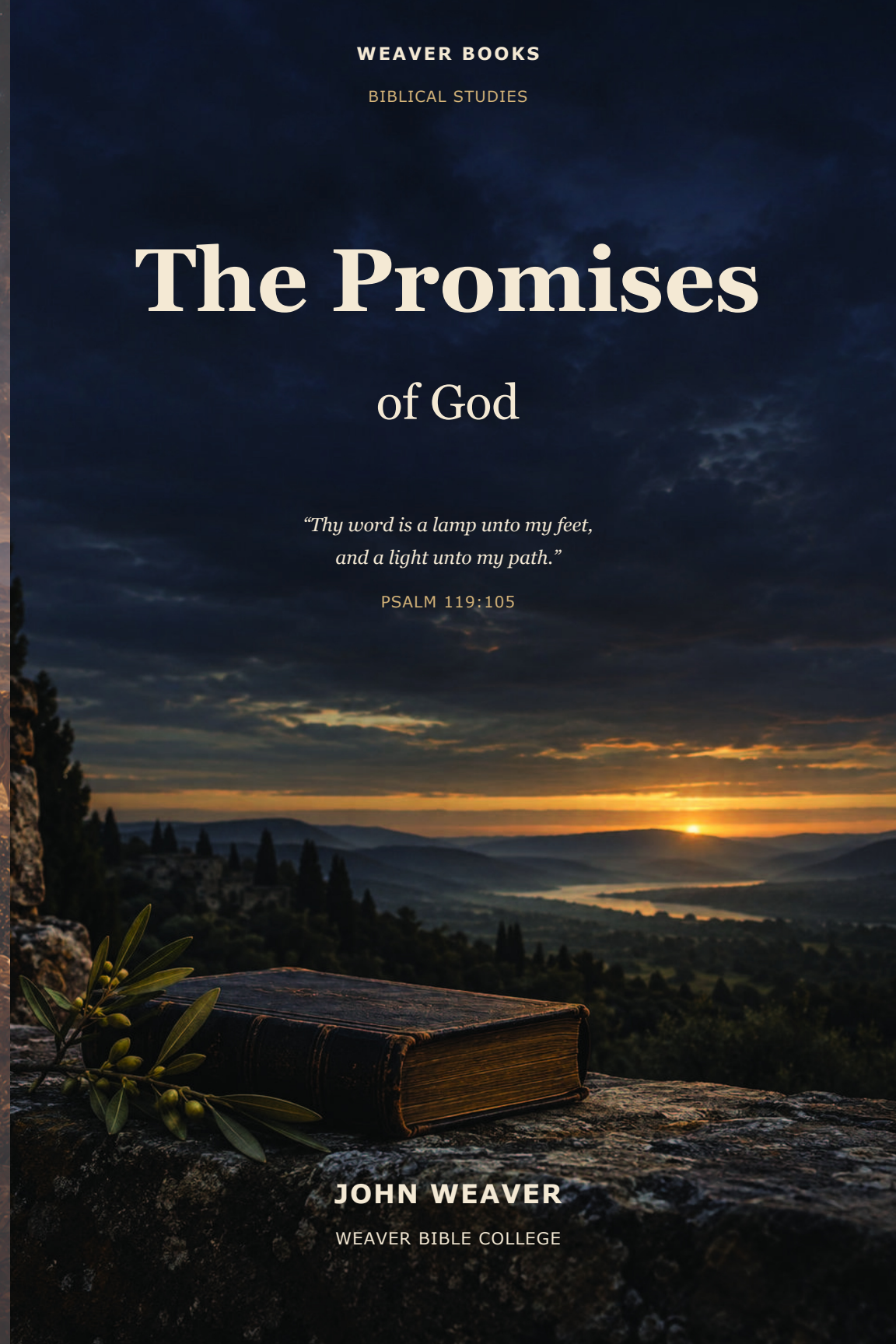
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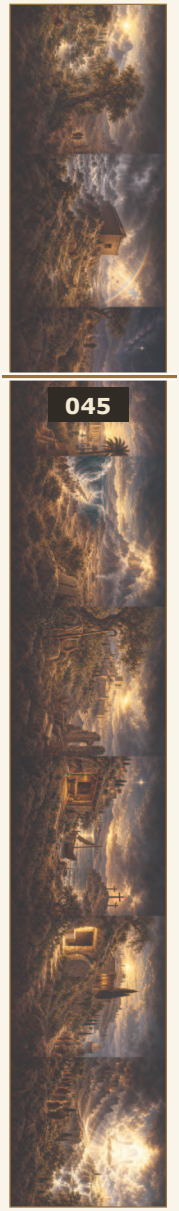
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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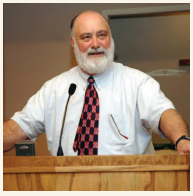
For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:20, EXCERPT

The promises of God provide a foundation for patient trust. This collection brings together messages on divine timing, protection and preservation, and the habits that hinder faithful responsibility. John Weaver asks how confidence in God's care should shape the believer's conduct, endurance, and readiness to act.

"Survival, protection, and preservation of life are not something for which we should feel guilty."

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John Weaver

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CHAPTER 1

When It Is Time

Judges chapter 6, beginning with verse 12:

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Introduction: The Question of Timing

I have often been asked a very simple and straightforward question: "When is it time?" My answer has always been equally simple and straightforward: "The Lord will reveal when it is time." The question of time is in regard to a revolution such as we had in 1776. I suppose

that the correct way to answer, in one sense of the word, would be to ascertain exactly what took place that ignited the war for independence in 1776.

Yes, there were taxes, and lots of them. There were also persecutions and prosecutions. There were colonists who had been murdered in cold blood by the British. I am sure that each and every one of these, plus a multitude of other reasons lumped together, would be a heavy weight upon those colonists. However, I believe the straw that actually broke the camel's back, so to speak, was when they came for the guns and ammunition.

Older people know about the battles of Lexington and Concord. Unhappily, the younger generation is deficient in historical knowledge. But when they came for the ammunition and for the guns, in Concord especially, that is when war really and truly broke out.

Historical Context: Declaration of Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms

Our forefathers did not leave us in ignorance as to why they fought, nor as to what instituted that war. Many of you are not aware that there is an official document known as the Declaration of Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms. This document was issued by the Second Continental Congress on July 6, 1775, to explain why the thirteen colonies took up arms against the British government. The final draft was written by John Dickinson, who incorporated language from an earlier draft written by Thomas Jefferson. A portion of the Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms gives a general sense and understanding of what was happening in the colonies in 1774 and 1775. Remember, this was put out by the Second Continental Congress.

"Soon after the intelligence of these proceedings arrived on this continent, General Gage, who in the course of the last year had taken possession of the town of Boston in the province of Massachusetts Bay and still occupied it as a garrison, on the 19th day of April, sent out from that place a large detachment of his army who made an unprovoked assault on the inhabitants of the said province in the town of Lexington, as appears by the affidavits of a great number of

persons, some of whom were officers and soldiers of that detachment, murdered eight of the inhabitants and wounded many others. From thence the troops proceeded in warlike array to the town of Concord, where they set upon another party of the inhabitants of the same province, killing several and wounding more, until compelled to retreat by the country people suddenly assembled to repel this cruel aggression.

"Hostilities thus commenced by the British troops have been since prosecuted by them without regard to faith and reputation. The inhabitants of Boston being confined within that town by the general, their governor, and having in order to procure their dismission entered into a treaty with him, it was stipulated that the said inhabitants having deposited their arms with their own magistrate, should have liberty to depart, taking with them their other effects. They accordingly delivered up their arms. But in open violation of honor and defiance of the obligation of treaties, which even savage nations esteem sacred, the governor ordered their arms deposited, as aforesaid, that they might be preserved for their owners to be seized by a body of his soldiers, detained the greater part of the inhabitants in the town and"

The few who were permitted to retire were compelled to leave most of their valuable effects behind. By this perfidy, wives were separated from their husbands, children from their parents, and the aged and sick from their relations and friends. Those accustomed to live in plenty, even elegance, were reduced to deplorable distress. The general, emulating his ministerial masters, by a proclamation dated the twelfth of June, after venting gross falsehoods and calumnies against the good people of these colonies, declared them all, by name or description, rebels and traitors, and superseded the common law by ordering the use and exercise of martial law.

His troops butchered our countrymen and wantonly burned Charlestown, besides many houses elsewhere. Our ships and vessels were seized, necessary provisions intercepted, and he exerted his utmost power to spread destruction and devastation. We received certain intelligence that General Carleton, governor of Canada, was instigating the people of that province and the Indians to fall upon

us. We had too much reason to apprehend that schemes had been formed to excite domestic enemies against us.

In brief, part of these colonies already felt, and all were sure to feel, as far as the vengeance of administration could inflict it, the complicated calamities of fire, sword, and famine. We were reduced to choosing between unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers and resistance by force.

The latter was our choice. We had counted the cost and found nothing so dreadful as voluntary slavery. Honor, justice, and humanity forbade us tamely to surrender the freedom received from our gallant ancestors, which our innocent posterity had a right to receive from us. We could not endure the infamy and guilt of resigning succeeding generations to the wretchedness awaiting them if we basely entailed hereditary bondage upon them. Our cause was just. Our union was perfect.

Our internal resources were great, and, if necessary, foreign assistance was undoubtedly available. We gratefully acknowledged as signal instances of divine favor that providence had not permitted us to enter this severe controversy until we had grown to our present strength, been exercised in warlike operation, and possessed the means of defending ourselves. With hearts fortified by these reflections, we solemnly declared before God and the world that, exerting the utmost energy of the powers our beneficent Creator had graciously bestowed upon us, we would, in defiance of every hazard, assume the arms compelled upon us by our enemies with unabating firmness.

“Perseverance, employ for the preservation of our liberties, being with one mind resolved to die free men rather than to live slaves. In our own native land, in defense of the freedom that is our birthright and which we have ever enjoyed until the late violation of it, for the protection of our property acquired solely by the honest industry of our forefathers and ourselves against violence actually offered, we have taken up arms. We shall lay them down when hostilities cease on the part of the aggressors and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed and not before.” So our forefathers made it exceedingly clear that they were not the aggressors.

They did not want the fight, and they did not start the fight. However, they were planning on finishing the fight. In this declaration of causes and necessities of taking up arms, our forefathers were not left a choice. It was either fight or become slaves, and so they chose to fight. We must also understand, in reading this document, that they were telling us the time of fighting was brought upon them by the providence of God.

