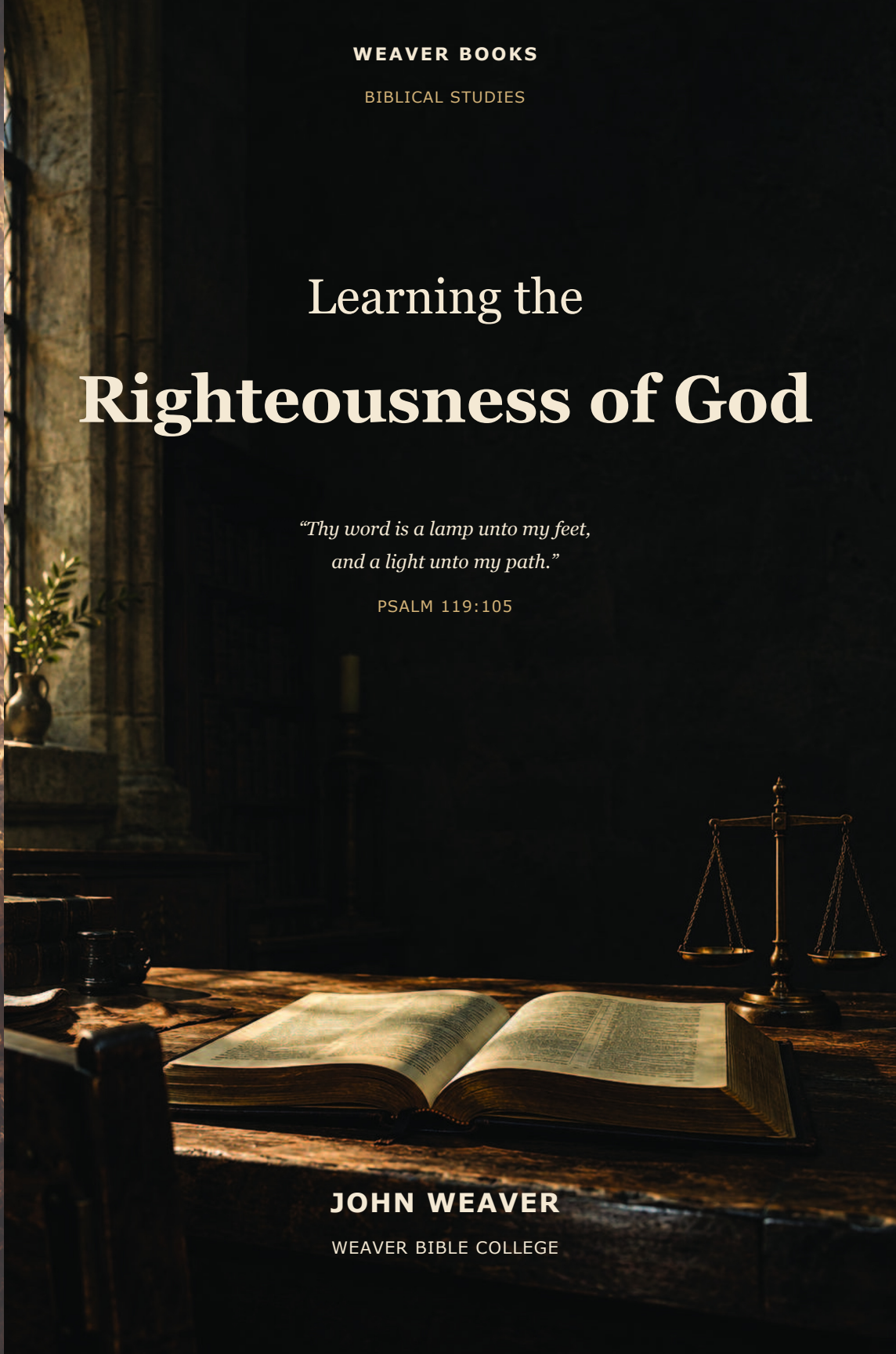
WEAVER BOOKS

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Learning the Righteousness of God

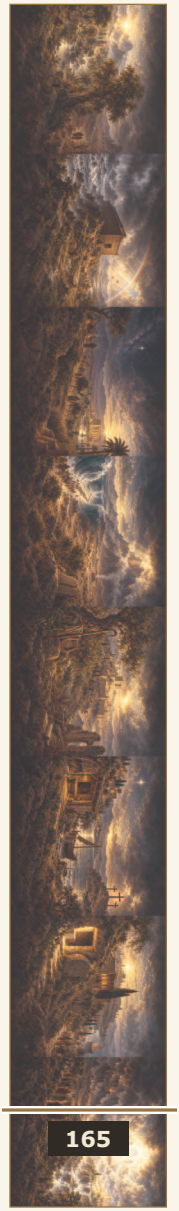
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



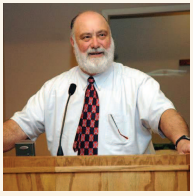
My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.

PSALM 119:172

Knowing God's righteousness requires continued instruction from His Word. John Weaver considers moral responsibility, covetousness, obedience, and the accountability of rulers and individuals. These messages call believers to honor God without compromise and to recognize the exposure of sin as an opportunity for repentance rather than as a reason to reject truth.

“Not only is delayed obedience disobedience, but partial obedience is disobedience as well.”

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.

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

weaverbiblecollege.com

WEAVER BOOKS

Learning the Righteousness of God

New Testament Studies

John Weaver

Weaver Bible College

LIBRARY BOOK 165

Learning the Righteousness of God

John Weaver

Weaver Books
Weaver Bible College

Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Contents

Chapter 1: Learning the Righteousness of God - 1 5

Learning the Righteousness of God 5

Introduction: Man Does Not Know God by Nature 5

Believers Must Learn Christ 8

God's Controversy with His People in Micah 6 9

The Call to Remember from Shittim to Gilgal 11

The Sin at Shittim: Violating God's Law 13

God's Law-Word as the Standard of Righteousness 14

The Law Fulfilled, Not Abolished 16

Application: Living by God's Law 20

Chapter 2: Learning the Righteousness of God - 2 25

Introduction and Review 25

Balak's Desire and Balaam's Failed Curses 27

Balaam's Shift to Consultant and the Plan to Corrupt Israel 29

The Danger of Seduction Over Frontal Assault 30

The Setting of Shittim and the Danger of Prosperity 32

The Gradual Nature of Sin and Its Consequences 34

Sin Affects Others and Stems from Our Own Lusts 36

Applications: Responsibility and Vigilance 40

Chapter 3: Learning the Righteousness of God - 3 43

Introduction and Review 43

Partial Obedience Is Disobedience 45

Partial Obedience Is Disobedience 46

The Connection Between Immorality and Idolatry 47

The Power of Temptation and the 'Grove' 49

Historical Examples of Idolatry and Immorality 50

Covetousness as Idolatry 53

Applications for Holy Living 55

Chapter 4: Learning the Righteousness of God - 4 57
Introduction and Review of Previous Principles 58
Sin and Judgment 59
The Connection Between Sin and Judgment 59
Understanding God's Sovereignty 60
Understanding God's Holiness 66
Understanding God's Justice 69
The Only Way to Turn Away God's Fierce Anger 71
Chapter 5: Learning the Righteousness of God - 5 73
Review of Previous Principles 73
Introduction of the Sixth Principle 75
Biblical Basis for Judges Executing God's Justice 75
The Doctrine of Interposition Defined 76
Interposition in Scripture: Phinehas as a Lesser Magistrate 80
The Nature of a Magistrate 82
Examples of Spiritual Magistrates Acting as Civil Magistrates 86
God's Approval of Interposition 90
Theological Basis and Christ as the Ultimate Interposer 92
Chapter 6: Learning the Righteousness of God - 6 95
Review of Previous Points on God's Righteousness 95
Christ Honors Those Who Honor Him 97
Introduction of the Seventh Point: Christ Honors Those Who Honor Him . . 97
God Is No Man's Debtor 98
The Principle of Honor and Dishonor from 1 Samuel 2:30 98
God's Righteousness in Not Forgetting Our Works 100
Ministering to God by Ministering to the Saints 102
Exposing and Fighting Sin as Service to God 104
The Negative Side: God Dishonors Those Who Dishonor Him 107
Applications 110
Applications: Honoring God Daily and Without Compromise 110
Topical Index 115
Scripture Index 119
Study Guide Link 125

CHAPTER 1

Learning the Righteousness of God - 1

Learning the Righteousness of God

Introduction: Man Does Not Know God by Nature

Micah chapter 6 begins: “Hear you now what the Lord said. Arise, contend thou before the mountains and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and you strong foundations of the earth. For the Lord hath a controversy with his people, he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants. And I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteousness of the Lord.”

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams

or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

It may surprise many to find out that man does not intuitively nor instinctively know God. In fact, the truth of the matter is simply this: fallen man does not know God at all, nor does he have the capacity or the ability to know God. Now, he may know that there is a God, but he does not know who the one true and living God really is. Evidence of this fact is found in all the pagan countries because they worship idols of every shape, form, and fashion.

But moreover, the Scriptures are exceedingly clear. Do you remember in Acts chapter 17, when the Apostle Paul came to preach at Mars Hill? The Bible tells us that he beheld their devotions to the gods and they had altars there to every imaginary and conceivable God that there might possibly be. But just in case they had left one out, they even had an altar there to the unknown God. Well, that's exactly what God is to the average individual. He is the unknown God, because man by nature just simply does not know God.

If you would hold Micah 6, we're coming back there. But look in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians, chapter 4, and then we're going to go to 1 Corinthians, chapter 2. So Ephesians, chapter 4, and then we're going to go to 1 Corinthians, chapter 2. Just showing you the fact that man does not know God by nature. In Ephesians chapter 4, look what the Bible says in verse 18. In fact, let's read verse 17. He says, "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk." How?

"In the vanity of their mind." Now, notice the word "vanity." The word "vanity" means uselessness, worthlessness. So he says they're walking in the worthlessness of their mind. Why is their mind worthless and useless? Here's why in verse 18: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart." Now note the Bible says that they are alienated from God through the ignorance that is in them. That is, they simply do not know God.

Now, let me spell it out for you. Fallen man does not know the one true and living God. He does not know Him intuitively. He does not know Him instinctively. And if you look in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, this passage is even more explicit. 1 Corinthians 2, verse 14, where it teaches us that fallen man does not even have the ability to know God in and of himself. So in 1 Corinthians 2 and verse 14, the Bible says this: "But the natural man"—that is, the unsaved man or man by nature—"but the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

Why does he not receive them? Here's why: "For they are foolishness unto him." Well, let's ask, why are they foolishness unto him? Here's why: "Neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." And may I remind you that "can" is a term of ability. "Neither can he know them." In other words, fallen man in and of himself does not have the ability. He does not have the capability to know the things of God. Now, clearly, as you study through the Bible, the Bible teaches that man does not have the ability to know God.

In Romans 3, verses 10 through 12, the Apostle Paul lists the four “nones”: “There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no, not one.” So how many by nature do good? No, not one. How many by nature seek the one true and living God? No, not one. How many understand? No, not one. How many are righteous? No, not one.

Romans 8, verses 7 and 8, tells us why: “Because the carnal mind”—the fleshly mind, man by nature—“is enmity against God.” Remember, “enmity” is a strong word for hatred. “It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Here is the conclusion: “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Why can they not please God? Because their carnal, fleshly mind is contrary to God, and there is a strong, intense hatred of God in their mind by nature.

The Scripture teaches us that fallen man does not know God, neither does he have the ability in himself to know God. There is another amazing discovery that comes to the child of God when he realizes another truth: although he is regenerated and converted by

the grace of God, yet as a child, he still does not really know his heavenly Father.

Believers Must Learn Christ

He may know that there is indeed a God, that He is the true God, and that He is the one Lord, Savior, Redeemer, and Judge; and yes, he is saved. But simply because an individual is regenerated and converted does not mean that he has automatic divine truth. As you study the Bible, you will find, as in 1 John 2, that John divides believers into three categories.

He says there are babes, there are young men, and there are fathers. I want you to understand that the knowledge and the understanding of each one of those groups differ drastically. You take a little two-year-old child. I was around one this past week, a beautiful little girl, and she was just as loving and kind as she could be. Now that little girl knew who her parents were, that is for certain sure. But I can assure you she could not delineate what type of work her dad did, nor anything about his character, nor anything about his attributes. The knowledge a baby has is quite different from that of a young man. And the knowledge that a father has is quite different from that of a young man. So he says, here are these three particular groups of believers.

Just because someone has been converted and regenerated by the grace of God does not mean that he automatically possesses all divine truth. Paul shows a contrast in Ephesians 4. He writes: "I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

Now, note the next word, "but," which is a strong word of contrast. "But," he says, "you have not so learned Christ." And then: "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be

renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Note what he said after showing what man is by nature and how he is alienated from God and totally ignorant of God. He comes with this strong contrast and says, "But you have not so learned Christ." We must learn Christ. In other words, here is something new to us. It is a new knowledge. It is a new way.

Therefore, if you have heard Him and have been taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus, you will put off your old habits, your old attitudes, and your old conduct, and put in their place new habits, new attitudes, and new conduct that are in line with the righteousness of God. In other words, this is known as learning Christ. The truth is, we must learn Christ constantly and consistently, even on a daily basis. That is why the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

As God’s people, believers, and Christians, we should be forever learning and forever increasing in faith. Scripture teaches us that we are to go from faith to faith and from glory to glory. We are to be ever increasing in the knowledge of our heavenly Father.

God's Controversy with His People in Micah 6

With that introduction, go back to Micah chapter 6. The first two verses tell us that God has a controversy with His people. I do not think I am capable of arguing with God, and I really do not want Him upset with me. So here is the controversy He has with His people. Look in verse 1: “Hear you now what the Lord said. Arise, contend thou therefore before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.” Do you have something to say against God? He says, go ahead and speak it. But He says, “Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord’s controversy.” You think you are upset with God? God has far more reason to be upset with you.

He says, “Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord’s controversy, and you strong foundations of the earth, for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, he will plead with Israel.” God, so to speak, is upset in

Micah chapter 6. He has a controversy and a grievance against His people. What did the controversy arise over? Look in verse 3: “O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me.” Here is the controversy: the people of Israel were tired of God. They grew weary of God. God said, “Wherein have you grown weary with me? All I’ve ever done is bless you.”

"I give you fresh air. I give you rain. I give you sunshine. I give you help. I give you family. I give you friends. I give you everything. And now you've grown weary with serving me. You've grown weary with worshiping me." Then he said in verse 4, "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt and redeemed thee out of the house of servants. And I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."

He said, "You better remember, if it was not for me, you would not have anything. You'd still be in the land of Egypt. You'd still be slaves. I'm the one that brought you up. I'm the one that saved you. I'm the one that gave you everything that you have. And now you are weary with me."

The author of Hebrews gives the same argument against these New Testament Hebrews. In Hebrews chapter 5, verses 11 and 12, he is talking about the person and work of Jesus Christ. In fact, verse 10 says, "Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek." So we are talking about Christ, the Savior. Now watch what he says in verse 11: "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered."

The writer of Hebrews says, “Seeing you are dull of hearing. For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” His complaint is that there are many things he would love to teach them, but they are dull. They are dim-witted, sleepy-headed, drowsy, not listening, not paying attention, and not learning. When they should have become teachers, they have forgotten everything and need to be taught again. These people in Hebrews 5 had grown weary with God, just like those people in Micah chapter 6.

That is an amazing thought, isn't it? We can grow weary of God. It is a scary thought.

The point of incorporating Hebrews 5 is simply this: in Micah chapter 6 and Hebrews chapter 5, the people are regressing instead of progressing. Instead of going forward, they are going backward. Do you know that is exactly where the average professing Christian is today? He is going backward, not forward. We have not only forgotten that we are supposed to go forward; we have even forgotten the old hymn, “Onward, Christian Soldiers.” We are regressing, not progressing, and have certainly forgotten our Lord's admonition in Micah 6 and verse 5.

The Call to Remember from Shittim to Gilgal

God has a controversy with Israel. In verses 3 and 4, He tells why He has a controversy: they have grown weary of God. Then, in verse 5, He nails it down: “O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that you may know the righteousness of the Lord.” If you want to know God's righteousness and learn something about Him, you must remember what Balak, the king of Moab, consulted and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered from Shittim unto Gilgal. Verse 6 further explains verse 5. This is what the people would be saying: “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow down myself unto the high God?” In other words, if I am going to know His righteousness and worship Him, how do I do that?

"Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn"—that is my child—"for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Of course, the answer to all of that is no. Then he says in verse 8, "He has showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." In other words, he said, "God has showed you; you've just forgotten it."

Someone is going to ask, "Well, Brother Weaver, how does Micah 6 and verse 5 apply to me? Because I am a New Testament

Christian." Well, you know the answer to that. We have one Bible, not two, and one God, not two. All of the Bible is the word of God, and all of the Bible is applicable to all of God's people. I want to remind you of two passages. Hold Micah 6.

Go in your Bibles to Romans chapter 15 and 1 Corinthians chapter 10, and let me show you how God specifically tells you that everything that happened to Israel in the Old Testament happened for our benefit. There is a New Testament application to Old Testament incidents. In Romans 15 and verse 4, the Bible says, "Now whatsoever things were written aforetime"—that is, the Old Testament—"were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

Now look what he said: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime"—why were they written? They were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.

If you look in 1 Corinthians 10, the subject and context is the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. You can see that for yourself in verses 1, 2, and 3, dealing with all the wilderness wanderings as well. In verse 6, concerning what happened to Israel in the Old Testament, he says, "But"—verse 6—"now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." Skip down to verse 11: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples"—or examples—"and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." Everything that happened to Israel in the Old Testament is for our admonition and for our benefit.

As you look back to Micah 6:5, God tells us especially to consider what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that we might know the righteousness of God. This includes a great deal of time to study in order to learn all that God reveals about His righteousness. I will not be able to do it all, but He speaks of Shittim, and I will tell you more about this place later.

The word is also Acacia, referring to the Acacia tree. It is called Abel Shittim in Numbers 33:49. This was a plain in the land of Moab where the Israelites had encamped after their two victories over

Sihon and Og, at the close of their wilderness wanderings. This was also where Joshua sent out the twelve spies to spy out the land. In other words, Shittim was just before they were ready to go in and conquer the land.

Now, from Shittim to Gilgal. Gilgal was in the plains of Jericho, on the east border of Jericho. It was there that the Israelites camped after crossing Jordan in Joshua 4. There, in Joshua 4 and 5, they kept the Passover, reinstituted circumcision, and set up the twelve memorial stones as they crossed the river.

The word Gilgal means "a rolling." After they kept the Passover and reinstituted circumcision, the reproach of their slavery in Egypt was rolled away. So what does God say? "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteousness of God." There is something particularly revealing about the time from Shittim to Gilgal, especially those two instances, that teaches and instructs us in the righteousness of God.

The Sin at Shittim: Violating God's Law

Go back in your Bibles to Numbers 25, because that is the passage God has in mind when He says to remember what Balak consulted and what Balaam answered, that you may know the righteousness of the Lord. I am limiting myself to what happened in Shittim. Without reading all of Numbers 25, I will read part of it, perhaps the first three verses. This is the incident where the children of Moab seduced the Israelites into adultery, fornication, and idolatry.

This is where God gave the death sentence against all those who participated in the worship of Baal Peor. Phinehas took a javelin and went in and pierced a man and a woman through who were committing fornication in the camp of Israel. There are a number of lessons that can be learned here.

"And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods, and the people did eat and bowed down to their gods, and Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel."

