, verse 1, here it is:

Christ as the True Prophet Like Moses

"And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them."

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house."

The Lord Jesus Christ was faithful in all of his house, as was Moses. It was Moses who sanctified all of the instruments of the tabernacle and the tabernacle itself.

"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 of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Now skip down, if you would, to verse 23: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these;

But the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Christ entered heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us. So, just as Moses purified the pattern, Jesus Christ purified the reality, the real things.

It was true that Moses also sanctified the people. He sanctified them ceremonially and practically. In Exodus 19:14, God told Moses to sanctify the people and make sure nobody touched the mount. The Bible says, “And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.” How is Jesus Christ like Moses? Jesus Christ sanctified His people perfectly and permanently.

Hebrews 2:11 says, “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Hebrews 10:10 says, “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Then Hebrews 10:14 says, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

Moses gave the law; actually, our Lord gave the law, and it came through Moses. Moses may have been the one who gave the law, but it was the Lord Jesus Christ who obeyed the law perfectly and made it honorable according to the Scripture. Moses, the Bible says, talked with God face to face. Jesus Christ is God. The Bible tells us in 1 Timothy 3:16, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”

Listen to what he said: "Justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." But without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh. As we read in Hebrews chapter 3, Moses was honorable in all of his house, but Jesus Christ built the house. Moses purified the pattern; Jesus Christ purified reality.

In Deuteronomy chapter 18, verses 18 and 19, God says, "And I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto

them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."

The Inseparability of Christ and His Word

He said, "And will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I command him." So the true prophet is the one who has the words of God. Do you remember that passage in John 1, 1 through 3? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Anytime you see the word "Word," W-O-R-D there, it is the word "Logos." The word "Logos" refers to Jesus Christ as the living Word: "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God." So Jesus Christ is indeed the living Word. Therefore he also speaks the words of God. In Luke 21, verse 33, he said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." In John 3, verse 34, listen: "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the

“Spirit by measure unto him.” “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.” You remember that passage in John chapter 6, when our Lord had given His dissertation about being the bread of life. He said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” You will have no part in Him. The Bible tells us that many were offended at that saying, and they said, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” Many of them left Him. Our Lord then looked at His disciples and said, “Will ye also go away?” Peter answered in John 6, verse 68, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” You are life.

Now consider Deuteronomy 18, and look in your Bibles at John chapter 12, verse 48. Here is an amazing statement by our Lord: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” So here He is putting Himself, the living Word, together with His spoken and written word.

Look also at John 14:10: “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” What did our Lord just say? The words that He speaks are the Father’s words. What did He say in Deuteronomy 18? “I’ll put my words in him.”

Then, in John 17:8, this is the high priestly prayer of our Lord, and He says, “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” Notice: “I have given them the words that thou hast given me.” John 12:48 again says, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

Since Jesus Christ is the living Word, and the spoken Word is now recorded for us in the written Word, we refer to this as the Word of God, or the words of God. Our Lord is telling us that He, the living Word, and His written Word are inseparable. You cannot believe one without believing the other. You cannot have one attitude toward the Bible and a different attitude toward Christ, nor one attitude toward Christ and a different attitude toward the Bible.

If someone says, “I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but I do not believe the Bible,” that is impossible. If someone says, “I believe the Bible, but I do not believe in Jesus Christ,” that is also impossible. They go together; they stand or fall together. If you truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you believe in the Bible. If you truly believe the Bible, you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord said very clearly, “I’m going to put my words in his mouth and he is going to speak them.”

The Certainty of Judgment for Rejecting the True Prophet

We are assured that we have the Word of God because God has placed His words in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Lord Jesus Christ has spoken the Word of God.

In Deuteronomy 18:18, He says, “I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.” Then verse 19 says, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.” God says, “There are my words that I’m giving him,” just as when Moses went up to the mount and God wrote with His finger the Ten Commandments. God gave the exact words to Moses, and God has given His words to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the true prophet. If you do not hear, hearken, or receive God’s words through His true prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ, He will require it of you. Why? God will require it because the one who dishonors His Son dishonors the Father. The one who will not believe the words of the Son, since they are the words of God, does not believe God. “For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth:

“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” To understand this verse, we must consider what happened from John 5:1 through verse 19. At the pool of Bethesda, a great number of impotent people lay in the porches around it—lame, halt, blind, and sick. Our Lord walked through this crowd and found one man who had been lame for thirty-eight years.

He asked him, “Wilt thou be made whole?” The man answered, “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.” When the angel troubled the pool, someone always stepped in ahead of him. He had no one to help him. Our Lord simply said, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.” The man took up his bed and walked. Then the Jews objected that he was carrying it on the Sabbath. He answered, “He that healed me said to take up my bed and walk,” and that was exactly what he was doing.

Now consider verse 21 again: “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” Why did Jesus Christ walk through that multitude of sick, halt, lame, and impotent people, single out one man, and heal him? Could He not just as easily have healed everyone there? The answer is yes.

There is no limit to His power. He is omnipotent, all-powerful; He could have healed everyone.

What is the one attribute that proves God is God? He is sovereign. That is why Christ said, “...as the Father quickeneth whom he will.” He raises the dead and quickens them. Psalm 115:3 says, “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” Only God can do as He pleases because only God is sovereign. Thus, “the Son quickeneth whom he will.” The Son is sovereign. If the Son is sovereign, He is God, because God only is sovereign.

Then verse 22 says, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” Why has all judgment been given to the Son? Here is why: verse 23.

"That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." God said, "I'm going to send a true prophet. That true prophet is going to be my Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm going to put my words in His mouth. He's going to speak my words. He will speak everything that I command Him. And if you don't hear Him, I will require of you." Why? Because not only is He my Son, not only is He speaking my words, but when you dishonor my Son, you dishonor me. When you disbelieve my Son, you disbelieve me. I'll require it.

Hebrews chapter 12 ties Jesus Christ and Moses together. You have to remember, back at the mount, when God came down, it quaked, there was fire, there was darkness, and there was a command: "You don't come near this mount. Whoever touches this mount, even if it's an animal, he's to be killed. You don't touch this mount." Now watch, beginning there with verse 18: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

For they could not endure that which was commanded. And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake. Even Moses was afraid.

But then he says: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.”

Listen to this truth: “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.”

“He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.” If you violated God's law given through Moses, and there were witnesses, you died. Achan died. The man who gathered sticks in the wilderness died. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, those who revolted against Moses and Aaron, died. You died without mercy. It was just death.

“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” What did God say? If you do not hear my Son, if you do not hear my true prophet, I will require it of you.

It was impossible to escape judgment under the law of Moses, though Moses was a mere man. How much more impossible is it to escape the judgment of God when you have spurned His only begotten Son and refused to hear the words of the true prophet, His Son, whom He has sent. God said, “I will require it of that man who will not hear, who will not listen.” It is an absolutely monstrous sin not to hear the words of God. Think of those who refuse to read the Bible, refuse to hear the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, and refuse to hear Him that speaketh from heaven. Think of Congress, the politicians, the president, and all these people whom you and I know. Many of them are not interested in hearing the Word of God. Yet God said, “I will require it of the one who will not hear.” It is a terrible, wicked, vile sin not to hear the word of God.

He that will not hear the written word despises the living Word who gave us the written word. “A Prophet… like unto me,” said Moses, “shall the Lord God raise up. Unto him shall ye hearken.”

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word and truth, and that Jesus Christ is indeed the true prophet. He is the prophet, priest, and king. May we hear him as he speaks to us in his Word. May we see his authority, priesthood, kingship, royalty, and right to demand and command; his sovereignty, omnipotence, mercy, grace, justice, and righteousness. Help us to hear, Lord, so that we obey and bring our lives into conformity to thy word. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 39

Has A Live Coal Touched Your Lips?

March 22, 2023

SCRIPTURE READING - Isaiah 6:1-11 (KJV)

Introduction and Reading of Isaiah 6:1-11

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he

> laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.
>
> "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long?
>
> "And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate."
>
> I have no idea how many times I've read through the book of Isaiah. I have no idea how many times I've read Isaiah chapter 6. I've also used this passage in a multitude of messages from time to time. But just recently, I was reading through the book of Isaiah again, and a truth jumped out before my eyes that I had not even contemplated before, and I had not even questioned the verse probably as I should have. Actually, it's two verses.

The Question: How Can a Live Coal Purge Sin?

In verses 6 and 7, “Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” Is it possible for a live coal to take away sins and purge from all iniquity?

We are taught very clearly in Hebrews 9:22, “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” In Leviticus 17:11, when God was giving all of the sacrifices, He said, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” Since without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, how then can a live coal purge away our sins?

The Hebrew word that forms the basis of the phrase “a live coal” is ritzpah, which literally means a live or glowing coal. It is hot, fiery, and basically red-hot. This is obvious because even the seraphim had to use tongs to take it from the altar. It was a very live and glowing coal.

The Context: Isaiah's Vision of God's Holiness

Before giving the answer to these questions, consider the context, because there are a number of truths we must see. In verse 1, the Lord has given Isaiah a vision of Himself in His high, holy, majestic person, and in His sovereignty. It was a memorable event, taking place in the year that King Uzziah died. Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, seated upon the throne, and the Bible says His train filled the temple. The train would be the long-flowing robe, or at least the hem of that robe.

Isaiah sees God in His holiness and majesty in this vision. At the same time, he sees the seraphim and their ministry of proclaiming God's holiness. When you read through the Bible, remember that seraphim, cherubim, and angels are not one and the same creatures. Seraphim evidently are more concerned with God's holiness. Cherubim are more concerned with God's justice, because it was cherubim that covered the ark of the covenant. Angels, the Bible tells us, are spirit beings and ministering spirits. They wait upon God, hearkening to His command, and He sends them to minister unto those who are to be the heirs of salvation.

The seraphim have six wings: with twain they cover their face, with twain they cover their feet, and with twain they do fly. They cease not saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." What Isaiah sees and hears in verses 2 and 3 is a declaration and revelation of God's holiness, as well as His greatness and majesty. This had a most revealing effect upon Isaiah. It was so powerful that, as verse 4 says, "And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke."

When Isaiah saw this, he said, "Woe is me! for I am undone. Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of

hosts." When he saw the majesty, sovereignty, and holiness of God, he immediately perceived and knew his own wickedness, depravity, uncleanness, and pollution. He understood that he had fallen short, that he had transgressed, and that he had not measured up. Therefore, he was willing to confess and acknowledge that he was a sinner.

However, it was not only Isaiah who was the problem. God showed him that the nation was the problem also: "Then said I, Woe is me! I'm undone. Because I'm a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." There is such a thing as individual wickedness, which we all understand, but there is also such a thing as national wickedness. It was not just Isaiah who was wicked; it was the entire nation. God judged them under the ministry of Isaiah as well. So he cries out, "I am undone."

Three Truths from Isaiah's Confession

There are three truths that we must see from verse 5, and they are extremely applicable to our lives today. The first is this: We will never see and understand the greatness of our sins and depravity until we see the greatness of God in His majesty, sovereignty, and holiness. When we see God in truth for what He is, we see ourselves in truth for what we are. When God shows us Himself, we see ourselves. We will never fully understand the depth and breadth of our depravity without an understanding of God's infinite holiness.

That is why in 1 Samuel 2:2 the Bible says, "There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God." God is infinitely holy. When we see His holiness, majesty, and sovereignty, we immediately understand our depravity and wickedness.

The second truth is connected with that, though it is not the same: The more we see and understand His holiness, greatness, and righteousness, the more we see our own depravity. If we truly saw the depth of our depravity at once, we would self-destruct. If we saw the greatness of God's holiness at once, we could not stand it. There is a vast chasm between an infinitely holy God and a wicked sinner. The more God reveals His holiness to us through His Word and in His providence, the more we see our own wickedness and depravity.

Most of us committed immeasurable sins when we were young, and that is why David prayed in Psalm 71, "Remember not against me the sins of my youth." Most people forget their sins until they begin to get older. Then some of these things come back to haunt them, and they are reminded of what they have done.

Each one of us actually begins confessing, and we see how wicked we really were when we were young, in our middle age, and even up to our old age as well. The point I am trying to make is this: God does not show us the depth of our depravity all at one time. Neither does God show us His infinite holiness all at one time.

Moses had asked God to show him His glory. The Lord said unto Moses, “I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.” That was Moses’ request. And Moses said, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory.”

God answered, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy.” The Lord would make His goodness pass before Moses and proclaim His name. Then He said, “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.”

The Lord continued, “Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.”

God told Moses that he could not see Him in all of His glory and majesty at once. If he did, he would die. So God would pass by, put His hand over him, remove it after He had passed by, and allow Moses to see His back parts. He could not see God’s face and live. In light of this, let me tell you the two prayer requests that we should make often. At the same time, we must understand that these two prayer requests go together.

The first prayer is this: “Lord, show me myself.” The second is: “Lord, show me Thyself.” If God opened our eyes and allowed us to see the depth of our depravity and wickedness, we would indeed self-destruct. But we need to see not only our sin, wickedness, and

depravity; we must also see His holiness, righteousness, and sovereignty. We must understand that He is therefore the answer to our guilt, our pollution, and our every need. That is why these two prayer requests need to go together: “Lord, show me myself,” and, “Lord, show me Thyself, because You are the answer to all of my guilt and all of my pollution.”

There is a third truth that we need to see in Isaiah chapter 6 and verse 5. When we see what happened to Isaiah in his cleansing and calling, we must take note of this reality: the initiative was from the divine side. In other words, God first moved. God revealed Himself to Isaiah in verses 1 through 4. God opened his eyes and allowed him to see the seraphim and hear them cry, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty.” God allowed him to see the posts being moved and the house filled with smoke. The initiative is always with God. We never first seek Him.

He seeks us and finds us, and then we seek Him. That is why the Scripture says in Luke chapter 19, verse 10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The initiative is always God's. Moreover, it was God who revealed to Isaiah the desperate wickedness of his heart. It was God who revealed to him the wickedness of the people, his own uncleanness, and the state of the nation. That is why Isaiah cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts." It was also the Lord who sent the seraph with the coal to touch Isaiah's lips and cleanse him. Salvation and deliverance are always from God alone. That is why, in Jonah 2 and verse 9, Jonah proclaimed, "Salvation is of the Lord." Understanding these three truths should enable us to ascertain the truth concerning the coal that touched Isaiah's mouth.

The Altar and Its Typology

The starting point should also be the source of the altar and the fire that created the coal. The altar from which the coal was taken was undoubtedly that known as the altar of burnt offering, sometimes referred to as the brazen altar. This brazen altar was always at the door of the tabernacle and/or at the door of the temple. Thus it is called the brass altar, the burnt offering altar, or the brazen altar.

We must understand that this altar was made at God's command and directions, with God's divinely ordained materials, according to the pattern that God gave Moses. Everything was to be made exactly as God determined. In Exodus chapter 25, verse 9, God 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 ye make it." God gave Moses the pattern. In the same chapter, verse 40, He says, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount." Moses did not simply decide one day to make an altar according to his own ideas. No, God directed that altar to be made. He gave Moses the directions, the pattern, and the materials to use.

Hebrews chapter 8 and verse 5 says, “Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,” speaking of the tabernacle and the temple, “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.” Moses, then, was obligated to follow every detail that God commanded and every detail that God outlined.

You may read about this brazen altar in Exodus chapter 27, verses 1 through 8, and also Exodus 38, verses 1 through 7. There you have the building of this brazen altar. It was made of acacia wood and then covered with brass.

Now, here is a problem, and I want to try to deal with it. Isaiah is seeing a heavenly vision, and the coal is taken from off the altar and touches his lips. How could the seraphim reach down to the tabernacle and/or the temple, the temple at that time, and take a coal from that altar and then touch Isaiah’s mouth? Someone would say, “The altar was a physical altar. Isaiah is seeing this in a vision, in a dream. So how could that happen?” Well, there is an answer.

Look in Hebrews chapter 9, verses 23 and 24. In fact, let us go back and begin reading verse 21. “Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.” So Moses, when he dedicated that tabernacle, sprinkled everything with blood. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”

"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these"; that is, the tabernacle and the temple, and those were the patterns. Those were the types. Those were the emblems. Those were the shadows. Those were the pictures. So they were purified with the blood of animals. "But the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands," that is, the tabernacle and the temple, "which are the figures" or types or emblems "of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in"

So the true tabernacle, the true altar, is in heaven. Everything that we see in the tabernacle, everything that we see in the temple, was nothing more than pictures. That is all there was to it. It was a pattern. It was a type. So the true altar is in heaven.

