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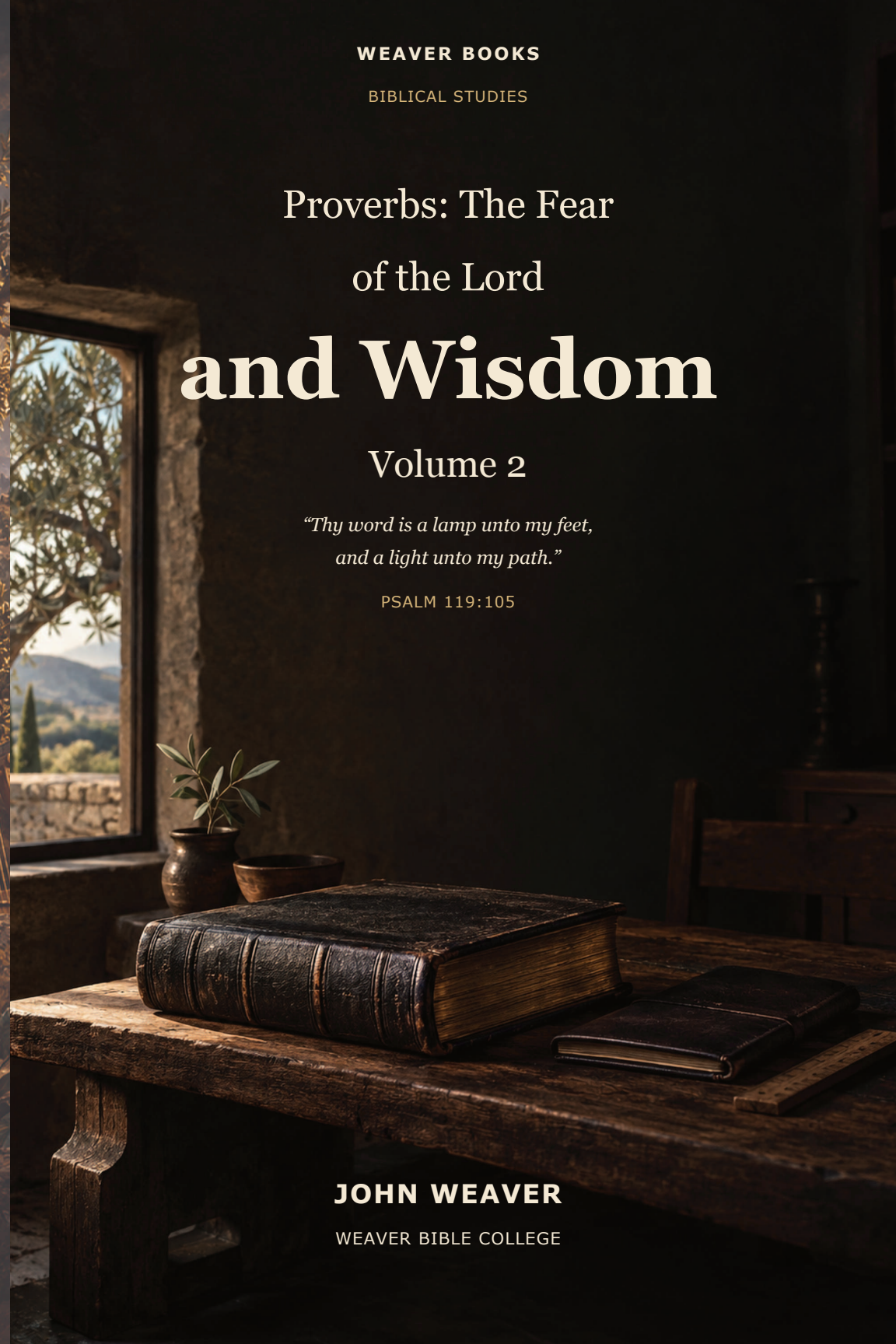
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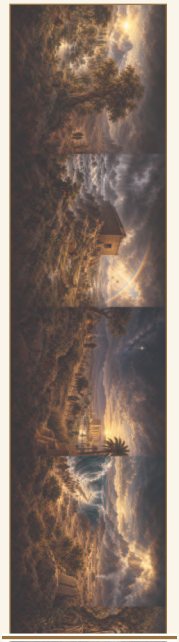
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

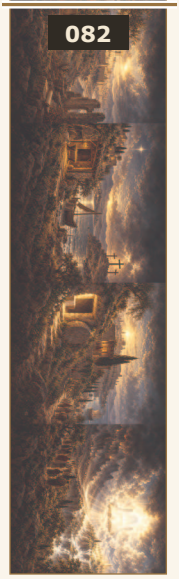
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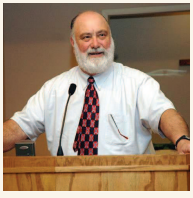
The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.

PROVERBS 1:7, EXCERPT

John Weaver explores the fear of the Lord, discernment, integrity, and obedience through Proverbs and other biblical passages. These messages invite readers to measure their habits, counsel, and choices against the wisdom of Scripture. Volume 2 is one of two volumes; the complete chapter sequence is preserved across the set. This volume contains corrected chapters 25-47.

“When we reach eternity by the grace of God, our understandings will be perfected.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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Volume 2

Corrected chapters 25-47

John Weaver

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Proverbs: The Fear of the Lord and Wisdom

Volume 2

John Weaver

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Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Corrected review edition - October 4, 2026. Repeated full sermons have been consolidated; chapter numbers, contents, indexes, and study-guide reading ranges follow this corrected edition. Original transcript variants remain preserved in the editorial archive. Final editorial and publisher approval is still required. This is Volume 2 of two, covering corrected chapters 25-47. Both volumes use one matching study guide.

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CHAPTER 25

The Way To Die

January 21, 2020

Introduction: Jesus Tells Peter How He Will Die

In John 21, beginning in verse 17, our Lord is talking to Simon Peter: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” Peter was grieved, because he said unto him the third time, “Lovest thou me?” And he said unto him, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” Jesus said unto him, “Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say to thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkest whither thou wouldest. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.” This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said unto him, “Follow me.”

The Certainty and Unavoidability of Death

In this passage, our Lord tells the Apostle Peter exactly how he is to die. The truth of the matter is that most of us never really think about dying. We do not even want to entertain the idea of death. Moreover, we certainly do not want to contemplate the way in which

we are going to die. I am absolutely sure that most people never think of death, nor the way in which they will eventually die.

One thing is absolutely and certainly sure: each of us is going to die in some manner. Death will come to us either through old age, disease, accidents, incidents, persecution, violently in some manner sometimes, and other times just what you and I would call normal and natural death. But the truth of the matter is, death is going to come to us.

In Psalm 22 and verse 29, the Word of God says, “All they that be fat upon the earth shall eat and worship. All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, and none can keep his soul alive.” Stop and think about that: “And none can keep his soul alive,” which means that none of us can survive; we are going to die.

In Psalm 49 and verse 7, the Bible says, “None of them can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him.” So we cannot prevent our death, neither can we prevent the deaths of others as well. The interesting thing is when you read through the book of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah chapter 9 and verse 21, Jeremiah likens death to a peeping tom.

Here's what he said: “For death is come up into our windows and is entered into our palaces to cut off the children from without and the young men from the street.” But notice what he said: “For death is come up into our windows,” almost like death is peeping in, looking for someone to pounce upon. Well, the fact is, we know that we're going to die. And the very fact that we know that should provoke us to do some thinking and certainly some preparation as well.

Jesus' Desire to Glorify the Father in Death

It was the Confederate General Stonewall Jackson who made this statement. He said, “I do not concern myself with the time of my death. My concern is that I want to be prepared whenever it may overtake me.” And certainly that is wise. We don't need to be concerned about the time. We just need to be concerned that we're ready.

I hope that you remember the incident of the Mount of Transfiguration, where our Lord Jesus was actually transfigured before His apostles, Peter, James, and John. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah met with Jesus Christ, and they spoke and had a conversation. If you're unaware of what that conversation was about, the Bible tells us in Luke chapter 9, beginning with verse 28: “And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James and went up into a mountain and prayed. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered and his raiment was white and glistering. And behold, there talked with him two men who were Moses and Elias or Elijah, who appeared in glory and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish in Jerusalem.”

So I find that interesting: on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah met our Lord, and they were concerned and talking about His decease, which He should fulfill and complete at Jerusalem.

The word "decease" is from the Greek word "exodus," which literally means to exit, to depart, or to depart from this life through death. They were speaking to Him concerning His exodus. I am absolutely sure that our Lord Jesus Christ desired to glorify the Father in His death. In fact, that was His stated purpose not only in His death but in His life as well.

You remember the passage in John 18 where the mob came to take our Lord, and Peter drew out his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus. I have had people ask, "Do you think Peter really meant to cut Malchus's ear off?" My response is no. I do not think he meant to cut it off; I think he was aiming for the center of his head. He just missed and cut the ear off. Our Lord reached down, picked up the ear, and put it back on Malchus just as though it had never been severed.

Our Lord looked at Peter and simply said, "Peter, put up the sword in thy sheath. The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not take it?" In other words, He was willing to do whatever God would have Him do. In John 8:29, our Lord said, "He that sent me is with me. The Father has not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him." Our Lord was interested in glorifying His Father, not only in life, but in death as well.

There is an interesting truth in the book of John. We will go back to John 21, but remember these passages, especially a particular word. Look at John 7, verse 39: “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” The word “glorified,” of course, refers to His death. Jesus had not yet died.

If you look in your Bibles to John 12 and notice verse 23, again the Bible says: “And Jesus answered him, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.” He is saying, “The hour is come that I am going to die. I’m going to be absolutely glorified.” Then, if you look in John 17 and verse 1, you have the high priestly prayer of our Lord. Look what He prays: “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.”

So it goes without saying that Jesus Christ was interested in glorifying His Father even in death.

The Question: How Would You Like to Die?

Now let me ask you a question. Maybe you have not thought about this. Maybe you have. In fact, I probably know the answer before I ever ask the question. How would you like to die? I am sure that the most normal and the most natural response would be, “I want to die peacefully and easily in a ripe old age, surrounded by family and friends.”