They say, "We gratefully acknowledge as signal instances of the divine favor toward us, that his providence would not permit us to be called into this severe controversy until we had grown up to our present strength, had been previously exercised in warlike operations, and possessed the means of defending ourselves." In the providence of God, God prepared them physically, mentally, spiritually, militarily, in every way, so that they could fight this war. They chose to fight because they were basically not left a choice.

Jefferson said it very succinctly in the Declaration of Independence when he said that all mankind are more willing to suffer while evils are sufferable than to right themselves in abolishing those customs to which they are used to. However, Jefferson was also pointing out that there comes a time when evils are insufferable. That is exactly what our founding fathers gave us in this declaration of the necessity of taking up arms. They are telling us that evils became insufferable.

Many have chosen to fight over the years for different reasons. But every time they fought, they believed it was indeed time to fight. When we talk about fighting, we talk about drawing a line in the sand. When you hear someone say, "I've drawn my line in the sand," all he is saying is, this is the last place I'm willing to suffer while evils are sufferable. This is the last point at which I'm willing to give in and give up. Let me tell you very quickly the background for this drawing the line in the sand.

The Line in the Sand

Supposedly, this came from Colonel William Barrett Travis, who did exactly that for the men of the Alamo. Colonel Travis was a young man, only twenty-six. He was not a professional soldier; he was a lawyer. But he knew enough about history to understand that, in a

siege, the army on the outside usually prevailed against the army on the inside. These men were inside the Alamo.

It was March of 1836 when Colonel Travis addressed his men: "We must die. Our business is not to make a fruitless effort to save our lives, but to choose the manner of our death." Travis considered three possibilities. They could surrender and be annihilated by the Mexican armies; try to fight their way out and be butchered by the Mexican lancers; or stay in the fort, resist every assault, and sell their lives as dearly as possible. After making these statements, he took his sword, drew a line in the sand, and said, basically, "I want every man who's determined to stay here and die with me to step over this line." Needless to say, there was probably not a stampede to get over that line, because everyone knew that crossing it meant death. We are told that young Tapley Holland was the first to run quickly over the line. As he did so, he said that he was ready to die for his country.

Eventually, every man in the Alamo stepped over that line except two. One was co-commander Jim Bowie, who was sick in bed. He ordered men to take his bed and carry it over the line, and they did so. The other was a French soldier of fortune named Louis Moses Rose, who escaped that night and supposedly made it successfully through the Mexican line to the state of Louisiana.

Colonel William Travis drew that line in the sand and said, "Here it is; all of you who are willing to die, step over here." But what worked for Colonel Travis will not necessarily work so easily for you and me today. The reason is that the line in the sand keeps moving. We draw a line here and say, "Don't you step over this line," and the enemy steps over the line.

And so what do we do? We draw another line: "We'll let you go over that one, but don't you come over this one." They step over that line, and then we draw a third. The line keeps shifting; the line keeps moving.

You must understand another problem with drawing the line in the sand: different men draw their lines in different places. What really angers and upsets you may not anger and upset me, and what really jerks my line may not jerk your line. As our forefathers said in the declaration of causes and necessities of taking up arms, it

requires divine providence for you and I all to have the same line in the sand. So God has to work that out.

Biblical Answers: Three Ways God Initiates War

I have been asked this question innumerable times: “When is it time to fight?” Stop and think with me about that answer. As you read through Scripture, there are different answers to that question. I am going to show you from the Bible three answers, and then show you in Judges chapter 6 how God worked in the life of Gideon.

First of all, when you ask, “When is it time to fight?” you must realize that, at first, there were times when God specifically told His leaders that it was time to fight. He commanded and ordered them to make war. For instance, hold Judges chapter 6, but look in your Bibles to the book of Numbers, chapter 31. I want you to understand that this is a non-negotiable command. In Numbers chapter 31, beginning with verse 1, notice what is said: “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,” So the LORD initiated this conversation and this command: “Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites.”

“Afterwards thou shalt be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the LORD of Midian.” Then He told them exactly what to do. Notice that it was the LORD who initiated this war. It was an offensive war; the Midianites were not attacking the Israelites. It is true that this war was initiated in response to what happened in Numbers chapter 25, where the Midianites seduced the Israelites into fornication and idolatry. But there was no battle, and consequently God now commanded Moses to avenge Israel of the Midianites. This was an offensive war begun and initiated by God. God commanded the civil ruler, Moses—he was king in Jeshurun, the Scripture says—to start this war. If you will turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 15, you will see this again, beginning with verse 1.

In 1 Samuel 15:1, Samuel said unto Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel. Now therefore, hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember all that Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up out of Egypt. Now go

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

Notice, it was God who came to King Saul and said, "You start this war." It was an offensive war. You say, "But God said He remembered what the Amalekites did to Israel," but notice that this was when they came out of Egypt, 400 years earlier. The period of the judges was 480 years. Here is another offensive war when God came to the civil ruler and said, "You begin this war."

Joshua 10:40 says, "So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings. He left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, ...as the LORD God of Israel commanded." So God commanded all of those wars.

Now, you can ask this simple question: "Well, how many wars did God command?" And the answer is, I don't know. A lot of them. Numbers 21:14 says, "Wherefore, it is said in the book of the wars of the LORD, what He did in the Red Sea and in the brooks of Arnon." Note the statement, "Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the LORD." Evidently there were a multitude of wars, for there is an entire book concerning the wars of the LORD. Since you are in Numbers, turn to Joshua chapter 5, because everyone is familiar with this passage, and if you are not, you should be. I want to point out one thing concerning it. Joshua 5:13 says, "And it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with a sword drawn in his hand."

In Joshua 5, Joshua went unto him and said unto him, “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” And he said, “Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship, and said unto him, “What saith my Lord unto his servant?” And the captain of the LORD’s host—the Christophany, the pre-incarnate appearing of Jesus Christ—said unto Joshua, “Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy.” And Joshua did so.

Notice verse 14: “But as captain of the host of the LORD, am I now come.” Then verse 15 says, “the captain of the LORD’s host.” The word host is the word for armies: “As captain of the LORD’s armies, am I now come.” So God has His armies. Therefore He is a man of war, the Bible tells us, and there is a book concerning the wars of the LORD.

When is it time to fight? First of all, it is when God tells His leaders, “Now is the time; do it.” That is exactly what He did in these passages. The second answer is that sometimes His leaders sought Him for direction as to whether or not to initiate a battle or war.

David is one of the greatest examples. Many times he sought God’s directives as to whether he was to pursue or attack. God had already chosen David to be king; in fact, David was already anointed king. Yet 1 Samuel 23:1 says, “Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing floors. Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said to David, Go and smite the Philistines and save Keilah.” God did not necessarily initiate this conversation; David did. He asked the LORD, “What is your will?”

David asked, “Shall I go and do this? Is it your will for me to fight this time?” And the answer was yes. In 1 Samuel 30:8, “David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue, for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.” David was asking the LORD’s will concerning pursuing this troop.

Again, in 2 Samuel 5:19, “And David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? Wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.” Notice now: three times David asked the LORD, “Shall I fight? Shall I attack?” And three times God said, “Yes you may.”

In David’s instance, undoubtedly, he consulted what was known as the Urim and the Thummim, where the high priest discerned the LORD’s will. You and I do not have the Urim and the Thummim. We have something far greater: the completed, full, final, inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. Everything that we do is to be

directed and determined by the Word of God, because God's Word is His revealed will for us today.

So, when is it time to fight? On some occasions, God told His leaders, "Do it." On other occasions, the leaders sought Him for wisdom and direction, and He either said yay or nay.

Thirdly, there were times in the Bible when God did not speak directly to the ruler, and the ruler did not necessarily seek the LORD's will concerning the matter. But there were times when everyone just knew it was time to fight. In Judges, chapter 20, verses 1 and 2, without going into the background, this points out one truth: there were occasions when everyone knew it was time to fight.

"Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan, even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD in Mizpah. And the chief of all the people, even all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 footmen that drew sword." Notice in verse 1 that they gathered themselves together as one man, from Dan even to Beersheba. Verse 11 says, "So all the men of Israel were gathered together against the city, knit together as one man." Everyone knew it was time to fight.

In 2 Chronicles 32, the king of Assyria was attacking and planning to attack. Verse 4 records, "So there was gathered much people together who stopped all the fountains and the brook that ran through the midst of the land saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?" Note the words, "So there was gathered much people together." In other words, everybody knew, "We've got to do something." They were going to make sure that the kings of Assyria did not find water to sustain themselves and their armies.

Now return to Judges 6:16, which is our text. This was part of the promise that God gave to Gideon in his war against the Midianites: "And the LORD said to him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." In other words, God was saying that all the hearts of the people would be melted together as one man.

Everybody will know it's time to fight. At times, God may use either one of these three ways, or He may use a combination of them. For instance, in 1 Samuel chapter 11, verses 6 and 7, God not only stirred up the civil ruler; He also stirred up the people. The Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard the tidings, and his anger was greatly kindled. He took a yoke of oxen, hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, “Whosoever cometh not after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done in his oxen.” And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. So God not only stirred up the king in this instance; He also stirred up the people, and all the people came together with one consent.

So, when is it time to fight? The answer is biblically, number one, when God tells the civil ruler, “It's time.” Or when a ruler asks God, “Shall I?” and God says yes. Or when God places it in the hearts of all His people, with one consent, and they know, “It's time.”

Gideon's Call and Preparation (Judges 6)

Now, I want to take this and go back to the book of Judges, chapter 6, and show what transpired when Gideon began his war. First of all, notice Judges chapter 6, verses 1 through 5. This is like what I read concerning the causes and necessities of taking up arms. The oppression, the persecution, the fraud, and corruption during Gideon's time were exceedingly severe. Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. The hand of Midian prevailed against Israel, and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them dens in the mountains, caves, and strongholds. When Israel had sown, the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the children of the east came up against them. They encamped against them and destroyed the increase of the earth as far as Gaza, leaving no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. They came up with their cattle and with their tents, and they came up as grasshoppers for a multitude.

"For both they and their camels were without number, and they entered into the land to destroy it." Notice, please: oppression, fraud, everything. They came with one intent—to destroy the land. They were leaving nothing for the people or their animals. It seems

as if folks have to hit rock-solid bottom before they look up to the LORD.