The Fire: Divine Wrath and Atonement

Now, let us consider another concept. This altar had a fire, and there were burning coals upon this fire. Do you realize that even the brazen altar was divinely lit by God, and that it was to be continually burning and never to be put out? The tabernacle had been set up, and the initial fire was sent by God. Moses did not light that fire. God lit that fire.

"And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces."

God then gave directions to Moses concerning how to make this sacrifice, and He was going to start the fire. "And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings. The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out." God was saying that once He lit this fire, its purity must be maintained. This was God's fire. It was not man's fire.

Nadab and Abihu got into trouble because they took strange fire—fire that they initiated, fire that they began—and put it in their censers before the Lord. God sent fire and killed both of them. This teaches us that anytime God does something and man adds to it, it is a profanation. It is a perversion. God immediately struck Nadab and Abihu dead because they offered strange fire.

Fire, of course, speaks of wrath and judgment as well. God rained down fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Fire is involved in the final destruction, the final condemnation, the final damnation, however you want to say it. Fire is always a sign of wrath and judgment. It is the wrath of the Father against sin and wickedness and everything that is impure and unholy and contrary to God. It is a picture of the Father's wrath and anger, a picture of the Father's judgment.

In Genesis chapter 22, we have a perfect picture of that truth. This is the passage where God commands Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. Verse 1 says, "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt" or test "Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham."

"And he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

God has just told Abraham to offer his only son Isaac. He was an only child by Sarah. It is true Abraham had other children; he had Ishmael. But Isaac is the son of promise. Verse 3 says, "And Abraham rose up early in the morning." Most of us would have slept in. Our alarm clock would not have gone off, I can assure you. We would have tarried and dragged our feet as long as we could have. But Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son.

Abraham clave the wood for the burnt offering. Who cut the wood? The father, Abraham. He clave the wood for the burnt offering, rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. Abraham said to his young men, “Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to

you." He believed that if he offered Isaac as a sacrifice, God would raise him up because of God's promise. Therefore, he said, "I and the lad will come again to you."

Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he, Abraham, took the fire in his hand and a knife. The father carried the fire and the knife. They went both of them together. Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father and said, "My father." Abraham answered, "Here am I, my son." Isaac said, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." So they went both of them together. He did not say, "God will provide for himself," but, "God will provide himself." God will be the sacrifice. The father carried the fire and the knife, while Isaac carried the wood, just as Jesus Christ carried the cross.

Jesus Christ created that tree and caused it to grow, and now He is carrying that tree, true to the picture of Genesis chapter 22. Just as the wood was laid upon Isaac and the father carried the knife and the fire, so likewise it was the Father's wrath that fell upon the Lord Jesus Christ when He was crucified in our stead.

Everything in the tabernacle, everything in the temple, was a picture, a shadow, and a type. Each one of these things pictured the Lord Jesus Christ in one way or the other. In fact, the entire tabernacle pictured the Lord Jesus Christ, and each specific instrument in it pictured Him also. All of the sacrifices picture the Lord Jesus Christ. You remember that Passover lamb?

Christ Our Altar and the Coal

There is no idea how many lambs were sacrificed, even on that first night in Exodus chapter 12. And thereafter, every lamb that was ever slain pictured the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why in 1 Corinthians 5 and verse 7, the Bible says, "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." So Jesus Christ is the true Paschal Lamb. Jesus Christ is the true Passover. All of those lambs were just pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please remember this: the problem in the book of Hebrews is that some of these people wanted to go back to the Old Testament types

and shadows. We get confused so many times. We think, “Wow, think about that temple. Think about that tabernacle. You could see it. You could hear it. You could smell it. You could taste it. I mean, look at the smoke. Look at the sacrifice. It was all there.” You say, “Now that’s reality.” No, it was not reality. That was just a picture.

Now watch this. Look in verse 10—it is of Hebrews 13. Watch this: “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” Jesus Christ is our altar. If you want that old physical fleshly altar back in the Old Testament, He says you have no right to our altar. You have no right to Jesus Christ. I had a young man ask me about these Old Testament types not too long ago. He had been married about a year and a half, but when he was married about two or three months, he asked me about them because there were some people at work warning him to go back to some of these types

Since he was a professing Christian, he was asking me about this. I asked him, “Do you have a picture of your wife in your billfold?” He said, “Of course I do.” I said, “May I see it?” Of course, I was at his wedding because I knew his wife, and so he showed me the picture. I said, “Now here’s what I want you to do. When you go home tonight and get ready for bed, I want you to take this picture out of your billfold, and I want you to give it a big old long loving smack right on the lips.” He looked at me and said, “Why would I do that when my wife is sitting right by me?”

I said, “You mean you prefer reality to the type and the shadow?” We now have the reality. We have the truth. Whereas in the Old Testament, all they had was the picture. So Jesus Christ is our altar.

The author states: “For the Christian, the altar is full of symbolic meaning and spiritual teaching. The shittim, or acacia wood, which it was made of originally, before it was covered with brass—the acacia wood was a hard, incorruptible, and indestructible wood which grows in the Sinai desert. It beautifully portrays the humanity of Christ, who came from a root out of dry ground (Isaiah 53:2), and was sinless in His nature (Hebrews 4:15). The indestructibility of the wood speaks of Christ in His humanity, withstanding the fire of crucifixion (John 10:18), the decaying effect of the grave (Acts 2:31), and His body, which was victoriously resurrected (Matthew 28). The

brass covering of the acacia wood typifies the divine righteousness and judgment of Christ."

Christ, the righteous one (1 John 3:5), took the divine judgment of God upon Himself, bearing our judgment on the cross by becoming sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). As all were saved from death when they looked upon the brass serpent which Moses held up in the wilderness, so shall all who trust in Jesus Christ, who was lifted up on the cross as a sacrifice for sin, be saved from damnation (John 3:14-15). Finally, Christ's appearance to John on the Isle of Patmos with feet of fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace (Revelation 1:15), speaks of His judicial character in judging His enemies at the Second Coming.

It was at the altar that an innocent lamb would bear the judgment of the guilty. Christ our Lamb (John 1:29) died upon the altar of the cross to bear the judgment of God's wrath against sin on our behalf (Isaiah 53). The sacrifice being burned upon the altar as a sweet savor to God (Leviticus 1:9) typifies Christ, who was offered up as a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.

Everything about this altar pictured the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle says we have an altar where they who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. That perpetual fire we read about in Leviticus chapter 6 went beyond symbolizing the divine wrath, for the altar was also the place where the holy, righteous God accepted a sacrifice. In other words, it was the place of atonement, propitiation, and reconciliation. All of this was achieved through a substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ and all of His work are encapsulated for us under the picture of a living coal taken from the altar. It was Jesus Christ who purchased our salvation and cleansed us from all sin.

This brazen altar was also, in one sense of the word, a place of fear and trepidation. Suppose you were alive in Old Testament days while the tabernacle was standing and wanted to bring an offering to God. You brought your animal, perhaps a lamb or an ox, to the door of the tabernacle. You had to put your hand upon its head, confessing the sin, and then either you, the priest, or both killed the animal. As that animal was dying, you had to understand that it was you who should have died, because the animal was your substitute. In that sense, it

was a place of fear and trepidation, because you realized you deserved to die and deserved death.

At the same time, it was also a place of grace and mercy, because that sacrifice was placed upon the altar and covered sins until the Lord Jesus Christ, the true sacrifice, came and took them away. Salvation, reconciliation, propitiation, and purity all come from God alone. This is why the coal in Isaiah chapter 6 was taken from the altar and touched Isaiah's lips. The seraphim took the coal from the altar. Jesus Christ is our altar. Isaiah said, "And he laid it upon my mouth," and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

Instantaneous Cleansing and the Need for Continual Cleansing

"The Bible does not deal in dumb signs. Application leads to explanation. He laid it upon my mouth and said," the touching of the lips with the live coal shows how God ministers to the sinner at the point of confessed needs. Isaiah said, "Woe is me, I'm a man of unclean lips. And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." The seraphim then took the coal with the tongs and touched his lips.

"The effect is instantaneous. The two verbs, 'has touched' and 'is taken away,' are coordinate perfects, stressing that as soon as the one happened, the other happened also. They were simultaneous. Isaiah contributes nothing. All is of God: "This touched your lips and your iniquity went." A comprehensive work of dealing with sin takes place. Isaiah confessed what he knew—with his lips—but God dealt also with his guilt and iniquity, the inner reality of the deviant or depraved nature, and with his sin, the specific instances of shortcomings.

All of this arises from the payment of a price. The verb "atoned for" means to effect a kopher, or ransom price—the price which justice requires. The Hebrew considered for itself leads to "cover" as the original meaning. God covers guilt out of free grace, but this is acting less like the pardon of a father than the releasing by a judge. As a sum of money is sufficient to cover a debt, so kopher is the payment of whatever divine justice sees as sufficient to cover the sinner's debt.

The death of the substitute sacrifice on the altar, which would be the Lord Jesus Christ. As soon as the coal touched his lips, everything else happened instantaneously.

Here is a good picture and illustration. Luke 8:40 says, "And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him. And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house. For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

She touched him, and instantly, immediately, she was healed. The touch of God, or to touch God, is salvation, healing, and deliverance. When the coal touched the mouth of Isaiah, he was immediately delivered from all guilt and pollution.

The glowing coal then is our Lord Jesus Christ, not on the throne high and lifted up, but on the cross lifted up. Jesus Christ is our atonement. Jesus Christ is our reconciliation. Jesus Christ is our propitiation. Jesus Christ is our glowing living coal that purges from sin and death. He is the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. He is God in the flesh.

Here is why I titled this message as I did, and here is my question to you: Has a coal touched your lips? Have you been cleansed by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our sacrifice? Here is the impact, I believe, of Isaiah chapter 6. The truth is, even if we have been saved, even if

we are saved, there is still a need to be touched for cleansing. Isaiah was saved before Isaiah 6. Isaiah was a prophet before Isaiah 6. He was already saved and called of God to be a prophet.

I want to give you two quick quotes, one by John Calvin and one by Matthew Henry. John Calvin said it like this: “We must not conclude, therefore, that Isaiah's lips were impure, because they are now cleansed, but we ought to inquire why it is done. It was because the Lord intended to enlarge and extend His favor toward him, and to raise him to a higher dignity, that he might have a greater influence over the people. And this was rendered necessary by the character of the times and the change which had taken place in the state.”

It is true that there had to be some uncleanness in Isaiah, but that does not mean that he was unsaved. This is what Calvin is saying. And that is why later on, as you read this passage, God asked, “Who shall go for us?” And Isaiah said, “Here am I, Lord, send me.”

Matthew Henry said: “Those only who are thus purged from an evil conscience are prepared to serve the living God. The taking away of sin is necessary to our speaking with confidence and comfort, either to God in prayer or from God in preaching. Nor are any so fit to display to others the riches and power of the gospel as those that have themselves tasted the sweetness and felt the influence of that grace. Those that shall have their sin taken away who complain of it as a burden and see themselves in danger as being undone by it.”

In other words, God is not going to use filthy people, dirty, wicked, transgressing people. If we want to be used by God, there must be not only an original and initial cleansing, there must be constant and continual cleansing.

SCRIPTURE READING - John 13:4-11 (KJV)

> “He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith

> unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.
>
> "Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean."
>
> Here is another picture. Jesus Christ comes to wash Peter's feet. Peter said, "Lord, You're never going to wash my feet." The Lord said, "If I don't wash you, you don't have any part with Me." In that case, Peter was saying, "Give me a bath." He wanted the Lord to wash his head, body, hands, and everything. But our Lord said, "Once you're clean, all you need is your feet clean."
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> The picture would come from those times. You could take a bath in your home, in your tent, or wherever you were. Then, as you traveled, your feet would become dirty. You did not need another whole bath; you only needed your feet washed. That is the picture our Lord was giving Peter.

Suppose you and Mary are invited to Gary and Donna's house for dinner, only one hundred yards away. You are in the desert, however, and you take a bath. Then you put on your sandals and walk that one hundred yards. When you arrive, you have dirty feet. Most homes had a bowl of water and a towel at the door, and by custom, you washed your feet when you entered, or they washed them for you. You were clean, except for your feet.

What our Lord is teaching us here is that we need daily cleansing. We have been cleansed by the blood, but consider the daily frustrations, temptations, incidents, things that upset us, and things that tear us apart. He says, "Look, these things need to be dealt with." Our Lord is telling us that we need daily cleansing. I believe this is the same thing Isaiah experienced when that coal touched his lips, and now he is clean.

Application: Has a Coal Touched Your Lips?

God is using him for service. If you and I want to be used of God, we must be clean, and we must keep ourselves clean. The only thing we can do is say, “Here I am, Lord. Use me as You will and as You please.” God is not obligated to use any of us. But the very fact that we are available to Him means that, if He chooses to use us, He may. The truth is, we need a coal to touch our lips, and that coal is the Lord Jesus Christ. David prayed, “Keep the door of my lips.” And the way we stay clean is through the Word. Our Lord said in John 17, “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” What did David say in Psalm 119, beginning in verse 11?

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” We need the living water, the Lord Jesus; the living coal, the Lord Jesus; and the written water, the Word of God. And the written fire—what did God say through Jeremiah? “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord.” We need it for daily cleansing if we are going to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. Has your lips been touched with a coal? The Lord Jesus—has He cleansed you?

Has He washed your feet? Are you clean? Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask You to make us pure, to keep us pure, to make us holy, to make us godly. May we see how desperately we need Thee. May we follow after righteousness, follow after holiness. May we follow after a godly cleanliness. We thank You for the living sacrifice, the living altar, the living coal, the living water, the living Word, and beside Thee there is none other. Give us grace to serve Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 40

How Have You Been Looked Upon

June 27, 2023

Introduction: The Question of Being Looked Upon

The title of the message is “How Have You Been Looked Upon?” You will understand shortly. Notice in Luke chapter 22, beginning with verse 55:

“And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall and were set down together, Peter sat down with them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire and earnestly looked upon him and said, This man was with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth, this fellow also was with him, for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he

had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly."

The question that I would ask at the very beginning of this message is, have you been looked upon? I could ask the second question, how have you been looked upon? I could push it even a little further and ask it this way: how have you been looked upon by God? Being looked upon can either be in a good sense or a bad sense.

I got to thinking about all the deputies and the police; they have what they call BOLOs—be on the lookout. In other words, you are looking for someone, you are watching for someone, and you want to look upon someone. We can do the same thing. We can look in a good sense or in a bad sense. Of course, we can look upon our children with delight, or we may look upon them with disappointment. We may look upon our spouses with love and affection, or we may look upon them with anger and bitterness.

When we are talking about being looked upon, it can be used in a good sense or in a bad sense. For instance, when it comes to lust and covetousness, our Lord said in Matthew 5:27-28, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." So here would certainly be an evil look or a sinful look. I have heard women say to me about certain individuals, "It looks as if he's undressing me with his eyes." Certainly that would be an evil look and an evil desire, that is for sure.

Just as we may look upon individuals for either good or bad, the truth of the matter is that God also looks upon individuals for good or bad. However, let me quickly emphasize the fact: when God looks upon someone for evil, there is no sin on the part of God, because God is absolutely, totally, and completely holy and righteous. The evil look from God comes as a look of judgment and as a look of condemnation as well.

God's Looks of Judgment and Chastisement

For instance, Genesis 6:12 says, "And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon

the earth." God looked upon the earth, and since He saw that all had corrupted his way, that look turned into a look of judgment. You know what happened to Noah and the antediluvians—those who lived—because God sent the flood and destroyed man and woman as well. God may look upon stubbornness, rebellion, wickedness, and insubordination and judge it now.

Consider also Numbers 12. There God looks upon people in judgment and chastisement, and we may look upon them and see the judgment of God. The passage says, "And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out, you three, into the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out." God has looked upon them. He hears everything and sees everything. Then God speaks very suddenly and says, "Get in front of this tabernacle." The passage continues: "And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both came forth."

And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold. Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow. And Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. And Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.

Aaron and Miriam had spoken against Moses, and God looked upon that situation. He sent judgment in such a way that when Aaron looked upon Miriam, he saw the judgment of God as well.

Another passage to compare with this is 2 Chronicles 26, concerning King Uzziah. By and large, Uzziah was what you and I would call a good king, and he was a godly king until pride came into his heart. Look at 2 Chronicles, chapter 26, verse 14.

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 26:14-21 (KJV)

"And Uzziah prepared for them"—that is, for his armies—"throughout all the host, shields and spears and helmets and habergeons and bows and slings to cast stones. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name was spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong." That is, God helped him. Then he got strong.