There's nothing wrong with that. I've thought that. I've also thought I would like to have a few days' notice before I died, just so I could witness to my family and friends again. I can't help but think of a story I heard about a young man. He said, "I wanted to die like my grandfather died, peacefully and in his sleep. He didn't want to die like the rest of those people on the bus, screaming in terror and agony as he went over the cliff."

I've had good friends who went to sleep and never woke up. There's nothing wrong with that, especially if you're ready to die and everything's prepared. That's the way John Battelle went; he went in his sleep. We are concerned many times not only with dying, but also

with the manner in which we die. Let me show you something that should concern us more.

Go back to John 21 and look at verse 19. Our Lord is talking to Peter about his death. He says, "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." Isn't that interesting? "By what death he should glorify God." After telling him that, he simply said to Peter, "Follow me."

What our Lord is telling Peter is the manner in which he is going to die, but also the manner in which that death is going to glorify God. Have we ever meditated or considered the fact that in our death we would want to glorify our Father as well? It is not just the fact that we will die, or that we will die in some manner. We must consider whether we will honor and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ as we die. Note verse 19 once again: "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God."

Peter's Martyrdom and the Example of Paul

In John 12, verses 32 and 33, our Lord said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." This he said, signifying what death he should die. In other words, our Lord was going to be crucified. John 18:32 says, "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die." Our Lord, then, was talking about his own crucifixion.

In John 21, verses 18 and 19, our Lord told Peter, "Verily, verily, I say to thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkest whither thou wouldest." In other words, Peter did whatever he wanted to, wherever he wanted to go. But our Lord continued: "But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." He was speaking of Peter being crucified. "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God."

Peter was crucified in Rome in 64 A.D. Tradition says that he was crucified upside down. In fact, Peter chose that because he believed he was not worthy to be crucified in the same manner as our Lord. Eusebius, in 325 A.D., in his Ecclesiastical History, states that all the apostles were martyred with the exception of the Apostle John. Most

of the apostles were martyred, that is for sure. But if we have absolute, conclusive proof that every one of them was martyred, no, I would not say so. In all probability, they were. When it comes to the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter, however, we are absolutely sure that they were both martyred in 64 A.D. under the persecution of Nero.

Paul was beheaded, but Peter was crucified, probably upside down. Albert Barnes says of Peter's crucifixion: "The ancients say that Peter was crucified at Rome about 34 years after this, with his head downward. Clemens says that he was led to the crucifixion with his wife and sustained her in her sufferings. She was crucified as well."

Peter was exhorted to remember the example of our Lord. It was also said that Peter died, not as the philosophers did, but with a firm hope of heaven, patiently enduring the pains of the cross. Evidently, Peter's wife was martyred in some manner, probably crucified just as Peter was.

In 2 Peter 1:13, Peter speaks of his own death: "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, that is in this body, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, that is his body, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me." He was saying, "I'm going to die. I know I'm going to die. I even know the manner in which I'm going to die." Moreover, he would endeavor that, after his decease, they might always remember these things. That is why he was writing. The word "decease" is the same word used in Luke 9: "exodus." It means after my departure, after my exit: I am leaving this world through death.

Peter certainly was martyred. The Apostle Paul was martyred, and many other individuals were martyred as well. Although the title of this message is "The Way to Die," I am not suggesting that the way to die is to die a martyr's death. Multitudes have died a martyr's death. If you have never read the book, Fox's Book of Martyrs, I would encourage you to do so. You will find ample illustrations of men and women who have given their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, you do not even have to buy the book. All you have to do is go online to the Gutenberg Project. You can have that book right there and read it free. The Avalon Project also has a lot of historical works at

your fingertips. All you have to do is simply type in the Avalon Project or the Gutenberg Project. If you have never read Fox's Book of Martyrs, I would certainly encourage you to do so.

Again, I am not suggesting that martyrdom is the way to die. If martyrdom is not the way to die, what is the way to die? Here it is: The way to die is in faith, in full confidence in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, after having lived a faithful and fruitful life.

Turn in your Bibles to the book of Philippians, and you might as well mark this passage, because we will come back here several times. Look in Philippians chapter 1, verses 20 through 24, beginning with verse 20. The Apostle Paul writes: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

He says, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." The word "magnified" is a very interesting word. It is "megaluno" in the Greek, and it literally means to magnify, to enlarge, to show as great, to laud, to celebrate, to glory, and to praise. So he says, what I want more than anything else is for Jesus Christ to be glorified in my body, whether it is in life or in death.

You have to consider where the Apostle Paul was when he wrote the book of Philippians. He was in prison, expecting to have his head severed from his body at any moment.

He says in verse 21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." If I live, I am going to live for Jesus Christ; if I die, it is gain. "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not." Then he says, "I'm in a strait," that is, I am in a predicament, in a tight spot, betwixt two: death and life.

Watch carefully: “Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” To really understand this, add two words: “for me”—which is far better for me. Nevertheless, “to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” Paul said he was in a strait betwixt two, because he knew what was best for him: to die and be with Christ. But what was best for them was for him to continue in the flesh, teaching and preaching. If he died, he would be the gainer; and he would not lose anything by living, because whatever he did, he did so that Christ might be magnified. In the strictest sense of the word, this was what Paul was saying.

Living and Dying to Magnify Christ

Does it matter whether I live? Does it matter whether I die? All I want is for Jesus Christ to be magnified in my body, in my life. If He allows me to live, I am going to magnify Him. If I die, I want to magnify Him. The concern of the Apostle Paul, even concerning his death, was that he might magnify the Lord Jesus Christ.

The way to live is to live for God's honor and God's glory. The way to die is to die for God's honor and God's glory. The way to live is to live righteously and godly. The way to die is to die righteously and godly. The way to live is to live glorifying Jesus Christ, and the way to die is to die glorifying Jesus Christ.

When you read Hebrews chapter 11 in the first part, you read about Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and others. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:13, "These all died in the faith, not having received the promises," that is, the fulfillment of them. But they believed, and they counted themselves as pilgrims, strangers, and sojourners. The Bible says, "These all died in the faith."

We cannot die in the faith unless we live in faith. We cannot die glorifying our Lord unless we live glorifying our Lord. It was wicked Balaam, the false prophet, who in Numbers 23:10 said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But Balaam did not die the death of the righteous because he was not a righteous man. He was killed with the sword of the children of Israel. He was a wicked, ungodly reprobate. You cannot die the death of the righteous unless you live the life of the righteous. You cannot die in faith unless you live in faith.

The Apostle Paul, in Romans chapters 1 through 11, lays down doctrine: the doctrine of depravity, the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of election, and all this doctrine. When he gets to Romans 12:1, he begins to make a practical application. Listen to what he said in verses 1 and 2.

Paul said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed, how? By the renewing of your mind that you might prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Now he says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." So here is a good question: How do you present your body a living sacrifice?

Romans chapter 6, verse 19, gives us a very practical way that we are to present our bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul says, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh." In other words, your flesh is weak. Your flesh is sinful. So you want to understand this? Here it is: "For as you have yielded your members," that is, the members of your body, "as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."

What is the apostle Paul saying? Here is what he is saying. When you were lost, before you were converted, before you were saved, you served sin with all of your body. Every member of your body, including the faculties of your mind and your heart and soul—everything in you—served sin. You yielded every member of your body as a servant to uncleanness and to iniquity. Now he says the way you present your body is to take every member and present it to the Lord Jesus Christ, just like you used to use every member for sin. Now you use every member for righteousness and holiness' sake.

Paul says in Philippians 1:20, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body." Paul is saying that he does not want to be ashamed in any way. He does not want to be ashamed of any

member of his body. He wants his entire body to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants Christ to be magnified in his body with all boldness, as always, so now also.

Boldness in Life and Death

Now, Lord willing, in a few weeks, I am going to bring two messages on the word “ashamed.” I was astounded, as I searched the Scripture, to find how many times the word “ashamed” occurs in the Bible. There are some things we should be ashamed of and some things we should not be ashamed of, but the apostle is saying that he does not want to be ashamed in anything. Our Lord said in Mark 8:38, “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this sinful and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father and with his holy angels.” The apostle Paul said, “I do not want to be ashamed.”

Notice something else in Philippians 1:20: “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.” The apostle Paul not only wants to yield every member and not be ashamed in anything; he also wants to do this with all boldness. Proverbs 28:1 says, “The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are as bold as the lion.” Most of us never know the boldness of a lion.

We are not even around lions. Years ago, I was preaching in Arizona and visited a man who had a private zoo. He took me around and showed me all the animals. There was a lion, and he said, “This is my pet.” He stuck his hand in the cage and petted that big male lion as though it were a little kitty cat. I asked, “Could I pet him?” He said, “Sure. Anybody can pet him.”

“Except when it comes time to eat.” I asked what he meant, and he said, “I’ll show you.” As docile as that lion was, when the man got a big chunk of meat and threw it into the pen, the lion roared and pounced on it, devouring it. He was not embarrassed at all to roar and pounce. He had boldness.

SCRIPTURE READING - Acts 4:23-31 (KJV)

> In other words, this is what our Lord is saying: “The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are as bold as a lion.” The apostles had been called before the elders, the rulers, and the chief priests, and had been threatened.
>
> “And being let go, they went to their own company and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

When these Christians were persecuted and threatened, they did not ask God to lighten the persecution. They did not ask Him to do away with their enemies. They said, "Lord, grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness we may preach thy word." They sought boldness in the presence of the enemy. Once they had prayed, the place was shaken, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Our boldness, as well as our faithfulness, honors the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason our boldness honors the Lord Jesus Christ is because it is from Him. Ephesians 3 and verse 12 says, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." This is why the apostle Paul in Philippians 1 in verse 20 said that in

nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

God's Sovereignty Over Life and Death

Paul was saying that there was with him a holy indifference. It really did not matter whether he lived or died; he was going to be the gainer either way. If he died, he would be with the Lord. If he lived, he would still be with Him, serving Him, magnifying Him, and honoring Him. There was therefore a holy indifference in his life, and Paul was quite willing to leave whether he lived or died in the hands of the Lord. It should be that way in each of our lives as well.

Although there was a holy indifference as to whether or not he lived or died, Paul understood that God was sovereign. This did not mean that he desired death instantly or immediately. He knew he was going to die, but it is normal and natural for everyone to want to live. I want to live; I do not want to die. I know I am going to die, but that is a normal and natural thing. As long as I live, I want to keep preaching and teaching the word of God. It is just that simple.