When you read these first three verses, the thing that should strike your mind is that the people of Israel violated, basically, four of the original Ten Commandments instantaneously. They violated the first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” They violated the second commandment, which deals with making false gods and bowing down before them. They violated the seventh commandment: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” They violated the tenth commandment: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife or his land or anything that is thy neighbor's.”

But in reality, they did not just violate four of the Ten Commandments; they violated all of the Ten Commandments. Understand this one truth: whenever you violate one part of God's law, you are guilty of violating all of God's law. James 2:10-11 says, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.”

If you break the law in one part, you have broken it in all. Let me put it very plainly: God's law either stands or falls together—all of it. You either obey it all or you violate it all. It's just that simple.

God's Law-Word as the Standard of Righteousness

It is impossible to sin without violating the law of God. God's law-word is our standard for righteousness, and any deviation from his truth is sin and unrighteousness. This is the single point: God's law-word is our standard for righteousness. Any deviation from his truth is sin and unrighteousness. James 2 says that if you offend in one, you are guilty of all.

First John 3:4 says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." What is sin? Sin is a transgression of the law. It is a violation of God's law. Sin cannot be separated from God's law, because sin is defined by the law. When God says, "Thou shalt not," and you say, "I'm going to," that is sin. When God says, "Thou shalt," and you say, "I'm not," that is sin. In either case, you have rejected what God has commanded and have violated his law. What is sin? Sin is a violation of God's law.

Romans 3:20 gives another part of this truth: "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Why? "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." One of the reasons God gave the law was so that we would know what sin really is. The law does not justify anyone by its deeds; rather, it gives the knowledge of sin. It tells us what God has declared to be right and wrong, and it exposes our departure from that standard. Without God's law, we would have no standard by which to identify sin as God defines it.

How do I know that adultery is wrong? How do I know that thieving is wrong? How do I know that murder is wrong? How do I know that covetousness is wrong? Because God said, "I've given you my law. I've given you my standard. When I tell you what is right and what is wrong, that is my standard, and you can know based upon my law."

Now, let me show you: the law has a spiritual application as well as an external application. In Romans 7, look at verses 7 through 9. I want to emphasize this because it's vitally important. The Apostle Paul says, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid"—that is, perish the thought. "I had not known sin, but by the law. For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead." "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." What in the world is Paul talking about? How can he say, "I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died"? You have to remember Paul's pedigree.

Paul said that he was “a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee of the Pharisees,” and, “as touching the law, blameless.” Was the apostle Paul perfect? Of course not. How, then, could he say he was blameless? Paul was a Pharisee. The Pharisees had narrowed the law down to externals. Paul said, “I had my own righteousness. I kept all these externals. I thought I had it made.”

But he said, “when the commandment came”—when he saw the spirituality and applicability of God’s law, and that it meant more than externals—sin revived and he died. When God said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” it was not merely that one must avoid the

physical act; one was not to have a lustful or covetous heart. When God said, "Thou shalt not steal," it was not merely that one must not rob somebody. One must not covet, become selfish, or become a grudging individual. The law has a spiritual, inward application as well as an external application.

Paul said, "I had not even known sin but by the law." When the law came in its fullness, sin revived and he died. In other words, he found out that he was a sinner. He thought he was perfect, but he was totally, perfectly lost, undone, and ungodly. He would never have known that without the law.

The Law Fulfilled, Not Abolished

Do not think that the law of God has been nullified, abrogated, set aside, done away with, or destroyed. It has not been. Our Lord said in Matthew 5:17–18, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." He said, "Think not." That is the same thing the Apostle Paul said: "Perish the thought." Christ did not come to set aside the law; He came to fulfill it. The word "fulfill" literally means to put into full force as continuous, to fill and to keep full.

Some individuals try to argue, "Well, the law has been done away with." But look at Romans 7:12. The Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of Scripture and the Holy Spirit, says, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." If God's law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good, why in the world would God do away with, set aside, or abrogate anything that was holy, just, and good? Ask yourself that question. He would not.

Someone objects, "But wait a minute, Brother Weaver, I can show you a scripture that states that Christ abolished the law." I want you to show me that. Inevitably, they turn to Ephesians chapter 2. They say, "You turn to Ephesians chapter 2 and I'll show you. The Bible says this very plainly." Let us see what the Bible does say. Ephesians 2:14, speaking of Christ, says, "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Then the Bible says, "Having abolished in his flesh the

enmity"—that is, the hatred—"even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

"You say, 'There it is, Brother Weaver. He has abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments.'" Ah, but note the next phrase: "contained in ordinances." This verse does not say that Christ has abrogated or nullified the law. It refers to the ordinances that surrounded the tabernacle and the temple, the ordinances that related to worship. And what does the Bible say? Christ has taken those out of the way. How did he do so? Not by destroying them, but by fulfilling them.

Let us stop and think for a moment. Suppose you were an Old Testament Israelite and wanted to worship God. What must you do? You must bring a sacrifice, come to the high priest, come to the temple, and have it put on the altar. Everything about the tabernacle and the temple was pictorial and emblematic. It was simply a picture and a type.

"But under Christ, I don't do all of that." Oh, yes, you do. It is impossible to worship God without doing all of that. "What are you talking about?" The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:28 that Christ is our all and in all. How is that? Let me quote it. First of all, guess what?

As New Testament Christians, we have an altar. Hebrews 13:10 tells us that altar is none other than Jesus Christ: "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." Jesus Christ is our altar. We still have a high priest; Hebrews 4 teaches us that Jesus Christ is our high priest. We still have a temple; Revelation 21:22 tells us that Jesus Christ is our temple. We still have a sacrifice. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." You cannot come to God without an altar, without a sacrifice, without a temple, and without a high priest.

But now it is no more types and shadows and emblems. Now it is reality, because we have the substance in Jesus Christ. He is our sacrifice, our altar, our high priest, and our temple. So even the

ceremonial law has not been done away with; it has been fulfilled in reality and substance in Jesus Christ.

The greatest evidence that the law has never been abrogated and set aside is that Jesus Christ kept the law perfectly in every detail. Jesus said in John 8:29, “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” Jesus Christ kept the law of God personally, perfectly, and perpetually.

Galatians 4:4-5 says, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” When Jesus Christ was made under the law, that meant that He was obligated to keep the law of God personally, perfectly, and perpetually.

How important was our Lord’s obedience to the law of God? Let me ask you a question before showing you this verse. Suppose that all Jesus Christ did for you—that all he did for you—

Was he just so that your sins may be forgiven? That is all he did? Now, here is my question: If all our Lord did was die for us, that our sins might be forgiven, would that be sufficient to get us into the presence of God? The answer is no. It might keep you out of judgment and hell, but it would not necessarily get you into the presence of God. Why? Because to be in God's presence, you need more than forgiveness. You need a positive righteousness. Jesus Christ did not just forgive us our sins; Jesus Christ did more than that.

He made us righteous by giving us His perfect righteousness. Here it is, 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21: "For he"—that is, God the Father—"hath made him"—that is, God the Son—"to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." So here is what God did. This is the doctrine of imputation. God took our sins and imputed them to Jesus Christ. He then took that perfect obedience that Christ earned, merited, and worked out under God's law and imputed it to us. Thus, we are not only forgiven of our sins; we have now been given an absolute, perfect righteousness in Jesus Christ. Our Lord's personal, perfect, and

perpetual obedience now accrues to us. It is His righteousness that has been given to us, charged to our account.

But you say, "Well, now, wait a minute, Brother Weaver. If I have His righteousness as a perfect righteousness, that means I do not have to obey at all." Oh, no. Not at all. The doctrine of imputation does not negate our obedience; it necessitates and ensures our obedience. You are in 2 Corinthians. Look, if you would please, at chapter 3, beginning with verses 2 and 3. The Apostle Paul writes to these Corinthians: "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men."

Now, watch: "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink"—how are they written?—"but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." What is he saying? Under the new covenant, we do not have the law engraved in stone. We have the law engraved in our hearts.

Paul says, “But if the ministration of death”—that is under Moses—“written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.” Think about all the glory that Moses had when he came down off that mount, how his face shone. He had to cover the greatness and brightness that he had. What does the Bible say? That was to pass away. That was temporary. What is permanent is what Christ has done for us, writing His law in our hearts.

In Hebrews 8, beginning with verse 8, the Scripture speaks of the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant: “For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt”—which was written in stone—“because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make

with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

"And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." What did God say He was going to do? He was going to write it in our hearts.

Hebrews 10:16 says, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." Obedience should come naturally for the child of God, since His law is written in our hearts and minds. The writing of God's law in our hearts and minds does not mean that we cannot sin. It does not mean that we will not be tempted to sin, but it does mean this: we will know the difference between right and wrong, we will know what sin is, and we will certainly know that we should not engage in it.

Application: Living by God's Law

How do we express our love, gratitude, thankfulness, and honor to our Heavenly Father? Do we express it by disobeying Him or by obeying Him? If we wish to please our Heavenly Father, do we please Him by breaking His law or by keeping His law? The answer should be obvious. What is God's law? It is God's revealed will for His people. In other words, it is God's divine revelation as to how we are to live, how we are to treat each other, how we are to honor and worship Him, and how we are to obey Him.

Deuteronomy 6:24–25 shows us what God says concerning His law: "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes"—that is, His law—"to fear the Lord our God." Why should we keep these statutes? Why should we fear the Lord our God? Here is why: "for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us." Isn't that amazing? Do you realize that what God gave us is law, and that it is for our good? God says, "I expect you to obey it."

The New Testament does not teach differently. Do you remember what our Lord said in John 14:21? “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” Verse 24 says, “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.” First John 5:3 says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” What is the love of God? Keeping His commandments. Do you remember what our Lord said in 1 John 2:4? “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” How can God say that? Because God has written His law in the hearts and minds of His people, and we know that we are to obey His word.

Consider Numbers 25. I am making one point and one point only: God’s law-word is our standard for righteousness, and any deviation from that truth is sin and unrighteousness. What happened at Shittim? What did God say? “O my people, you better remember what Balak consulted and what Balaam answered from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteousness of the Lord.” God’s law-word is our standard. Numbers 25:1 says, “And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.”

“And the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.” Do two people automatically see each other and instantaneously begin committing fornication? No. If that were true, you would see people falling down in the streets and everywhere else. What does the Bible mean? That which preceded the actual physical act was an attitude of lust and covetousness. Now just stop and think about this. Are you thinking? Let me ask you a question. I'm not trying to be too graphic, and I'm certainly not trying to be ugly. Listen carefully.

One always leaves and forsakes the law of God mentally, emotionally, and willfully before he ever does so physically. When God forbids any sin, He also forbids anything and everything that will lead up to that sin. I am not trying to be too graphic or ugly; I am simply pointing out that people leave God’s law mentally, emotionally, and willfully before they ever do so physically.

Look in your Bibles to Matthew 5. Numbers chapter 25 says that the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

Now look at verse 27, at what our Lord says: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time"—that is, the Pharisees—"Thou shalt not commit adultery." In other words, no physical act of adultery; that is what they taught. They externalized God's law. But our Lord says that the law of God has an internal and spiritual application as well: "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

When did the adultery begin? With the lusting—with the willful, mental, and emotional forsaking of the law of God. You and I do not simply go out and start flagrantly sinning and violating God's law. We think about it, desire it, plan it, lust after it, and covet it. Any deviation from God's law is sin, whether it is a physical act or a mental, emotional, or spiritual act. When God forbids any sin, He forbids anything and everything that would lead up to that sin. When you begin to lust, covet, and desire, then you have sinned, because you have deviated from the law of God. Now what did God say?

"O my people, remember what Balak consulted and what Balaam answered from Shittim to Gilgal," why? "That you may know the righteousness of the Lord." The first thing we learn about God's righteousness is this: His word is absolute truth. His word is His will for our lives, and whenever we deviate from it, we have sinned against God. We have left and forgotten His righteousness.

If we are to learn the righteousness of God, we must comprehend that His law expresses His righteous will for each of us. Remember what God told Joshua in Joshua chapter 1, verse 8: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." God was saying, "Joshua, if you want to be successful, prosperous, righteous, and holy, learn my law, and do not depart from it."

Now, let me make just a couple of applications. The first one is this: Listen carefully to me. Turn to Romans chapter 3, because someone will inevitably say, "Brother Weaver, we're justified by faith and not by works." I understand that. The law was never given for justification. But the doctrine of justification by faith alone does not

negate the law of God. The Apostle Paul argued in Romans chapter 3, verse 30: “Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith?” His answer is, “God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” Any true teaching of justification by faith alone establishes God’s law. It does not negate, destroy, or do away with it.

When we are saved by faith, we automatically want to know, “How can I please God? How can I obey God?” The answer is, “Here’s the law.” God says, “Obey my word because this is my will.” Therefore, anyone who preaches any gospel, so-called, that denies, despises, denigrates, and destroys the law of God is not preaching true justification by faith alone. True justification by faith alone undergirds the law of God. Remember this: God’s law is given for our benefit and blessing. It was not given as a hindrance, a burden, or a curse.

What did Deuteronomy 6:24 say? “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.” What was so burdensome in the Old Testament, particularly during the four hundred years between the Old Testament and the New Testament, was the Pharisaical misinterpretation of the law and Pharisaical traditions. That is what our Lord got rid of in Matthew 5: “You have heard it said by them of old time. But I say unto you.” God's law is for our good.

It is for our blessing, not for our cursing or our hindrance. When God says, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” that is for our good. When God says, “Thou shalt not steal,” that is for our good. When God says, “Thou shalt not kill,” that is for our good. When God says, “Remember thy father and thy mother and honor them,” that is for our good. God did not give His law to chastise us; He gave it to be a blessing for us, that we might have a prosperous, successful life and know His righteousness.

Learn this one thing today: God's law-word is our standard for righteousness. Any deviation from that truth is sin and unrighteousness. If you want to live a holy, godly life, you must live by the Word of God. Our Lord said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Father, we ask that You would speak to us and teach us. May we learn this one simple principle today: Your Word is truth, and any deviation—in any shape, form, or fashion, mentally, emotionally, willfully, or physically—is sin and unrighteousness. Make us obedient and make us holy. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Learning the Righteousness of God - 2

Introduction and Review

Open your Bibles to Micah chapter 6 and Numbers chapter 25. We will read at least the first eight verses of Micah chapter 6 and take up where we left off last week. We have been bringing the series on learning the righteousness of God. This is the second message in that series. Notice Micah chapter 6, verse 1.

"Hear you now what the Lord saith, Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and you strong foundations of the earth, for the Lord hath a controversy with his people. He will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? And where have I wearied thee, testify against me? For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants, and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord."

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Hold Micah 6, but turn also to Numbers 25, because that is a text we have been using in reference to Micah 6 and verse 5. Be ready to look there in a moment. In Micah chapter 6, verse 5, God says, "O my people, remember now what Balak the king of Moab consulted and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that you may know"

Man by nature does not know God. Ephesians chapter four teaches that man by nature is alienated from God through the ignorance that is in him. When Paul went to preach on Mars Hill in Acts chapter 17, he found an altar with this inscription: "To the unknown God." That is exactly what God is to those who are unconverted and unsaved. They may know there is a God, but they do not know the one true and living God.

It may surprise you even further that Christians do not know God automatically simply because they have been regenerated and converted. We know that He is our Savior. We know that He is the one true God. We know that He is Lord and King. But that does not mean that we understand all of the attributes of God. That is why, in 1 John 2, John divided Christians into three categories: babes, young men, and fathers. The knowledge of one group is different from the knowledge of the other groups. There are babes in Christ, young men in Christ, and fathers in Christ.

In Micah 6:5, God says, "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD." The incident singled out in Numbers chapter 25 happened at Shittim in the Old Testament. God says that we must learn the righteousness of God. This passage was selected because it

was first referred to in Micah 6:5. The main point is that God's law-word is our standard for righteousness.

Any deviation from His truth is sin and unrighteousness. God's law-word is our standard for righteousness, and any deviation from that truth is sin and unrighteousness.

The consuming point of Numbers 25, especially verses 1–3, is this: when God forbids any sin, He also forbids everything that will lead up to that sin. In other words, the sins of the spirit are just as condemned as the sins of the flesh, because sins of the spirit and sins of the mind always lead up to and point the way to the sins of the flesh. When God has given us His standard for righteousness, whenever we begin to deviate—whether it is mental, emotional, spiritual, or willful deviation—it is still sin. God has given us His standard for righteousness, and any deviation from that standard is sin and wickedness.

There is a second point: sin places us under the judgment and curse of God, no matter how we arrive at the sin. This is the point to be developed.

Balak's Desire and Balaam's Failed Curses

Look at Numbers 25:1–3: "And Israel began to abide in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods, and the people did eat and bow down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel."

Remember what Micah 6:5 said. Remember what Balak the king of Moab consulted and what Balaam answered, from Shittim to Gilgal, that you might know the righteousness of God. To comprehend this simple point, you must remember Balak's desire. What did King Balak desire? He desired to have Balaam curse Israel.

Over and over, Balaam tried to curse Israel, but God would not allow him to do so. Numbers 22:5–6 says: "He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying,

Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me."

"Come now, therefore, I pray thee. Curse me, this people, for they are too mighty for me. For adventure I shall prevail, and that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom thou blesses is blessed, and he whom thou curses is cursed." So Balak then, the king, sins for Balaam. Why? That he might curse Israel, that Balak might have a military victory over them.

Look in verse 10. Balaam said unto God, "Balak the son of Zipor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which cover the face of the earth. Come now, curse me then, for adventure I shall be over to come to them, and drive them out." Note once again: the purpose was to curse Israel. Every time Balaam stood up to curse Israel, what did God do? He turned it into a blessing.

King Balak became so upset. He said, "I called you to curse me, this people, and these three times you've all together blessed them." In essence, Balak told Balaam, "You better go home, boy, and you better go home quick." He thought he was going to promote Balaam and make him rich, but Balaam had blessed the one whom Balak wanted cursed. He had angered and upset him. Basically, Balak said to Balaam, "You better get out of my sight, or I may change my mind and kill you."

Now let me point something out. Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness. If you hold Numbers 25 and look in your Bibles at 2 Peter 2:15, you will find that Balaam was not about to give up so easily. He wanted his reward; he wanted that money. The Bible says concerning Balaam, "Who have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosar, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." He knew that Balak could make him rich, and he wanted that money. He was not about to give it up.

There is a tremendous truth we ought to apply to our lives from Numbers 22 through Numbers 25: Balak wanted Balaam to curse Israel.

Every time Balaam stood up to curse Israel, God turned the curses into a blessing. Here is the truth that we should rejoice in: there is absolutely nothing that can hinder, harm, curse, or vex us as long as we are in the will of God. The safest place for any child of God to be is right smack dab in the middle of the will of God. A powerful monarch brought a powerful medium to curse Israel, and every time he tried, he ended up blessing Israel. As much as we are hated, maligned, despised, and persecuted in this world, as long as we have God's blessings upon us, man's curses mean nothing.

It does not matter how irate people are against us, how upset the government is against us, or how willfully malignant our enemies are against us. As long as we are under the blessings of God, there is no one who can turn those blessings into curses.

Balaam did not and could not curse Israel. On the other hand, he was not going to give up easily, because he loved the wages of unrighteousness and had another plan that would allow him to get his money. Balaam switched roles from a diviner to a consultant.

Balaam's Shift to Consultant and the Plan to Corrupt Israel

Remember what the Bible says in Micah 6 and verse 5: “O my people, remember that which Balak consulted, that is, he asked his consultant for some wisdom, and he says, remember what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered.” Here is a consultant and a consultee, and God says that we had better remember that. There is a reason.

This role of consultant is mentioned in the Bible. In Revelation 2:14, Balaam is once again pointed out and singled out by Christ Himself as He speaks to the church at Pergamos: “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them there that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.” Notice what He said: “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast them there that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak.” Balaam did not simply advise him; he taught him and told him exactly what to do to get Israel to sin. God is saying, “You had better remember this.”