"But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense." Which none were to do but the priest.

"And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests, the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the

house of the Lord: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land."

Miriam was looked upon and was smitten with leprosy and was healed. Uzziah was looked upon, was smitten with leprosy,

The truth of the matter is, Miriam spoke against God's prophet. Uzziah transgressed his authority and went into the temple and tried to do something he had absolutely no authority to do. So here are two lessons that you and I should learn. Number one: you do not criticize and judge and mock and make fun of God's true servants. That should be obvious.

The second one is this: simply because God has given us authority in one area does not mean that we have authority in every area or other areas. I might be the head of my house, but I'm not the head of Clay's house. I'm not the head of Steve's house. I can only be the head of my house, and just because I have authority there does not mean I have authority in every other home. Just because I'm the pastor of one church does not mean I have authority over all the other churches.

We have to understand that all authority is delegated by God. It's limited by God. Therefore, whenever we transgress in these areas, God has the absolute right to judge us.

Now the truth of the matter is this: God most often looks upon His people for good. He hears our cries. He knows our needs. He knows our limits. He knows everything about us.

God's Looks of Grace and Mercy

I want to show you a passage that has really been a help and a blessing to me. I could quote it, but I want you to see it. I want us to look at Psalm 103, verses 13 and

The Bible says, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” Every father in this room has seen a child trying to do something when the job was too big or the load too heavy. The father simply goes over and helps the child, because we have pity on him. We know the child is incapable of doing what he is trying to do. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.”

Now look at the next verse: “For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” Have you ever wanted to do something that was right, good, and holy, but you were incapable of doing it? Sometimes you may be too tired or sleepy. There have been many times I wanted to do something and said, “Lord, I just can’t go any further. I’ve got to take time and rest.” The Lord knows our limits. He knows what we can take and what we cannot take. He knows what we can do and what we cannot do, and He knows the load that can be placed upon us and that which cannot be placed upon us.

A New Testament passage parallels Psalm 103:14: 1 Corinthians 10:13. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.” First of all, the temptation is a test, a trial, an adversity, or an affliction; it is not a seduction to evil. Whatever Gary goes through, I go through; whatever I go through, Clay goes through; whatever he goes through, Steve goes through; and whatever Steve goes through, Lorraine goes through. Everybody goes through the same trials.

“But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.” God is not going to put more upon us than we can take. Let me put it very plainly: if God places it upon you, you can take it. You may not like it, and you may chafe a little, but if He places it upon you, you can take it.

Let me finish the verse: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Whenever God places a test upon us, there is always a way of escape. Usually that way of escape is through obedience and submission, but it is still a way of escape.

We can see wonderful illustrations of how God looks upon His people. In Exodus 2:25, "And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." God saw their slavery, their persecution, and how hard they were being driven. In Exodus 4:31, when Moses told them that God had looked upon them, the Bible says that the people believed: "and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their

affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." So God looked upon them.

Now consider this astounding passage. Why would God look upon any of us? Have you ever considered the humility of God? God is absolutely supreme, sovereign, holy, and righteous. God's interest is in God; it has to be in Himself, otherwise He would not be God. Yet Psalm 113 shows how God humbles Himself just to behold things in heaven and earth. The Bible says: "Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised." That is all day long. "The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in earth!"

“He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord.”

“He humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth.” I am absolutely astounded and amazed that God would even humble himself to look upon us, especially when we are wicked, rebellious, and ungodly. I am amazed that he would ever look upon me. Yet the Bible says that he humbled himself to behold the things in heaven and earth. The vastness and greatness of God’s humility are astonishing.

What did God see when he looked upon us? Here is the picture that God paints concerning Israel, concerning Jerusalem. It is applicable to us because the same is true. “Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations.” Jerusalem was where the temple was. That was where the Levites, the teaching priests, and the elders were. “And say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.”

That means they were idolaters. They were Canaanites. When God came to Abraham, he was an heir of the Chaldees.

"And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these things unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born." God said, "When I looked upon you, you were filthy, you were wicked, you were absolutely cast out, ready to die."

"And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." That is the look of grace and mercy: God passed by and saw us in all of our sins, and yet he still loved us, set his heart upon us, and gave us life.

The Look of Disappointment

I have just shown you from Scripture some looks from God: the look of God upon wickedness in judgment, when He destroyed the antediluvians; how God looked upon His people in chastisement, with Miriam and Uzziah; and how God has looked upon each of us in grace and mercy. I showed you those looks in order to show you another look—the look of disappointment.

The Look of Disappointment: Peter's Denial

Consider this question: Have you ever disappointed the Lord Jesus Christ? Has the Lord Jesus Christ ever been disappointed in you? We used to sing a song when I was a boy: "I'm satisfied with Jesus." You know that chorus: "I'm satisfied, I'm satisfied, I'm satisfied with Jesus." But the question comes to me as I think of Calvary: Is my Master satisfied with me? That is a good question.

When you look in Luke 22—and that is our text—we are thinking about Peter, his betrayal of our Lord, and his denial of our Lord. All of this was preceded by pride and arrogance. This is astounding to me. Have you ever thought about the fact that in our dreams we are all heroes? I mean not necessarily only the dreams we dream at

night—sometimes that is true—but even in our daydreams, when we think about scenarios and things that may or may not happen, usually we are the hero. We can save a child, our mates, or someone else. In our minds, it always works out that we are the hero.

But unhappily, in reality, sometimes—and most of the time—it turns out that we are the cowards. We often boast of what we would do in certain situations. You can hear about people who are in danger or being assailed, and usually someone will say, "Well, I will tell you what I would do if I was in that situation. I would do this and I would do that." The truth is, no one knows exactly what they would do until they get into that situation. But we always have the answer as long as we are not in the situation. We are always the hero then.

We are not actually doing the fighting. Here is what really prepared the way for Peter's denial—and for the denial of the rest of the disciples. The stage was being set by the pride and arrogance of the disciples. Luke chapter 22, verse 24, says, "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." Strife means an argument. They were fussing and saying, "I'm going to be the greatest," or, "I'm the greatest disciple."

Our Lord said unto them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth."

It is almost hard to imagine that the twelve apostles were arguing among themselves about which one would be the greatest. You remember that the mother of James and John came to Jesus and asked that one of her sons might sit on His right side and the other on His left side when He came into His kingdom. Our Lord said, "You don't know what you're asking." He said it was not His to give, but it would be given to those for whom it was prepared.

Obviously, they were fighting to see who would be the greatest. Our Lord said, "When it comes now to my kingdom, if you really want to be great, you've got to be lowly. If you want to be chief,

you've got to be a servant." Then our Lord, who is God incarnate, said, "I am among you as one that serveth." Over and over in Scripture, the Bible says that Jesus Christ came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give my life a ransom for many."

Here the disciples were arguing over who would be the greatest. The next stage in the setup for this fall was that they refused to hear the words of Jesus Christ. They refused to acknowledge His warnings.

In Luke chapter 22, verse 31, our Lord said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." And he said unto him, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." And he said, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me."

Our Lord said, "Peter, I've got something to tell you. Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat." You're going through a big temptation, a big trial, a big affliction. But he said, "I've prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." So Peter did not lose his salvation. Don't come up with anything like that. Our Lord said, "I prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." How many prayers that our Lord have that were unanswered? None. Or did he say, "Father, I know that thou hearest me always"? So he prayed for Peter. Peter did not lose his salvation. He said, "I prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." That is, when you get turned back, when there's a repentance.

But what did Peter say when the Lord told him, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not"? He said, "Lord, Lord, really no need to pray for me, because I'm really determined right now. I will go with thee to prison and even unto death." Wow. That does not sound to me like Peter took our Lord's words very seriously at all.

"And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Our Lord had just told them, "You're

gonna be offended. You're gonna be scandalized." Why? Because it is written. He quotes Scripture and tells them exactly what has been prophesied. Then He says, "But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee."

But Peter said unto him, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." Jesus said to him, "Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." Then Peter "spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise."

"Likewise also said they all." It was not just Peter; it was all of them. Matthew 26:35 records Peter saying, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples." Think of all the bravado, determination, and manly grit expressed in these words: "We will fight, Lord. We will go to prison with thee. We will die with thee, Lord. We will never, ever deny thee. No, we will not." Even though our Lord had told them, "All of you are going to be offended in me because of me this night," they answered, "No, no, no, Lord. We're not gonna be offended. We're gonna die with you."

Our Lord is in the garden: "And they laid their hands on him, and took him. And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear." That was Peter. "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled." Now watch it: "And they all forsook him, and fled." All the disciples.

"And there followed him a certain young man"—this would be Mark—"having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." All of them had said, "Lord, we're not going to deny you. We'll go to prison with you. We'll die with you." Yet when they took Him, everyone fled. They ran.

Peter evidently did muster a little courage—not much—but enough to follow our Lord afar off. Matthew 26:58 says, "But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went

in"—watch this—"and sat with the servants," the servants of the high priest, the enemies, "to see the end." Peter was saying, "It's over. I'm just waiting till the killing. It's over. It's done with."

Mark 14:54 adds, "And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire." Now he is fellowshipping, so to speak, or at least identifying with the enemies of Christ. He is warming himself by their fire.

Luke 22:54 says, "Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off." It does not look like Peter has too much grit and courage at this particular point. He was downcast, disillusioned, and disheartened. He followed Christ afar off to see the end, and when he got in the palace, he was warming himself by the fire of the enemies.

So here is my question, and I want to set you up for this: How did Peter even get into the palace? If you look in your Bibles at John chapter 18, you will see the answer to that question. John 18, and we will begin reading there with verse 15. Please hold Luke 22, but John 18, verse 15: "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple"—that would be John. "That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without." Why? He did not know anybody in the palace; John did. "Then went out that other disciple"—that would be John—"which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter."

The only way Peter got into the palace was that John happened to know someone in the high priest's palace. He went to the door and asked this little damsel, this little maid, to open the door and let Peter in.

Now I want to show you something: I want to show you that it did not take much for Peter to deny Christ. Look in your Bibles at Luke chapter 22 and verse 56. We can also see it in John 18, but go back to Luke 22 first. I am going to read both of them so you can see this. In Luke 22 and verse 56 we read, "But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him." Now look at that: "But a certain maid." Then in

John 18 and verse 17: “Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?”

He said, “I am not.” The word “damsel” in John 18:17 and the word “maid” in Luke 22:56 are exactly the same Greek word, *paidiske*. It refers to a damsel, a maid—hang on—a bondwoman, a female slave. This little girl only had authority to open and shut the door. She was not some governmental figure, nor someone high up in the government or in the palace of the high priest. She was a doorkeeper. She said, “You're one of them.” He said, “Not me.” That boggles my mind. So here's a man

Peter had just said, “I will never deny thee. I’ll go to prison with thee. I’ll die with thee.” And here is a little girl with absolutely no authority. She said, “You’re one of them.” “No, no, not me. I don’t know the man.”

Luke 22:58 says, “And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.”

The man who drew forth the second denial was a kinsman of Malchus, the man whose ear Peter cut off. I have been asked innumerable times, “Pastor, do you think Peter meant to cut that man’s ear off?” No, he did not mean to cut off the ear; he was aiming for the center of his head. He simply missed. He would have taken him out if he could have. Yet it has always astounded me when I read this passage. When Peter cut off the ear, our Lord said, “Put your sword back up in your sheath.” Then He reached down, picked up the ear, and stuck it back on Malchus. I do not think I would be too interested in catching a man who had just put my ear back on merely by touching it.

John 18:26 records, “One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?” And again he denied, “I don’t know the man.” This is the same man mentioned in Luke 22.

That was only the second denial. About an hour later, another confidently affirmed, “Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean.” Peter replied, “Man, I know not what thou sayest.” The speech of the Galileans differed from that of the Judeans, and it could be recognized. Every section of the country has different

accents. This man said, in effect, “It has got to be you because you have the speech of a Galilean.” Peter said, “No.” He said, “I don’t know, don’t know”

“And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.”

“And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.” Have you ever wondered about that look? In verse 61 there are two distinct actions, and both are important. First, “And the Lord turned.” He did not turn away from Peter; He turned to Peter. He did not turn His back upon Peter, although Peter had just denied Him three times.

The Lord's Look and Peter's Repentance

The second action was based upon the first: He turned and looked upon Peter. The word “looked” is the Greek word emblepo, which means to behold, to look upon, to gaze. Stop and think about that. Each of us has gazed at times, either at a landscape or at an individual. Our Lord simply turned and looked at Peter. The gaze had to be one of earnestness and compassion, not wrath and resentment, but love and mercy. At the same time, it had to be a signal to Peter, putting him in remembrance. The cock crows, Peter remembers, and the Bible says, “And Peter went out and wept bitterly.”

I was preparing this message this past week, and I ran across Matthew Henry’s commentary on this section. Matthew Henry pointed out that our Lord’s looking upon Peter signified at least six different things. I want to read this to you because I believe Matthew Henry is correct in this matter. First, it was a convincing look. Peter said that he did not know Christ. Christ turned and looked upon him, as if He should say, “Dost thou not know me now, Peter? Look me in the face and tell me that thou dost not know me.”

Secondly, Henry said it was a chiding look. We may suppose that Christ looked upon him and frowned, or in some way signified His displeasure. Let us think with what an angry countenance Christ justly looks upon us when we have sinned.

Thirdly, it was an expostulating or upbraiding look: "What, Peter, thou that didst own me to be the Son of God, and didst solemnly promise thou wouldst never disown me, and yet now…"

Fourthly, he said it was a compassionate look. He looked upon Peter with tenderness: "Poor Peter, how weak is thine heart? How art thou fallen, undone, if I do not help thee?" Fifthly, it was a directing look. Christ guided him with his eyes, giving him a wink to go out from that sorry company. Peter was warming himself by the fire of the servants; Christ directed him to retire and bethink himself a little, and then he would soon see what he had done.

Lastly, it was a significant look. It signified the conveying of grace to Peter's heart to enable him to repent. The crowing of the cock would not have brought him to repentance without this look, nor will external means without special efficacious grace. Power went along with this look to change Peter's heart, bring him to himself, and put him in his right mind. That is when the next verse says, "And Peter went out and wept bitterly."

Applications: Our Weakness and Need for Grace

Has Christ ever looked upon you with disappointment? How many times have we done things, said things, or thought things that should not have been done, said, or thought? John Trapp, the old Puritan, said it like this: "A stroke from guilt broke Judas's heart into despair, but a look from Christ broke Peter's heart into tears."

I do not suppose that anyone loves the Lord Jesus Christ any more than Peter did. Peter lived with Him for three years, walked with Him, ate with Him, fellowshipped with Him, obeyed Him, and ministered to and with Him. If someone so intimate with Christ for three years could so easily deny Him, how much weaker are we when we are not with Him as Peter was? The Bible says, "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

We can boast like Peter and the other apostles, saying, "If I was in that situation, I would not have done that." Yes, you would have. Apart from the grace of Christ, you would have. Have we been broken to tears? Have we wept bitterly over disappointing our Lord?

Each of us has disappointed Him, but has it ever broken our hearts that we truly disappointed Jesus Christ? Have you comprehended how weak, frail, and shallow we really are? If our Lord does not hold us up, we have no strength.

If our Lord does not instill courage in us, we have no courage in and of ourselves. If He does not give us grace and mercy, we will compromise, deny, and disappoint Him on every hand.

May I remind you of John 15: “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” “For without me ye can do”—what?—“nothing.” Without me ye can do nothing.

The truth is, I believe our Lord often looks upon us with disappointment, but we do not realize it. Yet the look of disappointment is also a look of encouragement. How could that be? Peter went out and wept bitterly; he repented. The Bible tells us in 1 John 1:7: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” And then he said in

1 John 1 and verse 9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." When is the last time we confessed disappointing Jesus Christ? It is possible to disappoint Him, and possible for Him to look upon us with disappointment. We must seek Him for grace and mercy.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, and the opportunity to stand. Only Your grace enables us to stand, and only Your mercy enables us to confess Thee before men. Otherwise, we will be like Peter and not even confess Thee before a handmaiden, a servant. Lord, how desperately we need Thee and Thy grace and mercy. Forgive us for disappointing Thee so many times. We are weak and frail. Have mercy upon us, and may we love Thee with all our hearts. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 41

Will America Be Destroyed And Will You Be Dispossessed?