When we say that there is a holy indifference as to whether we live or die, that does not mean that we are suicidal. If you ever hear that I have committed suicide, begin a murder investigation, because I am not doing it. It is just that simple. Neither does it mean that we ignore our body or ignore our health.

As long as I have my being, I want to be as healthy as I can so I can serve the Lord and preach His word as long as I can. It is just that simple. But I do know that one of these days I am going to die, and there is absolutely not one thing I can do about it. You know what the Bible said in Psalm 31, verse 15? “My times are in thy hand.”

The apostle Paul knew that. He knew his time was in God’s hand. In Psalm 76 and verse 9, the word of God says, “Who holdeth our soul in life and suffereth not our feet to be moved.” God not only has our times in His hand; He is the one who holds our soul in life. We should trust Him as to whether we live or whether we die, because everything about us is in His hands.

I believe it should be the desire of every real Christian to magnify our Lord in our life and in our death and leave it up to Him as to when He takes us home. Our Lord taught us to pray, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” If we want His kingdom to come, if we want His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, do we not want His will to be done in our lives? The answer is yes.

Albert Barnes, commenting on what the apostle Paul said in Philippians 1:20, wrote: “If my trial shall result in death, then he, that is Paul, believed he would be able to show such a spirit as to do honor to Christ and his cause. He was not afraid to die, and he was persuaded that he would be enabled to bear the pains of death in such a manner as to show the sustaining power of religion and the value of Christianity. Christ is magnified in the death of Christians when his gospel is seen to sustain them. When supported by its promises, they are enabled to go calmly into that dark valley. And when in the departing moments, they confidently commit their eternal all into his hands. The effect of this state of feeling on the mind of Paul must have been most happy. In whatever way his trial terminated, he felt assured that the great object for which he lived would be promoted. Christ would be honored, perhaps as much by dying as a martyr, as by his living yet many years to proclaim his gospel.”

“He was therefore reconciled to his lot. He had no anxiety. Come what might, the purpose which he had most at heart would be secured, that the name of the Savior would be honored and glorified.” And that is true. If we really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we know that whether we live or whether we die as Christians, we can honor Him.

The Preciousness of the Saints' Death

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” These words are inscribed on the headstone of my father’s and mother’s grave. This is one of my favorite verses. I preached from this text when my father died, when my mother died, and on the deaths of many Christians. But pay close attention to what the Scripture says in Psalm 116 and verse 15.

The Hebrew word for “precious” is the word “jakar,” and it is translated as precious, costly, excellent, and honorable. It refers to that which is very valuable, prized, rare, weighty, and glorious. David is saying in this passage that God does not hold our lives in a small estimation. God does not expose us to death casually or needlessly. No. He is saying that our deaths are exceedingly precious, honorable, and valuable in His sight.

The truth of the matter is that it is not only our births that have been decreed by God, but also our deaths. The manner in which we are going to die has also been decreed. Consider Job 14 in light of what we are talking about. Job puts forth some very obvious truth to begin with: “Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” That is certainly true. “He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.”

"And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." No one can save himself. But notice verse 5: "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." Just as God said to the ocean, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and hither shalt thou proud waves be stayed," so the waves cannot go farther than God's decree. None of us will live one second longer than God's decree concerning our deaths. Therefore, the real issue is not how long we shall live. It is how we shall die. Will we honor our Lord and magnify Him in our deaths as well?

Isaiah 57 reveals something we may have overlooked: sometimes God removes His choicest servants early to ensure that they do not see the evil that is to come. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Many times we do not pay attention to the fact that righteous, merciful, godly men are taken away from the evil that is to come. God said that to Josiah: "I am going to bring evil on this city, but you're not going to see it. You will be dead before the evil comes."

However we die, it does not matter whether we die a martyr's death, of old age, in what the world calls a car accident, or of natural causes or disease. How we die, glorifying the Lord, is what is

important. Albert Barnes says, "How much has the cause of religion and Christianity been promoted by the patient deaths of Polycarp, and Latimer, and Ridley, and Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and the host of martyrs? What does not the world owe and the cause of religion owe to such scenes as occurred on the deathbeds of Baxter, and Thomas Scott, and Haliburton, and Payson? What an argument for the truth of Christianity."

The Way to Die

What an illustration of its sustaining power, and what a source of comfort to us who are soon to die. Religion does not leave the believer when he most needs its support and consolations. It can sustain us in the severest trial of our conditions here. It can illuminate what seems to be, of all places, most dark, cheerless, dismal, and repulsive: the valley of the shadow of death. Isn't that amazing?

Conclusion: The Way to Die

When we look and see how God has sovereignly and powerfully worked in the lives of these men and women who have given their lives as martyrs, it should encourage us. The way to die is to die saved, trusting only in the finished work of Jesus Christ. The way to die is to die righteously, after having lived a righteous, fruitful, and faithful life. The way to die is to die glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. The way to die is to die like the apostle Paul, with a view toward heaven and the crown that awaits.

Paul did lose his head, but in 2 Timothy chapter 4, verses 7 through 8, he said it like this: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Our Lord said to the church in Revelation chapter 2, verse 10: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." Obviously, when we die, death is not the end. It's the beginning. We're to look forward to the crown of life.

David said, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he restoreth my soul.” He goes on to say, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.” Note the words, “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.”

If you are standing in the shadow of a tree, are you in the tree? No. There is no work for you in climbing the tree, and there is no danger to you in that tree. You are just in its shadow. David spoke of the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus Christ has already taken the sting out of death for the child of God. We are not walking in the pains of death and the sting of death; we are walking only in its shadow, in the cool, calm, reposed shadow of death. For the child of God, death is the beginning, not the ending. We should be concerned to glorify God, not only in our lives, but in our deaths as well.

This can be done by His grace. Paul said he wanted to magnify Jesus Christ, whether in life or in death. May we do so as well.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for his word. We thank you, Father, that you have told us the way to die: to die in faith, believing in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Help us, Lord, to love thee, to live for thee, to honor thee, and to die for thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 26

The Sin Of Not Thinking

April 20, 2020

Mark 6:52 says, “For they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened.”

Introduction: The Danger of Not Thinking

Oftentimes we do things that can only be defined as stupid. When we are confronted with our actions and asked why we did those things, the most common response is, “I wasn’t thinking,” or at least, “I guess I wasn’t thinking.” Not thinking, of course, can have very grave consequences.

Years back, Alice and I had a friend who was not only a talented builder but also an overall good mechanic. He was doing some work on the concrete around his pool, drilling with his electric drill to put some screws in to hold a railing down. The bit got hot. Without thinking, he dipped the tip of that bit, still in the electric drill, into the pool to cool it. He was instantly electrocuted and killed. Did he know better? The answer is yes.

Why did he do it? The answer has to come back that he simply was not thinking. I can assure you that God, in His infinite grace and

mercy, has spared my life numerous times, even in spite of my own stupidity. I am sure He has done the same for you. The proof of that is that you are alive today. God has been gracious to us because oftentimes we do things without thinking.

If you look in Mark 6:52 again, the Bible says, “For they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened.” There are grave consequences even for Christians who do not think. The truth is that thinking is work. Work requires time and effort. Hence, we do not wish to think because we do not wish to engage in any more work, particularly.

Thinking Is Work, and We Prefer Amusement

The fact is, we would rather be entertained and amused. When you consider entertainment and amusement, one does not need to think. If you look up the word “entertainment” in a dictionary, you will find this definition: “the act of entertaining; agreeable occupation for the mind; diversion; amusement.” Note once again that entertainment is amusement. I have told you before, and I remind you, that the word “muse” means to think.

The word occurs twice in our Bibles, in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Holding Mark 6, turn to Psalm 143, and look at verse 5. Here David, the psalmist, says, “I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the works of thy hands.” That is, I think and consider the work of thy hands.

Then look in the book of Luke, chapter 3 and verse 15. Here the Word of God makes a statement concerning John the Baptist: “And as the people were in expectation, all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not.” So they were musing in their hearts.

The word here is dialogizomai in the Greek, and it literally means to dispute, to reason, to muse, to think and consider. These people were turning over and over in their minds reasons as to why John the Baptist could either be the Messiah, or reasons why he was not the Messiah as well. They were actually thinking. The word “muse” means to think. In the Greek language, when you put an alpha or an “a” in front of a word, it negates it. It makes it a negative. So if

“muse” means to think, to “amuse” means not to think, not to consider.

Here is the problem: when you talk about entertainment and amusement, there is absolutely no work involved. You are just sitting there with your mind in neutral. Entertainment and amusement then simply work on your emotions. Here is a statement that we need to remember: amusement bypasses the brain and goes straight to the emotions. I do not know if you have ever heard Ravi Zacharias, but he has a radio program titled “Let My People Think.”

As you read through Scripture, you find that there is a great deal of emphasis upon thinking. For instance, you find such phrases as “think not,” “what think ye,” “how think you,” “let such a one think this,” or “do you think” over and over in Scripture.

Biblical Emphasis on Thinking

Now, the truth of the matter is we're actually called to think. So let me just show you several illustrations. I want you to look in your Bibles, first of all, to the book of Matthew, chapter 5. And look, if you would please, at verse 17. Matthew, chapter 5. And notice, if you would please, verse 17. Watch this, if you would. Matthew 5 and verse 17. Here's what our Lord said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Now notice what He said: "Think not." The interesting thing is here the word is nomizo, and it literally means to think or to suppose that,

to deem something to be true or to hold something by what you and I would call custom. So He says, "Don't even begin to think. Don't deem this to be true." He says, "Don't think that I've come to destroy the law or the prophets. I've not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

Now, if you look in John chapter 5, John chapter 5, here's another word and another term. In John chapter 5 and verse 45, John 5 verse 45, our Lord says to these Pharisees, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust." Now, here the word is dokeo, and it literally means to be of the opinion, to judge, to think, to suppose, to appear to be.

So our Lord says, "Do not think, do not let it appear, do not even suppose that I am come to judge you. I don't have to. Moses, in whom you trust, he is going to judge you as well."

So I want you to turn now to the book of Philippians. Here is one of the most frequently used words in the New Testament for thinking, in the book of Philippians, chapter 4 and verse 8. This word happens to be logizomai. And look what the Bible says. Philippians 4 and verse 8. The apostle writes, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Now notice, if you would, he said, "Think on these things." Wow.