If you want to learn God's righteousness, you had better remember what Balak consulted and what Balaam answered. Since God would not allow either Balak or Balaam to curse Israel, Balaam then came up with a plan to get God Himself to curse Israel.

In Numbers 23, Balaam was supposed to be cursing Israel. He says, "Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." Then he says, "He that is God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them."

Isn't that interesting? They wanted him to curse Israel, but he had received a command to bless, and that was what he would do. God had not beheld iniquity in Jacob or seen perverseness in Israel.

So here was Balaam's plan: if God saw Israel become perverse, sin, and rebel against Him, then Balaam concluded that God's anger would be against Israel and that God would destroy them Himself. What did Balaam do? He teaches Balaam how to seduce, entice, and lure the people into fornication and adultery. He taught him to lure them not only into fornication and adultery, but also into idolatry.

If Balak had drawn out his sword and fought against Israel, Israel would have bravely resisted, and no doubt Israel would have been conquerors. But Balak did not send his sword.

The Danger of Seduction Over Frontal Assault

Beautiful women were among the men, inviting them to their banquets and to their beds. These men, who could not possibly have been overcome with the sword, were overcome by these harlots. I want you to learn something, folks. The truth is, we are in far greater danger from a smiling world than we are from a frowning world. We are in far greater danger when the world and everyone loves us than when the world hates us.

Balak did not have to mount an all-out attack against Israel to destroy her. He did not have to needlessly endanger his army, waste his military might, or empty his arsenal. All he had to do was entice Israel to sin against God, and God would destroy Israel. Temptation, seduction, deceit, and allurements often work far better than an

open frontal assault. Do you realize the advantage that the enemy has in seduction and allurement? The advantage is simply this: when you are being seduced, enticed, or allured, you usually do not even recognize or comprehend it until it is too late. You have fallen.

It is impossible to disguise your intentions with a frontal attack. When we know that we are being attacked, what do we do? We place ourselves in a defensive position, saying, “No, no, no, you are not going to do that to me.” But when we do not know that we are being attacked, and we are being pampered and enticed, we are indeed vulnerable.

Repeated attempts to bring the curse of God upon the people utterly failed. Balaam then changed his plans. Those he could not curse, he would corrupt. When you corrupt someone, the judgment of God is against them. So what did he do? He sent his most beautiful women among the men to seduce them. I would encourage every man and every woman to read Proverbs 5, 6, and 7. Here is a warning. Look at what God says in Proverbs chapter 7.

“Let us begin with verse 5.” He is talking about His words and His precepts. “That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.” There is the enticement, the allurement, the seduction. “For at the window of my house, I looked through my casement, and I beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding.” He did not just say stupid; he said void of understanding.

He said it very nicely. Passing through the street near her corner, he went the way to her house. In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of a harlot and subtle of heart. She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house. Now she was out on the streets and layeth wait at every corner. So she called him and kissed him with an impudent face, saying, “I have peace offerings with me. This day have I paid my vows.” In other words, “I am right with God, so I can sin.” Therefore came she forth to meet him, diligently to seek his face, and she found him.

"I deck my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt." In other words, she had the best the world could offer. "I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning. Let us solace ourselves with loves, for the good man that is her husband is not at home. He has gone on a long journey. He has taken a bag of money with him and will come home at the day appointed." The word sees not going to catch us.

Watch verse 21: "With her much fair speech, she caused him to yield; with the flattering of her lips, she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteneth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." Hearken therefore unto me now, ye children, and attend unto the words of my mouth: "Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths, for she hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

Now, this was Balaam's counsel: If I cannot curse, I will corrupt. And if once I get them corrupted, God will destroy them Himself. That is why He warns that it is nothing but death and destruction.

The Setting of Shittim and the Danger of Prosperity

In Numbers chapter 25, the Bible says that Israel abode in Shittim. Shittim was a place in the plains of Moab, at the end of their wilderness wanderings. They were camped there before they went into the Promised Land and went over to Gilgal. The place is called Shittam, or Shittam Wood; you could call it Acacia. Shittam Wood and acacia are the same tree. Scarcely anything else grows there in the borders of the land of Canaan. So they were kept in what you and I would call a lush, verdant valley, surrounded by all of these Shinem trees, or tastier trees, which means it was a place of comfort, consolation, rest, and plenty. In Numbers 33 and verse 49, the place is called Abel Shittim.

The word shittim, or shittim wood, is synonymous with acacia, and the word acacia, or shittim, literally means, listen carefully, "that which turns aside." Why in the world would a shittim tree, or an

acacia tree, have the name “that which turns aside”? Because it was full of big, long thorns. Who wants to run head-on into a big, thick thorn bush? No one. If you are going toward that thorn bush, what are you going to do? You are going to turn aside. That is what the word means, and I think there is a great deal of spiritual significance to it. Remember, now they are in this valley, lush, verdant, beautiful, comfortable. They enter their wanderings.

Do you realize that oftentimes we are in greater temptation in the place of prosperity than we ever were in the place of adversity? In adversity, we are constantly praying and watching and begging God for help. But in the place of prosperity, you do not need the help. So what is there a tendency to do? To forget God.

Look in Numbers chapter 25, but also look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 8. God understood this principle, and therefore He gave a very stern warning concerning it in Deuteronomy 8 and many other places in the Bible. Beginning with verse 11: “Beware that thou forget not the Lord by God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day.” Now look: “Lest when thou hast eaten and art full.”

“And has built goodly houses, and dwelt therein. And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied, what's the danger? Then thine heart be lifted up. Then thou forget the Lord thy God, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, where there were fiery serpents and scorpions, and drought, and where there was no water, who brought thee water out of the rock of flint, who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers do not, that he might humble thee, that he might prove thee to do thee good at thy lattery. And watch, here is the danger, and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant, which you swear to my fathers as it is today.”

What does God say? Beware when you are in a place of prosperity, because the tendency is to forget God: “We don't need you, Lord.”

These people were in a place of comfort and consolation, and they did not need God. Go back to Numbers chapter 25 and look at verse 1. In this place of prosperity, comfort, and consolation, the Bible says, “And Israel abode in Shittim, remember that which turns aside, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.” Note that the Bible says they began.

The Gradual Nature of Sin and Its Consequences

It was not an all-out, headlong rush into sin and fornication. It began little by little. We do not understand the power and dominion of sin. Most of us think we can sin just a little bit and quit anytime we want to. I have heard people tell me about smoking, “I can quit anytime I want to.” They never want to. The same thing happens with marijuana and with running around with women: “I can quit anytime I want to.” No. Sin is addictive and powerful. Read Romans chapter 6.

The point I am trying to make is this: it is the little things we try to overlook. Remember in Genesis 19, after God had sent fire and brimstone against Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain? There were more cities being overthrown than just Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot was getting out of the city, and there was this little town called Zoar.

And Lott says, “Let me escape there, that my soul may live.” In fact, let me quote the verse, Genesis 19:20: “Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one. Oh, let me escape thither—is it not a little one?—and my soul shall live.” Lott, you can go to Zoar. It is just a little one. From that little one, he stepped out to the mountains, got drunk, and committed incest with his two daughters.

Solomon, in the Song of Solomon, chapter 2 and verse 15, says, “It is the little foxes that spoil the vines.” It is our little sins that make up and constitute our greater sins. One of these days, it would be interesting to study and analyze certain sins to see what actually makes up the big sin. When you analyze it, you will see that all the big sins are usually made up of numbers of little sins.

You have got to remember this principle: when God forbids any sin, He also, at the same time, forbids anything and everything that will lead up to that sin.

Go back to Numbers 25 and look at it. Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom, little by little. The Bible says in verse 2, "And they"—who in the world is "they"? It would be the daughters of Moab; that is in the context—"called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods." The word called is a very interesting word. It is the Hebrew word qara, variously translated in our Bibles as to call, to proclaim, to invite, to bid, to summon, or to preach.

These Moabites did not coerce or force the Israelites to come. They invited them, summoned them, called them, and enticed them. Undoubtedly, after some of the men had tasted the immorality of the Moabitish women, they hastened to their call.

When you look at these Moabitish women, they did not simply approach the men and say, "Let us go bow down before our false gods. Let us go bow down before Isis." They invited them to their banquets and to their beds. In other words, they got them to commit immorality before they got them to commit idolatry. Had they mentioned idol worship up front, many of the men probably would have said, "Uh-uh. I know better than that. I am not going to get involved in that."

But what they have done is get them by degrees, little by little. You can do this. Well, yes, okay. Now that you have done that, you can do this. The next thing they know, they end up in idolatry. These feasts were usually in celebration of a false god. Simply by attending this feast, it was in reality a renunciation of the one true and living God.

Now look at what God says in verse 3: "And Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor." The word joined is tzomad in Hebrew and literally means to link, to gird, to fasten, to frame, to join, and to serve. What did Israel do? Israel fastened herself, linked herself, joined herself with Baltheor, thus forsaking the one true and living God to worship the false god of Baltheor. How many men went after Baltheor?

There was a large number. You will find that mentioned in Deuteronomy 4, which I will deal with a little bit later. But if you look in your Bibles at 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 8, there is a number

given to us of how many God killed because of their sin. I will deal with this verse later as well, but 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 8 says: "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand."

Now, I do not know how many were killed later because of this. There may not have been any; there may have been some. I do not know. But we do know, based upon 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 8, that in one day 23,000 Israelites were killed. Why? Because they joined themselves unto Belpheor in committing fornication and worshipping there.

Sin Affects Others and Stems from Our Own Lusts

You say that might not be a very good percentage. I mean, it would be a low percentage. And, by the way, notice the Bible said Israel joined himself unto Belpheor. Let us say there were two million people there. Twenty-three thousand would be a very small percentage out of two million people. But let me give you another thought. It could not necessarily be just the percentage that God is referring to; it could also have been the fact that many of those 23,000 were their leaders. For instance, if you will skip down to verse 14, you will find one of those leaders mentioned specifically: "Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianite woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites."

So undoubtedly, a number of these individuals who were taken away in this adultery and idolatry were leaders, so much so that God said Israel had joined himself in the idols.

Now let me give you a very important truth. I have hit this before in several different messages, but I want to hit it again. Here is the truth, folks: whatever we do always affects other people. That is a simple fact. Here were 23,000 men who were killed. You say, "Well, Brother Weaver, it was those men who were killed because they committed fornication and idolatry." Well, think of the widows that were left. Think of the fatherless children that were left. Think of the blight upon the nation. Listen to Romans 14 and verse 7: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." What in the world is God teaching us?

Whatever we do always affects other people. When you take the attitude, “What I do is my own business,” that is a wicked, ungodly, perverted attitude. It is positively wicked and unscriptural. The consequences of sin oftentimes involve other people who are not even participants in the sin. Here is a man who is a drunkard, and he says, “What I do is my own business. I am not hurting anybody,” until he gets in his car, runs head-on into another family, and murders them. Innocent people are reaping the consequences of another man’s sin, although they were not even participants in his sin.

How about an unfaithful husband who comes home to a faithful wife and infects her with HIV? She is now reaping the consequences of his sin when she was not even a participant in that sin. What about the leaders of our nation when they embroil us in unjust, unholy, and unbiblical wars? We as a nation have to reap the consequences of what they did. The point is very simple: no man lives by himself, and no man dies by himself. Whatever you do always affects other people, whether it is for good or for bad. It always affects others.

It is the height of selfishness to say, “This is my life. I will live it any way I please. Everybody else can go jump in the lake.” The Moabites seduced, tempted, and enticed the Israelites. None or more fatally bewitched than those who are bewitched by their own lusts. None are more fatally deceived than those who are deceived by their own lusts.

James 1:13–15 says: “Let no man say when he is tempted, That I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he’s drawn away of his own lust and enticed. And then, when lust hath conceived, bring it forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bring it forth death.”

Look what God says 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.” Let me explain that. It is true that God will test us, but God does not tempt us into sin. God does not set traps for us that will allow us to fall into sin. God will test our metal; God will test our faith. But if ever we are tempted to sin, to violate

God's law, to do that which is wrong, God is not the author of it. What does the Bible say? "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God." Why? For God cannot be tempted with evil. That is, God is infinitely holy. Neither tempteth he any man. Because God is holy, God is not going to tempt someone else to go contrary to his word. So let me spell it out for you like this: when you sin, you cannot blame God, either directly or indirectly.

It is not God's fault. It is your sin. It is your lust. It is your desire. It is not God's fault. And let me go ahead and take care of Flip Wilson. It is not the devil's fault either. You remember he said, "The devil made me do it"? No. The devil does not make you do anything. He may tempt you. He may seduce you. He may entice you. He may lure you. But you do what you do, and you are responsible for every action and every attitude. So it is not God who makes you sin, and it is not the devil who makes you sin.

But look what the Bible says. Now watch verse 13 again: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempted of any man." Here it is: every man is tempted. When? When he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. So it is our lust, our desires, and our whims, real or imagined, that are unsatisfied and unfulfilled and lead us into sin and disobedience. The Bible says every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.

By the way, I want you to note what he said: every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust. What does that mean? Well, it means this: we are all sinners, but that does not mean we all have the same lust. Don's lust may be different from mine; mine may be different from Doc's; Doc's may be different from Ernie's. Every man has his own lust.

Look what he says. That would include every woman, too, by the way, and every child, Eddie. But here is what he said: "Every man is tempted when he's drawn away of his own lust and in tax."

Let me explain it simply. When something appears outside of you that you believe would satisfy an inward desire or lust, and you act upon it, the results follow. He says in verse 14, "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."

Here is how this thing works: when there is an inward desire, an inward lust that we have, whether it is real or imagined, it does not matter, and there appears something outside of us that we think will satisfy something inside of us, we act upon it, and it turns out to be sin. Here is an illustration that each of us can identify with.

My wife and I have a favorite food, and I know you have a favorite food. We love fresh fish. I would rather have fish than a T-bone steak any day of the week. If any of you go fishing and catch more than you want, let me know. Here is a nice bass in my pond and a bunch of bluegill brim, and I want fish supper.

What do I do? I run and dive into my pond and try to catch those fish. How stupid, because those fish can outswim and outmaneuver me. There is no way in the world I am going to catch a fish by trying to swim him down. But I know that deep inside those bass and bream is a strong desire for a nice, juicy, fat worm. So I take that fat worm and hide a hook in it, then drop it in the water. That fish is safe in the water. It may even be under rocks or a fallen log and be safer. There is no way I can get that fish. But when I drop that hook, allure him, and he sees that worm dancing on the hook, there appears outside of him something that will satisfy an inward desire. He runs out from under the safety of the rock, bites the hook, and I have fish for supper.

Do you know that is exactly how it happens to us? When we see something outside us that we think will satisfy something inside us, we bite. And look what God says: "And when lust hath conceived"—when it stops being pregnant, when it brings to birth—what does it bring to birth? Sin. "And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

That which promised life, joy, and pleasure to that mass ended in death forever. Our sins, lusts, and desires, when we think we can deviate from God's law and have everything in us satisfied that God tells us not to do, always end in death and destruction. Sin does not bring joy, light, or happiness; it brings death and destruction. What did Israel do? Israel went after those beautiful Moabitish women,

and their whoredoms did everything that Balaam's enchantments and curses could not do. They set God against Israel. He was turned to be their enemy, fought against them, and there fell in one day twenty-three thousand men.

Applications: Responsibility and Vigilance

Listen to me, folks. It does not matter how you get into violation of God's law—whether deliberately, through deception, by being led astray, or through temptation. Once you are there, you are under the curse of God's judgment.

When I was a boy, we used to play marbles. You would shoot, might miss, and holler, "Slip us. It slipped; I did not mean to shoot. Let us call it back and do it over again." No, that does not work. Once you are there, you are there; you are caught. That is what God is saying.

Now, let me make a couple of applications. First, no one makes us sin. We sin because we want to sin; therefore, we are responsible for all our sins. The devil does not make us do it. God does not tempt us to do it, nor is He the author of our sin. We sin, and therefore we must bear the fruit and consequences of our sins.

We must understand and recognize temptations, seductions, and enticements for what they truly are. They lead us contrary to the Word of God and ultimately end in death and disappointment. Therefore, we must never keep unbiblical, unholy, and ungodly thoughts in our minds. Why? That is the beginning. What does the Bible say? "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Our minds, spirits, and dispositions should be clean and holy as well.

This begins before we ever commit the physical act. We must view temptations for what they really are—not sources of joy and pleasure, but sources of death and desolation. The second application, in light of this truth, is that our enemies do not always attack us in a straightforward manner. It would be easy if they did, coming to the front, waving flags and saying, "We are here to conquer and kill you." But they do not always come that way. Many

times they appear behind us or to the side of us. Seduction away from the truth of God's Word is an attack just as a frontal assault is an attack.

Compromise, toleration, and political correctness are tools of destruction. We cannot be in a place of blessing while denying any portion of the Word of God. Under no circumstance must we allow ourselves to be led away from the one true and living God and the revelation of Himself in His Word.

The first principle of learning the righteousness of God is this: Any deviation from God's law, any deviation from His standard, is wickedness, disobedience, and unrighteousness. The second principle we are to learn is this:

CHAPTER 3

Learning the Righteousness of God - 3

Introduction and Review

This is the third message entitled “Learning the Righteousness of God.” My own heart has been moved as I have studied for these messages. One thing impressed upon me is how simple these truths are, and yet how patently overlooked they are.

In Micah, chapter 6, verse 1:

“Hear ye now what the Lord saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

“For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him

from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?

"Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Verse 5 has been the key text: "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." God commands us to examine the times from Shittim to Gilgal in order that we might specifically learn the righteousness of God.

We have chosen Numbers 25 because it happened while the people were camped at Shittim. The other name is Acacia, or Acacia Wood; the Shittim tree and the Acacia tree were one and the same. This was where they were camped right before they crossed over the river into the promised land. Balak, the king of Moab, called Balaam to curse Israel, but every time he attempted to curse Israel, God turned the curse into a blessing.

Balaam then turns consultant and gives Balak counsel about how to get God to judge Israel, since God would not allow Balaam to curse Israel. He says that he will corrupt Israel, and therefore God will judge Israel Himself. Thus, he counsels Balak on how to cause Israel to become corrupted.

We have seen two truths previously. The first truth pointed out in Numbers 25 is that God's law word is our standard for righteousness, and any deviation from His truth is sin and unrighteousness. The consuming truth under this point is that when God forbids any sin, He also forbids anything and everything that would lead up to that sin.

Therefore, lustfulness and covetousness—sins of the spirit, attitude, and disposition—are equally evil, wicked, and wrong, even as the sins of the flesh. Why? Because they point to and lead up to

the sins of the flesh. That is why, in 2 Corinthians 7:1, the Apostle Paul said, “Dearly beloved, having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

The second truth we learned last week is that sin places us under the judgment and curse of God, no matter how we get there. Many individuals hope to be excused because they were tempted, seduced, and enticed. However, all of that is merely the beginning of sin, and therefore you are accountable and responsible. God says, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. And lust, when it is conceived, bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” You cannot be excused from your lustful and sinful desires. You are accountable and responsible, and you will give an answer to God for them.

It does not matter how you get yourself into sin; it still places you under the judgment and curse of God. Today, hopefully, I will cover two additional principles. The first is this: we must learn that partial obedience is disobedience.

Partial Obedience Is Disobedience

Now look in verse 1: “And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.”

We are told in the first three verses of Numbers 25 that certain people committed fornication and idolatry with the daughters of Moab. I want you to note what we are not told. We are not told that these individuals were low-down, filthy, dishonest, scumbag drunkards. It does not say that at all. Quite differently, in all probability, most of these people were upright and honest in every other area of their lives. They may have attended the sacrifices of God as required by God, attended the tabernacle, joined in singing and shouting the praises of God, and been honest in their dealings

with their brethren. However, Scripture does point out that they were fornicators and idolaters.