June 27, 2023

SCRIPTURE READING - Ezekiel 33:23-29 (KJV)

Introduction and Scripture Reading

The Word of God says:

“Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel, speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land. But we are many, the land is given us for an inheritance. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, You eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood, and shalt you possess the land? You stand upon your sword, you work abomination, and you defile every one his neighbor's wife, and shalt you possess the land? Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, As I live, surely they that are in the waste shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I

give to the beast to be devoured, and they that be in forts and in caves shall die of the pestilence. For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease, and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. Then shall they know that I am the Lord when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations, which they have committed."

This message precedes another message that I wish to bring next week, entitled "Cataclysmic Judgments." Hopefully, this will lay the foundation and groundwork for that message. This message poses two very important, difficult, and unnerving questions: Will America be destroyed? Will you be dispossessed?

Although I have referenced America, these questions could apply to any country. Will Germany be destroyed? Will the Christians there be dispossessed? Or will Austria be destroyed, or Poland be destroyed? These questions apply to any country because they are based upon biblical principles clearly taught in the Word of God. These principles are also based upon what is known as the immutability of God.

The Immutability of God and His Judgments

God is immutable; that means He does not change. In Malachi 3:6 He says, "For I the Lord change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Not only is God unchangeable, but His Word is unchangeable as well. Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, O Lord, is Thy word settled in the heavens." Our Lord Himself said in Matthew 5:18, "For verily I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

Clearly, God is immutable. His Word is immutable, and therefore His judgments are immutable also; they do not change. It is impossible for God to become more holy, more righteous, or more just, because He is already perfect in holiness, righteousness, and justice. Moreover, it is impossible for God to become less righteous, less holy, or less just. If He did, He would not be perfect, and therefore He would not be God.

God's immutability is one of those perfections absolutely required in Scripture. Since God is immutable and His Word is immutable, it is therefore obvious that His judgments are immutable as well.

In light of these truths, we see in Ezekiel 33 that Israel was indeed dispossessed of her land. Judah and Jerusalem were dispossessed as well, simply because of their sins and rebellion against God. God's right to dispossess anyone at any time is based not only upon His sovereignty, but also upon His creatorship and the fact that He owns everything. The world and everything in it, including everyone, is owned by God because God created each of us and everything in the world.

Over and over in the Bible we are given this simple truth. Exodus 20:11 says, "For in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day and blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein."

God's Right to Dispossess Based on Ownership

Acts 17:24 declares, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is the Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." Notice the words, "God that made the world and all things therein." Twice in 1 Corinthians 10, verses 26 and 28, the Scripture says, "For the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." And, of course, the book of Psalms tells us that He owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

Everything in the world was made by God, and therefore God is the true and proper owner. Since God is the true and proper owner, and since God is also sovereign, He may dispossess anyone at any time according to His own will and His own pleasure. He does as He pleases.

Why would God dispossess anyone? Why would God kick anyone out of their nation or country? The answer is simply that those individuals do not and would not render to God His dues. For instance, the tithe is nothing more than God's tax for the use of the earth. I believe that unconverted people should tithe just like

converted people. Why? Because they breathe God's air, use God's earth to grow their food, and God gives them ability. All the tithe is, as I say, God's tax for the use of His earth. We are also required to worship God, honor God, and glorify God.

Four times, I believe, in Psalm 107, the Scripture says, "Oh, that the sons of men would praise the Lord for His goodness to the children of men." God has indeed been good to us. But when we refuse to give God the rent that is due unto Him, He has the absolute right to dispossess anyone.

Suppose you owned twenty properties and had renters in those properties who refused to pay the rent. Not only did they refuse to pay, but they abused and destroyed the property. Then you discovered that they were ripping out all the equipment, appliances, and everything else you had provided, either throwing them away or giving them to their friends and their lovers. What would you do? I know what you would do, and it is the same thing I would do: you would try to get those renters out as quickly as you could, before they absolutely destroyed everything.

Biblical Warnings and Israel's Dispossession

Before Israel went into the land, God warned them and told them exactly why He kicked all the other nations out before they came into the land. In Leviticus 18, beginning with verse 24, God says, “Defile not you yourselves in any of these things.” The things mentioned previously included offering children to Moloch, lying with animals, and other abominations. He continues: “Defile not yourselves in any of these things, for in all these the nations are defiled, which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled, therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you. For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled.”

Now watch it: “That the land spew not you out also when you defile it, as it spewed out the nations that were before you. For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls

that commit them shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore shall you keep mine ordinances, that you commit not any one of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you defile not yourselves therein. I am the Lord your God."

God has stated very plainly that they are not to engage in these wicked abominations; they are to obey Him, because if they do not obey Him, the land is going to vomit them out, just exactly as it vomited out the nations previously. In Leviticus 20, verses 23 and 24, He says this again: "You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my judgments and do them, that the land whither I bring you to dwell therein spew you not out. And you shall not walk in the manner of the nation

God said of the nations, "which I cast out before you. For they committed all these things and therefore I abhorred them." The word "abhorred" is a very strong word for hatred. God says, Do not do it.

Deuteronomy 29:24 says, "Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done this unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger?" God was judging the land of Israel. "Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which He made with them, when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt. For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom He had not given to them. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book."

Verse 28 says, "And the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, in wrath and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day." God did indeed dispossess Israel. He dispossessed the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and Simeon in the southern kingdom as well.

The Equality of God's Ways

When people get kicked off rental properties, they will always say, "Well, it's not fair. I should not have been kicked out for what I did," or, "This should not have happened unto me." But it did happen. In Ezekiel 33, Israel is accusing God, in one sense, of being unjust and

unfair, saying that His ways are not equal. Verse 17 says, “Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal. But as for them, their way is not equal.” The Lord demonstrates the equality of His ways in verses 12 through 20: “Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression.”

SCRIPTURE READING - Ezekiel 33:12-20 (KJV)

> As for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness. Neither shall the righteous be able to live after the righteousness in the day that he sinneth. When I shall say to the righteous that he shall surely live, if he trusts to his own righteousness and commit iniquity, all of his righteousness shall not be remembered. But for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right, if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him, he hath done that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live. Yet the children of our people say, The way of the Lord is not equal. But as for them, their way is not equal. When the righteous turneth away his righteousness and committed the iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness and do that which is lawful and

“Right, he shall live thereby. Yet you say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, I will judge you everyone after his own ways.”

Now listen to what God said. He said the righteousness of the righteous will not save or spare his life in the day that he sins, in the day that he transgresses. Here is an illustration. I have been a preacher for 58 years, and I believe I have a good and godly testimony. But let us suppose that tomorrow I go out and rob a bank. I am arrested, taken to trial, and standing before the judge. The judge says, “Sir, you have been charged with robbing this bank.” I reply, “But your honor, you do not understand. For 58 years I have

been a preacher, I have lived right and done right, and I never robbed a bank for 58 years. You should be lenient with me because of how good I was." Do you think that will fly with the judge? No. If I robbed the bank, he is going to sentence me. That is all there is to it. My righteousness is not going to deliver me when I do that which is wrong.

It is the same thing if I become angry with Steve and say, "I will just shoot you," and begin pulling out a pistol, only to have him pull out one and shoot me first. It does not matter that I had done right for 58 years. I am now dead. The point is that God says this is equal. If a sinner turns from his wickedness, he is not going to die; he is now doing that which is right and holy. God says, "My ways are equal. It is your ways that are not equal."

Everyone can do that which is right. Usually, if you are going to be attacked, you will be attacked either by your own government or by some organization like the SPLC, the Southern Poverty Law Center. I heard this morning on the news that the Southern Poverty Law Center has labeled the American Family Association a hate group. Can you imagine that? I tell people that the SPLC is wrong. Southern—they may be in the South, but they are really not Southern.

Well, they certainly do not follow biblical law, constitutional law, or common law. They might follow legalese, but no law. And poverty—they are certainly not poverty-stricken, because Morris Dees put millions upon millions in the banks in the islands. The only thing left would be center, and I think the word S-I-N-N-E-R, center, would be more appropriate. If you do not believe that, you can read the divorce papers of Morris Dees and find out all of the wickedness and vileness involved.

All I am trying to say is this: God is saying that if you do what is right and then turn around and do what is wrong, you are going to suffer for it. If someone is doing what is wrong and turns around and does what is right, he is not going to suffer for doing what is right. God is saying, "My ways are equal." The problem was that those folks in Israel and Judah were unrighteous, ungodly, disobedient, rebellious, and unrepentant; therefore, the Lord rightly judged them and dispossessed them.

The Watchman's Duty and Rejected Warnings

Now, in Psalm 145:17, the Bible says, “The Lord is righteous in all of His ways and holy in all of His works.” Whatever God does is done in righteousness and holiness. God is not going to do that which is unrighteous or unholy. In this chapter, God has appointed Ezekiel to be a watchman to warn the people.

Look at the first seven verses so that you can see the absolute necessity of these warnings. Ezekiel chapter 33, verse 1: “Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak unto the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon the land,” and note that phrase: “When I bring the sword upon the land.” In other words, this is God’s judgment. He says, “When I bring the sword upon the land, if the people of the land take a man of their coast, and set him for their watchman, if when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people, then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet and took not warning, his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned, if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, and his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.”

“So thou, O son of man, I've set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore, thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me.” God is taking an illustration of a military watchman. The man is on a tower with a trumpet, and all he has to do is blow it if he sees the enemy approaching. Once people hear that trumpet being blown—the distress signal, the signal of war—the man who fails to heed it, if he is killed, has his blood on his own head. The man who heeds it and gets out of the way has his life spared. But if the watchman sees the sword coming, sees the enemy invading, and does not blow the trumpet, and those people die, God said, “His blood will I require at the hand of the watchman.”

God says, “So thou, O son of man, I've set thee watchman of the house of Israel. Therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me.” The warnings in this chapter are not from

Ezekiel; they are from God. God is simply giving the word of warning to Ezekiel. Ezekiel is nothing more than the messenger. To ignore the warning Ezekiel gave is to ignore the warning God has given, because God gave the words to Ezekiel.

Likewise, the same is true today. To ignore the warnings from a man who is preaching, proclaiming, and expounding the Scriptures is to ignore the warning from God, because God and His Word are immutable. These warnings are from Him.

Most people today are like the people in Ezekiel's time and in Jeremiah's time. They do not pay any attention or listen to God. They do not listen to preachers; they simply do their own thing. In Jeremiah chapter 7, God complains of this over and over in Scripture.

God says, "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I've even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck, they did worse than their fathers." God was speaking through the prophets, but they did not listen. In Jeremiah chapter 25, verse 4, He says, "The Lord has sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you've not hearkened nor inclined your ear to hear." God said they simply would not listen.

In Jeremiah 26, verse 5, He says, "to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send unto you, both rising up early and sending them, but you have not hearkened." Consequently, He said in verse 6, "Then I will make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth." In Jeremiah 29, verse 19, God says, "Because they have not hearkened to my word, saith the Lord, which I send to them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, but you would not hear, saith the Lord." He said the same thing in Jeremiah chapter 35 and in Jeremiah 44: "I sent you all my servants the prophets, but you would not listen. You would not heed, you would not hear."

Since they would not heed the warnings from God through His prophets, when judgment came many of them were surprised. They took the attitude, "It couldn't happen here. It just can't happen

here." I've heard people say that: "America can't be destroyed. We're a Christian nation."

Really? May I remind you that Israel and the southern kingdom were covenant nations as well. They were supposed to be the people of God. Yet God destroyed them and dispossessed them. God kicked them out of the land because of their sins. The fact that we are supposedly a Christian nation, and were a Christian nation originally, only intensifies our sins and also intensifies our judgment.

Greater Judgment for Greater Light

Here is an amazing and astounding statement by Jeremiah in Lamentations chapter 4, verse 6: “For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hand stayed on her.” Did you hear that? He said the punishment of Judah and Jerusalem was greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom. Wow.

Here is a good question: Why was the punishment of Judah and Jerusalem greater than the punishment of Sodom? The answer is because Judah and Jerusalem had all the blessings of God, all the opportunities, and all the responsibilities. They had the temple. They had the priesthood. They had the law. They had the sacrifices. They had everything. Therefore, God judged them more strenuously.

He said, talking about Sodom, “there was overthrown as in a moment. No hand stayed on her.” When God rained fire and brimstone, it was over with. It was over with quickly. But it was not over with quickly for Judah and Jerusalem. They were besieged. They were starving. People, women, killed and cooked and ate their own children. There was pestilence. Many of them were killed. Some were taken into captivity, and for seventy years they were in captivity.

So you would have to ask this: Why? Why were they judged more strenuously? The Bible answers that question. In Luke chapter 12, beginning with verse 45, God says: “But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the

menservants and maidens, and to eat and to drink and to be drunken; the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him," that is, it will be a surprise, "and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."

"And that servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. And to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Did you see what God just said? The man who knew his Lord's will and did not do it shall be beaten with many stripes. But the man who had no knowledge, who did not know anything about it, yet committed things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. Why? Unto whom much is given, much is required. Judah and Jerusalem had much given to them that the other nations had not received.

The greater the opportunities, the greater the responsibilities, the greater the culpability—that is, the criminality deserving censure and judgment. That is why Jeremiah said that the hand of God was far more grievous against Judah and Jerusalem than it was against Sodom and Gomorrah.

Living Off a Heritage vs. Obedience

Now go back in your Bibles to Ezekiel chapter 33 and look at verses 23 and 24. I read this earlier, so let me point it out. Our attitude today is similar to the attitude of Israel in Ezekiel's day. Since the land had been given to Abraham, and these people were Abraham's descendants, they assumed they had a greater right to that land. Here is what they said:

"Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land. But we are many, the land is given to us for an inheritance."

In other words, we should possess this land because we are the descendants of Abraham. He was one man and received the land; look at us now—we have filled the land. Therefore, the land should be ours. They were living off the heritage of Abraham. What they had forgotten was this: Abraham was a righteous man.

Abraham was an obedient man, a man of faith, and a friend of God. And they were not. You know what we have been doing for years now? We have been living off our Christian heritage. It was given to us by our founding fathers, those early people here. We have developed the attitude exactly as these Israelites had developed theirs. You have heard of American exceptionalism, or Christian exceptionalism.

God is not going to judge us. We are a Christian nation. God is not going to judge us; we are the exception. That is exactly what Israel thought. That is exactly what Judah and Jerusalem thought. Do not care what you call it. The truth of the matter is that God did indeed judge them, and God says, You are not going to possess this land.

Ezekiel 33:25 says: “Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes unto your idols, and shed blood, and shall ye possess the land? Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abominations, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife, and shall ye possess the land?” God says you are doing absolutely contrary to everything I commanded you, and you think you are going to stay here.

“Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, and none shall pass through. Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.”

Notice that twice in this short passage God asks, “and shall ye possess the land?” May I remind you that the sins of America are the same sins of Israel?

Idolatry, murder, aborticide, adultery, fornication, corruption, fraud, theft, deception, pride, arrogance, haughtiness, and blasphemy. Hold Ezekiel 33, but turn back in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 5. Jeremiah grieved exactly as Ezekiel did over the people. Go back to verse 1: "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem." We are talking about Judah and Jerusalem. Now skip down to verse 7. God asked, "How shall I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forsaken me and have sworn by them that are no gods. When I fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning; every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall I not visit for these things?" That is not a friendly visit either. "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

"Go ye up upon her walls and destroy, but make not a full end. Take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the Lord. They have belied the Lord," that is, lied against the Lord, "and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us. Neither shall we see sword or famine. And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done unto them."

Skip now to verse 25: "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat. They shine. Yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked." These were professing covenant old people of God, and God says they overpass the deeds of the wicked. They were more vile than the wicked. "They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord."

"Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and a horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means;

and my people love to have it so. And what will you do in the end thereof?"

Pause for a moment and think of the political and governmental corruption that abounds. Not only are the innocent and righteous persecuted and prosecuted, but the wicked and guilty either go free or receive only a little slap on the wrist. Moreover, consider all the corruption, perversion, and heresy in our modern-day professing Christian churches. When you stop and think of all the churches in this land, how few are really genuinely preaching the truth of God, the whole counsel of God. It is astounding. We have turned into politically correct and sin-tolerant social clubs what we now call churches.

All I am pointing out is that everything that happened in Ezekiel, everything that happened in Jeremiah, is happening today. Go back to the book of Ezekiel, to chapter 36, and look at four verses, beginning with verse 16:

"Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land"—that is, they did possess it at one time—"when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings. Their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured out my fury upon them, for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it. And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries, according to their way, and according to their doings I judged them. And when they entered into the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land."

They knew why they dispossessed them: because of their sins and their wickedness. He said they had gone forth out of His land—that is, God's land. God was the owner; God was the proprietor. God had the right to dispossess them, and He did.