Have you ever noticed that? We are so perverse that we do not heed instruction easily, nor do we take correction readily. Therefore, it takes the proverbial two by four upside the head to get our attention and wake us up. I am sure that a few people living in the land of Israel may not have been affected by the Midianite invasion, but by and large, as a whole, everyone was.

You have to remember that, in those days, the economy was agricultural. Without the fruit and the crops, you did not live. No one lived. No animals lived. Nothing. All you have to do is listen to the news, and I know that it is a controlled news media. But if you usually believe the opposite of what you are told, or if you extrapolate about a thousand percent out of what you are told, you will find that conditions are far worse than they really are.

Look at the corruption and fraud that we have in our own government. Look at our own congressmen, our judicial system, and the executive branch. My question is this: Why do we have to get so low before we look up?

I will be absolutely honest with you. I suppose one of the greatest things that could happen to this country is if it got a hundred times worse. Maybe then people would say, "You know, there is something wrong." Maybe we would begin to open our eyes and wake up. I am showing you the background for God choosing a deliverer, for God choosing a man to start a war and a fight. First of all, you have to consider the oppression, persecution, fraud, and corruption. We read all about that in the Declaration of Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms.

Generally speaking, the people as a whole in Judges chapter 6 were crying for help, relief, and aid. They understood that their society, economy, and country had been destroyed. “And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD. And it came to pass when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites.” They were crying because of all the oppression, corruption, and destruction.

When they cried to the LORD, most of them were already hiding in the mountains and caves. They had lost everything.

Why did Israel wait so long before they cried to the LORD? Why did they have to get so low before they cried to the LORD? Go back to verse 1: “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.” They had to get so low because they were sinful, wicked, disobedient, and lacking in understanding. Sinners do not want to repent or change; they love their sin. That was Israel’s problem. The reason they were in trouble to begin with was their sin. Had they not been idolaters and rebellious, they never would have been delivered into the hands of the Midianites.

But now they were beginning to cry and scream. Now they were beginning to realize, “We’re done for. We are gone as a country, as an economy, as a society, as a nation, if God does not do something.” That was the point they had to come to.

There was also a rebuke for their sins and disobedience. While they were crying, “Then the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, who said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage, and I delivered you out of the hand of all the Egyptians, and out of the hand”

God Chooses the Deliverer

"Of all them that oppressed you, and drave them out before you, that is all those peoples, and gave you their land. And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God, fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell, but ye obey not my voice." God was saying, "I told you and you wouldn't listen. I gave you a command and you wouldn't obey." It is strange that we cannot put two and two together and make it equal four.

We wish to blame our problems on everyone and everything else. We do not want to confess, acknowledge, or forsake our sins. There are many things wrong with America today, but our most pressing problem is that we have sinned against our God. The Bible tells us in Numbers 32 and verse 23, "Be sure your sins will find you out." The

truth of the matter is, our sins have found us out. We have been caught up with, and still desire, blaming our problems on everyone and everything else. It seems that we do not want to listen to God's rebuke or heed His voice.

We will never prosper until we do. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 28 and verse 13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy." Yet we are willing to say that our problems are anything but spiritual.

Fourthly, God sovereignly and providentially selects and chooses the man to deliver His people. He chose the judges, David, and a host of others. Therefore, it should not surprise us that God chose Gideon. Look in verse 11: "And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under the oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained to Joash the Abiezrite, and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, If the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? Where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? But now the LORD hath forsaken us and delivered us in the hands of the Midianites. And the LORD looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not I sent thee?"

I find it extremely interesting that the angel appears to Gideon and says, “Hail, thou mighty man of valor.” What was Gideon doing? He was hiding, threshing wheat by the winepress, trying to keep the Midianites from finding him. And yet God calls him a mighty man of valor because God knew his character and his courage.

When the angel says, “The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor,” look at verse 13: “And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befalling us? Where be all these miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? But now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.” Then the next verse says, “And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.” “Have not I sent thee?”

Isn't it interesting that God never answered his questions in verse 13? Of course, we already know the answer: their sin, wickedness, and idolatry. Why is all this befalling us? Everyone wants to ask, "Why? Why? Why?" Why something happened is not important. What is important is what happened and what must be done to make it right. Our Lord simply ignored his questions. In fact, our Lord had already given us the answer. Go back to verse 10: "I said unto you, I am the LORD your God. Fear not the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell, but you have not obeyed my voice." They fell into idolatry. So God then comes and sovereignly, providentially selects Gideon.

Gideon was not seeking the job as a deliverer. He did not want the job, and if you looked at him, you would say he was not even qualified for it. Gideon did not seek the LORD out; the LORD sought Gideon out. God had sovereignly and providentially selected the man who would deliver His people.

Fifthly, God prepared Gideon in every way for the work to which Gideon was chosen. He said in verse 14, "And the LORD looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, have not I sent thee?" Those whom God calls, He qualifies. Men tell me that God had called them to a certain work, and yet they were totally unprepared and unqualified for that work. My estimation is that God never called them to that work. For whom God calls, He qualifies.

If God calls a man to preach, He is going to give him the gift of teaching. It is just that simple. If God calls a man to lead, He is going to give him the gift of leadership. If God calls a man to serve, He is going to give him a servant's heart. If God calls a man to fight, He is going to give him the gift of warfare, as He did David in Psalm 144 and verse 1, where David said, "Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." Did God give David the gift of warfare? Yes, He did. Where did David learn? From God.

If God is going to use Gideon, He is going to qualify him. Notice how God qualified him. In verse 11, "There came an angel of the LORD and sat under the oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the

winepress, to hide it from the Midianites." Number one, Gideon was already a worker. Number two, he was already using his noggin for something beside a hat rack. He knew that if he was going to preserve himself and his family, he had to at least put something away that could not be stolen by the invaders.

So God selects him. Look in verse 16: "The LORD said, Surely I will be with thee." God is going to be with him. Skip down to verse 23: "The LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." God proclaims peace unto him and tells him not to be afraid. Skip down to verses 25 and 26. Look at this.

"And it came to pass the same night that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it, and build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of the rock in the ordered place, and take the second bullock and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down."

God tells Gideon how to start the war, and he starts it with a spiritual act. Why did he have to throw down the altar of Baal and cut down the groves, which were for Asherah worship? Why were they subjects of Midian to begin with? Because God said in verse 10, "You've failed to obey my voice. You're idolaters." Here was their idolatry, the cause and root of their problem. So God tells Gideon, "You begin this war by tearing down this altar of Baal. And you establish my altar. You set it up where they will know that if they want liberty and freedom, they must come back to God."

We have forgotten in this land that our problems are first and foremost spiritual problems. It is true that we have economic, political, governmental, societal, and military problems. We have all kinds of problems, but behind every one of them is a spiritual root. We would not have those problems if we were biblical. So God qualifies Gideon. God brought Gideon's family to understand and support him, to stand and work with him. Now Gideon tore down that altar of Baal.

When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by

it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. They said one to another, "Who hath done this thing?" When they inquired and asked, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing." Then the men of the city said unto Joash, "Bring out my son, that he may die, because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it." Joash said unto all that stood against him, "Will you plead for Baal? Will you save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to death while it is yet morning. If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar." Therefore, that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, "Let Baal plead against him, because he had thrown down his altar."

Notice what God did. God took Gideon's father and turned his heart to support Gideon and the war. Remember, it was his father's altar that Gideon tore down. It is important that a man's family be with him in his work and in his ministry. Whatever that ministry is—whether he is a warrior, preaching, serving, or exhorting—his family must support him. In 1 Samuel 22, when David had to flee to the cave of Adullam because of Saul, his father, mother, and brethren went to him. They were solidly behind David. Therefore, wives, if God calls your husband to a ministry, you must be with him in that ministry. It is important that children, sons, brothers, and daughters be with you in the ministry.

God gave Gideon a work, and his family supported it. Seventhly, God empowered Gideon for the work to which he had been chosen. "But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and Abiezer was gathered unto him." Notice the phrase, "and the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon." You will find this truth throughout the Bible: those whom God chooses to lead His people in fighting, inevitably and invariably, He always endows with His power. God has said in Zechariah 4:6, "Not by might nor power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD."

It is important that you understand this. If it comes to fighting, if it comes to warfare, we do not fight out of anger, retaliation, bitterness, or resentment. We fight because it is right to fight. There is a biblical basis and scriptural principles, and we do it in faith

according to the Word of God and by the power of God upon us. We do not fight just because folks make us mad or are not doing right.

Every time God calls a man to fight, the Spirit and the power of God come upon him, because those whom God chooses, He qualifies and He empowers. Othniel, who was a judge, is described in Judges 3:10: “And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war.” Notice, “the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war.” We read of Samson in Judges 14:19, “And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men, and took their spoil.” First Samuel 11:6 says, “And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was greatly kindled.” Judges 11:29 says, “And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over unto Gilead, and to Manasseh, and he went to war.” In other words, every time God calls a man to fight, the Spirit and the power of God come upon him. Those whom God chooses, He qualifies and He empowers.

God's Selection and Empowerment of the Army

Eighthly, in Judges chapter 7, verses 1 through 7, God selected the army, or fighting men, that Gideon was to use. The Lord brought the people to the water and said, “Everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise, everyone that boweth down upon his knees to drink.” “And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand into their mouth were three hundred men. But all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you and deliver the Midianites into thine hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his own place.”

God had already sent home everyone who was afraid. Then He separated them further. The men who picked up water with their hands and lapped like dogs were the three hundred God would use, because they could look around and remain aware of their surroundings while they lapped. Those who bowed down and put their mouths in the water could not see what was happening. God

chose these three hundred. David had his six hundred; Gideon had his three hundred.

This is important for us to learn: when God is in charge, His will is to be obeyed in every area. When God is in charge and His will is obeyed, it does not take a vast army to win. God is majority in and of Himself. I would rather fight by myself with God on my side than with twenty thousand men with me and God against me.

It was a minority that prevailed in the American war for independence. Washington never had more than three thousand men at one time. Samuel Adams said, “It does not require a majority to prevail, but rather an irate, tireless minority keen to set brush fires in people's minds.” And that is a fact.

Jonathan, Saul's son, revealed this truth to his armor bearer: “And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armor, Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the LORD will work for us, for there is no restraint of the LORD to save by many or by few.” Jonathan was saying, “We don't need the army if God's on our side.” He and his armor bearer went out, showed themselves, and killed about twenty or thirty Philistines. It is nothing with God to save by many or by few.