Mark it down in your mind: just because someone does not appear to be ungodly does not mean that he is not ungodly. I have known men who appeared outwardly to be upstanding, honest, hardworking, loyal, and faithful husbands. Yet, in reality, they were addicted to pornography, engaged in immorality, and anything but what they portrayed and set forth themselves as. Unhappily, some of these were preachers.

I remember hearing one preacher; some of you may know who I am referring to. He was a very popular preacher for a long time. His philosophy was this: if you wanted to engage in a little sin, you needed to make yourself so valuable to God that He would overlook your sin because of your own usefulness.

Not only is that attitude and philosophy totally, completely ungodly, wicked, and unbiblical; consider its implications. First of all, it implies that God can be bought off. Secondly, it implies that God needs us, and that if we can make ourselves so valuable and useful to God, He will overlook our sins and our ungodliness. That is certainly totally contrary to Scripture.

Understand this: partial obedience is disobedience. Obedience in one area does not cancel out disobedience in another simply because we are mostly obedient or obedient most of the time. That does not negate the fact that sometimes we are disobedient in other areas. How many sins does it take to make an individual a sinner? One.

Partial Obedience Is Disobedience

James 2:10–11 says, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” What did God say? If you think you are attempting to keep the whole law, yet break it in one point, you are guilty of all. When you violate one of God's laws, that makes you a sinner indeed.

It is amazing how many people erroneously think that somehow their good deeds will balance out their bad deeds. Or, if they are

good in one area, God will excuse their sin and disobedience in another. No. Not only is delayed obedience disobedience, but partial obedience is disobedience as well. The law of God demands that we obey God personally, perfectly, and perpetually. When we do not render to God the obedience He demands, we are sinners and sinful. We cannot expect our sins in one area to be exempted from judgment because we are obedient in another. God has set the standard. You know what the standard is?

Let me give it to you. First Peter 1:15–16 gives it plainly: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy, saith the Lord.” Please put it down: partial obedience is disobedience. You cannot think that because you are obedient in one area, God will overlook your disobedience in another. That does not work. Our obedience does not cancel out our disobedience.

The Connection Between Immorality and Idolatry

The next point, and the one I want you to see, is the connection between immorality and idolatry. In Numbers 25:1–3, God makes bare the connection between the sins of the flesh and the sins of the spirit. Adultery and idolatry are two great sins that go together, and they often lead one to the other. Listen carefully: it does not matter which you begin with; you will always end up in the other. Now look in verse 1.

"The people began to commit whoredom." Verse 2: "And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods." And verse 3 says, "And Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor." They began by committing whoredom, then bowed down, and finally Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor.

I am trying to show you the connection between immorality and idolatry. The very name Baal Peor signifies licentiousness, wickedness, and sexual sins. The word Baal Peor literally means "Lord of the openings." Here is a clear indication that sexual sins were involved in this idolatrous worship. Moreover, Scripture specifically says so: in verse 1, "the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab."

Do you realize that in most pagan worship, licentiousness and sexual impurity are involved? This was not true only in Old Testament times. It was also true in New Testament times, and it is true today. In New Testament times, if you wanted to cut someone down, calling them a name that was dirty and lowdown, you called them a Corinthian. If you wanted to stigmatize someone, you said he was acting like a Corinthian. Why?

Corinth was a seaport town, a wicked and ungodly city. It had a temple with a thousand prostitutes for the free use of visitors to the temple. It was a sexual-worship, orgy, licentious temple—totally corrupt, immoral, and ungodly. Thus, to cut someone down, you called him a Corinthian, or said he was acting like a Corinthian.

Let me tell you how immoral Corinth was. It was so immoral that the great apostle Paul was afraid when he went there. Hold Numbers 25, but look in your Bibles to Acts chapter 18, beginning with verse 9: "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, 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."

And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. Verse 8 says, "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." Then the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Be not afraid." If God told Paul not to be afraid, what does that imply? He was afraid. Why?

Because this city was a wicked, corrupt, vile city, God said, “Don’t be afraid. Don’t hold your voice back. You speak. I’ll do the saving. I’ll protect you. No man will hurt you as long as you’re in this city.”

It is interesting and most informative to see in the Bible the connection between immorality and idolatry. In fact, I want to make a statement to challenge your thinking and to get you to mull this over in your mind. I am going to prove this to you before I finish today. Here is the statement: No one can commit immorality without committing idolatry. Every immoral person is an idolater.

The Power of Temptation and the 'Grove'

With that statement firmly embedded in your mind, let us examine the Scriptures and see the connection between immorality and idolatry. First of all, in Numbers chapter 25, the daughters of Moab were not only the tempters, but they were also the conquerors of the children of Israel. You remember the Bible tells us that Eve was deceived. Although the woman is classified in the Bible as the weaker sex and the weaker vessel, according to 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7, the truth of the matter is that the Bible ascribes a lot of power to a woman. In fact, the Scripture tells us—and we read it last week in Proverbs 7—verses 25 and 26, talking about the immoral woman:

"Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her."

It is amazing. Men who cannot be tempted with money or fame can so many times be destroyed by a woman. God says there is a connection. Solomon, who was certainly wise, or at least should have been wise in the wiles of women, wrote a tremendous truth in Ecclesiastes 7:26: "And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her." So Solomon says there is something that is really worse than death.

Now, I want you to understand that whoredom and idolatry go together. What happened in Numbers 25? The Bible tells us that the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. The very first thing that happened was this: they defiled and debauched their conscience, or their consciences, by committing lewdness and immorality with the women. Once their consciences were defiled, they were easily drawn into compliance with the women, going a step further to eating at the banquets and bowing down to the idols, until ultimately they were drawn into absolute contempt of God Himself because they were joined to Baal Peor.

Those who have broken the fences of modesty will never be held by the bonds of piety, and those who have dishonored themselves by their fleshly lusts will not scruple to dishonor God in idolatrous

worship. Let me put it like this: once we have broken God's law in one area, it becomes easier and easier to break that law in other areas.

These men were first tempted to immorality, and their immorality led them to idolatry. Immorality and idolatry go hand in hand. Each one leads to the other.

Now, let me show you this. I want us today to consider the word "grove" in the Old Testament. Every time you see the word "grove," G-R-O-V-E, in the Old Testament, with the exception of Genesis 21 and verse 33, it does not refer to a grove of trees. When you and I think of a grove, being from the South, we think of a pecan grove. There is a grove of trees over there. But that is not what the Bible means when it talks about a grove, except in Genesis 21 and verse 33. Let me show you.

Deuteronomy 16:21-22 says, “Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee. Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the Lord thy God hateth.” When you read that verse, you would think, “Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee.” What in the world is this verse talking about? The heathen usually would dedicate a tree to a certain deity or a group of priests to a certain deity. What God is forbidding in Deuteronomy 16:21 is any shape, form, or fashion of idolatry to be associated with His altar.

Historical Examples of Idolatry and Immorality

God is safeguarding His altar and the revelation that He gives of Himself. His revelation is not to be confused with, conjoined with, or even put on a level with the altars of false gods. Every time an altar was built to God in the Old Testament, God had revealed Himself. God revealed Himself to Abraham, and Abraham built an altar. God revealed Himself to Jacob, and Jacob built an altar. Every time an altar was built, it was due to the revelation of God Himself. There can be nothing else around it that will confuse or confound the revelation of Himself.

You know what most of us—and I am speaking of Christendom as a whole—have done? Most professing Christians, in trying to give aid and help in the worship of God, have surrounded the altar, or the revelation of God, with false gods and false helps. There are things so pleasing to our flesh, so aesthetically beautiful to our eyes, and so desirable to our emotions that we think they would really help in our worship of God. Yet God forbids them. God forbids statues, pictures, and images in worship. Just as He forbids them physically, He also forbids them mentally. We think, if we could just have this deep-throated organ, these stained-glass windows, these beautiful choir robes, and the whole congregation humming and singing while we pray, all this would be a help to our worship. Not necessarily. God has revealed in His Word exactly how He is to be approached and exactly how He is to be worshiped.

Usually, what we add to God's worship tends to distract from and take away from the revelation of God and His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, rather than add to it. I pointed out that the word "grove" does not necessarily refer merely to a grove of trees. What does it refer to? The word "grove" occurs forty times in our King James Bibles. Each time, the word is "Asherah," which properly refers to a wooden image or pillar representing the goddess Ashtoreth, a sensual Canaanite goddess. Ashtoreth is also called Asherah or Astarte. In other words, the word "grove" refers to this false sexual goddess—Asherah, Astarte, or Ashtoreth—all one and the same.

It does not matter if you call her Venus, as the Romans did. Different groups may have used different names, but the reference was to the same false god. Astarte was the consort of Baal. When God speaks of the grove in the Bible, it was this idol that Gideon cut down at his father's house in Judges chapter 6. There, the grove was identified with and associated with Baal because Asherah, Astarte, or Ashtoreth was Baal's consort. This was also the idol worshipped by Ahab and Jezebel in 1 Kings 16:33. It was the same idol worshipped by King Asa's mother, whom he removed from being queen because of her worship and association with it. The Bible says, "And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove," or an idol of a grove, "and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt it at the brook Kidron."

Godly Asa said to his mother, "You're no longer queen." He took the idol and destroyed it. I am trying to show you how wicked and ungodly immorality is, and how it is associated and connected with idolatry. So turn in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 21.

It is interesting that you can have a good and godly king, and then somehow his son turns out to be a reprobate. You can see the same thing today. You can have godly parents, and some of their children will turn out to be absolute fools. How can that be? Unless the grace of God is in their lives, that is exactly how it turns out.

Manasseh, who was a son of godly Hezekiah, was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. “And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel. For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.”

The Bible specifically says that Manasseh rebuilt everything his father had destroyed. He reared up an altar for Baal and made a grove—that is, a wooden pillar, a wooden image, an Asherah, an Astarte, or an Ashtoreth.

“And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord.” How bold and blasphemous Manasseh was! Here was where God had His altar, where God had said His name, and where God had given a revelation of Himself. Yet Manasseh built all these false altars to false gods and put them in the house of God.

“And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger.” “And he set a graven image of the grove which he had made in the house, of which the Lord said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever.”

He set a graven image of the grove in the temple. He placed an image of Ashtoreth, or Asherah, in the temple of God. You may say, “Brother Weaver, I know these folks were immoral, but I haven't seen anything just right yet that connects immorality with idolatry.” Turn over to 2 Kings chapter 23.

Here we have Josiah's reform, and I want you to note what he undoes and what he destroys. Notice, in verse 5: "And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven." "And he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. And he brake down the houses of the Sodomites that were by the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the grove."

This is astounding. Manasseh not only put an image of Asherah in the house of God; he then moved the Sodomites right next door to it. The women who were prostitutes—religious prostitutes—were there weaving their hangings for their goddess of Asherah. All this was in the temple of God. Wherever you find idolatry, you will always find immorality. Wherever you find immorality, you will find idolatry.

Now, I have not traveled all around this world. Dave pretty well has. And I haven't even asked him about this. But I'll guarantee you in the countries of the most idolatrous, those are the same countries that are the most immoral and most wicked and most vile. Why? These two things go together.

Covetousness as Idolatry

Now, I want you to remember something. I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians, chapter 5. Ephesians, chapter 5. I want you to remember this statement that I made earlier. Earlier I said that no one can commit immorality without committing idolatry. I said that no one could commit immorality without committing idolatry. Then I said that every immoral person is also an idolater.

Now you say, "But Brother Weaver, that's a strong statement." Yes, but it is a true statement. Let me show you. Look in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians chapter 5 and look, if you would please, at verse 3. Ephesians 5 and verse 3. Ephesians 5. Notice, if you would please, verse 3. Look what God says: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints." Now stop right there. He says, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints."

Now ask yourself a question. Why would God lump fornication, all uncleanness, and covetousness together? Why would God say let not covetousness be once named among the saints? Go to your Bibles and turn to Colossians 3 and look at verse 5. Colossians 3 verse 5. In Colossians 3 verse 5, the Word of God says: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness."

What are those next words? "Which is idolatry." Covetousness is idolatry. What? Covetousness is idolatry. Let me ask you, what is it that leads to fornication, adultery, sodomy and all other fleshly sins? How much is this? You want something that you don't have. You want something that will satisfy the desires of your flesh. You want something that someone else has.

Every immoral person is an idolater. You cannot commit immorality without committing idolatry. When God gave us the Ten Commandments, way down number seven was, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Number ten was, “Thou shalt not covet.” Before you can violate number seven or number ten, you will have already violated number one: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” In order to violate number seven or number ten, you have to dethrone God and enthrone yourself. You have to deny God as the one true and living God, and His law word as sovereign and supreme, and replace Him with yourself and your law word. Thus, when you commit immorality, you have already committed idolatry. Immorality and idolatry go together. You cannot commit one without committing the other.

Applications for Holy Living

Remember what God said in Micah 6 and verse 5: “O my people, remember what Balak consulted, and what Balaam answered from Shittim to Gilgal,” why, “that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.” If we wish to learn God's righteousness and be holy as He is holy, we must understand that we cannot be satisfied with partial obedience. We must seek to be obedient in every area of our life. We must learn to think, to study, to find out, to discern the will and the word of God, and then obey it as applied in our lives.

We are not perfect. But simply because we are not perfect does not mean that we cannot strive after perfection; it does not mean that we cannot strive to be holy and godly in every area of our life. I do not doubt that everyone wants to be godly and holy. But everyone can find room for improvement in their lives, more obedience, and better obedience. We must say, “Lord, I am not going to be satisfied with partial obedience. I want every area of my life brought in conformity to your word.”

We must learn to stay away from anything and everything that would hint, suggest, entice, or tempt us into immorality. If we do not wish to commit the sin of idolatry, we must not commit the sins of immorality. Immorality is the threshold and the open door into idolatry. Why do you think there is so much pornography on the web, on television, and in the movies?

If we are interested in pleasing God, we will want to make sure that we do not please ourselves. He who pleases his own flesh displeases God. We miss the obvious when someone says, “Well, Brother Weaver, I’m strong. I believe I can look at a little bit of pornography, and it will never affect me.”

I got news for you: you might look at a little bit of it, but you will never, ever be able to erase it from your mind. It will affect you. If you do not want to be addicted, you had better not ever start. And by the way, remember in Romans chapter 1? One of the names for sodomites is derisively “fags.” It comes from the Greek word in Romans chapter 1, which means to be burned out. Once you get started, it takes more and more until finally you are burned out.

So what is God saying? If we are going to learn His righteousness, we had better learn to be holy and pure, and stay away from the sins of the flesh. If we are going to please God, we cannot please our flesh. He who displeases God is pleasing his own flesh. He who displeases his own flesh is usually pleasing God.

Thirdly, sin will always bring temporary pleasure, but we trade that temporary pleasure for permanent death and destruction, especially apart from the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Here is a Bible principle: He who sins must suffer. It is true that God may forgive you for the penalty of your sins, but you must always bear their consequences. You will always reap the consequences of your sins. You will find out exactly what Solomon meant in Proverbs 13:15: “The way of transgressors is hard.”

If we are going to learn God's righteousness, we must learn that His law word is our standard, and any deviation from that law word is sin and wickedness. We have to learn that, however we enter a sinful situation—through enticement or seduction—it does not matter: however we get there, we get ourselves under the curse and judgment of God. We must learn that partial obedience is disobedience, and that there is a connection between sins of the spirit and sins of the flesh. They lead one to the other, and he who commits the sins of the flesh is ultimately going to end up in idolatry.

Every immoral person is an idolater. Every idolater is an immoral person because he has already committed idolatry against the one true and living God. We must learn God's righteousness and bring our lives into conformity to it.

Let's pray. Father, thank You now for Your love to us. Thank You for Your grace and truth. Father, make us to understand that Thou art the righteous God of heaven and earth, and Thou hast said that we are to be holy as Thou art holy. We pray that You would make us holy. Renew our minds. Revive us, O God, that we may follow after Thee. Grant us repentance and faith. Above all, enable us to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Learning the Righteousness of God - 4

Micah 6:1-8 says: “Hear ye now what the Lord saith. Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth. For the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of service. Now I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give the firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.”

This is the fourth message in this series on learning the righteousness of God. I have already given several principles and want to remind you of them. Micah refers us to Numbers 25, saying, “O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal.” We went back to Numbers 25, to Shittim, that we might learn the principles of God's righteousness.

Introduction and Review of Previous Principles

The first principle is simply this: God's law word is our standard for righteousness, and any deviation from that truth is sin and wickedness. The corollary is that when God forbids any sin, He also forbids anything and everything that would lead up to that sin. Sins of attitude, sins of disposition, lust, and covetousness are as wicked and sinful as the physical acts themselves.

The second principle from Numbers 25 is this: sin places us under the judgment and curse of God, no matter how we arrive at the sin. It does not matter whether we purposely and deliberately do so and so, or whether we are enticed, seduced, and led into it unknowingly and ignorantly. Whatever we do, however we get there, sin always places us under the judgment and under the curse of God.

The third principle is that partial obedience is disobedience. We cannot obey God in one area and disobey Him in another, somehow expecting our obedience to balance out our disobedience. Our Lord said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not those things which I say unto you?" Obedience is tied to Lordship. Partial obedience is disobedience.

The fourth principle is that we must see and understand the connection between immorality and idolatry. It is impossible to be immoral without at the same time being idolatrous. Those who are immoral are idolatrous because they have already denied the sovereignty, supremacy, and lordship of God, elevating their lusts and desires above God Himself. Does it matter to them what God has said? They want what they want, and they will do what they will do.

Numbers 25 shows how brazen sin can become. In verse 14, the name of the Israelite who was slain with the Midianitish woman was

Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of the chief house of the Simeonites. The name of the Midianitish woman who was slain was Cosbi, the daughter of Zur. He was a head over a people, a chief over the house of Midian.

Now skip down, if you would please, to verse 6, or up to verse 6: "And behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought in unto his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of Israel." In other words, the sin was so open and so brazen that it was committed in the full sight of Moses and all the people who were weeping and crying before the congregation.

Once you progress into immorality, you have also progressed into idolatry. Sooner or later, your immorality and idolatry will become more bold and more brazen, not caring who sees, whom you offend, or whom you upset—even God Himself. We must understand that there is a connection between immorality and idolatry.

Sin and Judgment

The Connection Between Sin and Judgment

The fifth point is the connection between sin and judgment, between disobedience and the righteous anger of God. Look in Numbers 25:3: “And Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one of his men that were joined unto Baal Peor.”

Have you ever wondered why God is angry with sinners? What about judgment? Does it surprise you that God's judgments fall upon sin? How can God righteously destroy individuals, families, churches, and even nations that are in rebellion and disobedience to Him and His Word?

Understanding God's Sovereignty

In order to answer these questions and elucidate this point, there are three attributes of God that you must comprehend and understand to some degree: the sovereignty of God, the holiness of God, and the justice of God. Whenever we talk about the attributes of God, we are referring to those manifestations of His person and His power that are revealed in Scripture and in creation. An attribute is something that is an inherent characteristic, something that properly makes up the person. Properly speaking, the attributes of God are those realities which belong to God, designate Him as God, and reveal aspects of His character.

There is a caveat that must be understood: the only God that exists is the God of Scripture. Simply because someone is ignorant of this one true and living God, or because someone has another god drawn up in the figment of his imagination, does not negate the reality of the one true and living God. The figments of the imagination are not real. We can imagine God to be a certain way when He is not, and we can imagine God not to be a certain way when He really is. But our imaginations do not affect reality. Our thinking does not affect reality. The only one true and living God is the God who has revealed Himself in Holy Scripture.