Internal Overthrow and Desolation

When you and I think of this land being destroyed and us being dispossessed, we tend to think of countries that will invade us. We tend to think of China or Russia. But you do not necessarily have to have an outside country come in and destroy us by war for us to be subdued and dispossessed. We do not necessarily have to be driven from our land in order to be dispossessed and for the land to be made desolate.

Isaiah chapter 1, verse 4, speaks of Judah and Jerusalem: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters. They have forsaken the Lord. They provoke the Holy One of Israel unto anger. They are gone away backward. Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

"Your country is desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. Your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in the vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom and we should have been made like unto Gomorrah."

Look at verse 7: "Your country is desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. Your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers." We must understand that a country may be overthrown from the inside as well as from the outside. In this instance it is from the inside, because the country is made desolate and devoured in their presence. Have we witnessed our nation, our country, being devoured and made desolate in our presence?

What about the BLM and the Antifa? What about all of those stores that were looted and burned? How about all the people who were either hospitalized or literally killed? I am simply saying that we have witnessed robbing, raping, destruction of business, looting,

murdering, and nothing is done about it—not one thing. I want to challenge you to do something. When you get home and have a few minutes, get on the internet and type in pictures of Portland, Oregon; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; San Francisco, California; Atlanta, Georgia. You could probably add Tallahassee, Florida.

The point I am trying to make is that you will see block after block, after block, after block, and street after street in all of these cities, with people lying on the sidewalk and drugs everywhere. Unbelievable. Everything is desolate. Who wants to walk down those streets? Check it out. God said in verse 7, "strangers devour it in your presence." The word "strangers" in Hebrew is zur, which actually means a foreigner, a loathsome individual, or an enemy. So clearly they are enemies because they are making the land desolate. They are destroying it. He said, "The land is overthrown by strangers." Do you realize that just because someone is born in this land does not necessarily make him one of us? He can still be a stranger. How can someone born in this land be a stranger?

He can be made a stranger through Marxism, through communism. In other words, he is a stranger to our faith, our culture, our society, and our way of life. Then, of course, you need to consider all of these illegal immigrants who are coming in and bringing everything imaginable except our culture and our faith.

I am simply pointing out that it is being devoured. Now, here is an interesting thing. Look at this again in verse 7. He said, "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire, your land, strangers devour it in your presence; it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers." The word "overthrown" in Hebrew is makpaka, and it means to destroy, to overthrow, and to make desolate. It is the same exact Hebrew word used for the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah.

So let us ask some questions. What has happened to our Christian heritage? What has happened to our constitutional republic? What has happened to our common law? The truth of the matter is that everything I have just asked has been overthrown and is being overthrown by our own government and by those who are in positions of power and authority. What has happened? Our country is being devoured and made desolate in our own presence.

Applications: Prayer and Entertainment Religion

Now, let me try to make some applications because to me this is exceedingly important. What can we do? In one sense, we're completely helpless. In another sense, the power to rectify the situation is in our hands. I can't change Congress, the president, or the judges. I can't stop George Soros. In that sense, I'm helpless. But in the other sense, I'm extremely powerful.

You remember our Lord's words in Luke, chapter 18, where men are always to pray and not to faint. In that passage He told about the unjust judge. The unjust judge said concerning that widow woman, "Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet I'm gonna give this widow woman justice lest by her continual coming she weary me." So the judge said, "I'm gonna give her what she wants just to get her off my back, just to get rid of her." And then our Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. Don't think God is like that unjust judge." Because He said, "Shall not God avenge His own elect who cry unto Him day and night? I tell you He will avenge them speedily."

What should we cry? We should be crying and praying some of these imprecatory prayers given us in the Bible. David prayed in Psalm 3 and verse 7, "Arise, O God. Save me, O my God, for Thou hast smitten all my enemies upon the cheekbone. Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly." When's the last time you've asked God to smite the enemies of God on the cheekbone and to break their teeth? That's a good prayer request.

How about this one in Psalm 7 verse 9? I pray this one regularly: "Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just." I like also Psalm 9 verses 19 and 20: "Arise, O Lord, let not man prevail. Let the heathen be judged in Thy sight. Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but mere men." Put them in fear. That's a good prayer request.

“Let not man prevail.” How about this one in Psalm 58, verses 6 through 8: “Break their teeth in their mouth. Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord. Let them melt as waters which run continually. When he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be cut in pieces. As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass

away like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun." Have you ever prayed that? "Break their teeth in their mouth?"

"O God, cast them down, O Lord, that they rise not up again." Psalm 140, verse 10: "Let burning coals fall upon them. Let them be cast in the fire, into deep pits, that they rise not up again." Those are imprecatory prayers that are being prayed against God's enemies.

Now, I want you to turn back to Ezekiel chapter 33. The power is in our hand in one sense of the word. We need to learn to pray these prayers. But here is another application. Here is where we are in America. Look at Ezekiel chapter 33, beginning at verse 30. God says to Ezekiel, "Also, thou son of man, the children of my people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors and in their houses, and speak one to another, everyone to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord."

He says, "My people still are talking against thee." Yet they are saying, "Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord." How can they be talking against Ezekiel while inviting people to hear him? It is explained in verse 31: "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them. For with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo,"

"Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument. For they hear thy words, but they do them not." Now watch verse 33: "And when this cometh to pass, and lo, it will come, then shall they know that a prophet has been among them."

This is how they regarded Ezekiel. They invited people to hear him for entertainment. "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument." In other words, they came to be entertained, not to obey. Their hearts were not in listening.

When you consider the people today who go to church for the entertainment, the music, the programs, the food, and the fellowship, they do not go to hear the Word of God. They do not go to

hear, learn, and obey. They go to be entertained. That is exactly what happened with Ezekiel. They were saying, “You will enjoy this. This is just entertainment for us. We are going to listen, but we are not going to obey.”

Conclusion and Call to Repentance

So I ask: Will America be destroyed? Will we be dispossessed? When you consider the immutability of God, how He has judged other nations, especially Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem, the southern kingdom, and that we are committing the exact same sins they committed, it does not look good unless there is repentance and a real turning to God. God asked them, when they were doing all these evil, wicked things He commanded them not to do, “And shall you possess the land?”

I want you to understand that what happened to these people happened suddenly. They were warned, but they did not listen. Lord willing, next Sunday I want to deal with “Cataclysmic Judgments” and show exactly what God often does to destroy a wicked, vile nation.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Help us, Lord, to seriously consider these questions, examine our hearts and lives, and bring our lives into greater conformity to Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 42

A Hard Truth, But A Truth

October 27, 2023

Introduction: God's Sovereignty Declared

In Exodus 14, dealing with the destruction of Pharaoh and his army, the Lord said, “And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them. And I will be honored upon Pharaoh and upon all the hosts, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.” And they did so.

Then, in verse 15, the Lord said unto Moses, “Wherefore cryest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. But lift up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. And I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his hosts, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten the honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.”

The truth of the matter is this: God is sovereign. In fact, God is absolutely, completely sovereign. Psalm 115:3 says, “But our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He is pleased.” Isaiah 46:10 says, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” Revelation 4:11 declares, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.”

God is the only one that does as He pleases, whenever He pleases, wherever He pleases, and with whomever He pleases. We have absolutely no right or reason to complain about His actions, for everything that He does is done in holiness, righteousness, and justice. Moreover, He is the Creator and we are the creature. He is the Potter and we are the clay; consequently, He has the absolute right to make us however He pleases and to dispose of us however He pleases as well.

Man's Hypocrisy in Denying God's Sovereignty

Scripture affirms this truth. You may argue with it, detest it, despise it, challenge it, or refuse to believe it. But if you want to be upset about it, you need to take it up with God, because God is the one who said it in His Word. This is the truth of His Word. If you have an argument, you have to argue with Him.

What is strange to me is that many people deny God what they allow for themselves or for others. They deny God's sovereignty, but they allow for man's sovereignty. Man oftentimes allows governments to assume the prerogative to do as they please and as they will, and nothing is said about it. Yet they say that God cannot do that.

Let me give you an illustration. Listen to this headline in an article titled, "The World of the United Nations Must Reduce Population Growth." The article said: "On September 24th and 25th, world leaders will gather at the United Nations in New York to review progress toward UN's 2030 agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all, are commendable and summarize the kind of world many of us wish to see in 2030. But if this vision is to have any chance of materializing,

governments must now add the 18th goal to dampen population growth." In other words, reduce the population and limit the population.

Governments then assume the right and power to do as they please with their citizens, whether the citizens like it or not. Look at the people who have been killed—or, probably, murdered—simply because of governmental bioweapons and the vaccines produced, promulgated, and promoted in association with the government and Big Pharma. There is no need to discuss Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, or the others. Governments are responsible for multitudinous deaths, and I am not speaking merely of wars. If all the wars governments instituted and began for control or materials were included, the death toll would be absolutely astonishing.

Stalin was supposed to have killed several million. Pol Pot killed that many and more. Idi Amin killed—I have no idea how many. But the point I am trying to make is that you have to understand that fallen government does the very thing that people say God cannot do and will not do, because they are saying He does not have the right to make us as He pleases or dispose of us as He pleases. Fallen man, rebellious men, are always mouthing off about what God can and cannot do, or what God should or should not do. And yet the truth of the matter is that God is the only individual, the only person, able to do as He pleases, whenever He pleases, wherever He pleases, with whomever He pleases.

Biblical Basis for God's Sovereign Hardening

Let me show you. Hold Exodus 14; we are coming back there. Turn to Proverbs chapter 16, verse 4. Proverbs 16 and verse 4 says, “The Lord hath made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.” The Lord has made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Now turn to the book of Jude, right before Revelation, and look at verses 3 and 4. In Jude, verse 3, Jude tells us that we must contend for the faith. Then, in verse 4, he tells us why. “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation”—it was needful for me to write unto you and to exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the

saints. Why? “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Consider several questions in light of these scriptures. How many deserve to be saved? How many people deserve to be saved? The answer is none. How many deserve to be damned? The answer would be every one of us.

Could God save everyone if He chose to do so? The answer is yes. Could God justly and righteously damn everyone if He so chose? The answer would certainly be yes. But here is what the wisdom of God did. The wisdom of God said, “Divide the lump. Let some praise Your righteous justice and holiness, and some praise Your mercy and Your grace.”

Look, first of all, in the book of Jeremiah, chapter 18, beginning with verse 1. There is a good question that God asked in this passage, and I want you to see it. “The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter. So he made it again another vessel, that is a different vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.”

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “O house of Israel, now look at this question: ‘Cannot I deal with you as this potter?’ saith the Lord. ‘Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build, and to plant it; if it do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.’ Now therefore go to speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I frame evil against

you and devise a device against you. Return ye now everyone from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.'"

God said, "You are like the clay in My hands. I am the Potter." The vessel is marred in the potter's hand, and it does not turn out the way he wanted it. So he makes it another vessel that seemed good to the potter to make it. He may have been going to make a beautiful vase, but then he turns around and makes it a honeypot. That is totally up to the potter. This is what God is saying.

He can do the same thing with nations. Now, you must remember that nations are made up of individuals. In Romans chapter 9, you see how the Apostle Paul quotes from Jeremiah 18 and makes the application to individuals. Beginning with verse 17, the Apostle Paul says: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh"—here's an individual—"for the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, 'Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth.'" The Bible says that God raised Pharaoh up for one specific reason: to make His power known throughout all the earth. Now watch verse 18: "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth." Thou wilt say unto me, "Why doth He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?"

Now look at this response: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why hast thou made me thus?' Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory?" So the Bible says that God raised up Pharaoh for this one particular reason: that He might show His power.

The Meaning of 'Honor' and 'Hardened' in Exodus 14

In Exodus chapter 14 and verse 4, God said this: "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and then he shall follow after them. And I will be honored upon Pharaoh." Then, in verses 17 and 18, He talks about

being honored again twice: "Behold, I will harden the heart of the Egyptians, and they shall follow after them. And I will get Me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his hosts, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten Me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, upon his horsemen."

The question has to be asked: How was God honored upon the destruction of Pharaoh and his army? We could expand that question by asking: How will God be honored upon the destruction of those who hate, despise, ridicule, and reject Him?

First of all, God said three times in Exodus chapter 14 that He would be honored upon Pharaoh and upon the Egyptians. What does the word "honor" mean? The Hebrew word is "kavod," signifying honor and glory, that which is honorable and that which is heavy. It is the word used over and over in Scripture of God's glory. Thus, when He said, "I will be honored on Pharaoh," He meant, "I will be glorified on Pharaoh; I'll be glorified in the destruction of his armies." Let me give you three verses—I could multiply verses—but here is one where the same word "kavod" is used: Isaiah 6 and verse 3, speaking of the seraphim flying around God and singing, "Holy,

“Holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.” “Kavod,” it is the same word. Then Isaiah 40 and verse 5: “And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it”—now we are talking about the Messiah—“for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” So he talks about God’s glory. And then Isaiah 42 and verse 8, which I will quote a little bit later: “I am the Lord, and that is My name, and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images.” So the honor or the glory that God is going to get upon Pharaoh and his army is the fact that God is going to be glorified in the administration of His righteous judgment and justice against them because of their sin and their rebellion.

In Exodus chapter 5, beginning with verse 1, we see the very words of Pharaoh: “And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, ‘Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness.’ And Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.’”

You must remember that Pharaoh considered himself a god. Egypt was a nation that worshiped many gods, and one of the main gods was Pharaoh on the throne. So Pharaoh says, “I’ve never heard of Israel’s God. I don’t know of Israel’s God. I’ve never heard of any Jehovah or Yahweh. I don’t know who that is. I don’t recognize that name. I don’t recognize him as God. I will never entertain him as God. I refuse to obey him.” This was his attitude throughout all of the plagues. He refused to recognize God.

Now notice the word “hardened,” because God said, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart.” The Hebrew word is “chazaq,” and it literally means to make strong, to harden, to make rigid. It could also have the sense of emboldening and making strong. Did God harden Pharaoh’s heart, or did Pharaoh harden his own heart? The answer is yes: God did harden his heart, and Pharaoh did harden his heart.

In Exodus 4:21, before it ever started, the Lord said unto Moses, "When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all the wonders before Pharaoh which I've put in thine hand. But I will harden his heart, and he shall not let the people go."

Then, in Exodus 7:13, "And He hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said." When you get to Exodus 8:32, we read, "And Pharaoh hardened his heart at that time also." This means Pharaoh had also hardened his heart in the previous times. The verse continues, "And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go." Pharaoh was hardening his own heart all along. Then Exodus 10:20 says, "But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go."

Exodus 10:27 says, "But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go." Finally, Exodus 11:10 says, "And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go."

So yes, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. And yes, Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

The Nature of a Hardened Heart

Before giving an explanation, let us consider the word "heart." What was it that was hardened? You may respond, "It was his heart." That is true. But if you remember the message I preached many years ago on keeping the heart, I pointed out that the word "heart" referred mainly to the mind and the understanding. The Hebrew word is lev or levav. In our Bibles, it is translated as "mind" twelve times and as "understanding" ten times. This is the exact word used in Exodus 14 concerning Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Therefore, it has to do with one's mind and thinking.

Let me explain it like this. You remember when the Philistines captured the ark of God, and Eli happened to be, I guess, the lead priest, while often his two sons were under him. Of course, Eli fell backwards and broke his neck.

Because of the wickedness of Hophni and Phinehas, God killed them both in one day, and the ark of God was seized. God then began to plague the Philistines, and they could not handle it. They wanted to send the ark back, so their priests said to them, in 1 Samuel 6:6, “Wherefore do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?”

Notice what he said: “Wherefore do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts, when He”—God—“wrought wonderfully among them?” In other words, there is a practical, personal hardening, and there is a judicial hardening from God. The priest asked why they were hardening their hearts as Pharaoh and the Egyptians did when God worked wonderfully among them.

Do you realize that sin, rebellion, wickedness, and disobedience sear the conscience? They dull the mind to truth, rebuke, and reproof. Remember the word “conscience.” What is your conscience? It is also your mind and your understanding. In the English word, “con” means “with,” and “science” means “to know.” Your conscience is that which you know with. The Greek word, “syneidesis,” carries the same meaning: “syn” means “with,” and “eidesis” means “to know.”

The hardening of the heart is basically the hardening of the mind. It is when the mind is set against truth, reproof, rebuke, and the wonderful acts of God. Your mind is closed.