The proof that God had chosen Gideon and blessed him was the absolute success of the mission and the victorious outcome of the war.

Victory and Divine Protection

Look in Judges chapter 8 and verse 28: “Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more, and the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.” The proof that God was in the war was the victory. Do you realize that when God is involved, the outcome is guaranteed? When God is involved, victory is assured; when God is involved, there is no failure. God used Gideon to subdue the Midianites so that they lifted up their heads no more. Do you realize that God spared Gideon throughout this entire war? God had called him to fight and to victory; He had not called him to defeat and death. Those whom God calls, He qualifies.

Let me give you a similar remarkable act of divine providence in the life of George Washington during the French and Indian War in July of 1755. Washington was with the British. There were 1,459 British soldiers fighting out in the open, very stupidly, while the French and Indians hid behind trees. One thousand of those soldiers had already been killed, and the Indians were deliberately taking aim at the officers, destroying them one by one.

Finally, only one officer was left. The old Indian chief said, “Quick, fire, let your aim be certain, kill them all.” Round after round was fired at George Washington—ten, twelve, thirteen rounds. Twice his horse was hit and killed. Each time he disentangled himself, found another horse, and got on it. Finally, the chief commanded his men to stop firing: “This one is under the special protection of the Great Spirit.” One Indian brave said, “I had 17 clear shots at the man and after all, I could not bring him to the ground. This man was not born to be killed by a bullet.” When the firing ceased, Lieutenant Colonel George Washington led the remaining men in an orderly retreat. In safety, while the wounded were being treated, he noticed a hole in his sleeve—a bullet hole.

He pulled his coat off. There were three or four other bullet holes in his coat, but the bullets did not penetrate his skin. They stopped inside the coat. Fifteen years later, in 1770, the old Indian chief heard that George Washington was back in the area and made it a point to meet him. Other men were present, and the old chief said, pointing to Washington, "The Great Spirit protects this man and guides his destinies. He will become the chief of nations. And a people yet unborn will hail Him as the founder of a mighty empire. I am come to pay homage to the man who is the particular favorite of heaven and who can never die in battle."

That was in 1770. When God calls a man to a ministry, He is going to assure his success and spare his life. Those whom God chooses, He qualifies and protects. It does not matter if it is a Gideon, a Washington, or anyone else.

Applications: Waiting on God's Timing

Divine providence always arranges the time for fighting. We must remember that God is called the God of war; there is a book of the

wars of the LORD. Fighting and war are not to be taken lightly or entered into in the heat of passion. War is not to be begun out of sin, rebellion, bitterness, or resentment. It is serious business, and it is to be begun and carried on at the command and instigation of divine providence.

We must also be aware of the principles of Scripture concerning leadership and war in order to discern those whom God chooses to lead His people. God's choice of a leader during a time of war does not necessarily have to be a military man. Sometimes God chose men who had military training and power, but more often they had none. God taught them, and God used them.

One of the greatest generals during the War of Northern Aggression was Nathan Bedford Forrest. He had never been trained in the art of war, nor had he been to West Point or anywhere else. Yet he out-fought many men trained in warfare and defeated them repeatedly. When God chooses a man to lead His people, he does not necessarily have to be a military man, even though God may choose him to lead in battle or militarily. God uses whom He pleases to use.

Thirdly, the hardest and most difficult part in all of this is waiting upon God's time. Remember that our God is far more patient, gracious, and kind than we are. I have often said, “I'm so thankful I'm not God. For if I was, I'd have killed me and a whole lot of other people a long time ago.” If we really got what we deserved, it would be far worse than it is today, wouldn't it?

Lamentations 3:39–40 says, “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.” God is asking, “Why are you going to complain about getting what you deserve?” Then Lamentations 3:22–27 says, “It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed.”

"Because His compassions, they fail not. They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul. Therefore will I hope in Him. The LORD is good to them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is

good that a man bear the yoke in his youth." The hardest part is waiting upon the LORD.

The counsel I can give is this: Wait upon the LORD. Do not run ahead of Him or behind Him; run with Him. Our God will always deliver His people. He did so from Egypt and from Canaan land many times, and He will continue to do so if we repent of our sins and cry to Him for mercy, grace, and truth. When it is time, God will move.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee and ask for Thy grace and mercy. We ask for understanding. Teach us Thy Word and give us, Lord, an understanding heart. Help us, Lord, to be prepared and yet submissive vessels unto Thee, to be used of Thee as Thou dost please. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

God's Protection and Preservation

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 23:1-12 (KJV)

Introduction: David's Inquiry and the Men of Keilah

And then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing floors. Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the Lord said unto David, Go and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? Then David inquired of the Lord yet again. And the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand. So David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their cattle and smoked them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

It came to pass when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand.

> And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand, for he is shut in by entering into a town that hath gates and bars. And Saul called all the people together to war to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. And David knew that Saul secretly practiced mischief against him, and he said to Abiathar the priest, bring hither the ephod. Then said David, O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? Will Saul come down as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the Lord said, he will come down. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?

"And the Lord said, They will deliver thee up. Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. It was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah, and he forbade to go forth."

To me, this is one of the most remarkable passages in the Bible. God had told David to attack the Philistines, and He would deliver them into his hand. Yet David's men were afraid, which was unusual because they were mighty men. David checked again, and the Lord said, "Yes, you are to go and smite those Philistines. I will deliver them into your hand." So David saved Keilah and its inhabitants.

When Saul heard that David had gotten into the city, he prepared to assault it in order to get David. David asked the Lord, "Will Saul come after me?" The Lord said, "He will come." Then David asked this amazing question: "Will the men of Keilah deliver me up?" God said, "They will."

David had just saved those men from the Philistines, and now God knew that they would deliver David up in order to save themselves. No one has ever been persecuted and hunted as David was during the reign of Saul. Saul was relentless because he wanted David dead. He sent out spies, laid traps, and pursued David with armies. His pursuit was thorough. Saul knew that as long as David was alive, Jonathan would never inherit the throne. In 1 Samuel

20:31, Saul says to Jonathan, "For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom."

The Thoroughness of Saul's Pursuit

"Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die." Saul wanted David dead so that he could perpetuate his kingdom through Jonathan. It did not matter what the Lord willed, wanted, or had already stated; Saul wanted David dead. Therefore, when Saul sought David, he sought him very thoroughly. David asked Saul, "After whom is the king of Israel come out? After whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog? After a flea?"

If you are searching for one flea, how thoroughly do you have to search? Very thoroughly. If you are searching for a dead dog or a pet that has wandered off and has died, how thoroughly would you have to search to find that pet out in the woods or out in the wilderness? The search was a very thorough one. In 1 Samuel 26:20, David gives another illustration when he asks this question of Saul: “Now therefore let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord, for the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.”

He compares his pursuit to someone hunting birds in the mountains. Saul sought eagerly for David as a hunter seeks for a bird. The most powerful person in the land—the king, his minions, and his government—were absolutely powerless and helpless in finding one man. David was hunted relentlessly, and yet all to no avail. David was never captured or killed by Saul or his men. Why was Saul unable to capture or to kill David? How in the world did David escape the dragnets that had been laid out by Saul for him? In the thrilling close encounters that you read, especially when Saul was on this side of the mountain pursuing David, and David and his men were on this side of the mountain escaping, all of those close encounters always fell out to David and his men.

God's Providential Control Over All Things

Why? The answer is because of God's amazing providential control over every circumstance and God's gracious protection and preservation of David. I want to call your attention today to this one

thought and demonstrate it from Scripture. Have you ever really considered God's amazing providential control over everything? There is absolutely nothing over which God does not exercise total and complete control.

We are coming back to 1 Samuel 23, but turn in your Bibles to the book of Matthew, chapter 10. I want to show you how absolutely pervasive God's providential control is. Look in Matthew 10, and notice verse 30. Matthew 10 and verse 30. I will tie these together for you momentarily. God says, “But the very hairs of your head are numbered.” Stop and think just momentarily of every head of hair that has ever lived, that is living now, and that shall live, and yet God knows the number of every head of hair. Each one is numbered, and each one cannot fall apart from God. God not only knows; God controls.

Now I know what you're thinking already: God certainly has to do a lot less bookkeeping on some of us than on others. That's all right. I'm happy to report that God knows where each one of my hairs has fallen. I'm also happy to report that I don't have to bother God with such a mundane task as keeping count of so many hairs on my head as He does other people. Several of us allow the Lord to do other, more important things, don't we? But God does know every hair.

Watch, if you would, verse 29. Matthew 10:29: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

When we read this verse, we tend automatically to think of a sparrow dying and falling to the ground. Certainly, a sparrow cannot die apart from God. However, the Bible does not say in verse 29, "fall to the ground," but literally, "fall on the ground." He says, "one of them shall not fall on the ground without your heavenly Father." There is a difference between falling to the ground and falling on the ground.

In fact, the Greek word here actually means to descend from a higher place to a lower place. So literally, what he is saying in verse 29 is this: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not light on the ground without your heavenly Father." Anyone who has ever had bird feeders and watched birds, especially

sparrows, can testify to the multitudinous times that they fly to a high branch, go to a low branch, back to the ground, pick up a seed, back to a branch, and back to the ground. We feed birds right outside my office window, and I watch them many times. Those little sparrows are incessantly going up and down from branch to ground, branch to ground. The Bible says that not one can fly up or fly down apart from the absolute sovereign control of God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Each one is controlled by divine providence. It's amazing when you consider that not one sparrow can lie upon the ground or descend from a higher to a lower place apart from God.

Look at Matthew 10, verses 29–31: “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall or light on the ground apart or without your Father? But the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear ye not therefore, you have more value than many sparrows.” Here is the argument: If God is so punctilious over sparrows and controls everything for their good, will He not certainly do that for His children, who are worth far more than many sparrows?

We often forget the truth in Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.” How do we know that all things work together for good for those who love God? We know it because we believe in and know God's absolute sovereign control and His divine providence. He oversees, controls, directs, and orders all things. Such knowledge would be impossible apart from the knowledge of God's absolute sovereignty. It would be absolutely impossible if God were not sovereign and did not have absolute control over everything.