The word literally means to reckon, to reason, to take into account. It means to calculate and to determine. This word is so important because it deals with reality. If I logizomai, if I calculate that I have a hundred bucks in my bank account, I have a hundred bucks in my bank account. If I do not logizomai, if I do not calculate it, then I am simply deceiving myself. The point is that this word deals with facts and reality. It does not deal with suppositions, desires, or wishes. We are commanded to think on these things. These things are reality. These things are facts.

When you look back in your Bibles to the book of Mark, chapter 6, notice verse 52 again. There is a great deal of emphasis upon thinking in Scripture. The Bible says, “For they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened.” Look at the word “considered.” It is from the Greek word suniemi. It is a preposition “sun” and “hiemi,” which means to stand or to cause to stand. When you put the preposition “sun,” which means “with,” it literally means to cause to stand together in the mind. The Bible says, “For they considered not”: they did not cause things to stand together in their minds. They did not join things together. They did not comprehend. They did not understand.

Context: The Feeding of the 5,000

In order to really grasp verse 52, you have to understand the context. Prior to verse 52, our Lord performed two miracles. The first is

known as the feeding of the 5,000. In Mark chapter 6, beginning with verse 30, we read: “And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them,”

And they came together unto him. When Jesus came out, he saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. When the day was far spent, his disciples came unto him and said, “This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.” He answered, “Give ye them to eat.” They said, “Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?” He saith unto them, “How many loaves have ye? go and see.”

When they knew, they said, “Five, and two fishes.” He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. They sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. When he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. They did all eat, and were filled. They took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

The interesting thing is that Scripture tells us there were about five thousand men. In Matthew 14:21, it says, “And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.” If each of those men had a wife, that would be ten thousand. If each husband and wife had at least two children, that would be twenty thousand. Most probably had more than two children. So we are talking about a miracle involving thirty to forty thousand people. That is indeed a miracle.

Look particularly at verses 41 and 42: “And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled.” Note that he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, and his disciples gave it to the people. He did likewise with the fish.

The multitude probably did not realize how little fed so many. However, the disciples knew specifically. They knew that He began with five loaves and two fish. They had made the people sit down in companies of 100 and companies of 50. They saw Him pray and bless the food, break the bread, and give it to them so they could give it to the people. They saw Him break the fish and give it to them so they could distribute it to the people. It is not simply that the apostles saw this miracle; they participated in it. They were there, and they were doing it. This was a miracle of great proportions.

Context: Jesus Walks on Water and the Disciples' Fear

Now there is a second miracle. Verse 45 says, “And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.” “And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw him, and were troubled.”

“And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.” “And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.” So our Lord is walking upon the water. Not only is He walking upon the water, He is walking upon the water in a storm.

The disciples see Him. He could have just as easily walked past them, but He did not. What was their response to our Lord walking on the water? It was not one of wonder. It was not one of faith or amazement. It happened to be one of fear. So you are going to ask, why were they so fearful? Look in verse 49: “But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out.”

The word for “spirit” is phantasma in the Greek. It is translated as “spirit,” or an appearance or an apparition, and it could also mean a specter. If you look up the word “specter” in the dictionary, here is what you will find: a visible, incorporeal spirit. Incorporeal means it does not have a body. It is a visible, incorporeal spirit, especially one of a terrifying nature; a ghost, a phantom, an apparition, or some object or source of terror and dread. Let me be very blunt: they thought they had seen a ghost.

In Matthew 14:26, the same incident is recorded: “And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.” Mark 6:50 says, “For they all saw him, and were troubled.” We do not understand the word “troubled.” I could look at Joshua and say, “He looks troubled.” By that I mean he is concerned about something; perhaps something is slightly upsetting him. But the Greek word means more than being slightly upset. It is the Greek word tarasso, and it literally means, listen carefully, to agitate; to trouble a thing by the movement of its parts to and fro; to cause inward commotion; to take away the calmness of the mind; to disturb one’s equanimity; to strike one’s spirit with fear and dread; and to render one anxious and distressed.

Let me spell it out. Their knees were knocking. They were scared and shaking in their boots. Their joints moved back and forth. Their minds were exceedingly troubled because they thought they had a real ghost sitting before them, or at least walking on the water in front of them.

Our Lord then reassures them. In verse 50, the Bible says, "For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and

they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered."

The Bible says that they were "sore amazed" in themselves, "beyond measure, and wondered." The phrase "sore amazed" is translated from the Greek word existemi, which means to throw out of position, to displace, to be out of one's mind, to be beside oneself, literally to be insane. Put this together: They were troubled and afraid, and now the Bible says they were sore amazed; that is, they were out of their mind.

They were crazy with fear. How did the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ get into this state? Obviously, they were not exercising faith. How could they become so fearful and unbelieving? In another passage, our Lord asked His own disciples, "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?" And He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

If this could happen to the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ while He was present with them, how much more could it happen to us when He is not physically present with us? These apostles were literally shaking with fear. The average professing Christian today, as well as the average American, is shaking with fear over coronavirus. If it was not coronavirus, it would be swine flu, SARS, Ebola, or Zika. It could be the economy or your family. You get out of your mind, panic, lose everything, and totally give in to fear.

I was talking and showed it to Alice when I saw a headline: “Whoever dies of the coronavirus dies alone.” I could not help but laugh. Isaiah and Alice were in the room, so I said, “Isn’t that amazing? Everybody dies alone. Nobody dies with you. And if somebody did die with you, you would not know it.” I asked them, “Now when it comes my time to die, would you all like to die with me?” Obviously, the Christian does not die alone because of the Lord Jesus Christ. But each of us has to face death alone; no one else will face it for us. Why would you get bent out of shape because you have to die by yourself? Everybody has to die by themselves.

Every time you give in to panic and fear, you are giving in to a lack of faith, understanding, and comprehension.

The Root Cause: They Considered Not the Miracle of the Loaves

How did the disciples get into this state? Verse 52 says, “For they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened.” They got into this state because they did not consider the miracle of the loaves. They paid no attention to what Jesus Christ had accomplished, although they had not only seen it but participated in it. They did not think, meditate, or consider; they did not cause anything to stand in their minds. One reason was simply that their heart was hardened.

Let me explain what that means. The problem today is that most Christians have a hardened heart—not a judicial hardening, in which God judges someone, and not a hardening from immorality. Rather, it is a dullness and blindness of the mind settled upon us, so that we cannot think, consider, or put two and two together. The Greek word translated “hardened” is poroo. It literally means to become hard or blind; it also means to cover with a thick skin or become calloused. We could therefore say that we have become calloused as Christians. You ask, “How can you say that we have become calloused?” How many people really get upset over abortion today? How many over sodomy? How many over socialism or communism? Nobody. We have literally become calloused.

The disciples here were not opposed to Jesus Christ. They were not fighting against Him. Consider the two disciples of our Lord who were walking on the Emmaus road, when our Lord joined Himself to them. He asked what they were discussing, and they said, “Are you a stranger here? Have you not heard what has happened? Why, Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. We thought He was the Messiah. And besides this, this is the third day.”

In Luke chapter 24, beginning at verse 25, our Lord said to these two disciples, “Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” Our Lord called His disciples fools.

There are four different Greek words for “fool.” One of those words is used in Matthew chapter 5, where it is a term of reproach and contempt. God forbids us to look upon our brother and say, “Thou fool,” when we are treating him and holding him contemptuously and reproachfully. That word is not the word used in Luke chapter 24. Anoetos is the Greek word there, and it means one who is foolish, unwise, weak, or dull. It is backed up by the Greek word bradus, which means dull, inactive, and one of a stupid mind. By a stupid mind, I mean what our Lord means: one who is slow to believe and to comprehend the absolute truth.

In Hebrews chapter 5, the apostle has been speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ and the fact that He is of the lineage of Melchizedek, after the order of Melchizedek. Verse 10 says, “Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.” Then he says to these Hebrew Christians, “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.”

The word here is nothros, which means dull, slothful, sluggish, indolent, languid. He says, “You’re dull of hearing, you’re indolent, you’re sluggish, you’re slothful, you’re not thinking, you don’t want to think.” How did the apostles’ hearts get so hardened, and even more hardened? The answer comes back in verse 52: “For they considered not the miracle of the loaves.” They considered not the miracle of the loaves.

They did not understand or put together all that our Lord did in feeding the 5,000, or feeding the 30 or 40,000, however many there were. The Greek word for “consider” is suniemi, which means to put together, to draw together, or to place together, and to cause to stand in the mind.

They not only saw the miracle; they participated in the miracle, but it had no effect upon them. They did not attend to it. They did not learn from it. They did not see the wonderful glory of Christ. They did not comprehend the power of Christ. They did not understand that what Jesus Christ did was an act of omnipotence. Our Lord performed a miracle that was far beyond the natural.

He took five loaves and two fish and fed an entire multitude. His power in producing and providing the multiplicity of loaves and fish

demonstrated not only His power and His deity, but also His control over the material elements. Do you realize that only God could do something like this? Only God could multiply the loaves and the fish. Only God could feed a multitude of people with manna in the wilderness for 40 years.

I've often said the richest man in the world cannot feed the birds that exist in the world for 30 days without going broke. Stop and think about that. Our Lord feeds everything, but He fed His people, several million people, every day for 40 years in the wilderness. If Jesus Christ can part the Red Sea and cause it to congeal and stand upright while His people walk across, undoubtedly He can walk on water. Undoubtedly, He could walk on water in a storm as well.

The reason these people were so fearful and in such a panic is that they did not comprehend the person, the power, and the work of Jesus Christ. If we want to live in a state of fear and panic, all we have to do is continue not to think, not to meditate, not to put things together, and not to consider. Unless we learn to think biblically and scripturally, we will end up with hardened hearts, even more so. God has done so many great things, not only in our lives, but in His Word and in the lives of other people. We need to see and understand, put all of this together, and learn to apply it to our life.