You're not listening. You're not looking. You don't care. You don't want truth. So what happens is this: God condemns the sinner because of his rebellion, and the sinner in his rebellion still continues to harden himself against God and against God's Word. So God condemns the man, and then the man condemns himself in his sin and his rebellion. And so God hardened the hearts or the minds of Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

Now here's another truth. It is possible for Christians to have a hardened mind or a hardened heart. In fact, it should be very easy for you and I to have a hardened mind and a hardened heart, because even the disciples of our Lord did. In Mark chapter 8 and verse 17, and in other passages in the New Testament, Jesus said to His disciples, "Why reason ye because ye have no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? Have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears, hear ye not? And do ye not yet remember?"

Then He told us about how He broke the bread, but notice that He asked very plainly, "Have ye your heart yet hardened?" He said, "What's wrong with you? You have eyes. Can't you see? You have ears. Can't you hear? You have a mind. Can't you understand?" When He asked, "Have ye your heart yet hardened?" the Greek word for "hardened" there is "poroo," from "poros," a noun referring to a type of stone. This word is translated as "blind" twice in our Bibles.

However, the word actually means to cover with thick skin, to harden like the covering of a callous, and to make the heart or mind dull; to grow hard, grow callous, become dull, and lose the power of understanding. I could say it this way: the word refers to an obtuseness of mental discernment. But I can break it down. It means just to be plain stupid—not to be able to think or see things, and to be devoid of what you and I would call consideration and understanding.

So let me give you a good illustration, and then I am going to show you how

This illustration is used by the prophet Jeremiah. In Job 39, God is questioning Job. Job had wanted to have an audience with God, and God says, "Here I am. Let Me ask you some questions. If you can answer these questions, fine. If not," of course, Job could not answer everything.

In verse 13, God asks Job, "Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks?" Obviously, he did not. Then He asks, "or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?" Why does He talk about an ostrich? Look what the ostrich does: "Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust." She digs a shallow hole, lays her eggs, covers them with dust, and forgets them, "that the foot may crush them"—anybody who walks on them—"or that the wild beasts may break them" or eat them.

Now look what He says: "She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers. Her labor is in vain without fear." Why is this ostrich so stupid? Why would she not take care of her eggs or her babies? Here is why: "Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath He imparted to her understanding." The ostrich does not know any better. She is hardened. The Bible says, "against her own," her own babies.

In Lamentations 4, Jeremiah uses this as an illustration. What God is telling us is that it is possible for anyone to harden their hearts, yes, even believers. Consider the siege of Jerusalem. Instead of protecting their children, mothers killed, cooked, and ate their own children. Lamentations 4:10 says, "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children; they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people."

You may ask, "How in the world could a mother kill, cook, and eat her own child?" Go back to verse 3: "Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones. The daughter of my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness." Just as that ostrich has hardened herself against her young, so these women hardened themselves against

They killed, cooked, and ate their own children. Now you are going to say, “Well, I’m so thankful things like that do not happen today.” Well, I have news for you: things like that do happen today.

When you talk about aborticide, infanticide, child rape, and child murder, when you talk about people who kill babies for body parts and to drink their blood just so they think they can become younger, you are talking about the same kind of hardened mind.

I recently read of an eighteen-year-old college student in California who was pregnant, although she was not really showing that much. When the pains came upon her, she left the classroom, went outside, had the baby, threw the baby girl in the dumpster, and then went back into class and sat down as though nothing had happened. How can anyone do anything like that? A hardened mind.

I read where one gang member had a wife, or at least a live-in girlfriend, and they had two children together. The gang boss believed that this man's girlfriend was an informant, so he ordered the gang member to kill her and the two children. What did the gang member do? He took them out on a picnic, had a picnic with his wife and two children, shot them, and left them for dead. Hardened against their own.

Hardening Can Happen to Believers

The Greek word for hardening indicates a process—a process that ends in petrification. We have petrified trees and a petrified forest. When matter is mixed with certain minerals, it turns to stone. That is exactly what happens to minds when individuals refuse God's truth, refuse to hear Him, refuse to heed Him, and refuse to obey Him. They become absolutely petrified in their thinking. That is why Ephesians 4:19 speaks of individuals who were past feeling. Men like Pharaoh and others become past feeling; they have no feelings for anyone or anything.

And I've got news for you. When Christians are no longer moved by truth, when they're no longer encouraged by truth, when they're no longer motivated by truth, when they no longer long for truth, it's time to examine our hearts and repent, because we are in danger of having a petrified heart. And that petrified heart, that hardened heart, is wicked in and of itself. Now, so when we talk about a hardened heart, don't think it's just the unsaved that can have it.

Okay, now let's get back to Pharaoh. The Bible does say that God hardened his heart. Was Pharaoh the only man whose heart the Lord hardened? And the answer is no. If you will turn in your Bibles very quickly to the book of Deuteronomy chapter 2, and look at verse 30 and 33, Deuteronomy chapter 2, and you're going to find Sihon. Deuteronomy chapter 2, and look if you would there please beginning with verse 30. I will come back to this passage momentarily. Deuteronomy chapter 2 verse 30: "But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day. And the Lord said unto me, 'Behold, I have begun to

Other Examples of Judicial Hardening

give Sihon and his land before thee; begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land.' Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz. And the Lord our God delivered him before us, and we smote him and his sons and all of his people. And we took all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed the men, the women, the little ones, and every city.

We left none to remain." Now, I'm going to come back there, but notice if you would, Sihon's heart was hardened as well. So look in your Bibles now to the book of Joshua chapter 11. Joshua 11, and look at verses 18 through 20. Joshua 11 verse 18: "There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. And all other they took in battle, for it

was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favor, but that He might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses." So here we go: only the Hivites or the Gibeonites were spared; the rest were hardened and fought. If you would turn over in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 36, you're going to read about Zedekiah. Zedekiah was a wicked king of Judah. 2 Chronicles chapter 36. Look if you would beginning there with verse 11. 2 Chronicles 36 and verse 11. Well, there's a real interesting statement that you need to pay attention to in this passage. 2 Chronicles 36, look in verse 11.

Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. Now I want you to watch how evil he was: "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord." So Jeremiah was giving him God's Word, and yet here he is, arrogant, haughty, and rebellious. "And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. But he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel. Moreover, all the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the Lord, which He had hallowed in Jerusalem."

I'm going to come back to Zedekiah, but turn right over in your Bibles to the book of John chapter 12. And I have to be very selective for time's sake, but here are enough scriptures that you can understand. Yes, hearts are hardened by God judicially as well as practically. Look if you would please in John chapter 12, beginning there with verse 37. John 12 and verse 37. Here it is. Look at this. John 12 verse 37: "But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him, that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, 'Lord, who hath believed our report?'" Isaiah 53:1, "and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Now watch: "Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said, 'He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart'"—which would be the mind—"'and be converted, and I should heal them.' These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory and spake of Him." Interestingly here, the Bible says there were many whose hearts were hardened. Now it should be pointed out in each of these passages that I read, men fail to believe God and His Word.

They fail to obey, recognize God's wonders, and apply anything. Just as in John 12, “and though He did many miracles before them,” they paid no attention. When you do not listen to God, His truth, or His Word, there is an automatic, normal, natural hardening against God. Then God judges that hardening, and it continues to harden. There is a judicial hardening as well.

Even judgment does not cause a man to listen. Consider the hardening of the heart in Revelation chapter 9, verse 20: “And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues”—horrible plagues—“yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils and idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which neither can see nor hear nor walk. Neither repented they of their murders, nor their sorceries, nor their fornication, nor their thefts.” Men can become so hardened in sin and rebellion against God that the most severe judgment will not deter them.

God Gives Men What They Want

Is it wrong for God to give men that which they want? Is it wrong for God to give men that which they desire? The answer is no. Pharaoh, Sihon, Zedekiah, and others did not want God. They did not desire God, the rule of God, or the Word of God. They wanted to rebel against Him and do whatever they wanted to do. God said, “All right, I'll let you do exactly that.”

If God wants to destroy a man, all He has to do is let him alone, and he will destroy himself. The same thing is true of a nation. The heart is the mind; God hardened the mind. The word literally meant to lack consideration and lack discernment. To show how stupid—and I am using the word purposely—how insane Pharaoh was, consider this: Can you imagine an army commander chasing his enemy when a supernatural miracle of God occurs? The sea opens and stands as walls of water on each side. Israel walks across on dry ground. Israel is almost over, and Pharaoh and his army chase them inside those walls of water. They are encompassed on each side by a wall of water, their enemy is in front of them, and there is no way to turn around.

You've got to be stupid to fall into a trap like that. Look at Sihon. Israel came to him and said, "We're not interested in your land. All we want is your permission to pass through. We will go by the King's Highway; we'll not turn to the left hand or to the right. We will need food and water, and we will buy from you with money. All we want to do is just pass through." Can you imagine some man being so insanely stupid as to pass down and pass by a peaceful and

prosperity package? All they wanted to do was walk through. He would make money.

All he had to do was say, "Well, yeah, I'll set the price at 50 bucks a quarter," or whatever. But no. He was so insanely stupid that he thought he could take his people and fight against a million men. God, of course, gave his land into their hand. This is what happens to the mind. Did God receive honor and glory from Pharaoh, his destruction, and the destruction of his army? Yes. What did He say? "They shall know that I am the Lord."

All their false gods were worthless and useless. Pharaoh himself, who claimed to be a god, could not even save himself. God's destruction of these wicked people demonstrated His godhood and His control.

God Glorified in Destroying the Destroyer

Stupid, sinful, and wicked people like Bill Gates, Klaus Schwab, and Harari are proclaiming themselves as gods. Whether Klaus Schwab said this or not, I don't know. I was not around him, but I read where he said, "We are gods, and you will either submit to us or die." He may not have said it, but I did read it, and it was quoted from Klaus Schwab. Klaus Schwab and some of the others are going to find themselves like Pharaoh and Sihon, because their minds are hardened against God, and God has already said in Isaiah 42

Verse 8 says, “I am the Lord; that is My name, and My glory will I not give to another, nor My praise to graven images.” Stop and think about this. I do not care whether you are talking about Pol Pot, Stalin, Idi Amin, or any other tyrant. Any tyrant who tries to play God must demonstrate his godhood in one of two ways: either by killing others—“I hold the power of life and death in my hand”—or by controlling others: “You will do as I say. You will own nothing and be happy. You’ll eat insects and you’ll be happy.” That is playing God. They are either trying to kill other people or trying to control them.

God demonstrates His godhood by destroying the destroyer. That is what He said in Romans 9 and in Exodus chapter 14. “I will endure these vessels of wrath with much longsuffering,” and God does. He

allows them to rebel and to gather all the riches they want. God gives them exactly what they want, and then He destroys them.

The Bible says in Jeremiah 4 and verse 7, “The lion has come up from his thicket”—we are talking about God—“the lion has come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the heathen is on the way. He has gone forth from his place to make the land desolate, and thy city shall be laid waste without an inhabitant.” God destroys the destroyer. In 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 10, the Bible says, “Neither murmur ye, as some also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.”

Now this might be a hard truth, but it is still truth: God is going to be glorified in the destruction of His enemies. Revelation 19:1-3 says, "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, 'Hallelujah! Salvation and honor and glory and power unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are His judgments, for He hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand.' And again they said, 'Hallelujah!' And her smoke rose up forever and ever." Wow. Yes, God will receive honor and glory in the destruction of His enemies. He did so with Pharaoh, and He will do so with those who are against Him today.

Application: Comfort for the Troubled

I want to make a couple of applications. The first application should be a comfort to the saints of God: God will judge the wicked, and we will rejoice in His deliverance. I know people who are so anxious, so discomforted, and so agitated over what is happening. Although I do not want what is happening, and I do not like what is happening, I know that God is in control. I know that God is going to work it out.

But look at what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 1:7: "And to you who are troubled"—you who are upset, agitated, anxious, and troubled—"rest with us." Rest with us, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the

This will display the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and be admired in all them that believe, because our testimony among you was believed in that day. And to you who are troubled, rest with us. In other words, it should be a comforting truth to the child of God. God will destroy the destroyers. He will judge them. He will receive honor and glory.

Now, in light of this, you are going to ask me how He will receive honor and glory. Do you remember Philippians chapter 2 and verse 5? The Word of God says: "Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Pharaoh will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Sihon will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Bill Gates will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Klaus Schwab will confess it. Harari will. Everyone will confess it.

Application: Warning Against Hardening Our Hearts

They will not necessarily be saved, but they will be forced to acknowledge there is only one God, and He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. God will be glorified and honored in the destruction of the wicked.

But it is not only the unsaved who may harden their hearts. Christians may harden their hearts as well. Hebrews 3:7 says, “Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, ‘Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, saw My works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known My ways.’”

How did they get such a heart? They did not know God or His ways. They would not listen, learn, heed, hear, or apply. Hebrews 3:12 says, “Take heed, brethren”—He is talking to believers—“lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

When we think that we can sin and get away with it, and that God will not chasten us, we are deceiving ourselves. We are hardening our hearts so that we may sin against God. Hebrews 4:7 says, “He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, ‘Today, after so long a time,’ as it is said, ‘Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.’”

What does that mean? Listen, heed, hear, obey, and submit. Our hearts are hardened by refusal to listen, hear, heed, and obey the truth of God. The easiest way not to have a hardened heart as a Christian is to hear His Word, apply His Word, obey His Word, and bring our lives into conformity with His Word. Harden not your hearts. Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. It may be a hard truth, but it is a truth.

Conclusion and Prayer

God will be glorified in the destruction of His enemies.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth, that Thou art God alone. Beside Thee, there is none other. Many claim to be God and play God, but there's only one true and living God who's revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. We bow to Thee through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ and ask for Your divine help in our lives. Make us holy, godly, and obedient. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 43

Concerning Your Exodus

February 21, 2024

Introduction: The Brevity of Life

“And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with a high hand.” Now think about that: the children of Israel went out with a high hand.

I trust that each of you understands that the Lord has graciously and mercifully allowed us to live through another year. He has protected us, preserved us, and enabled us to live and to move and have our being.

The great questions that each one should be asked and answered are these: number one, have you thanked Him for the grace and mercy in your life? Number two, have you acknowledged that He has sustained and preserved you all this past year? And number three, have you given Him the praise and the honor and the glory?

The truth of the matter is, we must remember that He is the one who holds our souls in life. The Bible in Psalm 66 and verse 9 says, “Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be

moved." And then David in Psalm 31 and verse 15 said it like this: "My times are in thy hand." So I can ask you this question: how many of the years of your life?

Life as a Pilgrimage and a Vapor

Now, I know that you and I could sit back and say, "Well, I've lived 79 years, I've lived 80-something years, or I've lived 60-something years." We can tell about the time that has passed, but we do not know about the time that is in the future.

But I want you to look in your Bibles, in the book of Genesis, chapter 47 and verse 9, at how Jacob told Pharaoh his age. Jacob, in talking to Pharaoh, said this: "And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." At that point Jacob was 130 years old, and he said, "These have been the years of my pilgrimage." I'm on a pilgrimage, and he says, "I'm a pilgrim. I'm just simply

He said, "I still have not attained unto the life of my fathers in their pilgrimage as well." I have often seen older couples display anniversary pictures beneath the words, "The Years of Our Lives." I got to thinking that Alice and I could do the same thing. On the thirteenth of January, we will be celebrating our sixty-first wedding anniversary. When we had our fiftieth wedding anniversary, I looked at Alice and said, "Where in the world has fifty years gone?" Now I can ask, "Where in the world has sixty-one years gone?" That is for sure.

The Bible tells us that all of our lives are nothing more than a vapor. When you stop and think about vapors, how they appear and disappear—and I have driven through the desert many times, especially down the highway on a hot day—you look way up ahead and see this vapor in the road, and when you get there, it is gone. The Bible says in James chapter 4 and verse 14, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." That is how quickly our lives go and come.

Moses' Contrast of Eternity and Time

If you look in your Bibles to Psalm 90, I want to take the time to read the twelve verses. Psalm 90 is a psalm of Moses, the man of God. I hope you know that David did not write every psalm in the book of Psalms. He wrote most of them; Asaph wrote some, and Moses wrote some. Here is the psalm of Moses, the man of God. Look at it in verses 1 through 12. Moses said, “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.”

For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

In Psalm 90, Moses is contrasting the eternality of God with the temporal being of man. Man is a creature of time, and our life is very brief. He tells us, first of all, that our life is like being carried away with a flood. The word "carried away" means carried suddenly, swiftly, with great violence.