Defining Providence

Without getting into all the theological distinctions, such as preservation, concurrence, and government, let me give you a concise definition of providence. Providence is the continual exercise of the sovereign Creator God, whereby He preserves and provides for all His creatures, is operative in all that comes to pass in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end. Providence is the full

and absolute control that God has over all things. It is the bringing to pass of that which God ordained and determined before the world ever began. It is when God directs all things, uses means, controls all things, and brings them to their ultimate end. In a world ruled by God, there is no such thing as luck, chance, fate, or fortune.

There are no accidents in a world ruled by God, only incidents that God, in His sovereign, all-wise providence, allows to come to pass. To show you the absolute control God has over all things, consider Proverbs 16:33: "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." In a way that we can understand, there is the rolling of the dice, but whatever comes up is determined by God. The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. God determines the outcome of absolutely everything, even the roll of dice. David's life is a wonderful example of divine providence.

Examples of God's Protection in David's Life

David was preserved over and over again. The same that was true of David is equally true in our lives. We may not have had the dramatic or close escapes that David had, but each one of us can point out instances when, if it had not been for God's sovereign providence and protection, we would not be here. The only reason we are here is because of God's providence and protection.

You remember the passage I have often quoted in Lamentations 3:22-23: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed. Because His compassions, they fail not. They're new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness." I try to make it a habit each night before I go to sleep to thank God for His tender compassions and mercies, His faithfulness, and allowing me to live through the day. When I wake, one of the first things I do is thank Him for protecting me through the night and allowing me to experience His tender mercies, compassions, and faithfulness. That is the only reason we are alive today.

It is not only God's providence that allows the sun to arise and shine upon us, and His rain to fall upon us; it is also God's providence that allows His blessings to be upon us, and His divine providence that allows us to enjoy those blessings. In Acts 14:17, the

Bible says, "Nevertheless, He, that is God, left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

What good are all the blessings of God if you are not able to enjoy them? God not only gives us the blessings; He enables us to enjoy those blessings. In Psalm 66:9, the Bible tells us concerning God, "Who holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved." In 1 Timothy 6:17, God says, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."

God not only gives us His blessings and His divine providence; He gives us richly all things to enjoy and enables us to enjoy them. One of the most precious blessings that God gives us is the blessing of life. God gives life, sustains and preserves life, and we are alive today only by the grace and mercy of God.

Think with me momentarily how God graciously, in His providence, protected and preserved David. Long before David became the good king and mighty warrior, God's providential hand was upon him. It was God's providence that allowed David to live long enough to become the good king and mighty warrior. I can think back in my life and name two or three instances where I could have died and should have died because of my own stupidity and wickedness. And yet God preserved me.

David was a shepherd. When you think about a shepherd, you think of someone merely spending his time with the sheep. It is a lonely job, but you would not think it was a very dangerous job. Yet notice what Saul says to David, and then David's response, in 1 Samuel chapter 17, beginning at verse 33:

“And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep.

“And there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth. And when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion

and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."

Notice what David said: "There came a lion and there came a bear and took a lamb, and I went out after him. I took it out of his mouth. And when he arose against me," he said, "I smote him. I killed him."

I do not mind fighting a bear or a lion as long as I can do it with my .308 at about a hundred yards' distance, or perhaps a .44 Magnum a little closer. But David had only a sling or a sword, or at best a spear. What are the chances, humanly speaking—and I use that word purposefully—of a young boy defeating a lion or a bear with a sword or spear? God providentially preserved David, gave him courage, wisdom, and discernment, and preserved him from this lion and bear before he ever became the good king or mighty warrior. Then, in 1 Samuel chapter 17, as he was about to fight Goliath, consider how God preserved and provided for David in that fight.

You can read about it in verses 40 through 51 there. What did the Bible say? Saul said to David, "How can you fight this man?" He said, verse 33, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." Goliath had been trained in warfare since he was a young man.

Now he was a mature adult, while David was simply a youth. Saul said, "It's humanly impossible. There's no way that you can win against this man." Goliath had the huge shield, the sword, the buckler—everything available to him. Solomon the wise man said in Ecclesiastes 9 and verse 11, "I returned and saw unto the sun that the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong." In this instance, it certainly was not to the physically strong one. Goliath came out with what you and I would term modern-day weaponry. He had what we would essentially call a bulletproof vest when he had his shield and harness around him. David went out with a sling. Do you know how David killed Goliath? After he hit him with a sling between the eyes with a rod, he went to Goliath, took his own sword from him, and cut Goliath's head off.

That had to be embarrassing—to get your head cut off with your own sword. Can you imagine that? Yet David was still not a mighty

warrior; he was but a youth. God sovereignly protected him. Saul took David into his house, and David became a favorite because he was excellent upon the harp. Then Saul became insanely jealous, raged over David, and tried to kill him several times by hurling a javelin at him as David played. Saul, too, was a man of war. Those men could throw javelins. Consider how close David had to be when that javelin was thrown. David was playing the harp, and harps are not known for volume, but for the softness and sweetness of their music.

Look at 1 Samuel chapter 18, verses 10 and 11. "And it came to pass on the morrow that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul."

"And he prophesied in the midst of the house." By the way, note that prophesying is also associated with an evil spirit. Just because someone says that he prophesies does not mean that the Holy Spirit is prompting him. You will find this on numerous occasions. Notice 1 Samuel 18:10: "He came to pass on the morrow after the evil spirit from God came upon Saul and he prophesied in the midst of the house and David played with his hand as at other times and there was a javelin in Saul's hand."

He did not have to reach for it; he already had it. "And Saul cast the javelin for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice." Thus, on that occasion, Saul attempted twice to smite him against the wall. Look in 1 Samuel chapter 19, beginning in verse 9: "And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, and as he sat in the house with this javelin in his hand, and David played with his hand, David was unarmed, he was playing the harp, and Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with a javelin, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smoked the javelin into the wall, and David fled and escaped that night."

Consider Saul missing at close range, which is almost inconceivable for a man of war. Again, in 1 Samuel 18, Saul tried trickery. He thought, "Well, if I can't kill David with the javelin, I'll get him to fall at the hands of the Philistines, and I will promise him my daughter if he will kill a hundred Philistines for me," knowing that this would be practically impossible.

So look in 1 Samuel 18, beginning at verse 25: "And Saul said, Thus shall you say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, that is, not any money, but a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law. And the days were not expired, and David rose and went out, he and his men, and slew the Philistines two hundred men, twice what Saul wanted. And David brought their foreskins and gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife."

It is impossible to know how many times Saul tried to kill David. It is also impossible to know how many times, or how many battles, David actually fought.

It is impossible to know how many men David actually killed. He killed a lot of them and fought in many battles. Yet, when Saul became insanely jealous, the women in 1 Samuel 18:7 sang, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.” Although David was a mighty warrior who killed a multitude of men, there was one time when the enemy thought they had killed him.

In 2 Samuel 21:15–17, we read: “Moreover, the Philistines had yet war again with Israel, and David went down in his servants with him and fought against the Philistines, and David waxed faint.” He became very tired. “And Ishbi-benob, which was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight, he being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David.”

“But Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, succored him and smote the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt not go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.” Here was a time when the enemy thought they had gotten David, but it did not work that way. The question must be asked: How in the world did David survive all those battles, especially when he was often outnumbered and outgunned?

Consider modern warfare. Think of the miniguns, or a gun that can put around in every square inch of a football field with one burst. How could anyone survive anything like that? And yet people do. David had only a few men; six hundred, when he was running from Saul, was his peak.

In 1 Samuel chapter 30, Ziklag is burned with fire. Ziklag happened to be a city of David while he was running from Saul. The women, children, and all the goods were stolen, and David took his men to recover everything. But two hundred of David's men were so faint that they could not fight, so they stayed by the river. David pursued them with four hundred men.

In 1 Samuel 30:8, David inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them?” And he that is God answered, “Pursue. For thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.” So David went, he and his six hundred men, to the brook Besor, where those left behind stayed. David pursued with four hundred men, for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over brook Besor.

David was after this troop, and he only had four hundred men. I do not know how many men the enemy had, but the word “troop” is also translated “army” in our Bibles. David was asking, “Shall I pursue after this army?” Evidently, David and his men were greatly outnumbered. David was concerned because they were outnumbered, and God said, “Yes, pursue them. You shall overtake them and recover everything.”

How did David survive all of these battles? If you read the Bible and if you believe the Bible, you certainly cannot ascribe David's protection to luck, chance, fate, or fortune. David survived only by God's providential protection and preservation. In fact, if you look in 1 Samuel chapter 30 and verse 23, David ascribes everything to God: “Then David said, You shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hands.” David ascribes his preservation and his protection to God.

God's Sovereignty in Counsel and Circumstances

David's protection was not simply limited to the battlefield. It is true that God protected David in battle. But remember when Absalom ran his father off the throne and sought to kill him. Ahithophel gave counsel: “Let me take some men, 12,000 men, and I will arise and pursue David this night, and I will kill him and kill him only, and I'll bring everybody else back.” Absalom turned to Hushai the Archite, David's friend, and said, “Listen, Ahithophel has given us this counsel; what do you say?” Hushai answered, “Well, the counsel of the fellow is not good at this time.” He reminded Absalom, “You know your father. You know the men that are with him. They're men of war and they're chafed. They're mad. They're upset. They're angry. Besides that, David's not going to be stupid enough to bed down with these men. Your few men are going to attack David's men, and David's men are going to kill a number of your men. Then everybody's going to hear there's a rout, and everybody's going to be discouraged and fleeing.”

“No, no, no,” Hushai said. “That's not the thing to do. You gather all Israel from Dan to Beersheba, and you lead the army yourself.”

It was going to take time to gather everybody from Dan to Beersheba, which was what Hushai wanted to do. This would give David time to get away, get set up, and get ready to defend himself. The counsel that Ahithophel gave was good counsel; it was right counsel concerning the circumstances. The counsel that Hushai gave was bad counsel concerning the circumstances. Yet 2 Samuel 17:14 says, “And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.” Then it explains why: “for the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.”

The Key Verse: God Delivered Him Not

God is sovereign even in the counsel of men. God is sovereign even in the thoughts and thinking of men. Go back to our text in 1 Samuel chapter 23, because there is one verse that I did not read. I saved it to show you the real reason David did not fall at the hands of Saul,

die at the hands of the Philistines, or die at the hands of Absalom or Ahithophel.

First Samuel 23:14 says, “And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.” Is that not amazing? God delivered him not into Saul’s hand.