How then can a righteous God justly slay and condemn wicked sinners and rebels?

Now, look at Numbers chapter 25, first of all at verse 3: “And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor.” Watch carefully: “And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.” Now verse 4: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one of his men that were joined unto Baal Peor.”

We may conclude from these passages that God is indeed a just God and is righteously angry. Did you know the Bible teaches over and over that God is angry not just with sin, but with sinners? Look in Psalm 7 and verse 11, holding Numbers 25. Psalm 7 and verse 11 says that “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the

wicked every day." How often is God angry with the wicked? Every single solitary day. There is not an hour, minute, second, or moment in the day that God's righteous anger is not burning hot against sinners. That is why God says in verse 12, "If he, the sinner, turn not, he, God, will whet his sword, he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He has also prepared for him, that is a sinner, the instruments of death."

He ordained his arrows against the persecutors. In other words, God is upset and angry with the wicked on a daily basis. God judges the righteous, but He is angry with the wicked. Look at Psalm 9, verses 16 and 17: "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth. The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

May I remind you of Revelation chapter 19, verses 1 through 11? When God judges the wicked and the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever, what does the righteous say? "Hallelujah. Hallelujah." In other words, praise God. God is angry with sinners. It is a righteous anger. Sometimes God is righteously angry with His own people. He was angry with Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. He has been angry with Israel over and over and over. God does indeed have an anger.

Anger in and of itself is not sinful. Anger is an emotion, and even anger in you and me can be righteous anger. Many times, however, when we think about anger, we automatically think of sinful, wicked anger because most of our anger is sinfully wicked.

But the Bible says in Ephesians 4 and verse 26, "Be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Then verse 27 says, "Neither give place to the devil." This is a direct command from God. It is an imperative in the Greek: I command you to be angry, and at the same time I command you not to sin in your anger. There is indeed a righteous anger. God says, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." There is a way that you and I can be righteously angry and not sin. Most of the time, however, we are unrighteously angry and do sin. God's anger is righteous. God is not sinful, nor is He capable of sinning.

To explain this, first of all, you have to understand God's sovereignty. What does this expression reveal about God? God's sovereignty speaks of His supremacy, His kingship, and the Godhood of God. To say that God is sovereign is to say that God is God. It is to say, like Daniel in Daniel 4 and verse 35, that He, God, doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven and in the heavens of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou? It is to say with the psalmist in Psalm 115 and verse 3, “But our God is in the heavens.” He hath done whatsoever He is pleased.

He has all power. His purpose cannot be thwarted, and His counsel cannot be overthrown. He does whatsoever He pleases. It is to say with David in Psalm 22 and verse 28 that God is the judge of the nations. God puts up nations and God takes down nations. It is to say with Paul in 1 Timothy 6 and verse 15 that He is the only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods. When we say that God is sovereign, we mean that God really and truly is God. Everything that makes God, that is what He is. He is sovereign.

It is one thing to confess and acknowledge God's sovereignty; it is quite another to comprehend and apply that sovereignty in every area of our lives. Do you realize that confession without application and understanding, in one sense of the word, is worthless? You could stand up and say all day long, “I confess that God is sovereign.” You may be confessing accurately and truthfully, but unless you comprehend that sovereignty and know how to apply it in your everyday life, your confession really is worthless. How can you derive any comfort, benefit, or courage from a doctrine that you do not understand or comprehend, nor can apply?

It is absolutely impossible to do so. There can only be one sovereign, one absolute, and one ultimate.

Ask yourself this simple question: If God is not sovereign, who is? There must be a sovereign. I prefer to believe the Bible and believe that God is sovereign rather than to postulate sovereignty in luck, chance, fate, fortune, or even man.

God is sovereign. Whoever is sovereign has the absolute right to command, to demand, and to issue law. Since God is sovereign, God is one, and His law is one. Do you comprehend this simple statement? A king rules by his law. Every ruler rules by his law, whether it is the bureaucratic mess that we have in this country or some tyrannical monarch in another country. A king rules by his law. God is a king, and God is sovereign; therefore, God, the sovereign King of the universe, has issued His law and has the absolute right to lay down His law.

Since He has the right to lay down His law, He also has the right to command and demand that we obey it. If God were not sovereign, His commands would be powerless and His law would be useless. How could He back up anything if He were not sovereign? Moreover, if God is not sovereign, then we owe our obedience to whoever or whatever is sovereign.

Thankfully, God is sovereign, and His sovereignty is declared over and over in Scripture. The important point is this: the issue of sovereignty and the issue of obedience are vitally connected. The sovereign God of heaven and earth has the absolute right to issue His law; therefore, He has the absolute right to command and demand that we obey His law. In fact, it is not simply an expectation; it is a demand.

Let me give you two illustrations that will, I hope, help you to see the wickedness in disobeying God. Most of the adults in this room are parents. As parents, you are given a proper and righteous authority over your children. What does the Bible say in Ephesians 6:3? “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”

Why is it right that James should have to obey Henry and Janet? Why is it right that Tripp has to obey his mom and dad? “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Why is it right? Let me show you why. Look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 11, verse 3. It is right because the sovereign God of heaven and earth has constituted an order of authority, not only in the universe, but also in the home.

The apostle Paul says, “But I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man.

And the head of Christ is God." What is God's sovereign order in the universe? It is God, and Christ, and man, and woman, and then under that, of course, children. That is why in Ephesians 5 and verse 25, the Bible says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord, for the husband is the head of the house, even as Christ is the head of the church." In other words, there is a God-ordained order of authority in the universe, in the church, and in the home.

Think about this. Here you are as Christian parents, and you understand that you have been given a proper and righteous authority from God Himself to rule over your children. If your children purposefully and deliberately disobeyed you, would it not peak your anger? It is not just that they have disobeyed you. It is not just that they have sinned. It is more than that: they have denied your rightful authority and your proper role as their head.

It does not matter whether their sin was great or minor. By their disobedience, they have challenged, despised, and denied your parental authority over them. That is an insult, a slap in the face of the parents, an attack upon the family, and an attack upon the God-given role of parents.

What right does a child have to disobey his parents? The answer is none, as long as those commands are lawful and right. No child has the right to disobey his parents under those conditions. When a child does disobey, he is challenging their authority and their position as parents, which is an insult.

Here you are, a businessman. You own your own business. You started it, run it, and built it. Your heart has been in that business, and thankfully, by the grace of God, it has expanded. So you hired someone to help you, and you gave your employee a clear, distinct, and direct order. What does he do?

He purposely and deliberately disobeys you. Would that not be an insult to you? It is not merely the fact that he is wasting your time and money, though that, too, is wrong. It is the fact that he is challenging your authority. You are the one who owns the business. You are the head of the business. You built the business. Now he is saying to you, in essence, "You do not have enough sense to run this

business. I am going to disobey you and do what I think is best." Do you see how that is an attack upon the owner of the business? It is an attack upon his authority.

If you can see the magnitude of rebellion in these two illustrations—between children and parents, and an employee and an employer—you have to remember that, as good, godly, and holy as Christian parents and Christian employers can be by the grace of God, they are still sinners. If you can see the magnitude of that rebellion against parents and employers, how much greater is the rebellion against the sovereign God of heaven and earth, who is sinlessly perfect and has an absolute right to command our obedience and demand our obedience? How much greater is our insult to Him when we say, "God, you do not have enough sense to come out of the rain. We will do what we want to do regardless"?

It is not just the sin, though it is that; it is more—it is an attack upon God Himself. It is an attack upon His person, His power, and His position. Since God is sovereign, He has the right to lay down the law. He laid down the law in the Garden of Eden. He laid down the law on Mount Sinai. He has laid down the law all through Scripture. Moreover, when He lays it down, He has an absolute right to command that we obey Him.

That is why the Bible says in Acts 17 verses 30 and 31, talking about repentance, "And God in times past winked at your ignorance," but He now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. God commands men to repent. The Bible says in 1 John 3 and verse 23, "And this is his commandment that we believe on his son, the Lord Jesus Christ." God has the absolute right to command you to repent. He has the absolute right to command you to believe on Jesus Christ. Why? Because He is the sovereign God.

It is more than an invitation; it is a command. When you disobey a plain command, you are not merely sinning against God. You are denying His sovereignty, His right to issue law, and His right to command.

Understanding God's Holiness

When you return to Numbers 25 and see how the children of Israel violated the first commandment, the second commandment, the seventh commandment, and the tenth commandment—in essence, the whole law—can you begin to understand how God's righteous anger was stirred and developed into fierce anger? They were committing adultery, fornication, and idolatry. As wicked as those sins are in themselves, the greater sin was an attack upon God's sovereignty—an attack upon God Himself. In essence, they were saying, "God, You are not God. I am. You do not have the right to tell me how to live. I choose that. I am my own god." Every sin is an attack upon the sovereignty of God. No wonder God is righteously angry at sin.

Secondly, if you are going to understand how God can judge sin and sinners, you must understand God's holiness. God is styled "the Holy One of Israel" in Scripture more often than any other title. Revelation 15:4 says, "Thou only art holy." Holiness is a central attribute of God, so essential that without it God would not be God.

Stephen Charnock, one of the old Puritans who wrote on the existence and attributes of God, said it this way: "Power is God's arm, or God's hand. Omniscience is God's eye. Mercy is God's bowels. Eternity is God's duration. But holiness is God's beauty." Certainly, holiness is God's beauty. It is the purity and rectitude of His nature. His nature is so pure that God is without spot and without stain. He is light itself; He is purity itself.

Scripture teaches that He is of purer eyes than to behold evil. He is our pattern throughout Scripture: "Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord." He said that in Leviticus 11, verses 44 and 45; in Leviticus 19, verse 2; and in 1 Peter 1, verses 15 and 16. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." What is He saying? "I am the holy God." Holiness is therefore an essential attribute of God. It is His nature and His essence; He Himself is holy.

The Bible tells us that, since God swears by Himself because He can swear by no other, He also swears by His holiness. Why? Because holiness is God, and God is holy. Without holiness, God's power would be tyranny. Without holiness, His justice would be

vindictiveness. Without holiness, His wisdom would be craft and cunning. Without holiness, His mercy would be a false sympathy. Without holiness, His wrath would be a horrible rage. But God is holy.

He is essentially and necessarily holy, and everything He is and everything He does is holy and right. Habakkuk says to God, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity." That verse does not mean that God does not see your sin or know your sin. God certainly sees your sin. The Bible says, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth," beholding the evil and the good. How else would He take note of sin to judge it and condemn it?

This verse does not mean that God does not see sin, nor does it mean that God will not judge sin. It means that God can never look upon evil approvingly or condoningly, because God is infinitely holy. I have seen parents and grandparents condone the sin and rebellion of their children and grandchildren and simply pretend that it does not exist.

That is beyond me; it boggles my mind. We must take notice of the way God does, and judge sin as God judges it. Since God is infinitely holy, He cannot approve or condone anyone's sin. In Numbers 25, when Israel turned its back on God and committed fornication, adultery, and idolatry, God in His holiness judged them. Their sins were a slap in the face of a holy God. Likewise, our sins today are a slap in the face of a holy God. Because God is holy, He hates sin—all sin, sin of every kind, caliber, degree, or intensity. He hates everything that is not in conformity to Himself and His Word. He loves everything that is in conformity to Himself and His Word; but anything contrary to Himself or His Word, He hates.

The Bible says in Proverbs 15:26, "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." It is not just the actions of the wicked that are an abomination to the Lord; even their thoughts are an abomination to Him. Let me show you how holy God really is. I do not want you to think for a second that somehow the wicked will escape the judgment of God. They will not. And if you are wicked, you will not escape either.

You may fool me because I am a man. You may fool your parents. But you can never, ever fool God. So many people deceive themselves into thinking that God will deal with them more leniently than His Word declares, that He will overlook their sins, or that He will say, "I will not judge that. I will let you into my kingdom." Somehow they think God will not be nearly as demanding as His Word declares that He is.

I want to read to you a quote from Stephen Charnock and make a commentary upon it. Listen carefully. Charnock said, "Not all the vials of judgment that have or shall be poured out upon the wicked world, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against the rebellious demons, nor the groans of the damned creatures give such a demonstration of God's hatred of sin as the wrath of God let loose upon His own dear Son. Never did divine holiness appear more beautiful and lovely than at the time our Savior's countenance was most marred in the midst of His dying groans. This himself acknowledged in Psalm 22, when God had turned His smiling face from him and thrust His sharp knife into his heart, which forced that terrible cry from him, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"

He, Christ, adores this perfection: "Thou art holy." If God was ever going to slacken His hand, hold back His sword, be lenient with sin, downplay His anger, or withhold His wrath, it would have been when the wrath of God would have been poured out to His own dear, innocent Son. But He did not. He poured out His wrath to the fullest. If you think God will pour out His wrath upon His own dear, innocent Son without reservation, who was dying in the place of sinners, and then let you escape and slip by, you are deceived.

The Bible says in Isaiah 53 and verse 10, talking about the sufferings of Christ, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him. He hath put him to grief, but thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." If God's holiness would not allow Him to deal more gently and leniently with His own dear Son, what makes you think He is going to deal more leniently or gently with you?

Understanding God's Justice

I can assure you He will not. His own Son was innocent. Our sins were imputed to Him. But you have purposely, deliberately, willfully, and maliciously rebelled against Him, and you think that you shall escape? Oh, no. If you are going to see the righteousness of God, especially the righteousness of God in judging sin, you must understand His sovereignty, His holiness, and, thirdly, in some degree, His justice.

When we think of God's justice, we normally think of what is known as His punitive or vindictive justice. The word punitive means punishment. We think of God's judgment that is sent directly for punishment. The Bible says in 2 Thessalonians 1 and verse 6, "Seeing it is a righteous thing to recompense tribulation to them that troubled you." In other words, it is a righteous thing with God to judge sinners. It is an aspect of God's justice.

In 2 Peter 2, God spared not the angels that sinned against Him, but cast them down into hell. He spared not the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah, Pharaoh and Egypt. Other countries and civilizations were not spared either. He did not spare Moab, Babylon, or Assyria, nor a host of others. You can look in the Bible and in history and see the righteous justice of God.

Why is it that we have all the wars and all the judgments that happen in time and history? Why do we have the hurricanes? Why do we have the tsunamis? Look in your Bibles to the book of Job, chapter 19 and verse 29. If you want to know why these things are happening, here it is. Job 19, verse 29: "Be afraid of the sword." That is a statement, isn't it? "Be afraid of the sword." Why? "For wrath bringeth the punishment of the sword." Why does God in His wrath send the sword? Here is why: "that ye may know that there is a judgment." In other words, all the temporal judgments in time and in history point to the reality that there is one eternal and final judgment.

You know what the Bible says in Amos 3, verse 6? "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" What is he

saying? He is saying that it is God who sends those judgments in justice against cities, nations, families, and individuals.

Let me give you an illustration. I read an article in World Net Daily on August 31st of this year, written by Deborah Caldwell. The title was "Did God Send the Hurricane?" She says, "This natural disaster is bringing together a perfect storm of environmentalists and doomsday sayers. What caused Hurricane Katrina to slam the U.S. Gulf Coast? Was it a typical late summer tropical storm caused by wind, water, and heat? Mother Nature's crying out on behalf of the Earth's pain? An angry God?"

"Depends on whom you ask. All along the theological and political spectrum, Katrina has crystallized people's fear into a now familiar brew of apocalyptic theories similar to that which we saw after September 11th and after the Asian tsunami several months ago."

Now, notice she starts out right, but she ends up wrong. She says, here are all these possibilities. No, they are not all those possibilities if you believe the Bible. Can there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it? What is the answer? No. It is God who directs the hurricanes. It is God who directs the tsunamis. You could say, "Well, Brother Weaver, over there where that tsunami hit, those people were idolaters. They were pagans. What do you think they were where Hurricane Katrina hit?"

Some say, "But we're a Christian nation." No, we were formed as one; we started out as one, but we turned our backs upon God a long time ago. Yes, there were Christians there, and Christians suffer as everyone else suffers. But the point is this: God directs those hurricanes. Those are His judgments. Tornadoes are His judgments.

The truth is simply this: God's righteousness cries for justice. In a world of sin, rebellion, wickedness, and disobedience, the only true justice is God's justice. As Henry pointed out, the mayor of New Orleans may not have canceled Southern Decadence, but God did. He took care of some of the decadent people there, too. That same God can take care of the decadent people in Georgia or in any other state.

Do you realize that in our judicial system the wicked often go unpunished or are lightly punished, while the righteous are

railroaded, persecuted, and slaughtered? But there is a Judge who will write things. He will begin to write them in time and history, and will culminate that judgment in the ultimate and consummate justice of the final day.

The Bible says in Psalm 55:23, “But thou, O God, shalt bring them down to the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.” God will bring them down to the pit of destruction. What will God do? He will strike them down in time and in history.

Nahum 1:3 says, “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.” He will not at all acquit the wicked. It is God who has His way in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.

Now go back to Numbers 25. I want you to look at this, though I will develop it more fully later. I have asked the question: How can we explain the righteous anger of God against sin? If you are going to understand God's righteousness, you must understand that God is righteously angry against sin and sends His judgment against it. You must comprehend, in some degree, the sovereignty of God, the holiness of God, and the justice of God. We are still looking at justice, so look at Numbers 25. Verse three says, “And Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.” Verse four says, “And the Lord said to Moses, Take all the heads of the people and hang them up before the Lord against the sun.” Why? “That the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one of his men that were joined unto Baal Peor.”

The Only Way to Turn Away God's Fierce Anger

Here is my question: What will it take to turn the fierce anger of God away? Here is the answer: only His righteous justice.

When those are killed who need killing—that is what He said—do you know why? In the Old Testament, the avenger of blood went after the one who had murdered his relative. It was not merely an act of vengeance. God said the murderer must be put to death to cleanse

the land from blood. When the murderer was not put to death, innocent blood was upon the land. You want to know what is happening in this country? Think of the 40 to 50 million aborted babies whose blood cries out for justice. Think of the thousands of murderers who have never been executed and probably will not be executed by our judicial system. It cries out for justice. Do you not remember when Cain killed Abel? What did God say? “Your brother's blood cries unto me from the ground.” Think of all the rapes and the sodomites and the wickedness that cry to God for justice. What is God saying? The only way My fierce anger can be turned away is when those who need to be put to death are put to death.

When government will not do it, God does it. That is why God sends His judgments. There is a connection between sin and judgment, between disobedience and God's righteous anger. The connection is simply this: God is sovereign, holy, and just. Consequently, God hates sin—all sin—and will judge it accordingly. One cannot sin against God and escape His judgment.

The Hebrew word for righteousness and the Hebrew word for justice are one and the same. When something is right, it is just. And when something is just, it is right. Once you understand God's holiness, God's sovereignty, and God's justice, which is equated with His righteousness, then you'll understand the connection between sin and judgment and disobedience and anger.

Father, we are thankful today for Jesus Christ, for His grace, and for His mercy to us. Father, we want to acknowledge and confess once again that Thou art God, and besides Thee Thou art, there is no other. Thou art the sovereign, holy, righteous, and just God of the universe, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, and we bow unto thee and are thankful for the mercy and the grace that has brought us in Jesus Christ. And we understand the only way that we can ever escape the penalty of our sins and the righteous anger of a holy, sovereign God is to flee to Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and Savior. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Pray in Thy name. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Learning the Righteousness of God - 5

Our key text is Micah 6:5: “O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.” If we are going to learn the righteousness of the Lord, we must know what Balak consulted and what Balaam answered, particularly in Shittim, but from Shittim unto Gilgal. Numbers 25 is the second passage used in this study, because Micah 6:5 refers directly back to it. There we find exactly the incident to which He is referring, the incident that happened in Shittim.