It is astounding how houses and everything else are simply swept away in floods. I remember the Johnstown flood, where they were finding pieces of Johnstown and pieces of houses a hundred and something miles down the river. Some time ago, I read about a Christian family crossing a bridge when the water came over it and swept their car away. They never found the little child who was in the child seat. He is saying that it is over with so quickly. Notice what

else he said: it is not simply like a flood; it is also like a sleep. I may be different from you, but I am thankful when I go to sleep.

I don't have to lie there at night counting the minutes and the hours while I'm asleep. I mean, we go to sleep and we wake up and it's over. I mean, it's just that simple. That's the way it is with our lives. It's so quick. Our life is like grass that grows up in the morning and in the evening it withers and is cut down. In youth, you're green and fresh and strong, and later on in life you've just withered up and now you're cut down. Our life is like a tale that is told. It doesn't take long to tell a tale, that is for sure.

The average man makes it to 70, but if you make it to 80, usually there is trouble and sorrow. In other words, you don't have the strength; you can't do what you used to do. So I'm simply pointing out what he now says in verse 12 and why I read this passage. Look at it: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” In other words, Moses now sends us to God so that God may teach us to number our days and that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

Numbering Our Days to Gain Wisdom

It has to be a divine reckoning, a divine teaching. We have only a limited time to learn wisdom.

Now, if you want to know what wisdom is, let me tell you a verse, and I would encourage you to memorize this. He not only tells you about wisdom; He also tells you about understanding. So in Job 28 and verse 28, listen to this: “And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” So the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and departing from evil is understanding.

Now Solomon, the wise man, in the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 12 and verse 1, gave us some sound advice. This is too late for you and I, but it may be not too late for others. In the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 12 and verse 1, he said this: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in

them." Now he said, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

If a young person truly desires an easy and enjoyable old age, the best thing he can do is live holily and godly as a young man. He will certainly have fewer regrets as an old man if he lives a godly, holy life as a young man and as a middle-aged man as well. The truth of the matter is, remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

The Biblical Usage of 'Year' and 'Years'

When I began this message, I did something I normally do: I looked up certain words to make sure I understood them. But it struck me that I would like to know how often the terms "year" and "years" are used in the Bible. When I looked it up, I was absolutely astounded at how often those words occur. I want to give you the first and last occurrence of the word "years," and then the first and last occurrence of the word "year" in the Bible.

There is a method to my madness. The first time the word "years" is used in the Bible is Genesis 1:14: "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." The last time it occurs is Revelation 20:7: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison."

The very first time the word "year" is used is Genesis 7:11: "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." The last time it is used is Revelation 9:15: "And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men."

Now, I went over this for a reason. Although God is eternal and unaffected by time, we are temporal beings, and time always affects each of us. One of the greatest excuses ever used for why we did not do what needed to be done is, "We didn't have enough time." Everybody says that. Alice says, "I can't get everything done." Getting up at 5:30 in the morning—she could start getting up at 4:30, and she still would not get everything done. At 3:30, she still

would not get everything done. We are creatures of time, and we prioritize our time, whether deliberately or on the sly. We still prioritize our time, that is for sure.

Time, Space, and Matter as Created Realities

Now, let me point out the fact in Genesis 1 and verse 1. The Bible says, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” In the beginning—that is time. Time was created by God. There was a time in the beginning, when time began, and there is going to be a time when time ends. Revelation chapter 10 and verse 6 says, “And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.” Time had a beginning at creation, and it is going to have an ending.

Think about this: “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.” In the beginning, that is time. God created the heavens, that is space; and the earth, that is matter. We are therefore creatures of time, space, and matter. We are limited by time and limited by space. We can only be in one space at a time.

We are not omnipresent like God. We were made out of matter, from the dust of the earth, and we live on matter, the dust of the earth. But when we die, and when the end of the age comes, we will not be creatures of time, space, or matter any longer. All of that will disappear at our exodus. I use that word purposefully and deliberately.

Israel's Exodus as a Type of Victory

When we think of “exodus,” we think of the book of Exodus and Israel leaving the land of Egypt. In Exodus 12:41, we read: “And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out”—they exited, and they had an exodus—“from the land of Egypt.” Verse 42 says, “It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.” This was the night that He brought them out of the land of Egypt.

In Exodus 14:8, we read: “And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out”—they exited—“with a high hand.” The exodus of the children of Israel was so great, and the Lord was so glorified in it, that Exodus 15 contains a song concerning their exodus from Egypt and the greatness of God in accomplishing it. Verse 1 says: “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” They continued, “The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name. Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.”

“The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”

This song magnifies the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. Israel went out in military rank, basically five abreast, equipped with whatever weaponry they had taken from the destruction of their enemies. They marched out in military fashion, with a high hand: praising the Lord, shouting, victorious, and thankful to Him.

Christ's Exodus on the Mount of Transfiguration

Now look into the New Testament to see how the word “exodus” is used there. We are not in the land of Egypt, unless you call this world Egypt—and it is a wicked, wicked world. Look in Luke chapter 9, beginning with verse 28, and understand why this message is titled “Concerning Your Exodus”: “And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

This passage is known as the Mount of Transfiguration. Here was a glimpse of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter, James, and John saw Him as He actually was—God in the flesh. During the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared, and their discussion with Jesus Christ concerned His decease at Jerusalem. The word “decease” refers to His death. In other words, they were talking about the redemption He was going to accomplish, becoming our propitiation and propitiating the wrath, anger, holiness, and righteousness of God. So they are not talking about Jesus Christ giving Himself as a sacrifice.

But look at verse 31: “Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” The word “decease” in the Greek is “exodus.” They spoke of His exodus. An exodus is a decease, a departing, or a departure from this life. The word “exodus” in the Greek is a very interesting word. It is made up of two words: “ex,” a preposition meaning “out of,” and “hodos,” meaning “a way, a path, or a road.” Thus, “exodus” means a path, road, or way out.

The way out for the Lord Jesus Christ was through death. The interesting thing is that the way out for Jesus Christ was through death, but in His death He brought forth life. We are talking about life now. Acts 5:30–31 says, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” God raised Him up and exalted Him

with or at His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, in order that He might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. In other words, He did not simply die for our sins—He did that—but He was raised from the dead that He might actually apply the salvation He purchased as well.

The Power of Christ's Resurrection for Believers

Acts 13:34 says, “And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.” The sure mercies of David come from the fact that God entered into that covenant with David. Yet Jesus Christ in Matthew 1:1 is called the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. So now we have the sure mercies of David.

In Ephesians 1, beginning with verse 17, the Apostle Paul is praying for these Ephesian Christians. He said in verse 16 that he never ceases to make mention of them in his prayers: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” Each one of these prayer requests is loaded with truth.

Then in verse 19: “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

The Apostle Paul was making these prayer requests for the Ephesians, that God would open the eyes of their understanding and enlighten them to certain truths. One of those truths is found in verse 19. He was praying that they might know “what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe.” So here is a good question: What did it take to convert you to Jesus Christ? What did it take to turn you from your sin and bring you to saving

faith in Jesus Christ? “What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe?” Now watch this: “According to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand.” Do you know what it took to bring you to Christ? It took the same mighty power of God that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, because we were dead in trespasses and sins.

He raised Him and set Him at His own right hand, which means this: We were raised together with Him. We died with Him, we were raised together with Him, we were buried with Him, and now we are seated at the right hand of God the Father in Him. The same almighty power that God used in bringing Christ from the dead was the same almighty power that He used in bringing us to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Peter's Anticipation of His Own Exodus

Moses and Elijah spoke of our Lord’s exodus, His decease, His way out. His way out through death brought unto us life.

Peter writes, “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.” This is a tremendous truth. Look at that verse again. Peter said, “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them.” In other words, truth must be taught over and over and over. Just because you know truth does not mean that you do not need to hear it again. “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle,”

“Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle”—his body—“even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.” The Apostle Peter is talking about his decease. In verse 15, the Greek word is “exodus.” He is talking about his exodus, his way out, his road out of this life.

Peter desired that while he was alive in his tabernacle, in his body, he might stir up the pure minds of these individuals by way of remembrance. In other words, Peter wanted to continue to preach and teach. But he also says, "I know that the Lord has shewed me I must put off this body," and therefore, after his exodus, he wanted them to have this. That is why we have 1 Peter and 2 Peter and this book. Peter is talking about his exodus. His exodus was his death.

Before he died, he wanted to get in as much preaching and teaching as he possibly could. Even after his death, he wanted to leave something so that they would have this truth in remembrance.

Unless one has been called to preach by God, one really cannot understand the desire and motivation to preach and teach. Alice used to get upset with me because, when we went somewhere, I wanted to stay in the motel room and study. That was what I enjoyed. That was my life, and it still is my life. No one can understand it. If I go a week without a message, something is wrong. I have to be studying and learning.

This is what Peter is saying here. I have told you this before, but I am going to remind you now. When my dear friend Pastor Bob McCurry was dying—I forget exactly how many years; I think he and Evelyn had been married sixty-seven years, and I think Bob had preached for sixty-three or sixty-five years—the doctor was there, trying to encourage him to hold on. He asked Brother McCurry, "Is there anything you would really like to do before you died?" Brother McCurry nodded. "What?" the doctor asked. He said, "Preach."

That was what he wanted to do, and I suppose that is what I would like to do as well. The point is this: the exodus mentioned in Christ's life and in Peter's life was the road out, the way out of this world. Each of us is going to have a way out. We are going to have our own individual exodus.

The Contrast Between the Saint's and Sinner's Exodus

Here is the first application: you will exit this world. You will have a personal exodus. You will leave. The question is not whether you will leave, but how you will leave. You will either leave this world as a saint, as a child of God, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, or you will

leave this world as a wicked, rebellious sinner. That is all. You are going to leave. There is no way out of that. You must ask yourself: how in the world are you going to leave? The exodus of the saint is much easier than the exodus of the sinner.

There are descriptions in the Bible of saints dying. When the old patriarchs—Abraham and Isaac—died, the Bible said they were gathered unto their people. That was a family reunion. Who is afraid of a family reunion? Everybody likes a family reunion. It was simply an expression of how they died: they were gathered unto their people.

Sometimes the Bible talks about those who sleep in Jesus. Who in the world is afraid of going to sleep? Most of us not only enjoy sleep, but understand that we need it and want it. There are times when you cannot help but sleep. This past week or so, when I had a very bad case of sinus, I could not stay awake. I would be up an hour or two trying to do something, and the next thing I knew, my eyes were closing. I had to sleep; it was just all there was to it.

No one is really afraid of going to sleep. The saints, of course, will have an absolutely new body, one that does not experience pain or sin. We will have a glorified body in which we will be able to see God and enjoy Him, His glory, and His majesty. All of this makes our exodus enjoyable and more desirable.

However a saint dies, the Bible says in Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Now I want to show you the difference between a saint's death and a sinner's death. In Job 19:25, Job said, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." It is not just that our Lord is going to return—He is—but He is going to return victoriously. This earth is His; He will claim it. So he said, "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

“And though after my skin worms destroy this body”—that is, his fleshly body—“yet in my flesh”—that is, resurrected flesh—“shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

So Job says, “I know I’m going to have a glorified body. I know I’m going to see my Redeemer. I know I am going to see God, and I will have a glorified body.” It is not flesh and blood that can enter the kingdom of God—rather, flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God—but flesh and bone is what our Lord had in that resurrected body of His. So Job says, “I know that I’m going to see God. I’m going to see for myself.”

When he said, “though my reins be consumed within me,” that has also been translated as, “my reins within me are consumed with this desire”—that is, the desire to have that glorified body and see God face to face. Here you have the exodus of the saint, encouraged by knowing the truth and that he is going to see the Lord.

Now, since we are in the book of Job, turn to Job chapter 27, and let me begin to show you the exodus of the sinner. Look in Job chapter 27, beginning with verse 13. Job 27:13: “This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep. Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver.”

“He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh. The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he openeth his eyes, and he is not. Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth: and as a storm hurleth him out of his place. For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand. Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.”

Now, you think that one is bad? In Job chapter 18, verse 11, we are still talking about the wicked man: “Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet. His strength shall be hungerbitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side. It shall devour the strength of his skin: even the firstborn of death shall devour his strength. His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. It shall dwell

in his tabernacle, because it is none of his: brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation. His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off. His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street. Now look at this: he shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world."

He shall be driven and chased out of the world. We have a lot of problems in this country, that is for sure. One of them is the fact that there are so many illegal immigrants, and now they have been taking over the homes of individuals. In fact, I just read recently of one man. He went off on vacation, and when he came back, squatters were in his house. They refused to leave, and the law would do nothing. So he got his weapon and went in and chased them out. They were ready to leave when they saw the weapon.

Now, the point I am trying to make is that here are the wicked. They are using God's earth and God's resources. They fail to acknowledge Him; they hate Him and despise Him. Like tenants who refuse to pay their rent, they get chased out of this world. I do not know about you, but I believe I prefer to leave as a saint instead of a sinner.

Conclusion: A Joyous and Victorious Exodus

The exodus of the child of God should be a joyous occasion. Why? Because we are being delivered from our sin and sickness, but also from death. Death has no power over the child of God because death has no power over the Lord Jesus Christ. Death could not hold the Lord Jesus Christ, and death cannot hold the child of God, because our resurrection is guaranteed by His resurrection.

When Moses and Elijah spoke of the exodus of Jesus Christ, His way out, His exodus was through death. In His death, He brought forth life. Do you realize that the physical death of the child of God also brings forth life? The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 in verse 26, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." The truth of the matter is, death has already been destroyed by the Lord Jesus Christ; although we die, we actually use that as an entrance into life.

You remember what David said in Psalm 23? He said, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.” Every child of God only goes through the shadow, because the Lord Jesus has gone through the real thing for us. So death, in one sense of the word, is our enemy, but in another sense of the word, it is our friend, because our death then issues in life.

When Israel went out of Egypt, they went out with a high hand. What does that mean? They went out victoriously, with courage, and bravely. When it comes time for our exodus, that should be us. We should go out with courage, confidence, and bravery. Why? Because we are not weaklings and we are not cowards. We are under the headship of our Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we know that in Him we are more than conquerors. He is the Lord God of hosts, the Lord God of the armies. He is going to lead us and be with us every step of the way. We will go out in a military fashion under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our exodus from this life, though the world will call it death, will only produce life.

Have you ever stopped to think about that? Moses said, "Lord, shew me thy glory." And God said, "I'll put you in this crevice. No man can see my face and live, and I'll cover you with my hand as I go by, and you can see my back parts." But in our exodus, we shall see Him face to face.

I've thought about this so much. I love animals. I've often thought, wouldn't it be wonderful if I saw every animal that I've ever loved? I can think of dogs, cows, and horses. But you know what I'm thinking? When we see our Lord face to face, nothing else is going to really matter. We'll be overwhelmed with the glorious majesty of the one true and living God.

This will be our exodus, our way out of the world of sin and death. It'll be a way of victory and pure, undiluted joy. As Psalm 16 says, "At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Help us, Lord, to understand. Thou hast indeed prepared a way out for us, and that way out is a way in. Thou didst bring them out of Egypt to bring them into Canaan, and You'll bring us out of this life into eternal life

by Your infinite grace and mercy. We give Thee praise and thanksgiving in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 44

What Could Have Been

December 1, 2024

Introduction: The Tragedy of 'What Could Have Been'

Today we are looking at Deuteronomy chapter 1, with Numbers chapter 13 providing a fuller explanation. Think about this: What could have been?

When we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which you saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us, and we came to Kadesh Barnea. And I said unto you, You are coming to the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto you. Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged. And you came near unto me, every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.

And the saying pleased me well. And I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe. And they turned and went up into the mountain, and

came unto the valley of Eshkol, and searched it out. And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us. Notwithstanding, ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God. And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the Lord hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.

SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 1:28-43 (KJV)

> Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there. Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. 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; and in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God, who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.
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> And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the Lord. Also the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither. But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither.
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> Encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. But as for you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea.

> Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the Lord, we will go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill. And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill.

What Could Have Been

The Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah. And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you. So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode there.

What could have been. I suppose probably some of the saddest words in the human language are these: “I wish I could live my life all over again,” or, “If I could undo what has been done,” or, “If I could take back what I said.” Someone handed me this this morning and said, “The saddest words of tongue or pen: of all the things that might have been.”

When you stop and think about what could have been, the problem is that every one of us has used these two words: if only. We say, “If only, if only, if only,” and we understand that, when we use those words, we have sinned against God, messed up royally, and usually hurt our family and friends as well.