Applications: Gratitude, Perseverance, and Divine Keeping

Without taking you through the book of Judges, read it for yourself. When Israel sinned against God, you will find this repeatedly: “and he delivered them into the hands of their enemies.” Yet here David is, and God delivered him not into Saul’s hand. This truth is emphasized over and over in the Bible, and it is there for our benefit. Romans 15:4 says, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” Everything God wrote in the Old Testament was written for our learning, to give us courage and hope. You must remember that God has not changed. God is immutable; He is unchangeable. The God who sovereignly protected David is the same God who sovereignly protects us today.

Several passages show what is said concerning God preserving David. In 2 Samuel 5:10, we read, “And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him.” God was with him.

In 2 Samuel 8:6, we read, “Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.” Skip down to verse 14: “And he, that is David, put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David’s servants. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.” The Syrians became David’s servants and brought gifts, and all they of Edom became David’s servants. In both passages, the statement is repeated: “Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.”

The same truth appears in 1 Chronicles 18:6: “Then David put garrisons in Syria-damascus; and the Syrians became David’s

servants, and brought gifts. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went." Again, verse 13 says, "And he put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became David's servants. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went."

Why did David not fall at the hands of his enemies? Because God delivered him not into their hands. Do you realize the multitudinous enemies that David had—and the multitudinous enemies that we have? The only One who can preserve and protect us is God Himself. Have you realized that the enemies cannot do one stinking thing if God's hand is upon us?

David summed up his protection, preservation, and survival beautifully in Psalm 140:7: "O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." Notice that David said, "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." Nothing can get through to harm or hurt us if God is sovereignly protecting us.

Let me make some applications. The first one is this: It is God's providential and protecting hand that covers us and enables us to survive wars, incidents, and everyday mistakes of life.

We do things without thinking, and sometimes they are very costly mistakes. Alice and I had a friend who was an overall man who could do anything. He was a builder and a handyman. He had a swimming pool, and one day he went out back with an electric drill, drilling a hole in the concrete, I guess to put some type of handle in. When the bit got hot, without even thinking, he stuck it into the water to cool it.

He was immediately electrocuted; it burst his heart, and he died instantly. He knew better, but he did it without thinking. You and I should constantly and consistently praise God for our lives, His protection, the fullness of our life, and the continuance of His protection.

I have heard of soldiers who survived serious and dangerous battles when many of their friends were killed. Consequently, some of them felt guilty because they had survived and their friends had not, and somehow figured that they should have died with them. Instead of being loaded with guilt, you should be loaded with a heart

full of praise and thanksgiving unto God, that God sovereignly covered your head in the day of battle, protected you, preserved you, and provided for you.

He obviously left you alive for a reason, and that reason is to honor and glorify Him. David understood all of this. In 2 Samuel chapter 22, David, a warrior and a soldier, spoke unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul:

"The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; the God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid; the sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented or preceded me; in my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple."

"My cry did enter into His ears." David says that God sent from above, took him, drew him out of many waters, and delivered him from his strong enemy and from those who hated him, for they were too strong for him. "They prevented or preceded me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my stay." The Lord lived, and David blessed his rock, exalted the God of the rock of his salvation, and declared that God brought him forth from his enemies.

"Thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me. Thou hast delivered me from the violent man. Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name. He is the tower of salvation for his king, and showeth mercy to his anointed, unto David and to his seed forevermore."

Notice that there is no guilt in this psalm. I call it a psalm because that is exactly what it is. You will find it recorded again in Psalm 18, where David praises and thanks God for His providential protection and blessing. Survival, protection, and preservation of life are not something for which we should feel guilty. They are something for

which we should be thankful, constantly and continually praising our God. He has protected us, and He has provided for us.

Here is a second application. Consider this truth: If God sovereignly protects us in this life, shall not His divine preservation and protection continue with us into the next life? I quoted this passage last night to my mother. You know it: "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He restoreth my soul."

Then David continued: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Why? For thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." There is a truth in the Bible: we are preserved in Christ Jesus. Jude 1:1 says, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, the brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Christ Jesus." We are preserved. We are not pickled. Pickled is with brine and vinegar.

Preserving is with sweetness, with honey and sugar. I want you to look at 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 23. It is a wonderful verse; you need to memorize it. The Apostle Paul says, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.” Wholly means totally, completely. “And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Notice verse 24, which follows: “Faithful is he who calleth you who also will do it.” What will God do us? He will preserve us unto His kingdom. Our Lord has never lost any of His sheep, and He never shall. He shall see the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.

His preservation comes to light in our lives as He enables us to persevere in repentance, faith, and obedience. He will see that we continue in the faith.

Now there is one last passage. Turn to the book of Numbers, chapter 6, because here is the third application. In light of the message today, in light of God’s providential protection and preservation, even in the times of battles, you need to consider the blessing of God that God gave to His people in the Old Testament. You will find it in Numbers chapter 6, beginning there with verse 22.

God said to Moses, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, saying, On this wise you shall

bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." The Lord blesses and keeps us; if kept by God, all is well, for He is faithful.

In His hand we are safe; He protects us. Our protection is only in the sovereign God of heaven and earth, individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally. God is our protector.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee and thank You. We acknowledge, Lord, so many times You have protected us in sickness, in mistakes, and in our own stupidity. You have allowed us to live unto this day. Life is Your blessing. You have enabled us to enjoy each other, our friends and family, and the food You have given us.

Lord, everything we are, everything we have, and everything we ever will be and ever will have is by Your grace. Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. We give Thee praise for all things, in and through our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 3

The Effects of a Slave Mentality

Introduction: The Slave Mentality Defined

I will be bringing several messages in the coming weeks from the book of Exodus, but today, Exodus chapter 14, verses 10 through 12. The title of the message is "The Effects of a Slave Mentality." I have preached in times past on the slave mentality from Judges chapter 15 and another passage, but this past week this simply jumped out at me again. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. And they were sore afraid, and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, that we should die in this wilderness.

It was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who said, "None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe that they are

free." We fail to comprehend the power of the mind in rationalizing and explaining the effects of wrong thinking. Many are enslaved who vainly believe that they are free, and many wrongly and ignorantly believe that that is absolutely the best life possible for them. In fact, most people had rather be enslaved and have their essential needs taken care of and satisfied than be free and be personally responsible for themselves. The Israelites were in such a case in this passage. Moreover, they repeated their mental lies over and over to themselves as well as to others, and their enslavement was basically self-administered. It was Charles de Montesquieu who said, "The ideal tyranny is that which is ignorantly self-administered by its victims. The most perfect slaves are therefore those which blissfully and unawaredly enslave themselves."

And of course that's exactly what the children of Israel were willing to do at this particular point. They were willing to go back and enslave themselves to the Egyptians. We enslave ourselves by our ignorance, by our self-deception, and by our lack of critical thinking. Our Lord said it like this in John 8:32: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." Now very obviously, if you do not know the truth, then you are not free. It's only the truth that will eventually and ultimately set us free. Our Lord said it like this in the book of Hosea chapter 4 and verse 6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." And according to the Word of God, it is truth, it is knowledge, it is right thinking, and by right thinking or critical thinking, I literally mean biblical thinking. It is by truth. It is by knowledge. It is by biblical thinking and the power and the grace of God that really and truly give us freedom. Do you remember that passage in 2 Corinthians 3:17 where the Bible says, "Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Liberty is only where the Spirit of the Lord is. Where the Spirit of the Lord is not, there's ultimate enslavement.

Crisis Reveals the Desire for Slavery

Now, I want to point out from our text, it is evident in Scripture here that it was a crisis or conflict that made these Israelites yearn for slavery. Now stop and think about that. It was a crisis, it was a conflict that made them yearn for slavery. Isn't it amazing how that is repeated over and over in history? How you always have a crisis,

you have a conflict, and then of course there's supposed to be an answer, of course, that the tyrants put forth for that crisis and that conflict, and the ultimate end is you're always losing more rights, more liberty, and more freedom, and you're usually more and more enslaved. So, in this particular crisis, in this particular conflict, it made the Israelites want someone to take care of them. Someone to protect them. Someone who would solve all of their problems. If they had not had this conflict, they may not have had necessarily that attitude.

Fear as an Effect of a Slave Mentality

But let me show it to you. Look in verse 10. Exodus 14 and verse 10: "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them, and they were sore afraid, and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord." One of the most notable effects of a slave mentality is fear—fear of the unknown, failure, defeat, man, loss of security, death. Fear always focuses on circumstances, situations, and surroundings. Whenever you are fearful, you're always looking at your circumstances, your situations, your surroundings. The Bible says it very plainly in Proverbs 29:25: "The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whosoever trusteth the Lord shall be safe." But notice, the fear of man bringeth a snare.

Let me try to illustrate that for you. If you look back at verse 10: "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them, and they were sore afraid." Let me point out several things. First and foremost, the Israelites knew very clearly and very well the strength of the Egyptian army. But not only did they understand the strength of the Egyptian army, they also understood the rage of the Egyptian army. They had not only spoiled the Egyptians as they left Egypt, they had also left a dead one, a dead loved one in every household because the firstborn of every house had died. Moreover, the land of Egypt had literally been devastated by all of the plagues. And so obviously now, these Egyptians are well-armed, well-trained, and enraged.

Look, if you would, please, in Exodus 14, beginning there with verse 5. Exodus 14 and verse 5: "And it was told the king of Egypt

that the people fled. And the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we've let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all of the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And he pursued after the children of Israel. And the children of Israel went out with a high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them in camping by the sea beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon." Now, notice if you would please, Pharaoh says, "We messed up. Why in the world did we let these people go?"

"I'm going back to get them." He was angry, he was upset, and the children of Israel understood not only the strength of his army, but the rage of the Egyptians. Secondly, the Israelites knew very well their own weaknesses. It is true they may have been a numerous people—in fact, it is estimated probably two million people came out of Egypt or more, including women and children. But even if you had a million men, you have to remember that the Israelites were on foot, unarmed, undisciplined, and untrained in the art of war. Moreover, they were now facing, or would be facing, their former masters, whom they had submitted before. These Egyptians beat the Israelites; they were cruel taskmasters, and the Israelites simply submitted and did not fight back. So they were not only aware of the rage and strength of the Egyptians, but also of their own weakness. Thirdly, they understood that they were hemmed in and could not escape a confrontation. Verse 9 says, "But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them in camping by the sea beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon." There was simply nowhere to run or hide. On one hand was Pi-hahiroth, a range of craggy rocks absolutely impassable. On the other hand was Baal-zephon or Migdol, which many said were Egyptian fortresses on the frontier. Behind them were the Egyptians, and in front of them was the sea. There was absolutely nowhere to go, nothing to do except be hemmed in. Fourthly, if they were delivered, their deliverance would have to be supernatural—there would necessarily have to be divine

intervention. They could not deliver themselves. So they were moved with fear; when they saw the Egyptians, they were afraid. Now there are basically two types of fear in the Bible: a biblical fear that moves us to obedience, and a fleshly humanistic fear that is totally unbiblical.