Review of Previous Principles

This whole series has been on learning the righteousness of God. The first point was that God’s law-word is our standard for righteousness, and any deviation from His truth is sin and wickedness. The consuming point under that is simply this: whenever God forbids any sin, at the same time He forbids anything and everything that would lead up to that sin. Therefore, attitudes, lusts, and dispositions are just as wicked and just as vile as the

physical act. His word is our standard, and any deviation from that standard is sin and wickedness.

The second truth is that sin places us under the judgment and curse of God, no matter how we arrive at sin. We cannot excuse ourselves by saying, "I was tempted, I was enticed, I was seduced." No. We are responsible for our attitudes, and we are responsible for our emotions. It does not matter how we get under sin or into sin; when we get there, we are automatically under the judgment and curse of God.

The third principle is that partial obedience is disobedience. God demands a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. That is why our Lord said in Luke 6:46, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?" In other words, if Christ is our real Lord, Boss, Owner, Master, and Savior, then we certainly will obey Him.

The fourth principle is the intimate connection between immorality and idolatry. They go hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other.

I pointed out from Scripture that he who is immoral is an idolater, because you cannot violate the seventh commandment, nor can you violate the tenth commandment until you have first violated the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." There is, then, an intimate connection between immorality and idolatry. Last week we looked at the connection between sin and judgment, disobedience and the righteousness of God. If you are going to comprehend God's righteous judgment against sin, you need to understand, at least in some degree, God's sovereignty, God's holiness, and God's justice. Until you comprehend those three attributes of God, you will never see the connection between God's righteous anger and His judgment against sin.

Today we come to the sixth point. You will find this in verses 5 through 9. Let us read Numbers 25:5–9: "And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal Peor. And behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were

weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand. And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand."

Introduction of the Sixth Principle

Here is the principle: We must see that when God's designated civil rulers fail to exercise His justice, He will always raise up alternative judges.

Biblical Basis for Judges Executing God's Justice

Let me set the stage by showing you two Scriptures. Look first in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 1 and verse 17, and then turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 19. Let me show you what God says concerning the judges, that is, the civil magistrates. In fact, you can read verse 16.

Moses charged the judges at that time, saying, "Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him." He continued: "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's." And Moses added, "And the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it." Notice the phrase, "for the judgment is God's."

Second Chronicles 19 likewise shows that God established judges and magistrates to execute His justice and His judgment. In verse 6, Jehoshaphat said to the judges, "Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment." What are judges to do? They are to judge for the Lord, execute His justice, and do that which He demands.

The Doctrine of Interposition Defined

We must see that when God's designated civil rulers fail to exercise God's justice, God will always raise up alternative judges. This doctrine, clearly taught in Scripture, is obviously a most hated doctrine by wicked civil rulers and those who are bent on tyranny and despotism. Their attitude is simply this: How dare anyone take their place, fulfill their responsibilities, and perform their duties? Moreover, they would ask: How dare a lesser magistrate arise and declare their edicts, their regulations, their guidelines, and their laws unbiblical, unnecessary, and unconstitutional?

The doctrine that teaches it is right and honorable to do so is known as the doctrine of interposition. This doctrine is only clearly taught in the Bible, but it was also employed and used not only throughout history, but especially in the history of our country. Opposition to the tyranny of the American federal government goes back a long way. In fact, it goes back to 1798. Isn't that amazing?

In 1787, you have the Constitution. In 1789, it was basically ratified and accepted by the states in this union. Then, by 1798, Thomas Jefferson drafted what were known as the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions to fight against the federal government in opposition to its issuing what are known as the Alien and Sedition Acts. The Alien and Sedition Acts made it against the law—in fact, a federal crime—to criticize the government. That is sedition. They also gave the federal government power to deport people who were living in America as long as they were not citizens.

Some of you might recognize this as President Clinton's Anti-Terrorist Act and President Bush's Patriot Act. It is all one and the same, but it all goes back to 1798 and the Alien and Sedition Acts. Jefferson proposed that the states then had the right, the duty, and the obligation to defend their people against federal usurpation of power. In fact, it is basically the same principle behind the recent wave of Tenth Amendment resolutions passed by various states today.

Let me read a partial portion of the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions: "Resolved, number one, that the several states

composing the United States of America are not united on the principle of unlimited submission to their general government."

Did you hear what Thomas Jefferson wrote? "Resolved that the several states composing the United States of America are not united on the principle of unlimited submission to their general government, but that by a compact under the style and title of a Constitution for the United States, and of the 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. That whensoever the general government assumes undelegated powers, its acts are unauthoritative, void, and of no force. And to this compact, each state is seated as a state and as an integral party, its co-states forming as to itself the other party. That the government created by this compact was not made the exclusive or final judge of the extent of the powers delegated to itself, since that would have made its discretion and not the Constitution, the measure of its powers, but that as in all other cases of compact among powers, having no common judge,"

Each party has an equal right to judge for itself, as well as of infractions, as are the mode and measures of redress.

All it says is basically this: In 1798, Thomas Jefferson wrote and said, “There’s no such thing as a federal bureaucracy. There’s no such thing as a sovereign federal government.” He was saying that the states gave certain powers to the federal government and reserved all other powers for themselves or their people respectively. Whenever the federal government assumes undelegated powers—that is, powers the states never gave it—its acts are unauthoritative, void, and of no force.

He went further to say that the federal government is not the final judge as to the extent of its powers. If you let the federal government be the final judge of the extent of its own powers, at its own discretion, then it would become sovereign. It would become a god. No, he said. That which determines the extent of its powers is the Constitution, that compact upon which the states agreed.

Here is the concluding part of the Third Resolve: “That in addition to this general principle and express declaration, another more special provision has been made by one of the amendments to the Constitution, which expressly declares that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the free speech or of the press, thereby guarding in the same sentence and under the same words the freedom of religion, of speech, and of the press, insomuch that whatever violated either throws down the sanctuary which covers the others, and that libels, falsehoods, and defamation, equally with heresy and false religion, are withheld from the cognizance of federal tribunals.”

The concluding words of the third paragraph are: “That, therefore, the Act of the Congress of the United States, passed on the 14th of July, 1798, entitled An Act for the Punishment of Certain Crimes Against the United States, which does abridge the freedom of press, is not law, but is altogether void and of no force.”

That was President Thomas Jefferson. The basic philosophy of the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions is that the American government is a government of specifically enumerated powers. Whenever the government attempts to exercise powers not specifically given to it in the Constitution, it acts illegally as well as unconstitutionally. When the federal government acts unconstitutionally, local officials, as guardians of the Constitution, have a responsibility to ensure that no federal agent is able to carry out these illegal acts within the jurisdiction of the local government.

This doctrine is known as interposition. Congress passes a law; let them pass all they want. If it is unconstitutional, then when that federal agent comes into this local jurisdiction, our sheriff, who is supposed to know the Constitution, is supposed to stop him and not allow him to carry out that unconstitutional law in his jurisdiction. The same applies to any other magistrate in that jurisdiction. When the federal bureaucracy attempts to destroy a right that we the people have, our local officials step in and interpose themselves between the federal government and we the people, saying, “No, you’re not going to take away our rights and our liberties.”

Here is an official definition from Black's Law Dictionary, which I will extend from the Bible. Defining the doctrine of interposition, Black's Law Dictionary says: "The doctrine that a state in the exercise of its sovereignty may reject a mandate of the federal government deemed to be unconstitutional or to exceed the powers delegated to the federal government." Thus, the states may reject federal mandates that are unconstitutional or exceed the authority given to the federal government.

It continues: "The concept is based on the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, reserving to the states powers not delegated to the United States. Historically, the doctrine emanated from Chisholm v. Georgia, where in the state of Georgia, when sued in the Supreme Court by a private citizen of another state, entered a remonstrance and declined to recognize the court's jurisdiction. Amendment 11 validated Georgia's position."

Chisholm v. Georgia is one of my favorite law cases. A man from another state was going to sue Georgia, and the Supreme Court of the United States ordered Georgia to appear. Georgia sent word back, "You're the servant. We're the master. You don't tell us when and where to appear. You have no jurisdiction in this matter. And we're not going to show up."

The Supreme Court then informed Georgia that, if it did not appear, the Court would try the case and issue its ruling. Georgia replied, "Please go ahead and do so. But this know that whoever you send to Georgia to enforce your edict, when he enters the state line, he will immediately be captured and hanged without the benefit of clergy." Consequently, the Eleventh Amendment was passed, showing that Georgia was right.

Here is the doctrine of interposition: Its implementation may be peaceable, by resolution, remonstrance, or legislation, or it may proceed ultimately to nullification, even with forcible resistance. Some of you have heard of that ironclad southerner, John C. Calhoun. From South Carolina, Calhoun taught nullification, which meant that the states had the absolute right, duty, and responsibility to nullify not only unconstitutional laws but bad laws that came out of Congress.

We are talking about the doctrine of interposition. The word interposition literally means to intervene, to come between. Politically, interposition occurs when a magistrate ends a rebellion by some of the people or by other magistrates. When we talk about interposition, especially in quelling a rebellion among a group of people, everybody readily understands it. We think, "Rebellion is bad, and a magistrate ought to step in and interpose himself and bring peace and reconciliation back." That is true. But what most people do not realize is that the legitimate and lawful role of a magistrate is not only to step in and quell a rebellion among the people; he is also to step in and quell rebellion among other magistrates. According to the Bible, it is not just the people who may rebel; the king also may rebel. According to the Constitution of the United States, it is not just the people who may rebel; our rulers may rebel as well.

Interposition has a far wider and greater implication. Not only are nullification and protection part and parcel of the teaching of interposition, but interposition also teaches that when a ruler is tyrannical, wicked, and seeking the overthrow of the people, a lesser magistrate may step in, take his place, and fulfill his responsibilities.

It was exactly this scenario that led to the American Revolution. King George III sent his governors and rulers to uphold and enforce his tyrannical edicts and the edicts of Parliament. The people knew those laws were unconstitutional. They were bad laws. So the people rejected the governors and rulers that the king sent and dutifully elected their own rulers to represent them. When they elected their own rulers, they found out, and they taught, that this was a way to resist tyranny, and it certainly was not anarchy. In other words, America is a product of the doctrine of interposition. When George III sent all of his governors and rulers, America said, "Nope, we're not going to take that."

Interposition in Scripture: Phinehas as a Lesser Magistrate

So they dutifully elected their own and interposed them between George III and the people of America. Let me show you this doctrine

as it is clearly revealed in Scripture. This is an extremely important doctrine; you must grasp it today.

In Numbers 25, beginning with verse 4, we read: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.” Take all the heads of the people, the Lord said to Moses, who was the highest civil and spiritual magistrate in the land at that time. God tells Moses, “Here is what I want done. I want the men who join themselves to Baal Peor killed, and I want them hanged up before the sun.”

Verse 5 says, “And Moses said to the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal Peor.” The head honcho passes it down to the lower honchos. Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal Peor.” In other words, they had the duty and responsibility under God to kill these reprobates. It is just that simple.

Verse 6 says, “And behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” Verse 14 identifies that man: “Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianite woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites.” Here, then, is another magistrate.

Notice what happens. This magistrate, who is a prince, in defiance of God and in disrespect to Moses, brings the Midianite woman into the camp in the sight of Moses and all the congregation before the tabernacle, weeping. The phrase “the congregation of the children of Israel” usually refers primarily to Israel’s leaders. Here it refers not only to the leaders but also to all the pious who were there, weeping because of the sin and rebellion that was going on.

If Moses was in front of the tabernacle weeping, and he was the head civil leader, do you not think that many of the other civil rulers were there with him? Of course they were. If the main man was there praying, making supplication, and weeping, that is where most of the other judges were as well. They were there weeping too.

Prayer is needed, necessary, and commanded. However, there is a time to stop praying and obey God. Prayer and humiliation avail nothing as long as sin and wickedness are allowed to continue. Consider the familiar statement in 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face,” and “turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven.” It does no good to pray and seek His face as long as you do not turn from your wicked ways. He is still not going to hear you. Obedience and prayer go together. These people were praying and crying when God had already told them what to do.

Zimri, a prince and civil ruler, brought Cozbi into the camp boldly and brazenly, in defiance of God and in disrespect to Moses and the law of God. What happened? Phinehas was not a civil ruler, nor was he a high priest, but he was certainly in the priestly order, being the grandson of Aaron. Since he had not ascended to the office of high priest, he would be considered a lesser magistrate. What did Phinehas do?

He got up, took a javelin, ran in, and took care of business. He thrust them through. Where was Moses praying and crying? Where were some of the other judges, undoubtedly at the door of the tabernacle, praying and crying? Phinehas was not a civil ruler, yet he was a spiritual magistrate—not a high one—but he was the one who took care of the problem.

The Nature of a Magistrate

Now, listen to this very carefully. And I'm not going to take the time to do this today, but there are several words that are used in the Bible for magistrate. I'm going to go over several of them. One of the words is found in Judges 18 and verse 7, and the Hebrew word is the word atsar, and it just simply means a restrainer or someone who has the power to restrain. In fact, if you look very quickly in the book of Judges, chapter 18 and verse 7, you'll see the meaning of the word is brought out very clearly. Judges 18:7, "Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing." And they were far from the Sidonians, and

had no business with any man. "And there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame." In other words, it means someone who holds back, a possessor of restraint.

In other words, somebody that has some power. That's what the word magistrate means there. But if you look in your Bibles to the book of Ezra, Ezra chapter 7 and verse 25, here's a different word. It is the word shaphat, and it is also translated that way. Notice Ezra 7 and verse 25. Look what the king tells Ezra: "And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not." What was the qualification to be a magistrate or a judge? What was the qualification to be a shaphat in Ezra 7:25? Someone who knew the law of God. And the king told Ezra, if you appoint anyone who doesn't know the law of God, you make sure you teach him the law of God. Now, without me taking you through the entire New Testament, there is another Greek word for the word magistrate.

In fact, that word occurs six times in the Book of Acts. We're not going to go there. It's Acts 16. But let me tell you what the Greek word is. It's the word strategos. Let me tell you what the Greek word strategos refers to. And by the way, I want you to go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Numbers chapter 3. Numbers chapter 3. And be ready to look at a verse. OK. Now I'm going to tell you what the Greek word strategos means. Here it is: it refers to a general, a military officer, a governor, a commandant.

When we speak of a military officer, a general, a governor, or a commandant, we are thinking of a civil magistrate—someone with power and the ability to restrain. The word strategos refers to a general, a military officer, a governor, or a commandant, but it also refers to the chief of the Levites. Why would it refer to the chief of the Levites? Consider Numbers 3:32: “And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be chief over the chief of the Levites, and have the oversight of them that keep the charge of the sanctuary.”

Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, was chief over the chief of the Levites. Thus, there was a chief of the Levites, but there was someone over the chief of the Levites. I will not pursue this in detail here; it is treated in the seventh chapter of my book, The Christian

Civil Government, in the chapter titled “The Pastor as a Magistrate.” But notice the order and authority described: Eleazar had oversight of those who kept the charge of the sanctuary, standing above the chief of the Levites.

It says that they had the oversight of those who kept the charge of the sanctuary. The word “keep” means to guard and protect. The word “charge” is a military term referring to the post of a sentinel. Here, then, is someone doing sentinel duty.

Look in Acts chapter 4. If I were to ask you who the Sadducees were, you could tell me. If I were to ask you who the Pharisees were, or who the Herodians were, you could tell me. But look at Acts 4:1: “And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them.” Who in the world was the captain of the temple?

Look at Acts 5:24: “Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.” Once again, the captain of the temple is referred to. Then verse 26 says, “Then went the captain with the officers,” showing that he had a whole lot under him, “and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.”

This captain of the temple evidently was armed, and his officers were armed. He brought the disciples without violence, not because he did not have the authority to use violence, but because he was outnumbered and feared that they might be stoned.

Look in Luke chapter 22:4: “And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains,” plural, “how he might betray him unto them.” Judas communed not only with the chief priests, but also with the captains. In verse 52, when they went after Jesus, they went armed: “Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?” Whoever these captains and officers of the temple were, they were armed and had the power to use those instruments. They were nothing less and no one less

The Levites in the Old Testament were given a charge to protect the tabernacle, the high priest, and later the temple and the high priest. That is how these men were armed. The point I am trying to make is this: you have a spiritual magistrate who also has the power of restraint, who knows the law of God, and who may lawfully use violence when it is needed and necessary.

Now, go back to Numbers 25. It is not difficult to justify what Phinehas did. Someone is going to try to say, "But Brother Weaver, Phinehas was not a judge." No, he was not a judge. That is true. He was not the high priest. That is true. He was a lesser magistrate, and he was a spiritual magistrate. He had not yet ascended to the priestly office, but he was in the lineage: Aaron, then Eleazar, then Phinehas. Aaron, then, was his grandfather. He would have been the heir apparent, so to speak, and he would have been a magistrate, albeit a spiritual magistrate.

His actions, by the way, give no countenance to private persons who, under a pretense of zeal against sin, try to put people to death. Let me put it to you pointedly, very plainly: you and I do not have the right to go out and just mow people down because they are doing wrong. Why? Because we are private people. We are not public people. Phinehas was a public person. Aaron was a public person. Moses was a public person. The sheriff is a public person. The governor is a public person. There is a difference between a public person and a private person.

The duties of one are not the same as the duties of the other. Phinehas was not necessarily a private person, but he was not necessarily a civil magistrate either. He was a spiritual magistrate and a lesser magistrate. A magistrate is a magistrate; the only difference is one of degrees. You have a greater one and a lesser one, and they do not necessarily have the same roles. Yet sometimes, because one is a magistrate, he may step in and lawfully fulfill the duties of an even higher or different magistrate simply because he is a magistrate. Let me ask you a question. I think you can see it like this: I am a pastor, a Baptist pastor, pastor of a Baptist church. And the reason I am a Baptist is I believe that

Our doctrines are closer to Scripture than any other group, but I did not leave that to be something else. Let me ask you this question:

just because I am a Baptist pastor, does that mean I cannot help a Presbyterian church that wants the truth, is willing to listen, or needs help? Of course not. I preach in Presbyterian churches. I preach in Methodist churches. I even drank the baptistery dry in one.

You want me to tell that story? It is getting off the point. I was preaching in a southern Methodist church. It was an independent Methodist church, on a Sunday morning during the summer. It was hot. They had this beautiful chalice up there on the pulpit, and I knew it was for me to drink because it was so hot. About halfway through my sermon, I was thirsty, so I stopped, grabbed that sucker, and chugged her down. I drank every drop in it.

I noticed everybody going, and I thought, "What in the world is wrong?" After the service, the pastor got up and said, "Well, we weren't going to have a baptism until Brother Weaver drank our baptism." I said, "Thank God. If I had seen him sprinkle that, maybe I'd have had a Baptist conniption." They had to postpone it because I drank the baptistery water. But you see what I am saying? Sure, I can step over and help them.

The same thing is true of a magistrate. It does not matter if he is a probate court judge; he is still a magistrate. He may not be a superior court judge, but he is still a magistrate. The superior court judge may not be a federal judge, but he is still a magistrate. A federal judge may not be a judge of the Supreme Court of the United States, but he is still a magistrate. A magistrate is a magistrate. The only difference is that of degrees.

Examples of Spiritual Magistrates Acting as Civil Magistrates

I want you to turn to three passages with me very quickly. I want you to see if you can identify a lesser magistrate or a spiritual magistrate who is fulfilling the duties of a higher or a civil magistrate. Turn in your Bibles, first of all, to 1 Samuel, chapter 15. Here is the first illustration. I think everyone in here probably knows this story. You remember how God sent King Saul out on a mission and told him to slay the Amalekites—man, woman, child, oxen, sheep, camel, ass. God said, "Kill it all." What did Saul do? He spared Agag the king,

and the best of the oxen and the best of the sheep. When Samuel, the prophet of God, the preacher, came along and Saul saw him, he said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord.