When you read the Scripture, how many really stop and think? How many ask, "What is the Lord saying? What is He saying to me? How do I apply this to my life? How do I change my life? How do I work this out in biblical principle?" Normally, we just read the Scripture and are content with saying, "Well, I read my Bible today." We do not consider or think, and we certainly do not consider the mighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Call to Think and Meditate on Scripture

He says in verse 52 that the reason these people were in such panic was that they considered not the miracle of the loaves. If you and I are going to profit from the reading and study of Scripture, we have to learn to stop and think. I can assure you that probably most people in this room

If you have read through the book of Psalms, one little word has probably caught your attention. It occurs repeatedly: “Selah.” It occurs seventy-four times in the Hebrew Testament—seventy-one times in Psalms and three times in Habakkuk. David will often say something, place a period, and then add the word “Selah.” Do you know what it means? Stop. Pause. Calmly think about what I just said or what you just read. You have been reading, and then comes “Selah”: Stop. Do not go any further. Think about what you have just read.

When we come to Scripture and simply read it to be reading it, it is really not doing us any good. I have often said that I would rather read two verses and understand them than read twenty chapters and not understand a word that I have read.

Our Lord tells us that we must learn to pause, think, and consider, or else we will end up fearful and panicky as well. We must also add to our thinking and consideration of Scripture a prayer for God to guide our understanding, open our eyes, lead us, direct us, and teach us. The Word of God says that it is not in man to direct his paths.

The reason there are so many divisions among Christians is that we do not think and do not submit our minds to the Word of God. Consequently, we do not think alike. If we want to learn to think alike, we must submit our minds to the Word of God and learn to think biblically and scripturally.

Here is what the apostle Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:7: “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” Our consideration is needed and necessary, but it does not give us understanding in and of itself. It is the blessing of God upon that consideration that gives us understanding. Proverbs 2:6 says, “For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” As we look at Scripture, think, meditate, consider, and try to put things together in our minds, we need to ask Him for wisdom, direction, and His gift of understanding.

Conclusion: The Sin of Not Thinking Is a Failure of Faith

Now I titled this message, “The Sin of Not Thinking.” Obviously, you could say, “Well, Brother Weaver, there is no commandment in the Bible that says, ‘Thou shalt think.’” That is true. I cannot find one that says, “Thou shalt think,” although I can show you commands such as, “Think on these things.”

The only thing that is sin, in one sense of the word, is a violation of God’s law. First John 3 and verse 4 says, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

But we can go even further than that. When we read our text, what was the prevailing attitude of the apostles in Mark chapter 6? Fear and panic. May I quote Romans 14 verse 23? “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” If you do not exercise faith, it is sin, according to Scripture. Faith and fear are direct opposites. If you are fearful, you are not exercising faith; if you are exercising faith, then you are not fearful. Our Lord said that His own disciples had their hearts hardened and were in such fear and panic. Why?

Because they considered not the miracle of the loaves. Had they considered that Jesus Christ is God and can perform the miracle of feeding 30 and 40,000 people out of five loaves and two fish, it should have been obvious that if He can control the elements like that, He can also walk on the water and calm the storm. We have to learn to think as we read Scripture and try to put things together so that we can understand them and apply them in our lives. There is a sin of failing to think.

Let us pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We ask, Father, that Your grace and Your mercy be upon us. Build us up in the most holy faith. Teach us to think, O Lord, and consider Thy wondrous works, Thy power, and the greatness and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 27

Learning The Difference Between Truth And Error

September 20, 2020

Introduction: The Importance of Knowledge and the Command in Deuteronomy 18:9

In Deuteronomy chapter 18, beginning with verse 9, the Bible says, "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations."

"There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord. And because of these abominations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For those nations which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times and unto diviners, but as for thee, the Lord hath not suffered thee so to do."

Of course, knowledge is important. It is emphasized repeatedly in the Word of God, especially in what is known as the wisdom literature, from Psalms through the book of Ecclesiastes. There was a special tree in the Garden of Eden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam in Genesis 2 and verse 17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat thereof, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

Learning is important. We teach our children, and we teach others. Even preaching should be teaching. Our Lord talked about feeding the sheep, and feeding the sheep, according to our Lord, was when they grazed upon the Word of God. One important aspect of the book of Proverbs is found in verse 4: to give subtlety to the simple and to the young man, knowledge and discretion. Then, in verse 7, the Word of God says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Most of us have observed that children are eager learners, and they should be. Yet oftentimes we really and truly neglect to teach our children.

The foundation for all that a child will ever learn is laid from the ages of three to eleven. If we neglect children at an early age, when they are so inquisitive and wanting to learn, we harm them for their future as well. As adults, we should continue to learn, especially as Christians interested in learning the Word of God and how to serve our Lord.

The only problem we have with learning is that oftentimes we want to learn things we have no business learning. Instead of learning truth, we learn error; instead of industry, laziness; instead of righteousness, wickedness; and instead of the ways of God, the ways of the world. We learn humanistic knowledge rather than biblical knowledge.

I saw a picture of a young woman with a mask over her nose and mouth. It said, "Closing colleges will not stop the spread of COVID. However, it may stop the spread of communism." I thought that was probably pretty well on. That is exactly what we do so many times: we learn to defy God rather than submit to Him, and we learn to take matters into our own hands rather than wait upon the Lord.

In Deuteronomy chapter 18, God is not only warning His people; He is commanding them. He says, "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations."

The Command Explained: Not Learning to Do, Not Ignorance

We should pay careful attention to these words. He did not say that Israel was not to learn about the abominations of those nations. He did not say that Israel was to be ignorant of their filthiness, wickedness, and rebellion. He commanded that they were not to learn to do those things which the heathen were doing. Simply put, they were not to act like, look like, live like, and worship like the heathen did.

When you look at verse nine, you would almost think that this command would be unnecessary. These were the people who had just come through forty years of wandering in the wilderness. They had seen over and over the grace and mercy of God, the mighty power of God, and His miracles. They were the ones who had been spared from death when they saw all the others die in the wilderness. These were the ones to inhabit the promised land and receive all the promised blessings that those who died in the wilderness had forfeited.

Yet now they were given this warning: “When thou art coming to the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.” We have an old adage that everyone can quote: curiosity killed the cat. The truth of the matter is, curiosity has killed a lot more than cats, that is for sure.

The Danger of Curiosity and the Depths of Satan

There are some things we need to know about, but we do not need to know about them in detail. Israel certainly needed to know about the wickedness of the Canaanites. They needed to know about their violence and filthiness in order to avoid those things. But they did not need in-depth knowledge or in-depth details.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 11, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Lest Satan get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices.” We are not ignorant of the devices, subtleties, or methodology of Satan. It is one thing to know those things, but quite another thing to delve into the depths of Satan. Our Lord was speaking to a church when He said, “But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.” We are not to be occupied with the depths of Satan. It may be one thing to know about his methodology and devices, but not his depths.

The truth of the matter is that our minds should be focused upon that which is right, holy, and godly, not upon those things that are wicked and wrong. Frankly, I am not interested in delving into the depths of Satan. I am more interested in delving into the depths of the Word of God and His righteousness. I should want to know more about God in order that I might live more righteously, more obediently, and more holy. Our emphasis should be upon truth. What we must see in Deuteronomy 18 is that everything the Canaanites did was absolutely contrary to God and His Word.

These Canaanites actually had two goals in mind in all of these forbidden things. First, they wanted to know that which they should not know; they wanted to know that which God had forbidden. Second, they wanted to know what God had forbidden in a way that defied God. In other words, their curiosity and their desire to know were wrong, and the methods they used to try to acquire that knowledge were wrong.

The Forbidden Practices: Moloch, Divination, Witchcraft, and Necromancy

It was not merely knowledge they were seeking to acquire; it was also power that they were seeking to acquire. There are some things that you and I do not need to know. To put it very bluntly, there are some things that are simply none of our business. In reference to God, Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us

and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Notice what God said: The secret things belong to the Lord. There are some things God has not revealed, and those things we do not need to know about. What He said we do need to know are those things that have been revealed. They belong to us and to our children, that we may do them forever.

So God has forbidden us to know some things. In Deuteronomy 18:10-14, God says, “There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord. And because of these abominations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times and unto diviners. But as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.”

“There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire.” This has a reference to what you and I would know as Moloch worship. When you read through the Bible, you will find the word Moloch oftentimes listed as Milcom, Melech, Malcolm, and Moloch. It is all one and the same. Moloch was a power religion. When he talked about passing your child through the fire, it is true that oftentimes children were actually sacrificed. That is, they were slaughtered. They were burned to death in sacrifice to Moloch.

But sometimes passing the children through the fire was not necessarily taking their lives. They would take an infant and very quickly pass him through the flames and bring him up the other side, and it would be called an act of purification. Thus they were dedicating that child to Moloch. So the child then would be given to Moloch for the rest of his life as well.

God said in Leviticus 18:21, “And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Moloch, neither shalt thou profane the name

of the Lord thy God: I am the Lord." God says you are not going to let any of your children pass through the fire to Moloch.

Do you know who introduced Moloch worship into Israel? It was Solomon. In 1 Kings 11, the Bible tells us that King Solomon loved many strange women. He married many of the women God had forbidden him to marry. Verse four says, "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father."

"For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon." In verse five, he is called Milcom; in verse seven, he is called Molech—one and the same, still the god of the Ammonites.

Notice verse four: "For it came to pass when Solomon was old." There are two main complaints of old people: lack of ability and lack of power. When Solomon grew old, instead of seeking power and ability from God, he sought them from below, from these false gods. He was basically betraying God, turning his back upon Him, and seeking what he needed from below rather than from above. All of this is satanic and demonic; it has absolutely nothing to do with God. It is a quest for knowledge or a quest for power.

Moloch worship is nothing more and nothing less than state worship. It is the worship of the state: the state is God, the king is God, or, as we would say today, government is God. Solomon was reaching for more and more power.

When you read, "You shall not have your son or your daughter to pass through the fire," he is saying that you should have nothing to do with Moloch. In verse 10, he says that you should not have anyone who uses divination, or is an observer of times, an enchanter, or a witch.

Someone who used divination was a soothsayer, one who used enchantments or divined. He was usually someone who planted a

curse or a ban upon another. The prime example of a soothsayer would be Balaam himself. Balak, the king of Moab, summoned Balaam, the soothsayer, so that he might curse Israel. Of course, God forbade him to curse. Balaam himself said, "I cannot curse whom God has blessed." In Numbers 23:23, Balaam says, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!"