Biblical Fear vs. Fleshly Fear

Now, I want you to listen very carefully. It is impossible to exercise faith and fear at the same time. When I use the word fear here, I'm talking about a humanistic, fleshly, unbelieving fear. Let me point out again that there is a biblical fear. The Bible says, "Noah moved with fear prepared to the saving of his house." He prepared an ark to the saving of his house. So there is a biblical fear that will move us to obedience. But there is also a humanistic fleshly fear that will cause us to freeze and to basically disbelieve. That is the kind that God does not give. Let me show you.

Turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 1 and look at verse 7. In this passage, we're talking about a fleshly, humanistic fear. 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 7, the Bible says this very plainly: "For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Now just stop and ask yourself this question. If God does not give us a spirit of fear, where does the fear come from? Well, it would have to come from self, or Satan, or surroundings. But it doesn't come from God. God does not give us a humanistic, fleshly, unbelieving fear.

Now in 1 John 4:18 the Bible says this: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." So it's not only faith that will cast out fear, it's also biblical love that will cast out fear as well. So that's why I made the statement earlier, it is impossible to exercise faith and be fearful at the same time—that is, possess a humanistic fleshly fear. Now, David said in Psalm 56:3, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Now, the interesting thing is this, we should trust in the Lord even when we're not afraid. But when we are afraid, David said, "I'm going to trust in thee."

Isaiah said it a little differently in Isaiah 12:2: "Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. He also has become my salvation." I will trust and not be afraid. Why? Because the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. I remember when our oldest daughter, Wendy, was about three, she was afraid of the dark. I taught her this verse, and she would get up at night and walk in the dark to the light switch saying, "I will trust and not be afraid," until she got the light on. This is what God is telling us: we should trust and not fear—certainly not have an unbiblical ungodly fear.

Now I want to show you very clearly what fear will accomplish. I'm going to first deal with biblical fear. If we have biblical fear, it will motivate us not only to obey, but to cry to the Lord. Look back in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 14, verse 10: "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians marched after them and they were sore afraid." Now watch: "And the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord." So the very first thing that a biblical fear will cause you to do is to cry out to the Lord.

Because you trust in Him, you lean upon Him, and you're going to seek Him for comfort and consolation, hope, and help. Now, hold Exodus 14, but turn first to Psalm 64, verse 1. David prays, "Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer. Preserve my life from fear of the enemy." So David is seeking the Lord to preserve him and keep him from fear of the enemy. A biblical fear will first drive us to seek the Lord, to trust in Him, and to deliver us from that fear or from a humanistic fear only as we believe Him, trust Him, and obey Him.

Now turn to Psalm 27, beginning with verse 1. In these three verses David expresses this very clearly. He's been delivered from the fear of his enemies, so he says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may

dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple."

Note what David said: "The Lord is the strength of my life. Whom shall I fear? Whom shall I be afraid? I'm not going to fear man. I'm not going to fear what man can do unto me." So fear, a biblical fear, will drive us to pray and to obey and to console and comfort ourselves in God, which will take care of the situation.

Fleshly Fear Leads to Murmuring and Betrayal

Go back to Exodus chapter 14. I want to show you what an unbiblical fleshly humanistic fear will do. Mark it down: fear is always an effect of a slave mentality. In verse 10, some cried unto the Lord. Here's what some others did, verse 11: "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, that we should die in this wilderness." What is their fear driving them to do? This unbelieving, humanistic, fleshly fear drives them to murmur, criticize, whine, complain, condemn, and belittle even the ones that have helped them the most. Moses was the one that had helped them. Moses was the one that God used. And now they're whining and complaining and belittling him, saying, "Did we not just say, let us alone? It had been far better for us to serve those Egyptians than we should die out here in the wilderness." I can assure you that every true Christian has had this happen to them. I've had it happen to me. You help someone. You sacrifice. You do everything that you can in order to work with someone and to be a blessing to that individual. And then they will turn around and basically stab you in the back. That's exactly what they're doing to Moses. They're saying, "Why didn't you just listen to us? Why didn't you just let us alone? We didn't want to be delivered to begin with. We didn't want to be brought out of Egypt to begin with." Now, let me show you how this works. Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 23, and watch very carefully what happens. I just got out of my mouth that a fearful mentality, a humanistic fear, will always motivate people to whine, murmur, complain, criticize, and turn against the ones who help them the most.

Historical Examples of Fear-Driven Unbelief

I find this extremely interesting. Look in 1 Samuel 23, beginning there with verse 1: "Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing floors. Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the Lord said unto David, Go and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah, how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? Then David inquired of the Lord yet again. The Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hands. So David and his men went down to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their cattle and smote them with a great slaughter." Now I want you to watch this: "So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah."

The Philistines attacked, David asked God whether to deliver Keilah, God said go, the men were afraid, David checked again, and God said go. At this point Saul was chasing David and trying to kill him; David had not yet ascended to the throne. Look at verse 7: "And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah, and Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand, for he is shut in by entering into a town that hath gates and bars. And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. And David knew that Saul secretly practiced mischief against him, and he said unto Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. Then said David, O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah to destroy this city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the Lord said, He will come down. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, They will deliver thee up."

Now look back at the last part of verse 5: "So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah." David had just saved their lives, yet when he asked God whether these people would deliver him over to Saul to kill him, God said, "They will." Do you see what a fear mentality will

do? A fear mentality will cause you to turn on the very one who's helped you the absolute most.

When you come back to Exodus chapter 14, these people are attacking Moses who delivered them out of Egypt. Their ungodly fear was an expression not only of unbelief but also of ungratefulness. They immediately capitulated to their circumstances, gave in and gave up to the enemy. The great deliverance out of Egypt meant absolutely nothing to them; the sacrifice and selflessness of Moses meant absolutely nothing to them. All they can think about is dying in this wilderness—that God brought them out of Egypt so they can die there. God to them was incapable of finishing what He started. They not only murmured against Moses, they murmured against God Himself.

This is an unusual situation. I just read this a few minutes earlier: Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, said, "What have we done, that we've let Israel go, that they should no longer serve us?" Pharaoh and his people were mad because they had let Israel go. Israel was mad because God had delivered them. Isn't that amazing? It's absolutely staggering: on the one hand, the taskmasters are mad at themselves for letting Israel go; on the other hand, the slaves are mad at Moses and mad at God because God had delivered them.

Now watch verse 12. Here's what they said to Moses: "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than we should die in this wilderness." I want to show you the passage that undoubtedly this refers to. When they said, "Did we not say unto you, let us alone," turn back to Exodus chapter 5, beginning with verse 14. I'm trying to show you that fear is indeed an effect of a slave mentality—an unbiblical, ungodly, fleshly, humanistic fear.

"And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and demanded, Wherefore have you not fulfilled your task in making brick? Both yesterday and today, as heretofore. Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy

servants, and they say unto us, Make brick. And behold, thy servants are beaten, but the fault is in thine own people."

"But he said, You are idle, you are idle. Therefore you say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord. Go therefore now and work, for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall you deliver the tale of bricks. And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in an evil case, after it was said, You shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily tasks." "And they met Moses and Aaron who stood in the way as they came forth from Pharaoh. And they said, The Lord look upon you and judge, because you've made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us. And Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people, neither hast thou delivered thy people at all." Evidently they were just trying to tell Moses, "Just leave us alone."

Skip down to Exodus chapter 6, beginning at verse 6. God tells Moses, "Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm and with great judgments, and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will bring you into the land concerning which I did swear to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you for an heritage. I am the Lord." And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, "but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage." So it's probably at this point they said, "Moses, just let us alone." Instead of delivering us, you've made everything worse. "Did we not tell you, just let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?"

Note this: the only thing a slave is really interested in is making his slavery as easy and as comfortable as possible. He's not interested in freedom, responsibility, or taking care of himself. They are condemning Moses for making their servitude worse, telling him, "Look, you brought us out here in the wilderness."

"Man, we had it made back in Egypt. You just brought us out here to die." Well, let me ask you a question. And if you can explain this to me, I will listen. Is there any real difference between being dead in Egypt and dead in the wilderness? I mean, if you're dead, you're dead. Isn't that correct? What would be the difference between dying in the wilderness and dying back in Egypt? Here's what is happening. The effect of their slave mentality is being expressed very clearly for their preference for servitude than for the difficulties of liberty and freedom. Let me tell you something, folks. It is not easy being a free people. And most people prefer slavery. They prefer servitude to real, literal freedom and liberty. In fact, the Israelites' attitude at this particular time was a disdain and a contempt not only for freedom, but for God's deliverance. I tell you, I'd much rather die in the wilderness fighting for liberty and freedom than die in the most comfortable slavery that man can afford. If their attitude had been biblical, if the Israelites' attitude had been biblical at this particular point in time, they would have said something like this: "If worse comes to worst, it's better to die in the field of honor than to live in the chains of slavery." Or they would have said something like this: "Better to live as God's free man in the open air in the wilderness than live on my knees begging for bondage." Or they had rather said something like this:

"I had rather die fighting God's enemies and my enemies than live on my knees begging or living in the smoke of the brick hills of Egypt." No, they didn't say that. Instead of possessing a biblically oriented mindset, most of these Israelites murmured, whined, complained, and were completely unthankful and ungrateful—not only for what Moses had done for them, but also what God had done. Moses suffered a lot and went through an awful lot. God got so angry at the Israelites that He told Moses, "The people that you brought out of Egypt." And Moses would get so angry at them, he'd say, "God, you brought them out." If Moses and God ever got together, there wouldn't have been one of them left. Moses had to pray for them, and God had to intervene on Moses' part and said, "Wait a minute."