“I have performed all of the Lord’s commandments.” About that time, something went bad. Samuel said, “Saul, if you’ve obeyed God, what meaneth the lowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep?” If Saul had obeyed God, everything would have been dead. Of course, he tried to blame it on the people: “The people spared the sheep. The people spared the ox. They were going to sacrifice for God.” There Samuel said that God would rather have obedience than all the sacrifices in the world.

Look in 1 Samuel, chapter 15, beginning with verse 32: “Then said Samuel”—who was speaking? Samuel—“Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites.” I like what follows: “And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.”

Who did the killing? Samuel. Where was the high civil ruler in the land, standing beside him and watching? Who had failed to do his duty? What did Samuel do? Samuel was not a civil ruler; he was a spiritual ruler, a spiritual magistrate. But he stepped in and fulfilled the function of the civil magistrate when that magistrate would not do his job. Samuel was not a private person. He was a public person because he was a spiritual magistrate. He, too, was a preacher of God.

Look in 1 Kings, chapter 18. You know how Elijah said, “As the Lord God liveth, there shall not be rain nor dew these years, but according to my word.” After three and a half years, God sent Elijah back to seek Ahab. Ahab said, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” Elijah answered, “It’s not me, you dirty reprobate. It’s you and your wicked wife.”

He said, “Now you get all your prophets of Baal up to Mount Carmel. We’re going to have a contest. Let them build their altar and call upon their god, to see if he sends rain. I’ll build my altar and call upon my God, and let the God that answereth by fire, let him be

God.” You know how those prophets of Baal climbed upon their altar, leaped upon it, cut themselves, and cried and cried and cried.

All Elijah did was sit back and mock. He said, "Surely he's asleep. Cry a little louder. Wake him up. Surely he is a god. Come on." Finally, when it was time for the evening sacrifice, he said, "All right, boys, you've had all day. Now it's my time." He built the altar, got water, and poured it on three different times. When he called upon God, God sent fire from heaven. It consumed the sacrifice, consumed the altar, and licked up the water about the trenches.

Look what happens next. In 1 Kings chapter 18, verse 39: "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there." Who killed the prophets of Baal? Elijah.

Where was the king, standing by and twiddling his thumbs? How could Elijah do that? Elijah was not a civil magistrate, no, but he was a spiritual magistrate. When the king refused to do what needed to be done, the spiritual magistrate stepped in and did it. A magistrate is a magistrate; the only difference is one of degrees.

Look in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 11. This is the story of Athaliah, a wicked grandmother who, after her son died, murdered all of her grandchildren except one. The only reason she did not murder him was that his aunt stole him and hid him in the temple. When it came time for Joash to be anointed king, Jehoiada the high priest was there. In verse 4 we read: "And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the Lord, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the Lord, and shewed them the king's son."

Jehoiada set up a way to defend the king and also a way to get rid of the wicked civil ruler. He commanded them: "This is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house; And a third part shall be at the gate of Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the

guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down."

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 11:8-9 (KJV)

> "And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain: and be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he cometh in." So if he gets within a certain distance, Jehoiada says, you kill him. "And the captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest."

"And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king. And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the Lord. And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: and Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, Treason."

"But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges: and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the Lord. And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain."

Who ordered the slaying of the queen? Jehoiada the high priest. Who ordered the army to kill all who followed her? Jehoiada the high priest. He could do that because he too was a magistrate—not a civil one, but a spiritual one.

In each of these three illustrations, a spiritual magistrate performed the duties of a civil magistrate. Samuel and Elijah did so in the presence of a rebellious civil magistrate who would not obey God. Jehoiada did it to eliminate a despotic and tyrannical civil

magistrate. In each incident there was interposition: a lesser or a different kind of magistrate stepped in and did what a higher magistrate refused to do. That is the doctrine of interposition.

When you get to the word "ruler" in Exodus 22:28, it simply means one lifted up, elevated, or exalted by or in the local congregation. The same word is used in Numbers 1:16 concerning the princes of the congregation, and also in Exodus 16, Joshua 9, and Joshua 22. The word nasi is equivalent to magistrate. It is a ruler. What is a magistrate? A ruler. What is a ruler? A magistrate. They are interchangeable.

There is a pastoral office. What does the Bible say? "If any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." What comes with an office? Power and authority.

What is the pastor? He is someone appointed and ordained by God, but lifted up, exalted, and elevated by the congregation. I cannot make you my congregation. If you do not recognize the office and the gift, then I would have nothing. It is the people who lift up and exalt the one who says, "Yes, we recognize that God has called you. Yes, we recognize that God has given you gifts. Yes, we recognize that God has given you authority." What does that mean? It means a pastor is a magistrate as well—a lesser magistrate, but still a magistrate.

God's Approval of Interposition

How do we know that God approves, condones, and has ordained the doctrine of interposition? Look at Numbers 25. When Phinehas takes the javelin and thrusts it through the man of Israel and the woman, "the plague was stayed from the children of Israel." We know that God approves of it, for God instantly put a stop to the plague.

The weeping and wailing at the door of the congregation accomplished nothing until this justice was executed. Once justice was executed, the plague was stayed. If magistrates do not take care to punish sin, God will. New Orleans did not take pains to stop the sodomite parade, did it? But God stopped it. The best way to stop the judgment of God is for magistrates to do the duty God has assigned

them. When God said, “If you don't put him to death, neither will I be with you anymore,” he was instantly put to death, because they wanted the blessing and protection of God.

The second way we know that God approves this doctrine is that God placed an honor upon Phinehas. Though he did no more than his duty as a magistrate, he did it with extraordinary zeal against sin, for God’s honor and glory, and for the good of God’s people. He was not afraid, even though Zimri was a prince and a fellow magistrate. Phinehas said, “You stay here and cry and pray. Just because he's a magistrate doesn't mean he's above God or above the law. I'll take care of it.” And so God placed an honor upon him.

Thirdly, Phinehas, though a young man, is pronounced his country's best friend and best patriot. Look at verse 11: “Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.” God said that Phinehas turned His wrath away, so that He would not consume the whole congregation. We must understand that one of the best services we can do for our country is not only to pray for repentance and deliverance and to be obedient, but to do everything within our power to bring sin and wickedness to an end.

The fourth way we know that God approves this doctrine is that Phinehas was given an everlasting priesthood. Verse 12 says, “Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood.” Why? “Because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.” It is true that the priesthood was entailed by covenant upon his family and had been designed for him before. Now, however, it was confirmed to him, giving him much honor and comfort. Moreover, his everlasting priesthood means that it was to continue throughout the Old Testament and be consummated in the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of interposition, then, is important, yet neglected, and we must grasp its significance lest we descend into anarchy. What was the theme of Judges? “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” Why? Because there was no king in Israel—in other words, no authority and no magistrate. We can always have a

magistrate. We may have to find a lesser magistrate, or do as our forefathers did and elect our own magistrates, but we can find or elect one somewhere.

Theological Basis and Christ as the Ultimate Interposer

Before you reject this and ask whether interposition has a theological basis, the answer is yes. In the Old Testament there was an avenger of blood. What did that avenger of blood do?

He sought to kill the man who murdered one of his family members because, when blood is shed unrighteously, God demands that the one who shed that blood unrighteously must give his blood. The avenger of blood was not merely a vengeful, vindictive person saying, “You killed my relative, now I'm going to kill you.” He was protecting the land. As he put that man to death, he was cleansing the land from blood guiltiness to avoid the judgment of God.

There is a theological basis for this, but let me go further. The greatest example is Jesus Christ, who interposed between a holy, righteous God and a sinful, rebellious people, suffering in our stead and in our place. Without His interposition, there would be no salvation—nothing but tyranny, anarchy, destruction, and death. Yet even though Jesus Christ has interposed Himself for our salvation, He continues to interpose Himself for our continued salvation, not only in the spiritual sense, but in the national and political sense as well.

You know what the Bible says in Psalm 2 and verse 9? The kings and rulers of the earth have gathered themselves together against our Lord and against His anointed, saying, “Come, let us break His bands asunder, and cast away His cords from us.” In other words, they do not like God's restrictions or His commands. They will throw off God's restrictions and do what they want. What does the Bible say? “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.” He declares, “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” Rebellious leaders of the earth cannot stop Him. He tells those rulers, “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” Jesus Christ still

interposes in time and history, providentially protecting His people from wicked, tyrannical, despotic rulers.

There will be a new world order, but the Bushes will not be in it—only King Jesus. He delivers us in time and history, but fully and completely at His return. If you do not understand the doctrine of interposition, you cannot understand salvation, providential dealings, or even history. That is how our country came into existence.

When civil rulers will not perform the duties God has ordained for them, inevitably God will raise up alternative judges to execute the duties of that rebellious civil magistrate. It only takes a matter of time.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we thank You for Your truth, especially the doctrine of interposition. It gives us hope not only in our salvation, but also for our country. We know what our forefathers did, and what we, by the grace of God, can do again as a people when we awaken to Thy truth and repent and turn to Thee in obedience to Thy Word. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Learning the Righteousness of God - 6

Micah 6:5 says, "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD." God tells us in this verse to remember particularly and specifically what Balaam consulted and what Balaam answered in Shittim and in Gilgal, that we might know specifically the righteousness of the Lord. Numbers 25 explains what happened at Shittim, where the judgment of God fell upon those people. Here we can see and learn once again another aspect of the righteousness of God.

Review of Previous Points on God's Righteousness

This is the sixth and final message in this short series on learning the righteousness of God. Before beginning this final point, let us refresh our memory by reviewing all the main points we have learned so far. Once we tie these things together, we can come up with a full picture of God's righteousness.

The first truth was that God's law-word is our standard for righteousness, and any deviation from that truth is sin and wickedness. When God forbids any sin, at the same time He forbids anything and everything that leads up to that sin. Our dispositions, attitudes, and lusts are all just as condemned as the physical acts themselves.

The second truth was that sin places us under the judgment and the curse of God, no matter how we get there. It does not matter whether we purposely, deliberately, malignantly, and willfully walk into sin, or whether we are tempted, enticed, seduced, and get there ignorantly. It does not matter how we arrive there. Once we are involved in sin, we are under the curse and judgment of God.

The third principle is that partial obedience is disobedience. Our Lord demands that we obey Him personally, perfectly, and perpetually. Some people think, "I am obedient in this area, and therefore He is going to excuse my disobedience in another area." No, that does not work like that. We may not expect Him to excuse disobedience in another area. Partial obedience is disobedience.

The fourth principle I enunciated was this.

I tried to show you the intimate connection between immorality and idolatry. Every immoral person is indeed an idolater. You cannot violate the seventh commandment or the tenth commandment without having first violated the first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Anytime you violate any of God’s law, you have already violated the first commandment. You have dethroned God and enthroned yourself, saying, “I don’t care what God says; this is the way that I’m going to do it.” Very obviously, then, immorality and idolatry go together.

The fifth principle that I enunciated was this: We must see the connection between sin and the righteous judgment of God upon disobedience. We must see the connection between sin and judgment, and disobedience and the righteous anger of God. God had to righteously judge sin. If you understand in any degree His sovereignty, His holiness, and His justice, you will see that God has to not only hate sin, but judge sin.

We must also see that when God's designated rulers fail to exercise His judgment, He always raises up alternative judges. This is what is known as the doctrine of interposition. It is exemplified in the life of Christ and was certainly exercised in the American Revolution. If you do not understand this principle, you do not understand how our country came into existence. Any lesser magistrate could step in and fulfill the office of a higher magistrate when that higher magistrate failed to do his duty, because a magistrate is a magistrate; it is only a matter of degrees. Magistrates have the right and authority to quell rebellion among the people and among other civil magistrates. This is shown not only historically, but biblically as well.

Christ Honors Those Who Honor Him

Introduction of the Seventh Point: Christ Honors Those Who Honor Him

This is the seventh and final point: Christ honors those who honor Him. In Numbers 25, beginning with verse 7, we read:

"And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel."

Phinehas, in righteous anger and by a righteous act, killed those whom God had already said should be killed. Moses and some of the other judges were before the tabernacle, praying and crying, according to Scripture. But when Phinehas saw this prince bring the

Moabitish woman into the camp, he took matters into his own hands. He too was a magistrate, though a lesser one, and he went in and took care of the problem.

God Is No Man's Debtor

God said, because he had done that, “I give unto him my covenant,” the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. Here is the simple truth: God honors those who honor Him. God will be no man’s debtor—period.

Romans 11 explains why it is absolutely impossible to bring God into our debt or for God to be any man’s debtor. Paul writes: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?”

“Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?”

What in the world is God telling us? God is telling us that no one can first give to God. God says, “You just show Me anyone who’s first given to Me and I’ll pay him back again.” Why is it impossible to give to God first? God gave us our life. God gave us our being. God gave us our health. God gave us our intellect. God gave us everything that we have and everything that we possess. So we cannot first give to God.

It doesn’t matter who you are. It doesn’t matter where you are. God has already given to you first. The only thing you can do is give back to God a portion, or a partial amount, of that which God has already given you. God is telling us that He always blesses and He always rewards those who faithfully serve Him.

The Principle of Honor and Dishonor from 1 Samuel 2:30

In 1 Samuel 2 and verse 30, God says, “Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far

from me;" Here is the principle He is enunciating: "for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." God says, "Them that honour me will I honour, and them that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." This is a principle from which God will not depart. There will be no alteration. Every promise that God has made is in reference to this principle: those who honor God shall be honored by God, and those who despise God shall be lightly esteemed.

In Numbers chapter 25, Phinehas honored God and did that which was right and well-pleasing in His eyes. Then God turned around and honored Phinehas. It is absolutely impossible to out-give, out-bless, and out-reward God. It is even impossible to out-bless, out-give, and out-reward God in this life.

Look at Matthew chapter 19, verse 27: "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" In other words, we have given up everything. And by the way, Peter, James, and John.

If I were to take you through the Scripture, they not only gave up their fishing vessels and fishing nets, but they even walked off when their greatest catch of their life was there in front of them. They walked off and left everything. Look what our Lord said: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

That is good for them, but what about us? "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." What did God say? If you have lost anything or given up anything for Him, you will end up receiving a hundredfold more even in this life. That is why you cannot outgive God, out-reward God, or out-bless God.

You will never, ever advance financially until you first learn to honor God with your time. "Them that honour me I will honour," saith the Lord. If you honor God through thick and thin, God will

honor you. I have had people tell me, “Pastor, I can’t afford the tithe.” The truth is, you cannot afford not to.

If I am doing business with Doc and he cuts me off and will not give me any more credit, I might could go over and get some credit from Brother Ernie. But if God cuts me off, I cannot get credit from anybody. I tell people they ought to do two things. The very first thing is to recognize God’s sovereignty, recognize God’s ownership of this earth and everything, and give Him His. The second thing is to take another ten percent minimum and save it.

Then you live on the rest. You will never, ever get ahead until you first recognize and honor God. That is a principle: “Them that honour me I will honour,” saith the Lord. You ought also to have enough brains to say, “Hey, I have got to put something back for a rainy day as well.” As God prospers you, you can put more and more and more back.

I realize that sometimes this is difficult. It is hard. My wife can tell you that there have been times in our lives when we have eaten peas all week long—peas, water, and bread, and nothing else—because we did not have it. But we still tithed. The most difficult thing is being consistent and faithful. But once you recognize God and honor Him, God says, “I'm honoring you.”

Now let me show you this principle in Scripture. Hebrews chapter 6, verse 10, is an exceedingly important verse. I want to spend a few minutes on this verse. The whole series has been learning the righteousness of God, and Scripture shows that those that honor God, God will honor. And let me point out, it is a matter of righteousness to Him.

God's Righteousness in Not Forgetting Our Works

The Bible says very plainly, “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” First of all, I want you to note in Hebrews 6 and verse 10 that this verse expressly states that God is not unfaithful to his own gracious promise.

He has promised blessings and rewards to those who lovingly and obediently serve him. Although God has promised rewards to those who lovingly, faithfully, and obediently serve him, these rewards are not ours by inherent right. In other words, we do not deserve them. They are based upon God's graciousness. We have no claim upon them.

The principle is simply this: the servant absolutely has no claim upon his master. Let us suppose that today, tomorrow, and all this week, you are perfectly obedient. You do not disobey God in any way whatsoever, mentally, physically, emotionally, or financially. Let us suppose you were just perfect. You have done everything that was commanded you. Does that mean that you are a reward? The answer is absolutely not.

Our Lord says in Luke 17, beginning in verse 7: “But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?” Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? “I trow not.” “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”

If we were perfect servants, obedient in everything, that would simply be our duty. We do not get rewards for doing our duty or for doing what we have been commanded to do. Although God is faithful to his own gracious promise, we have no inherent claim to reward, because whatever we do is simply our duty. Once we have done our duty, we must say, “We are unprofitable servants.”

We haven't gone over and above and beyond what you required us. We've simply done our duty.

Secondly, we must also consider that our best performances bear no proportion to what we leave undone. Isn't it wonderful that one of these days everything seems to go right? You just feel so good about it. But look at the days when things did not go right and you did not do what you were supposed to do. Just because we happen to be

obedient one time certainly does not bear proportion to all those times when we were not obedient.

We must also confess and acknowledge that when we are obedient and do right, we do right only because of the grace, power, and mercy of God that is in us. That's why I said in Isaiah 26 and verse 12, "LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us."

The very first thing we've got to remember is this: God is faithful to His own promise. When God promises to reward and bless us, it is not due to our inherent right to any reward. It is God being faithful to His own gracious promise.

Ministering to God by Ministering to the Saints

Now, there is a second thing to see: our works and our labor of love are not and will not be forgotten by God. Look at what he said in Hebrews 6 and verse 10: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." Good works and labor proceeding from the love to God are commendable, and when done in the name of God, they will not go unrewarded. A good work is explained in the Scripture; a good work is what God demands. It is not what we say it is.

Now look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 25. Notice what our Lord says in relationship to this. He is not going to forget our works and our labor of love, and this passage will tie right in with what I am going to say next. Look at Matthew chapter 25, beginning at verse 31.

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 25:31-46 (KJV)

> "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Here are these good works, just some of them. Here is this labor of love: inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me. Good works are never, ever going to be forgotten by God. They are not going to be overlooked. It is important to understand that we minister to God by ministering to the saints. What does God need that we have? Nothing. He has everything. He owns everything.

If we want to bless God, we must be a blessing to His people, fulfilling their needs and lifting them up. Even a cup of cold water given in His name will not go unrewarded. Our Lord says plainly in Matthew 10:42, “And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.” In other words, it is as we minister to God's people that we minister to God. It is

indeed an act of righteousness on God's part to encourage, uplift, and reward those who serve Him. God will never be any man's debtor. You cannot out-give God, out-bless God, or out-reward God.

Exposing and Fighting Sin as Service to God

Now note something about Numbers 25. What did Phinehas do? Phinehas took a spear and went in and eradicated the evil that was among the people. In a general sense, what Phinehas was doing was exposing and fighting against sin and wickedness, even when it was at a higher level. It was a prince that he killed, and the Moabitish damsel was a princess as well. God is telling us that it is a service to Him and a ministry to His people to expose and fight against sin and wickedness. As Phinehas exposed and fought against sin and wickedness, he stopped the plague that had fallen upon the nation. Twenty-four thousand people had been killed.