He said, "I can't use enchantment. I can't use divination. I'm not going to be able to do this." Whenever you speak of an observer of times, an enchanter, a witch, or enchantment, all these things normally go together.

These things are nothing less than what we would call spiritism, magic, witchcraft, divining, or fortune-telling. It is looking for signs and omens and trying to read them in order to discern the future. Many people look at the stars and try to determine the future by horoscopes or the signs in the heavens. Our Lord condemned some folks for knowing about the clouds and not knowing the Lord's Word. People look for signs all the time.

Years ago, a preacher told me that on the way to see me, he had passed a field and three doves flew up. He said, "Three doves: one for God the Father, one for God the Son, one for God the Holy Spirit."

Let me ask you a question. What if four doves had flown up? Who would the fourth one have been for? Or what about a dozen? Are you trying to tell me that reading into three doves flying up out of a field somehow relates to the Trinity? I certainly do not see the connection. I want to think about God; I want Him to be in all my thoughts. But when you try to read omens and signs, you are talking about things that are forbidden.

Here is an illustration. Hold Deuteronomy 18, but look in your Bibles to Ezekiel, chapter 21 and verse 21. Here is the king of Babylon. I want you to see what he did in trying to discern which way to go. The Bible says, “For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way.”

He had two choices; he could go one place or another. The king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of two ways. He stopped there because he did not know which way to go. How was he going to determine? To use divination, he made his arrows bright, so he tried to consult with his arrows. He consulted with the images, that is, his false gods. He looked into the liver. He killed an animal, or possibly a man, cut his liver out, and tried to read in the liver which way he should go. This is enchantment, divination, wizardry, spiritism, magic, witchcraft, and all kinds of things like that—fortune-telling.

I never will forget what my father told me years ago when I was a boy. He and my mother were holding hands at a county fair when they passed the fortune-teller's tent. The fortune teller saw this young couple and said, "Come in, and I'll tell you when you're going to get married." Daddy looked at her and said, "If you knew anything at all, you'd know we already were," and just kept walking. It is insane. I had an eleventh-grade teacher who was a tall, beautiful woman, and every teenage boy in the class was in love with her. It did not matter if she was already married; she was simply beautiful, and everybody was infatuated with her. She disinfatuated me very quickly because I remembered what my dad had told me. Her husband was a revenue agent, and he was away somewhere for school for two or three weeks.

She told us how she was supposed to spend the weekend with him. On the way out of town, she stopped at a fortune teller's building. The fortune teller read her palm and told her not to go, saying that she would be involved in a wreck. So she turned around and went back home and called her husband, saying she was not coming. He was mad and upset. Of course, I would have been mad and upset, too.

I thought to myself, how can someone with a degree in education be so stupid? But that was her. This is what God is saying: all of these things are an abomination. In Leviticus chapter 19, verse 26, God made it plain: "You shall not eat anything with the blood, neither shall you use enchantment or observers of time."

Witches, charmers, wizards, and consultants of familiar spirits all deal with that which is demonic. They seek to know the future and

direction apart from God. It is often an attempt to control people by the use of spells, bands, curses, and potions.

Those of us who are a little bit older may remember the song "Love Potion Number Nine." In other words, you could get that potion and it would make your sweetheart love you. Well, that's a bunch of hooey. It is false, but this is what all this is about. Such activity is not only a denial of God; it is also treason against God.

Look at 2 Kings chapter 1. Ahaziah, the king of Israel, had fallen down through a lattice. Evidently, he had hurt himself badly and had many wounds, cuts, and sores. He wanted to know whether he was going to get well, so he sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron. They met Elijah on the way, and Elijah essentially told them to turn around and go back. They were to tell Ahaziah that he was going to die; he would not come off the bed on which he had gone up.

But look what he said. In 2 Kings, chapter 1, verse 16, we read: “And he said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word? Therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but thou shalt surely die.”

The god of Ekron, Baalzebub, literally means “god of the filth” or “god of the flies.” Evidently his sores had gotten infected and the flies were there, and so he called to Baalzebub. Elijah says, “Is it not because there’s no God in Israel?” In other words, you betrayed God. You have acted treasonously against the one true and living God. You are not only denying Him; you are betraying Him by going to Baalzebub.

All of these things mentioned in Deuteronomy 18 deal with witchcraft, spiritism, and magic. In verse 11, he says, “or a charmer,” one who uses charms, “or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.” Now, what in the world is a necromancer? The Greek word necros means dead. If you have a wound, a doctor may say, “I need to cut out the necrotic tissue,” the dead tissue. That is all. A necromancer is someone who talked to the

dead. They were people who supposedly had a familiar spirit and could contact the dead on the other side.

By the way, did you know that Abraham Lincoln held séances in the White House? He did. Anytime you have a séance, you are trying to contact the dead. You are trying to get information and knowledge apart from God, and God certainly condemns it. So all the necromancers supposedly have a familiar spirit as well.

God said in Leviticus 19:11, “Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards to be defiled by them: I am the Lord thy God.” After He tells you not to do all these things, look at verse 12 in Deuteronomy 18: “For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord. And because of these abominations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”

The Nature of the Abomination: Treason Against God

The word abomination literally means a stench in God's nostrils. God said, anyone who does these things is an abomination. It is a stench in my nostrils. It is not just prohibited or condemned; it is an act of denial and treason against God.

John Calvin writes: "Note, this was the sole object of the Gentiles or the Canaanites when they inquired of their magicians and sorcerers: to seek from heaven that knowledge of which they perceived themselves to be destitute. Thus, they undoubtedly confessed themselves to be overwhelmed with darkness, and that the light of understanding was a special gift of God, whence also came the name divination, because they were persuaded that secret things were not within the compass of human apprehension, but that this knowledge must come from divine inspiration."

"But since by his machinations the devil perverts what is right in itself, these principles implanted in us, as I've said, by nature, have been corrupted by two errors. For both an immoderate desire of knowing more than is lawful has crept into our minds. And then we've had recourse to illicit means of knowledge." First, you want to know that which you're not supposed to know. Secondly, you're trying to use wicked means to get that knowledge. "From these sources, foolish curiosity and unrestrained temerity and audacity, all

the superstitions and errors have flowed whereby the world has been assailed."

"Therefore does God, by forbidding magical arts, introduce a remedy for these two diseases, which arts are perversely invented that they might search out and bring to light things which He has chosen to conceal. For the best rule of knowledge is sobriety, that it may suffice us to know as much as is expedient for us. The lust of men has carried them deeper so that they've desired to penetrate into all the most profound secrets. But the second error on which I've touched is much worse, that they should have sought by improper means to discover hidden things. We shall soon see that God also has foretold things to come by service, but no further than He knew to be profitable, and only with this object to make it manifest that He exercises special care for His church."

“But since men's curiosity is insatiable, they do not consider what is useful for them, but like Adam, desire to be gods and to know all things without exceptions. When God indulges not these improper desires, they address themselves to the devil, the father of lies. Still, however, I've stated under the false disguise of God's name, this is the origin of all the vanities whereby the world has ever been entangled.”

If you stop and think about that, all the world wants to know what God has forbidden, and they want to use the means that God has forbidden to acquire that knowledge. Or they want power that God has never, ever given them.

Now, let me ask you some questions. Since you know that all of these things are abomination because the Bible says so, why are you not involved in such satanic and demonic activities? Why are you not seeking power and knowledge from below? By the way, in case you do not know, there is a hellish wisdom and there is a heavenly wisdom. There is a big distinction between those two.

Why Believers Are Restrained: God's Sovereign Grace

That does not mean that a wicked man may not be a wise man. He may be wise, but he is wise in that which is wicked. James says, “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie

not against the truth. This wisdom, this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."

In other words, it is hellish. Verse 16 says, "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." Then he says, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." He makes a big distinction between a hellish wisdom and a heavenly wisdom.

Why are you not engaged in these magical arts? Why are you not involved? Look at Deuteronomy 18, verse 14: "For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do." Isn't that amazing? God allowed all these other nations to do this. They hated Him and His Word. They did not want to obey Him; they wanted their wickedness.

He let them have it. But Israel He restrained and held back. Now that is grace. Remember Genesis chapter 20. Abraham had said that Sarah, his wife, was his sister, and she herself said that he was her brother. Abimelech, the king, took her, but the Bible says that he had not touched her. Why? I do not know. She was a beautiful woman. Maybe the Lord gave him a case of twenty-four-hour virus, I do not know. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said, "If you touch her, you're dead, man. I'm gonna kill you because she's another man's wife."

Abimelech said, "In the innocency of my hands and the integrity of my heart have I done this. Said she not to me, 'He is my brother'?" God answered, "Yea, I know that thou didst this in the innocency of thy hands and the integrity of thine heart. Therefore, I suffered thee not to touch her." I withheld you; I restrained you.

The amazing thing is that God, in His marvelous grace, often restrains us from becoming involved in things and doing things that we would normally do. Acts chapter 14 and verse 16 speaks of God, who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. But God did not suffer Israel to walk in their own ways. He did not suffer them to walk in the arts of magic and spiritism and all that wickedness. No, He restrained them.

Consider another passage. In 1 Corinthians chapter four, we find a parallel passage that reveals the same truth as Deuteronomy 18:14. Look at verse seven. The apostle asks these questions: “For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” So he asks, “Who maketh thee to differ from another?”

In other words, why are you saved and somebody else is not saved? Why do you know the truth and other people do not know the truth? Why do you love the Lord and other people do not love the Lord? Why do you want to live holy when other people do not want to live holy? Who made you to differ? The answer has to be God. What do you have that you did not receive? God has given you everything: repentance, faith, knowledge, and wisdom. Everything that you have, He gave you.

Why, then, would you glory as if you had not received it? It was not you; it was God. He restrained you, kept you back, and gave you grace and mercy. The apostle is showing that the difference did not originate in you. So in this particular passage, God tells them, “I did not suffer you to do this.”

What Israel Was to Learn: The Fear of the Lord

Now go back to Deuteronomy 18:9. God says, “When thou come into the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.” Once again, it is not merely knowing about them; it is learning to do them. If Israel was not to learn to do after the abominations of those nations, what were they to learn to do? Let us look at several passages in Deuteronomy, because this instruction appears over and over.

Look first at Deuteronomy chapter 4, beginning with verse 9; we can also look at verse 10. Deuteronomy 4:9–10 answers that question. God says, “Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; especially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words,

that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children."