I have known, and married, many young couples. They tell me about their dreams, ambitions, plans, and how they are going to live happily ever after. They dream of growing old together. But many never get to grow old together because one violates the oath made to God and the partner, or someone enters an argument and says things that should never have been said. Then comes, “If only I had not said this; if only I had not done this; if only I had simply obeyed.”

Most of us use the words “if only.” In the Bible, God says “only if.” There is a big difference between these words. God does not use “if only’s.” God uses “only if.” Let me show you.

Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 15:5. God says, “Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day.” It is not “if only”; it is “only if.” God says His blessings will be upon you only if you hearken unto Him, only if you obey Him. In 2 Kings 21:8, God says again: “Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.” God uses “only if”; we use “if only.” If we want the blessings of God, then God is saying that we must hearken unto Him.

God's Command and the People's Suggestion

Our text in Deuteronomy 1 is a good, perfect, and excellent illustration of what could have been. Once you see the whole story, you will understand that these Israelites were probably saying, “If only I had not rebelled, if only I had listened.” But, of course, they did not listen.

In Deuteronomy 1:20–21, they are at Kadesh Barnea, the entrance into the promised land. They are told: “And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.” They are at the gateway into the promised land, and God is commanding them to go in and possess it. God gave it to them. God says, “This is a promise. You need to get up and you need to go to work.”

Now look at verse 22: “And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.” And Moses said, “The saying pleased me well. And I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe.”

Stop and think about this. They come to Moses and make a suggestion: “We don't know the lay of this land. We don't know how to get in or which cities we need to go to first. So let's send out some men and let them spy out the land.” Their purpose was to lead them into the land and identify the cities they should approach first.

To me, that is very reasonable, and Moses thought it was reasonable also. He chose one man from each tribe to spy out the land. The original purpose was simply to find the easiest and safest way to enter. Who wants to fight needlessly? Who wants to work needlessly and uselessly? It was a common thought, and a very realistic one. So they searched out the land.

The Spies' Report and Israel's Rebellion

The Bible says, “And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshkol, and searched it out. And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us.”

Turn back to Numbers, chapter 13, for a fuller description. The Bible says, “And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: and see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land.”

The time was the time of the firstripe grapes. So they went up and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath. And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were.

Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. And they came unto the brook of Eshkol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff;

and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. And the place was called the brook Eshkol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

I love grapes, and I've been to California, to the wine country, so to speak. It is astounding when you see a cluster of grapes like this. But when you consider it took two men, with a staff on the shoulders of each one, to carry the cluster of grapes, my soul—I don't know how much they weighed, but evidently it was pretty good. And if the grapes were that big, what about the figs and the pomegranates? We have little figs like this around here, but I've seen figs that big around. This was evidently a very, very good land, and they brought all of this so that they could see.

Try to picture that in your mind. What happened next? The spies gave an account. In Numbers chapter 13, beginning at verse 28, here is what they said: "Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

They said, “We were as grasshoppers in their sight.” In other words, that is how they saw themselves. Then they said, “And so we were in their sight.” How did they know how they thought or how they looked upon them? That is simply a demonstration of fear. Joshua and Caleb were the two who brought up the good report, while the other ten brought up the evil report.

When they received this evil report from the ten spies, they murmured in their tents, saying, “Because the Lord hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.” They continued:

“Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.”

So now the people were saying that God hated them. God had simply brought them out to destroy them. But in Numbers chapter 14, verse 31, God interprets not only the report of the ten spies, but also what the people were doing in their attitude and disposition: “But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.” God charges them with despising the land. You cannot despise the promised land without despising the promisor. You cannot despise the gift without despising the giver of the gift. God was charging them with despising not only the land, but also himself.

They were therefore in very deep trouble. Deuteronomy chapter 1, verse 27 says, “And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the Lord hated us.” Because the Lord hated us.

Look at Numbers chapter 14, the first four verses: “And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.”

They not only are saying that God hates them; they are saying it would be better for them to be slaves in Egypt. It would be better for them to die in this wilderness. They want to make a captain and return unto Egypt. That is despising the deliverance that God gave them. It is absolutely astounding.

The Bible says they murmured against Moses and against Aaron. I get tickled every time I read the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. God says to Moses, “Your people, which you brought out of the land of Egypt.” Moses, when he gets aggravated, says, “Lord, your people, which you brought out of the land of Egypt.” I heard someone say, if God and Moses ever got together, there wouldn't have been an Israelite left in the land. That's probably true. But God said, concerning Israel, that they provoked him ten times. Ten times.

How did they provoke God? We could also ask, How do we provoke God? They provoked God by refusing to hear him, refusing to listen to him, and refusing to obey him.

Who was instructing the Israelites at this point? It was Moses and Aaron, and it happened to include Joshua and Caleb. But God says they are despising his promise, and they are despising him.

The same principle is issued in 1 Samuel 8, where the people demanded a king so that they might be like other nations, and so that he might go out before them to lead them in battle. God said to Samuel, in 1 Samuel 8:7–8, “Give them what they want.” And here is what He said: “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” The rejection of Samuel, his preaching, and his teaching was actually a rejection of God. That is what God said. In 1 Samuel 12, Samuel again said that they had rejected God when God was their king because they wanted a man.

Let me state this very plainly. I could look at James and say, “I think,” or “I believe,” or “This is my opinion.” James could sit there very smugly and say, “Yes, you are right to your opinion. You are right to what you think.” And that is true. My opinion is nothing. I could say, “Neither is your opinion anything.” But there is a vast difference between my saying, “I think” and “I believe,” and my saying, “Thus saith the Lord,” and showing it to you from Scripture. You follow me?

Now, I want you to turn in your Bibles. Hold Deuteronomy 1, but turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 and look, please, at verse 13. I can show it to you in both the Old and New Testaments. You see, I have encountered this many times in sixty years of preaching. You teach something from Scripture, explain the Scriptures, exegete them,

explain them, and apply them, and someone comes up and says, "Well, that is just your opinion." No, it is not my opinion if it is in the Bible. It is what God said.

Look at what happened in 1 Thessalonians 2:13. Paul writes to these Thessalonian Christians: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing." Here is the good reason they thanked God without ceasing: "Because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." They did not sit there and say, "That is what Paul thinks," or, "That is what Silas says." They understood that when these men preached the word of God, it was the word of God. The apostle Paul said, "Ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Now I'll show it to you in the Old Testament. In 2 Chronicles 36:15-16 we read: "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place."

Any time God has compassion on a people, He sends them His preachers and prophets. Think about this: anytime God is ready to curse a people, He removes His preachers or silences them. What did He do in the reign of Ahab and Jezebel? He took Elijah out of the land for three years. For three years, they had no word from God.

Jeremiah was left in the land. But in Jeremiah chapter 7, God says, "Pray not for this people." In chapter 11, "Pray not for this people." In chapter 14, Jeremiah wanted to pray. He was a weeping prophet. God said, "All right, I'm going to let you pray. But you pray that I'm going to destroy them, because that's exactly what I'm going to do." Elijah was moved out of the land; Jeremiah was kept in the land, but God shut his mouth. So anytime God has compassion, He sends a preacher. When He is going to judge and curse the people, He silences the preachers or moves them.

Now look carefully at verse 16: "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew

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

They mocked the messengers of God and despised His words—that is, God's words. That is why the wrath of God arose against His people. What you have in Deuteronomy chapter 1 is Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb all declaring the word of God, and the people despising it and refusing to listen.

Here is the question that we have to ask—not only in light of the Israelites in Deuteronomy chapter 1, but also in light of Christians today: Why were the Israelites so fearful? Why were they so unbelieving, stubborn, hard-hearted, and rebellious? We must think about that in light of where we are today in our land.

I told our people this morning, while I was preaching in Waycross, that I have the answers to probably 99 percent of the problems in America. I have those answers because God gives them in His Word. But most people would not accept those answers because they do not want to obey God. They want to do what they want to do, but you cannot have the blessings of God and rebel against Him. It is just that simple.

So what in the world is wrong with us today?

These Israelites had firsthand knowledge of the power of God, the miracles of God, the preservation of God, and even the providence of God. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 1, beginning with verse 29: "Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. 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." Verse 31 says: "And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son." What does he mean? He picks the child up and takes him in his arms.

In all the way that ye went until ye came into this place. They saw all the plagues in Egypt. They saw that the land of Goshen was cut off. They saw Pharaoh drown in the Red Sea as he was trying to cross, and they saw the bodies floating on the shore. They saw the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They had the manna firsthand. They knew everything that God had done for them.

I am simply pointing out the fact that I cannot fathom how someone with firsthand knowledge could simply not believe God.

Deuteronomy 7:19 says, “The great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the Lord thy God brought thee out: so shall the Lord thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid.” This is repeated a number of times in the Bible. They saw it. They knew it. They experienced it. How is it possible not to trust God when you've seen firsthand what He has done for you?

But you know, that's the same way it is with us. Everything is going well. And we're thanking the Lord and we're praising the Lord.

The next thing you know, we hit a big bump in the road. It is either sickness or financial problems or this or that. All of a sudden we think, “God hates us.” What? How is it that we can trust God in all the good times and cannot trust Him in the bad times? Yet these people think they are going through a bad time when, in reality, they are not.

In Numbers chapter 14, beginning with verse 30, God says, “Look, you will not believe Me. You will not go up. You will not do what I am telling you to do.” Your spies searched out the land for forty days; I will make it forty years.

God's Judgment: Forty Years of Wandering

“Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

“But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall

be consumed, and there they shall die. And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still. And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly."

Stop and think about this. To show you the stubbornness, the hard-headedness, the unbelief—and I will even go further, the stupidity—of the people: God says, "You're at the entrance of Canaan land. All you have to do is go in. I've promised it to you. I'll give it to you." They said, "No. We've heard that it's a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof, the giants are therein, and no, no, no, no, no, we're not going in. We are not going to do this thing." And God said, "All right, I'll tell you what, you've despised me, you've despised my gift, so I'm going to let you wander for 40 years in the wilderness."

Presumptuous Obedience After Judgment

Then they suddenly decided that perhaps they should go in. Verse 40 says: "And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned." Wait a minute. God says, "I'm going to judge you. I'm going to chasten you because you're not believing me. You're not listening to me. You're not obeying me."

When they heard their judgment, they said, "We changed our mind. We're going to fight." Moses said, "Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you."

"But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto

Hormah." God said, "Go up." They said, "We're not." God said, "Don't go up." They said, "We're going up." Isn't that amazing?

It boggles my mind. These spies were sent out at Kadesh Barnea, the main entrance into the Promised Land. So here is why I titled this message, "What Could Have Been." Look at Deuteronomy chapter 2, verse 14: "And the space in which we came from Kadesh Barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the Lord sware unto them." They were in the wilderness for forty years, but from the time they left Kadesh Barnea, wandered in the wilderness, and returned, it was thirty-eight years.

The Cost of Disobedience: 38 Years Wasted

Let me ask you a question. The people were at Mount Horeb, and from Mount Horeb they went to Kadesh Barnea. How long was that journey? We are talking about two million people, including more than six hundred thousand men of war. How long did it take them to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea?

Deuteronomy chapter 1, verse 2, tells us: "There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadesh Barnea." Eleven days? They were not right back at Kadesh Barnea, but they were near it because of the brook Zered. The brook Zered happens to be about thirty-five miles long and forms a boundary between Moab and Edom. It is approximately fifty miles from Kadesh Barnea. It took them forty years to get into the Promised Land when it was an eleven-days' journey.

What Could Have Been

Can you imagine those Israelites saying, "If only we had listened, if only we had obeyed, if only we had done what God had said, we could have been enjoying the land and all the fruit of the land for the last 40 years. But we didn't."

A lot of times, we sit back and bemoan in our lives what could have been. I tease Alice a lot. If the Lord lets us live to January, we'll be married 62 years. I'll look at her and say, "Just think, sweetheart,

if I hadn't married you, I'd be single, rich, and happy." Well, that's not true. I am happy now. I'm not rich. I'm not single, but that's fine. But look at people who have messed up their lives. They say, "Man, if I had not done this."

Here is why they wandered 40 years in the wilderness. God told them to go up and possess the land. He said, "I'll fight for you. I'll defeat your enemies." But Deuteronomy 1:26 says, "Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God." They would not listen or obey. Then verse 32 says, "Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God." They were not believing, not trusting, and consequently not obeying God.

If you really genuinely trust God, you obey him. If you really genuinely obey God, it is because you trust him. They wasted 40 years of their lives simply because they would not listen. Deuteronomy 1:40 says, "But as for you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea."

Then they answered, "We have sinned against the Lord, we will go up." No, no, no. It was too late. Here is a principle I tried to teach my children: delayed obedience is disobedience. It is just that simple. They were commanded to go, and they did not. They were commanded to stay, and they went. What could have been an easy entrance, a successful entrance, a blessed entrance?

Application: Examine Your Own 'What Could Have Been'

All those men that came out would not have died in the wilderness. But they did. We sit back in our lives and always say, "What if? What if?"

You must examine your own heart and your own life, and ask yourself this question: What could have been if I had listened and obeyed? What could have been in your marriage, your work, your life, your family, or your education? What could have been if you had just listened and obeyed, if you had just hearkened unto the commandments of God?

I am dealing with people right now who know the Word of God and the truth of God, and yet are living exactly contrary to what God

has commanded. They are losing their family. They are losing their friends.

When we think about what could have been, we are actually thinking about the past. In the strictest sense of the word, none of us can change our past. I have often said, Doc, that I would be willing to live my life over if I could start over with the knowledge that I have now. I do not think I want to go back and be as stupid as I was when I was young. But if I could start over with the knowledge I have now, yes, I could handle that.

Changing the Present and Future Through Obedience

There are things I can say, “Boy, I wish I had never done that. I wish I had never said that.” I can assure you there are things like that in your life as well. But although we cannot change the past, we can change the present and we can change the future—by repentance, by faith, and by obedience.

It does us absolutely no good to sit around and say, “If only, if only, if only, if only.” What we need to think about is “only if” we obey, “only if” we hearken to God, “only if” we do that which is righteous in His eyes.

"And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God," for our good always, "that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day." Why does God give us His commandments? For our good, that He might preserve us alive. And then He says in verse 25: "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us." In other words, if we want to be right, if we want to be righteous with God, then we obey. It is just that simple, because disobedience is unrighteousness.

We must hear, we must heed, and we must obey the Word of God. Israel could have been in the land forty years earlier if they had just listened, hearkened, and obeyed. But they did not, and so they fell.

Psalm 81: The Heart of God for His People

Psalm 81 shows us what could have been. I love this Psalm. I read it frequently. It is an encouragement, but it is also a condemnation. In

verse 10, God says, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

We have a lot of antiques under our carport—farm stuff, because I was raised on a farm. Some have little buckets or other vessels. We have house wrens, those little brown birds, which will make a nest in the farm implements hanging on the wall. We watch the eggs, and finally they hatch. Many times I have walked by to check on the little birds, and as soon as they see me, they start chirping and opening their mouths as wide as they can. I shake my head and say, "I'm not mama. I'm sorry. I don't have anything to poke down your throat right now."

But that is exactly what God said: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Now look in verse 11. After He made this promise, He says, "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me." They would not listen and did not want to have anything to do with Him.

What Could Have Been

So what was the result? Verse 12: “So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.” Yet hear the heart of God: “Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.”

What could have been? God said, “If you had just listened to me, if you had just hearkened to me, I should have soon subdued your enemies, turned my hand against your adversaries, and fed you with the finest wheat and honey out of the rock.” Look what could have been. But it was not, because they would not listen.

Conclusion: The Choice Between 'If Only' and 'Only If'

The biggest sin that you and I have, even as Christians, is failure to listen to the Word of God: to hear it, heed it, apply it, and obey it.

God said, “But my people would not hearken unto my voice.” We are in trouble in this country—nationally, societally, ecclesiastically, familially, and personally—all because we will not listen to the Word of God. What could be in this country, our nation, if we obeyed God? It would surprise us to absolutely no end. What could be in our churches? What could be in our families?

God said, “Open thy mouth wide, I'll fill it.” What could have been? Our lives as Christians teeter between “if only” and “only if.” We moan, “If only, if only.” God says, “Your blessings only if you hearken unto me and obey me.” If we want our mouths filled with the goodness of God, it must be “only if” we hearken unto Him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth, and pray that You would enable us to hear Thee in Thy Word. Help us change our lives. We cannot change the past, but we can change the present and future by repentance, faith, and obedience. We ask for Your grace and mercy, and help to love Thee and live for Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

Source Notes

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Chapter 23: In Honor Of Confederate Veterans And Prisoners
JW01370 | 2013-10-31 | YouTube

Chapter 24: Will They Ever Learn
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