Stop and think about this. We think about giving a cup of cold water, providing food, or giving someone comfort and care when they have needs. Certainly that is a good work; certainly it is needed and necessary. But Phinehas was not giving a cup of cold water. He was not giving comfort and consolation. He was exposing and taking care of sin and wickedness.

It is absolutely amazing to me how God's preachers—and I emphasize the term God's—are criticized, persecuted, hated, and maligned simply for doing what God has commanded us to do: expose and fight against sin and wickedness. Have you ever wondered why people hate it when preachers rebuke, expose, and reprove them? Here is the answer: they love their sin more than righteousness, and their wickedness more than truth. Therefore, they view God's preachers as narrow-minded, bigoted, old-fashioned, and just plain hard to get along with.

I get so upset listening to the news, especially the preachers who are on the news. I got so angry that I turned it off and walked away because Joel Osteen was asked about the hurricane. He said it was just a natural catastrophe and that such things happen. He had a perfect opportunity to explain the righteousness and anger of God and to expose wickedness, sin, and ungodliness, but he missed it. Then consider Billy Graham's explanation of Katrina: “Evil is a

mystery. And we don't understand it now, but someday we will." What an in-depth statement. Here he had a perfect opportunity, and he blew it.

You say, "But Brother Weaver, that's in the Old Testament." Oh yes, I know. But what did the Bible say in Isaiah 58? Here is what God commands: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." God said, expose it. He did not say to cover it up and pretend it is normal and natural.

Consider 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 2: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Here Phinehas is exposing, dealing with, and judging sin and wickedness.

It is amazing how all of us would sin, and then, when we are caught in our sin, we become embarrassed. Let me tell you something, folks: if you are merely embarrassed because you were caught in your sin, there is no repentance in your life. The Bible talks in 2 Corinthians about a worldly sorrow and a godly sorrow. Godly sorrow worketh repentance, the Bible says, not to be repented of.

Worldly sorrow means that you are upset, humiliated, and embarrassed because you got caught. There is no sorrow for your sin—not that you violated God's law, displeased God, and dishonored Him, but only that you are embarrassed that you were caught in your sin. But when God will have mercy upon a people or upon an individual, the first thing He does is expose their sins. The very first thing He does.

Do you remember when David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and the great pains he took to cover it up? He brought Uriah, her husband, back and tried to make him go down and sleep with his wife, but Uriah would not do it. David then made him drunk, and he still would not do it. Finally David said to Joab, "Put him in the foremost front of battle, and retire from him, that he may be smitten."

And that's exactly what happened. David murdered the man by the hands of his enemies, and that's how God charged him with it. But when David had taken great pains to cover it up, we come to 2

Samuel chapter 12 and verse 1: “And the LORD sent Nathan unto David.” Nathan said, “There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.” He went into this story, and David was incensed at the arrogance and wickedness of the rich man who spared of his own flock and took the only little lamb of the poor man. David said, “The man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold.” Then old Nathan, with that long bony finger, said, “Thou art the man.” But in forgiving David, God was getting David back in a position to be used by Him.

What did He do? He began by exposing David’s sin. God can never use us until our sins are dealt with openly and honestly. What God does for an individual, He also does for a people. Look in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles 36 and verse 15: “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.” When God is going to have compassion upon someone, He sends them preachers—not just any preacher, but preachers who will expose their sin and bring them back to repentance and faith.

When God curses a people, He either removes or silences His preachers. Those who are rebuked, reproved, and exhorted by God’s preachers do not understand how blessed they really are. If God did not care about you, He would not send someone to rebuke you, reprove you, and expose your sin, that you might repent by His grace and be brought back under His blessings. It is really the blessing of God when someone preaches and teaches hard, saying, “Here’s your sins, here’s your wickedness, here’s your ungodliness, and I’m going to rebuke you in the name of Christ and reprove you according to Scripture.” Why? Not because I hate you, but to bring repentance into your life, bring you back to submission and obedience to God, and put you back under the place of blessing.

Do you remember what David said concerning the commandments of God in Psalm 19, verse 11? He said, “Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.” What do God's commandments do? They warn us. As we keep them, we are rewarded; we are honored by God. “Them that

honour me I will honour," saith the Lord. "They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." It is just that simple.

Our Lord said it like this in Luke 6:26: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." If you can go through this life and everybody thinks you are hunky-dory, that you are all right, a good guy, and number one, something is really wrong with your Christianity. You have not taken a stand somewhere. You have not exposed wickedness somewhere.

What did our Lord say in Matthew 5:11–12? God's blessings are upon us irrespective of the world's hatred and cursing. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." What is He saying? God's honor and God's blessing do not hinge upon man's recognition. Thank God for that. They do not hinge upon man's appropriation. God will honor us even when others dishonor us.

There are two sides to every coin. In Scripture, there is always a positive and a negative; the two go together. You cannot have one without the other. If you do not believe that, go out to your automobile and either remove the positive cable from your battery and try to start it, or remove the negative battery cable and try to start it.

The Negative Side: God Dishonors Those Who Dishonor Him

You've got to have both. Now, what I'm trying to make is this: God always gives us a positive and a negative. When he says, "Thou shalt not steal," what's he saying? The positive is that we're to work with our hands, labor honestly, that we may have to give to those who need, according to Ephesians chapter 4. When he said, "Thou shalt not kill," the positive is, thou shalt preserve life. When God says, "Them that honour me I will honour," that's the positive. The negative is, "for they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Isn't that amazing? Not only will Christ honor those who honor him, he will dishonor those who dishonor him.

This is known, once again, as the Lex Talionis. It is the law of retribution. It is where God makes the punishment fit the crime. So if God says, You dishonored me, fine, I shall dishonor you.

Now, David understood this principle. Joab and Abishai, his brother, murdered Abner, the son of Ner. The reason they murdered him was because he killed Asahel, their brother, in battle. And by the way, it was not Abner's fault. Abner begged Asahel to turn back, and he wouldn't. Finally, Abner had to kill him just to keep him from killing himself. Abner then came to David, and David and Abner entered into a covenant together. Joab and Abishai heard about it, called Abner to the side, and murdered him. David said concerning these two men who murdered Abner, "And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me."

Now look what he prays: "The LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness." Joab, Abishai, you took care of Abner, but now God's going to take care of you. The Lord rewards. This prayer is prayed over and over in Scripture. Psalm 94 says, "O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself." Then comes the prayer: "Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud."

“Give them what they deserve.” Well, that is a prayer, is it not? Then he asked the question, “LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?” He talks about their wickedness. David prayed that God would smite them, that God would reward them. They were dishonoring God, so he wanted them to be dishonored by God. What did God do to Biotharo? He destroyed him. Did He honor or dishonor wicked Haman? Consider what God did to Balaam and to Cain.

Consider also those men who opposed Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah. Look in the Bible, as well as in history, at the tyrannical rulers that God deposed. Look at the wicked priests whom He defrocked and destroyed: Hophni, Phinehas, Abiathar, and others specifically pointed out in Scripture.

Once again, I can hear someone saying, “Oh, but Brother Weaver, that is in the Old Testament. God in the Old Testament was a God of

vengeance. But when you get to the New Testament, all He is is a God of love." He is so loving and so forgiving. I know that God is love; Scripture says that. I know that God is a forgiving God; Scripture says that as well. But the same God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament, and God does not change. God is immutable. He will not be one thing in one era and something totally different in another era.

Do you know what the Apostle Paul prayed concerning Alexander the coppersmith? In 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 14, Paul said, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works." In other words, give back to him that which he has done. He has dishonored God; let God dishonor him. In 2 Peter, chapter 2, verses 13 and 14—and, in fact, beginning with verse 12—Peter says exactly the same thing concerning wicked people.

"But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children." But notice verse 13: "and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness."

Do you think our Lord is going to allow those who dishonor him to get away without being dishonored? The answer is no. It is the lex talionis. Everyone knows about wicked Babylon—commercial Babylon and religious Babylon—but look what the Scripture says in Revelation 18: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."

"Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double." What is God going to do? He is going to see to it that those who dishonor him are dishonored. In Revelation 22:12, our Lord says, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me,

to give every man according as his work shall be." My reward is with me. God says, I am going to pay you back.

Those that honor me will I honor. Those that dishonor me shall be lightly esteemed. We shall see exactly how lightly esteemed they are when, according to Psalm 58, the judgment of God falls upon them, and it falls upon them in such devastation that we say with the psalmist, "So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." The psalmist most definitely knows how to honor those who honor him, and how to dishonor those who dishonor Him.

Applications

Applications: Honoring God Daily and Without Compromise

We either honor or dishonor our Lord in our lives on a daily basis. If we want to be considered of God, we need to be considerate of Him as well. If we wish to be honored by Him, we must honor Him. We must learn daily to stop, examine our thinking, attitudes, dispositions, and actions, and see whether they are pleasing or displeasing, honoring or dishonoring to the Lord.

We have opportunities every day. But we must honor Him even when it seems and appears that we are dishonoring men and their beliefs. There is a cry today to be tolerant and politically correct. Scripture is exceedingly discriminating, and God is a discriminating God. Even when Scripture draws the ire, wrath, and vindictiveness of the politically correct and the religiously tolerant, we still must stand for His truth.

Dennis Johnson said: “The Lord's witnesses are to challenge the gods in which people trust, revealing all their emptiness and impotence. To bring God's salvation to the ends of the earth, Jesus' witnesses must unmask treasured idols, encountering hostility from those whose security is shaken by God's truth. Although the community of Lord's service witnesses is characterized by tangible love that is attractive to outsiders, their testimony makes no peace with any alternative faith to Christ. Religious solutions, apart from

Christ the Savior, are dangerous frauds with which there can be no compromise or polite toleration."

It is our duty to challenge and unmask the false idols of other people. It is our responsibility not to compromise His truth and say that there is a middle ground somewhere where we can all meet. No, there is no middle ground.

As Moses drew that line and said, "Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me." There is no middle ground. We either stand for Christ, honoring Him, or stand against Him, dishonoring Him. We either believe and declare all of God's Word or stand against Him. We work with Him in obedience to the totality of His Word, or we work against Him.

Christ said in Matthew 12:30: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

This last principle of learning God's righteousness must be indelibly pressed upon our minds. Christ honors those who honor Him. We must also remember that those who dishonor Him shall be lightly esteemed. You cannot be disrespectful, disobedient, and dishonorable to the Son of God and expect the Father to be pleased with you. But Christ will be no man's debtor. You honor Him, and He will honor you. Even when you have no inherent claim to reward, it is still a righteous thing with God to reward those who faithfully and obediently serve Him.

Father, we are so thankful for Your righteousness. Thou art God, and besides Thee there is none other. Give us grace, Lord, that we may honor Thee in all we say and do. Bring our lives into conformity to Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

Source Notes

Chapter 1: Learning the Righteousness of God - 1
JW00964 | SermonAudio

Chapter 2: Learning the Righteousness of God - 2
JW00963 | SermonAudio

Chapter 3: Learning the Righteousness of God - 3
JW00962 | SermonAudio

Chapter 4: Learning the Righteousness of God - 4
JW00961 | SermonAudio

Chapter 5: Learning the Righteousness of God - 5
JW00960 | SermonAudio

Chapter 6: Learning the Righteousness of God - 6
JW00959 | SermonAudio

Topical Index

Chapter titles and section headings are listed with the pages on which they begin.

A

Application: Living by God's Law p. 20

Applications p. 110

Applications for Holy Living p. 55

Applications: Honoring God Daily and Without Compromise p. 110

Applications: Responsibility and Vigilance p. 40

B

Balaam's Shift to Consultant and the Plan to Corrupt Israel p. 29

Balak's Desire and Balaam's Failed Curses p. 27

Believers Must Learn Christ p. 8

Biblical Basis for Judges Executing God's Justice p. 75

C

Christ Honors Those Who Honor Him p. 97

Covetousness as Idolatry p. 53

E

Examples of Spiritual Magistrates Acting as Civil Magistrates p. 86

Exposing and Fighting Sin as Service to God p. 104

G

God Is No Man's Debtor p. 98

God's Approval of Interposition p. 90

God's Controversy with His People in Micah 6 p. 9

God's Law-Word as the Standard of Righteousness p. 14

God's Righteousness in Not Forgetting Our Works p. 100

H

Historical Examples of Idolatry and Immorality p. 50

I

Interposition in Scripture: Phinehas as a Lesser Magistrate p. 80

Introduction and Review p. 25, p. 43
Introduction and Review of Previous Principles p. 58
Introduction of the Seventh Point: Christ Honors Those Who Honor Him p. 97
Introduction of the Sixth Principle p. 75
Introduction: Man Does Not Know God by Nature p. 5

L

Learning the Righteousness of God p. 5
Learning the Righteousness of God - 1 p. 5
Learning the Righteousness of God - 2 p. 25
Learning the Righteousness of God - 3 p. 43
Learning the Righteousness of God - 4 p. 57
Learning the Righteousness of God - 5 p. 73
Learning the Righteousness of God - 6 p. 95

M

Ministering to God by Ministering to the Saints p. 102

P

Partial Obedience Is Disobedience p. 45, p. 46

R

Review of Previous Points on God's Righteousness p. 95
Review of Previous Principles p. 73

S

Sin Affects Others and Stems from Our Own Lusts p. 36
Sin and Judgment p. 59

T

The Call to Remember from Shittim to Gilgal p. 11
The Connection Between Immorality and Idolatry p. 47
The Connection Between Sin and Judgment p. 59
The Danger of Seduction Over Frontal Assault p. 30
The Doctrine of Interposition Defined p. 76
The Gradual Nature of Sin and Its Consequences p. 34
The Law Fulfilled, Not Abolished p. 16
The Nature of a Magistrate p. 82

The Negative Side: God Dishonors Those Who Dishonor Him p. 107
The Only Way to Turn Away God's Fierce Anger p. 71
The Power of Temptation and the 'Grove' p. 49
The Principle of Honor and Dishonor from 1 Samuel 2:30 p. 98
The Setting of Shittim and the Danger of Prosperity p. 32
The Sin at Shittim: Violating God's Law p. 13
Theological Basis and Christ as the Ultimate Interposer p. 92

U

Understanding God's Holiness p. 66
Understanding God's Justice p. 69
Understanding God's Sovereignty p. 60

Scripture Index

Scripture references identified in chapter readings, headings, and manuscript text are listed with their page locations.

Genesis

Genesis 19 p. 34

Genesis 19:20 p. 34

Genesis 21 p. 50

Exodus

Exodus 16 p. 90

Exodus 22:28 p. 90

Leviticus

Leviticus 11 p. 66

Leviticus 19 p. 66

Numbers

Numbers 1:16 p. 90

Numbers 3:32 p. 83

Numbers 22 p. 28

Numbers 22:5-6 p. 27, p. 28

Numbers 23 p. 30

Numbers 25 p. 13, p. 21, p. 26, p. 27, p. 28, p. 35, p. 44, p. 45, p. 46, p. 48, p. 49, p. 58, p. 59, p. 60, p. 61, p. 66, p. 67, p. 71, p. 73, p. 81, p. 85, p. 90, p. 95, p. 97, p. 104

Numbers 25:1 p. 21

Numbers 25:1-3 p. 27, p. 47

Numbers 25:3 p. 59

Numbers 25:5-9 p. 74, p. 75

Numbers 33 p. 32

Numbers 33:49 p. 12, p. 13

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 4 p. 35, p. 36

Deuteronomy 6:24 p. 23

Deuteronomy 6:24-25 p. 20
Deuteronomy 8 p. 33
Deuteronomy 16:21 p. 50
Deuteronomy 16:21-22 p. 50

Joshua

Joshua 4 p. 13
Joshua 9 p. 90
Joshua 22 p. 90

Judges

Judges 18 p. 82, p. 83
Judges 18:7 p. 82, p. 83

1 Samuel

1 Samuel 2 p. 98, p. 99
1 Samuel 2:30 p. 98

1 Kings

1 Kings 16:33 p. 51

2 Kings

2 Kings 11:8-9 p. 89

2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles 7:14 p. 82
2 Chronicles 19 p. 75
2 Chronicles 36 p. 106

Ezra

Ezra 7 p. 83
Ezra 7:25 p. 83

Job

Job 19 p. 69

Psalm

Psalm 2 p. 92, p. 93
Psalm 7 p. 60, p. 61
Psalm 9 p. 61

Psalm 19 p. 106, p. 107
Psalm 22 p. 62, p. 68
Psalm 55:23 p. 71
Psalm 58 p. 110
Psalm 94 p. 108
Psalm 115 p. 62

Proverbs

Proverbs 5 p. 31
Proverbs 7 p. 49
Proverbs 13:15 p. 56
Proverbs 15:26 p. 67

Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 7:26 p. 49

Isaiah

Isaiah 26 p. 102
Isaiah 53 p. 68
Isaiah 58 p. 105

Daniel

Daniel 4 p. 62

Amos

Amos 3 p. 69, p. 70

Micah

Micah 6 p. 6, p. 9, p. 11, p. 12, p. 26, p. 29, p. 55
Micah 6:1-8 p. 57
Micah 6:5 p. 12, p. 26, p. 27, p. 73, p. 95

Nahum

Nahum 1:3 p. 71

Matthew

Matthew 5 p. 21, p. 22, p. 23
Matthew 5:11-12 p. 107
Matthew 5:17-18 p. 16

Matthew 10:42 p. 103, p. 104
Matthew 12:30 p. 111
Matthew 25:31-46 p. 102

Luke

Luke 6:26 p. 107
Luke 6:46 p. 74
Luke 17 p. 101

John

John 8:29 p. 18
John 14:21 p. 21

Acts

Acts 4:1 p. 84
Acts 5:24 p. 84
Acts 16 p. 83
Acts 17 p. 65

Romans

Romans 3 p. 7
Romans 3:20 p. 15
Romans 7 p. 15
Romans 7:12 p. 16
Romans 8 p. 7
Romans 11 p. 98
Romans 14 p. 36
Romans 15 p. 12

1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 2 p. 7
1 Corinthians 5:7 p. 17
1 Corinthians 10 p. 12, p. 35, p. 36
1 Corinthians 11 p. 63
1 Corinthians 15:28 p. 17

2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 5 p. 18, p. 19

2 Corinthians 7:1 p. 44, p. 45

Galatians

Galatians 4:4-5 p. 18

Ephesians

Ephesians 2:14 p. 16, p. 17

Ephesians 4 p. 8, p. 61

Ephesians 5 p. 54, p. 63, p. 64

Ephesians 6:3 p. 63

Colossians

Colossians 3 p. 54

2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 1 p. 69

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 6 p. 62

2 Timothy

2 Timothy 2:15 p. 9

Hebrews

Hebrews 4 p. 17

Hebrews 5 p. 10, p. 11

Hebrews 6 p. 100, p. 102

Hebrews 8 p. 19, p. 20

Hebrews 10:16 p. 20

Hebrews 13:10 p. 17

James

James 1:13-15 p. 37

James 2 p. 14

James 2:10-11 p. 14, p. 46

1 Peter

1 Peter 1 p. 66

1 Peter 1:15-16 p. 47

2 Peter

2 Peter 2 p. 69

2 Peter 2:15 p. 28

1 John

1 John 2 p. 8, p. 26

1 John 2:4 p. 21

1 John 3 p. 65

1 John 3:4 p. 14

1 John 5:3 p. 21

Revelation

Revelation 2:14 p. 29

Revelation 15:4 p. 66

Revelation 18 p. 109

Revelation 21:22 p. 17

Revelation 22:12 p. 109, p. 110

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

Your companion study guide

Learning the Righteousness of God

Follow the Scripture references, reflect on each lesson,
and use the written-response space to apply what you learn.



Scan to open the matching study guide

Downloadable PDF | 8.5 x 11 inches
No sign-in required

studyguides.weaverbiblecollege.com

If you cannot scan the code, visit the address above
and search for this book by title.