The truth of the matter is this, folks. Every time you have liberty and freedom and deliverance, it is always attended with difficulties, heartaches, and trials. Have you ever wondered why God allowed the Israelites to be hemmed in at this particular point? The sea in front

of them, the Egyptians behind them, the craggy eminences on one side, the fortresses on the other side. Why did God bring them to that place?

God's Sovereign Purpose in Trials

I want to show you. Turn in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 13, and look at verse 17. We'll read through verse 18: "And it came to pass when Pharaoh had let the people go that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea, and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt." Why did God bring them the way that He did? Because He understood that they were untrained, undisciplined in the art of war. And God said, "I'm not going to put them in a time of war right now. I'm going to bring them this way." Wow.

Do you realize, as difficult as their position was, God had designed that predicament for their good and not for their ill. God was going to fight for them; they were not necessarily going to have to fight for themselves. God again was going to prove Himself miraculously on their behalf. I marvel at the attitude of Moses in his patience and generosity toward the children of Israel, and I also marvel at the grace and mercy of God toward them.

Look in Exodus chapter 14. Remember, they had just turned on Moses. Verse 11: "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, that we should die in this wilderness." Now watch.

This is what makes my day. Watch the patience, grace, and generosity of Moses. "And Moses said to the people, Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which He will show you today. For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you and you

shall hold your peace." If that had been me, I would not have had the patience and grace that Moses did. I would have probably looked at those people and said, "You ungrateful, unthankful reprobates," chewed them up one side and down the other and spit them out. And probably you would too if you were honest. But the worst Moses did was this: "Just keep your mouth shut and watch God." What did he say? "Fear not. I know you're afraid. Fear not. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord that He will show you today."

"Those Egyptians whom you're so concerned about, you will see them again no more forever. The Lord is going to fight for you. So hold your peace. Don't say another word. Just shut up and watch God." It is amazing how we think that difficulties, trials, tribulations, and heartaches in the route of obedience mean God is not near us, that He has forsaken us. Oh no. God does not forsake His people. He had brought those people that way and created those obstacles so that they would learn to lean upon Him, trust Him, and see His mighty miracles. What did the Israelites think? "We're going to die in this wilderness. That's it. We're just going to die here. We can't go to the left. We can't go to the right. We can't go behind us. We can't go forward. The sea is there. We're just going to die." Unhappily, many Christians have wanted to give in, give up, give out. They think all hope is gone, that God is not there, does not hear them, is not interested or concerned. These Israelites thought that. And you know what God did? In all their murmuring, complaining, and unbelieving hearts, God wrought one of the greatest miracles recorded in the Bible: He parted the Red Sea. The children of Israel walked across on dry ground. When Pharaoh and his chariots and army came in behind them, God brought the water back together and they were all drowned. I would love to have been there after that happened and ask, "Now what were you whining about? What were you complaining about? What were these words, 'We're going to die in this wilderness'?" Moses just said, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." Fear—unbiblical, ungodly, fleshly, humanistic fear—always produces unbelief. Always. I want to show you. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 27. I'll show you three illustrations very quickly. If I were to ask you, who is the man after God's own heart, who would you name? David. King David. God called him a

man after His own heart. Do you remember how Saul kept chasing David?

We read about, even at Keilah there, where he delivered those people. Well, look if you would please at 1 Samuel chapter 27 verse 1. Watch King David, the man after God's own heart. "And David said in his heart," didn't say it out loud now, sometimes we're even ashamed to express our own unbelief in words. But David said in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. There's nothing better for me to do than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines. And Saul shall despair of me to seek me anymore in the coast of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand." What is he saying? Had not God anointed him to be king of Israel? Had not God chosen him? Had not God constantly and continually delivered him out of the hand of Saul? And now David says in his heart, "Well, one day Saul's going to kill me. There's nothing better for me to do than to escape to the enemies of God, to the Philistines, and I'll live with them and Saul will despair of looking for me there." Let me ask you a question. Did David die at the hand of Saul? Of course not. Saul and Jonathan fell down slain on Mount Gilboa. David came into the kingdom exactly the way God said he would. And yet David said, "Well, one of these days I'm going to die at the hand of Saul, I just better get away." And he is a man after God's own heart. Let me show you another one. Look in your Bibles. To 1 Kings chapter 19. I wish I had time to read all of 1 Kings chapter 18. I don't. But you remember that is the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel. And the mighty miracle that God wrought there and how He took the prophets of Baal and cut their heads off. Yeah. Elijah did that. And then God sent rain into the land after three and a half years. Ahab gets back into town. And when you look at chapter 19 in verse 1: "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. And Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree, and requested for himself that he might die."

And he said, "It is enough now, O Lord. Take away my life, for I am not any better than my fathers." God had just wrought one of the greatest miracles in sending fire and consuming that sacrifice, which had been inundated with water over and over. Then Elijah killed all the prophets of Baal. When Ahab came back and told Jezebel what Elijah had done, Jezebel said, "So let the gods do so to me and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. I'll have you killed as well." And Elijah ran. He got under that juniper tree and said, "It is enough, Lord. Just take my life. Let me die. I am not any better than my fathers." I've got a question for you.

How did it turn out? Did Jezebel take his life? Of course not. She was thrown out of a window by some eunuchs, smashed on the pavement below, trod underfoot by horses and chariot, and dogs ate her, while Elijah was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire. And what did he say? "It is enough, Lord, just let me die." No, Elijah. No. Just because we have heartaches, trials and tribulations, and difficulties, does not mean that God is not in control. God is still sovereign.

Let me give you one more. Turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 42. I love this passage and have quoted it many times before, but I want you to see it in light of what I'm talking about. You know the story of how Joseph had been sold into Egypt by his brothers, thrown into prison, then released and made the head man in Egypt, only under Pharaoh. Pharaoh himself said, "Only in the throne will I be greater than you." He said, "It's your word, not a dog shall move his tongue." In other words, Joseph was the number one man. And of course, you know how Jacob sent his sons down into Egypt to buy corn. When Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. He asked about his younger brother Benjamin and about his father. Finally he told his brothers, "You're spies. You're just spies, that's all you are."

"Oh no, we're true men. We're all the sons of one man. One is not, and one is yet with the father." Joseph said, "If you don't bring your younger brother, by the life of Pharaoh, you are spies." He said, "Tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to let you all go except one. I'm going to hold one here in prison." He held Simeon in prison. He said, "Carry grain back to your father. But if you don't bring your younger

brother back with you, you'll see my face no more." So finally when they eat up the grain, Jacob tells his sons, "Go back, buy some more." "There's no reason to go back. The man said, if we did not bring Benjamin, he's not going to see our face. Why did you even tell him that I had another son?" "Well, he asked," said Judah, "how in the world could we know that he was going to say bring him back?" Judah said, "I'll be his surety for him. If I don't bring him back, you can take my life." Jacob said, "Well, if I be bereaved of my children, I be bereaved of my children. Take him." Look what Jacob said in Genesis 42 and verse 36: "And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have you bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me." May I ask you a question? Which one of those things were against Jacob? Not one. Joseph being sold into Egypt was for Jacob's benefit. Simeon being held was for Jacob's benefit. Benjamin going down there was for Jacob's benefit. Because Jacob is going to be restored unto Joseph. And Joseph is going to take care of the family for years to come. But what did Jacob say? "All these things are against me," when absolutely not one of them was against him.

We really need to learn the truth of Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." God is still God. He is still on the throne, still working everything out after the counsel of His own will for the benefit and blessing of His people. As He said at Hebrews 13:5, "For He saith, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Why should we suffer from a slave mentality or its effects? Why should we be fearful or unbelieving when we know that the sovereign God of heaven and earth, who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, is on the throne of this universe working everything out after the counsel of His own will for our good and for His glory?

Applications: Thinking Biblically and Trusting God

Let me make a couple of applications. First, we must understand that what we hear, read, and are taught impacts our minds and thought processes. You are a product of what you have been taught, heard, and learned. That is why Ephesians 4 tells us to put off the old man and put on the new man. We have to learn to think aright, biblically, and scripturally—to think like free men, totally different

from the way we were raised and taught. The reason so many people today think and act like slaves is that they are fed a full menu of servitude and slavery over and over by what they hear, see, read, and have been taught.

In 1 Corinthians 7:23 our Lord says, "You were bought with a price, be you not the servants or the slaves of men." And in Galatians 5:1, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." One of the things destroying modern day Christendom is a slave mentality.

We have not learned to think biblically, scripturally, or like free men. We still think, "It's better to give up some rights and be safe than to have personal responsibility and watch out for ourselves." I hear that over and over: "We have to give up the Second Amendment for our safety." I've got news for you: give up your arms, and you are totally, completely unsafe. There's no safety in being defenseless. Our Lord says we must learn to think biblically.

Secondly, Moses gave excellent counsel to those who were fearful and troubled: "Stand still and shut your mouth." That's wonderful counsel. Literally, he said, "Don't fret against God. Don't try to second guess God." Do you realize we will never save ourselves either by fighting or by fleeing when we are in an unbelieving state? We need to properly assess our situation and trust in the Lord for deliverance. God said in Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am the Lord. I will be exalted among the heathen, I'll be exalted in the earth." In times of great difficulty and expectation, it is our wisdom to keep our spirits calm, quiet, and sedate, for then we're in the best frame not only to fulfill our responsibilities, but also to listen to the Lord and trust in Him.

The third application is this: if God brings His people into straits, He will always bring us out. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "There is no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man." What is common to you is common to me, to Robert, to Ron. We all have the same temptations and trials. "But God is faithful who will with the temptation make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." In every trial, difficulty, and heartache, there's always a way of escape. The problem is, most of the time we're not interested in the way of escape; we'd rather whine, murmur, and complain. The way of

escape is usually through submission to God and His Word and His truth. The children of Israel said, "He brought us out."

"To die in this wilderness. He brought us out to drop us." You know what the Bible says in Deuteronomy 4:37-38? Let me paraphrase it. Here's what He said: He brought them out that He might bring them in. God never ever leaves us or forsakes us. Whenever we have a trial, whenever we have a test, whenever we have heartaches, whenever we have problems, there's always a way out. And that way out is through faith and obedience and trusting in the Lord and His Word. We need to make sure that in our lives we are absolutely, totally free from the effects of a slave mentality. And we need to learn to think like free men in Christ. And learn to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. And to be careful that we're never entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. And we ask, Father, that You would indeed teach us, build us up in the most holy faith. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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JW01281 | YouTube

Chapter 2: God's Protection and Preservation
JW01284 | YouTube

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