In Deuteronomy 14:23, God says, "And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always."

Now look in Deuteronomy 17, because here we are talking about the king. In verse 19, God says, "And it shall be with him," that is, a copy of the law, a copy of God's Word. "And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them."

One more passage in Deuteronomy: chapter 31, beginning with verse 11. "When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: and that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it."

It is through obedience to God and His law that we learn to fear Him. He said this is what you must learn to do in order to please Him.

I cannot overemphasize the fact that we need to learn God's Word, God's ways, and God's will. How in the world can we please Him if we do not know what pleases Him? How can we obey Him if we do not know what His commands are? How can we abstain from that which displeases Him if we do not know what displeases Him?

New Testament Application: Learning Christ vs. Walking as Gentiles

Now I want to show you the New Testament application to this Old Testament truth. Turn to Ephesians chapter 4. You are going to see

the same exact truth stated in different words, but it is still the same exact truth. Look in Ephesians chapter 4; we will read verses 17 through 24.

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ."

"If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

It is true that God did not say in this passage, "Pass your children in the fire. Don't go to wizards. Don't go to witches. Don't use charmers. Don't look at omens." He did not say that, but He did say it and a whole lot more. Look at it again in verse 17: "I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk."

How do lost people walk? "In the vanity of their mind." The word vanity means that which is useless, worthless. Note what the vain mind is: it is a mind that has the understanding darkened, a mind alienated from the life of God, a mind of ignorance, and a mind of blindness. And what does this blind, wicked mind cause them to do? "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness," that is, greediness, nakedness, lustfulness, "to work all uncleanness with greediness." Now watch verse 20.

"But ye have not so learned Christ." You must learn Jesus Christ. This is why Deuteronomy 18 says that you do not learn to do those things as the heathen do; rather, you learn to do what God tells and commands you. The same thing is true here in Ephesians chapter four. You are not learning to live and act like the heathen. You are learning to live the way God has commanded you in Jesus Christ.

"But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." If you have heard God the Father, been taught by God the Father, and come savingly to Jesus Christ, then, according to verse 22, you will put off the former conversation, or conduct, of the old man, the dead man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts. You will be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and you will put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

The word learned is the Greek word manthano. It means to learn, to increase one's knowledge, to hear, and to be informed; but it also means to learn by use and practice, to be in the habit of, and to be accustomed to. Once you learn truth, biblical truth, and learn Jesus Christ, you become accustomed to living a holy, righteous, godly life. Yes, you are still a sinner, and yes, you still sin, but sinning is not your habit or your custom. Righteousness is. Obedience is.

John Calvin draws this contrast from Ephesians 4: "He," that is, the Apostle Paul, "now draws a contrast of the Christian life so as to make it evident how utterly inconsistent it is with the character of a godly man to defile himself regardlessly with the abominations of the Gentiles. Because the Gentiles walk in darkness, therefore they do not distinguish between right and wrong."

But those on whom the truth of God shines ought to live in a different manner. That those to whom the vanity of the senses is a rule of life should yield themselves up to base lusts is not surprising. But the doctrine of Christ teaches us to renounce our natural dispositions. He whose life differs not from that of unbelievers has learned nothing of Christ, for the knowledge of Christ cannot be separated from the mortification of the flesh.

In other words, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” We cannot walk the way the unsaved walk or live the way they live.

Applications: Gratitude for Teaching, Avoiding Occult, Escaping Corruption

Now, let me tie these things together and make some applications. First, I hope and pray that you not only see the necessity, but also the

blessings, of being taught. I have often thought what a blessing it is just to hear, know, and be taught the Word of God. I endeavor to thank my Heavenly Father every day for that which He has shown me and taught me.

I do not know everything. There is a lot I do not know, and I confess that. But I do know what the Bible says, and I do know that the Bible is truth. I want to obey the Word of God.

How are we going to escape the world and all the wickedness being plotted against us? I do not know if you have done any reading on this 5G technology, but I would encourage you to do so, because a lot of it is very scary. Everybody knows that, back thirty or forty years ago, you had MKUltra mind-control projects. Let me tell you, that is kindergarten stuff compared with what is available today. So, in light of all the problems and technology we are facing, how are we going to keep our minds pure and clean?

Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Peter chapter one. Beginning with verse two, Peter writes: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

How do we escape the corruption and pollutions of the world? It is not just through the exceeding great and precious promises—yes, it is that—but go back to verse two: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you." How? "Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Then look in verse three: "According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us unto glory and virtue."

Though we know Him, we also know His Word. That Word, that truth, needs to be in our minds and in our hearts, underscored a thousand times. It is only through the knowledge of God and His Word that we are going to escape anything. We need to learn to be thankful for everything God teaches us and shows us.

The second thing is this: We also need to grasp the realization that all the things the heathen do in seeking knowledge and power are an abomination unto God. They are not only hateful and repugnant unto God; He says that those who engage in them are an abomination unto Him. Why would anyone purposefully provoke God? To be honest, I want to give Him all the benefit of the doubt.

I'm not even going to look at a horoscope. My future is not in the stars. The stars do not determine what is going to happen to me. David said, "My times are in thy hand." He holdeth our soul in life. God is in charge—not the stars, not a fortune teller, nor anything like that. Whether you seek knowledge in fun, jest, or seriousness, you are in trouble. I'm not going to look at those little crystal balls or ask some stupid little ball a question. That is not harmless fun; you are seeking something apart from God.

I have a friend, or had a friend—he is now dead—who got into very serious trouble with God. He was a preacher because he did something on him and it cursed his family, until it was dealt with in a very strong biblical manner. You cannot do things that God condemns and think you will escape the punishment.

Listen to Leviticus 18, verses 26 through 28: "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you. For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled; that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you."

God said these Canaanites were so wicked and vile that the land vomited them out. If you do what they did, the land will spew you out as well. It is not just people or nations that get spewed out; churches do also. In Revelation 3, beginning with verse 14: "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

Conclusion: Learning to Do What God Commands

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." God said, I can't stomach you. I'll spit you out. Churches get spewed out just like people, just like nations, because we learn to do what the heathen do.

We should learn to pray as David prayed. David gave us a very good prayer request in Psalm 119:66: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments." Our knowledge and judgment should come from God and His truth.

If we say that we believe, we need to do. God says, Do not learn to do what the heathen did; learn to do what I say. Our nation, our people, and our churches have not learned to do that which God commands. As He spewed out Laodicea, He'll spew us out as well.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, the warning, and Your commands. Help us, Lord, to discern between truth and error. Help us to learn to do that which is right and holy, and not to do that which is wicked and wrong. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 28

Mind Control Equals Death

April 11, 2021

Introduction and Scriptural Foundation

Proverbs 8:35–36 says, “For whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favor of the Lord, but he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.” This is a different message from the exposition I normally bring of a passage. I have preached on this text, expounding it in times past. You would find that message under the title A Society of Death. But this message today is more of a warning as well as information than anything else.

The title of the message is Mind Control Equals Death. The Apostle Paul said in the book of Colossians, chapter 1, verse 28, “whom we preach, warning every man and teaching.” I will make a statement concerning the message after we read the Scripture. You remember that passage in Ezekiel chapter 3, also found in Ezekiel chapter 33, where God told Ezekiel, “Son of man, I've set thee a watchman over the house of Israel.”

He went on to say that when you see the danger, if you warn the people, you have delivered your hands, and the blood is no longer on

your hands. But if you see the danger and do not warn, then their blood will require your hand. If you warn and they pay no attention, if they pay no heed, they shall die; but you have delivered your own soul as well.

Mind Control Equals Death

The Nature of Mind Control

This message deals with an aspect of mind control and how it equals death. In times past, I have preached many messages concerning the mind, especially the mind in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God. The Bible commands us in Philippians 2 and verse 5, "Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus." Over and over, we are commanded to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. You cannot act right unless you think right.

In other words, thinking precedes action; thinking precedes conduct. That is why the Bible says in Proverbs 23 and verse 7, "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." We actually act out that which is in our mind and in our lives.

One important point must be clarified. By "Mind Control Equals Death," I am referring to mind control known as humanistic and tyrannical mind control. Fallen men have always tried to control others, and they still do. All you have to do is research MKUltra, DARPA, or Operation Midnight Climax, which dealt with LSD experimentation on people. If you are interested in mind control techniques, type "governmental mind control projects" into your internet search engine.

You'd be absolutely astounded at what comes up. There would not only be numerous books and articles and whistleblowers, but many times they would reveal not only the programs, but also their success or failure.

Now here is another truth I want to emphasize: everyone is ultimately the subject of mind control. Our minds are either controlled by truth or error, either by the Word of God or the word of man. Our minds are either controlled by reality or by propaganda. To be honest, I prefer to have my mind washed and filled with the

Word of God than with the word of man any day of the week. I absolutely resist and refuse anything and everything contrary to the Word of God.

When you study the Scriptures, you will find principles that govern our lives, lead us, and direct us. There is a vast difference between principles and feelings, emotions, situations, and circumstances. Emotions, feelings, situations, and circumstances change, but principles do not. It is almost like Joshua when he said to Israel in Joshua 24, "choose you this day whom you shall serve." You could say, choose you this day who's going to brainwash you, choose you this day who's going to fill your mind, and choose you this day whom you are really going to serve.

Historical and Media Manipulation

Tyrannical governmental mind control has gone on for years and years. Some of you are old enough to remember an old movie known as The Manchurian Candidate. I think Gregory Peck played in that movie, and I think Frank Sinatra did as well. That movie was made in 1962. And how about the one by Charles Bronson titled Telephone, T-E-L-E-F-O-N? That movie was about, if I remember, the telephone ringing. The man would pick up the phone and say, “Hello,” and then a voice would start quoting some of Robert Frost’s poem. The man would put the phone down almost in a trance, go get a pistol, and go out and murder or assassinate someone. This was in 1977.

If we have been paying attention, we would have understood that much of this has been going on for years. I remember seeing an old television program years ago. I have to remind you that those who know me know we have not had a television in our home in years and years and years. So it was a really, really old program.

It was about a town or village where everyone was practically a zombie. They walked around almost in a trance-like state, doing everything exactly the same except for one man. A visitor observed this and noticed that the man was different. At the end of the program, it was revealed why: he did not have a television. He did not watch TV, and everybody else was being put into a trance by the

patterns and everything that came on television. I thought that was absolutely fascinating in one sense of the word.

I know that TV has been used for good, but unhappily, the truth is that it can also be used for that which is evil and wicked. Consider the propaganda, pornography, filth, misinformation, and even the failed attempts at entertainment. The sitcoms prevalent today are not funny or humorous. Unless you have heard Red Skelton or Jack Benny—even Jackie Gleason—most folks have no idea what humor or fun really was.

In my estimation, TV is a huge waste of time. Hardly anyone reads anymore, and hardly anyone does research or study. Most people blindly accept the propaganda, error, lies, and misinformation that come through the TV set and the mainstream media, and they never think to question anything they hear.

The sad thing is this: They normally do not question whatever they hear. They follow what they hear and end up defending it, even at the expense of their own lives, even when it is illogical, unreasonable, or unbiblical.

I'm going to quote extensively in this message because I'm going to give you facts and information, and I'll append the sites so you can check them yourselves. But here's a good question: Did you know that six corporations control 90% of the media outlets in America? There is only an illusion of choice or objectivity. Listen carefully to this article: Today, their impact is more felt in our online news intake and media consumption habits. Thirty-seven years ago, fifty companies controlled the media in America. Fast-forward to 2011: American news outlets were controlled by only six powerful corporations.

Back in 2018, Jim Morrison, a singer, songwriter, and poet who served as the lead vocalist of the rock band, once said, "Whoever controls the media controls the mind." He was right. Today, Americans think they have unlimited variety of entertainment and media options at their fingertips. But it is all a lie. The illusion of choice was fabricated by media elites in the early '90s, before mainstream media adopted the Internet. The media landscape used

to be simple and straightforward. Today, six media giants control a whopping 90% of what we read, watch, or listen to.

Now, I'm going to give you another quote. This quote is from John Swinton. I'm going to tell you the date after I read the quote, but John Swinton was the former head of the editorial staff for the New York Times. He was one of America's best loved newspaper men, and he was called by his peers, the dean of his profession. So there was a banquet held in his honor, and they were giving a toast. And John Swinton spoke, and here is what he said to the journalists who gave him the banquet and were toasting him. He said, "There is no such thing at this date of the world's history in America as an independent press.

You know it and I know it. There is not one of you who dares to write your honest opinion. And if you did, you know beforehand that it would never appear in print. I am paid weekly for keeping my honest opinions out of the paper I'm connected with. Others of you are paid similar salaries for similar things. And any of you who would be so foolish as to write honest opinions would be out on the streets looking for another job. If I allowed my honest opinions to appear in one issue of my paper, before 24 hours my occupation would be gone.

“The business of journalists is to destroy the truth, to lie outright, to pervert, to vilify, to fawn at the feet of mammon, and to sell his country and his race for his daily bread. We are intellectual prostitutes.”

That was John Swinton, who said it in 1880. You know it and I know it. What folly it is to toast an independent press! We are the tools and vassals of rich men behind the scenes; we are jumping jacks. They pull the strings, and we dance. Our talents, our possibilities, and our lives are all the property of other men.

Propaganda in Entertainment and News

In light of these facts, six media corporations control 90 percent of the news. How can anyone think that they are getting the truth and the whole truth apart from individual research and study? How can anyone blindly and mindlessly accept whatever they hear on

television or read in the newspapers? It is absolutely astounding to me that most people have become absolutely brain dead, refusing to think about and question what is being reported.

I want you to apply these truths to the present things that we are going through. For instance, let us talk about COVID-19, face masks, social distancing, and vaccines. Do you honestly think that you are getting the truth from the press and from TV journalists? Do you not think that there is an agenda being followed to our detriment and our destruction?

Before going any further, let me point something out. You may not realize this, but even movies have been made and controlled by the CIA for propaganda purposes. In fact, here is one book that exposes the connection between Hollywood and the CIA: Hollywood and the CIA: Cinema, Defense and Subversion, by Oliver Boyd-Barrett, David Herrera, and James A. Baughman.

Even your entertainment is propaganda. A lot of the movies that you see are nothing more than conditioning your mind to accept certain things. I was talking to a friend from up north this week, and he asked me, “Did you see the movie Jericho?” I said no; I did not even remember the last movie I had ever seen. He said that it came on TV. I told him that I did not have TV. He was surprised, and I repeated, “No, I don’t have TV.”

He said, "Well, I'm going to send you one down to Georgia." I said, "No, don't do that. I wouldn't watch it anyhow. I don't have time for it. It's just that simple."

But what we fail to understand is that much of this is sheer propaganda and amusement. Anyone who reads your Bible knows that the word "muse" is found in the Bible. "Muse" means to think. Put the alpha, or "A," in front of it—"amuse"—and it means not to think. Amusement and entertainment mean that you sit there without thinking, absorbing whatever is being thrown at you without any reflection whatsoever. Just read your Bible.

Many times our Lord would ask questions like, "What think ye?" or "Think ye this?" In other words, at least people once thought. In researching this, I encountered a litmus test for determining whether one is a sheeple.

The 'Sheeple' Mentality and Emotional Manipulation

The word "sheeple" comes from a combination of "sheep" and "people," and the term is usually used in a derogatory reference. A sheeple is someone who is easily manipulated, easily controlled, and does not think for himself. A sheeple is a person who has very strong, visceral, and vibrant emotions about a subject concerning which he has had no firsthand experience. He is an easily manipulated person who follows various shepherds and listens to their Pied Piper song and dance, even to his death. You are a sheeple.

You are angry about something you have read, not about what you have experienced. Unless you have personally experienced the events that generate your anger, you are being manipulated by those who own the media companies, and they are using you. All they have to do is keep throwing something in front of you that makes you angry, resentful, fearful, or upset. My father used to box some professionally when he was younger.

When I got to be a teenage boy, he taught me a lot about boxing. I never will forget one thing that he said: “Now son, I’m not telling you to hurt somebody. But if you ever have to hurt someone in a fight, the first thing you do is make them mad, because when a man gets mad, he doesn’t think. It’s the same truth when a man gets angry: he doesn’t think; it’s his emotions that are in control.”

Fear, anger, shame, peer pressure, and yes, even patriotism can be used to manipulate and control. Fear is one of the greatest manipulatory tools. Look at what has happened in our country, even in regard to face masks. There are people who will avoid, like the plague, someone who does not have a face mask on. They even avoid their own families. I read this past week that someone thought it was cute and wonderful that a doctor wrote a prescription for a grandmother saying that it was now all right for her to hug her grandchild.

I got news for you: I don’t need a doctor’s prescription to hug my grandchild. I’m simply pointing out the fact. If someone does not follow the rules, then those who are following the rules, when they meet someone like that, fall apart. They get angry, resentful, and sometimes violent. They simply don’t understand that they are the

ones being manipulated and controlled. They are angry at someone who does not follow those rules.

It is interesting, especially in the age in which most of us were raised, that we were taught to resist peer pressure and not experiment with drugs. Today, however, people are being peer-pressured into taking experimental drugs. Michael Lesher's article, titled “Why are people so crazy about being guinea pigs,” states:

COVID-19, Masks, and Vaccines as Control Tools

“In fact, our government isn't just refusing to protect us without even an arguable excuse. Our government is going out of its way to subject us to dangers it is obliged to minimize. Even before these experimental drugs had reached the market, U.S. officials had taken the unprecedented step of granting the manufacturers blanket legal immunity for any adverse effects the drugs may cause. They have exempted the vaccines from crucial stages of pre-approval, animal testing, etc.

“And now they're spending hundreds of millions of dollars in public funds to pressure people into taking the drugs while concealing serious questions about their safety, let alone their public utility.”

Consider the ever-present face masks that are everywhere these days. I do not know whether you have researched anything about face masks, but information is available on every one of these subjects. Dr. Lee Merritt, who is far more than a medical doctor, has an excellent article on the occultic nature and fraud of face masks.

You'll find that on the Internet. Notice that all the occult programs use masks. Even the big place out in Washington, where they worship the grove and all this, uses a face mask. I hope you notice that in Islam the women are always masked because it is a picture of submission. Face masks, however, are not just cultic in their origin.

They also have a very physical determination upon your health. Think of all the poisons you are exhaling and then re-inhaling into your body, including carbon dioxide. Here is an article that might

excite your attention: “Oklahoma doctors claim masks are harmful to healthy people,” and they file lawsuits against the mandates.

In Jenks, Oklahoma, a group sued Tulsa Mayor G. T. Bynum and Tulsa Health Department Executive Director Bruce Dart, saying the city’s mask mandate was harmful to healthy people. Robert Zoeller, Clay Clark, Dr. James Meehan, and other Tulsa-based business owners asked the city to immediately repeal the mandate, passed the previous month. The group alleged that wearing masks was causing healthy people to become sick while attempting to prevent the spread of a disease that was not a deadly threat to children and much of the public.

The OSHA website states that employers should not make employees work in an environment with less than a 19.5 percent oxygen level, said Clay Clark, one of the plaintiffs. Yet the mandated mask causes employees to dip below a 19.5 percent oxygen level within ten seconds of wearing it. “I do not want my healthy employees to be sick.” Within ten seconds. Now listen to this warning from a German neurologist about wearing face masks: oxygen deprivation causes permanent neurological damage.

Dr. Marguerite Brisson, MD, PhD, is a consultant neurologist and neurophysiologist with a PhD in pharmacology and special interests in neurotoxicology, environmental medicine, neuroregeneration, and neuroplasticity. This is what she says about face masks and their effects on our brains:

“The re-inhalation of our exhaled air will without a doubt create oxygen deficiency and a flooding of carbon dioxide. We know that the human brain is very sensitive to oxygen deprivation. There are nerve cells, for example, in the hippocampus that can’t live longer than three minutes without oxygen. They cannot survive. The acute warning symptoms are headaches, drowsiness, dizziness, issues in concentration, slowing down of reaction time, and reactions of the cognitive system. However, when you have chronic oxygen deprivation, all of these symptoms disappear because you get used to it. But your efficiency will remain impaired, and the undersupply of oxygen in your brain continues to progress. I know how damaging oxygen deprivation is for the brain. Cardiologists know how

damaging it is for the heart. Pulmonologists know how damaging it is for the lungs. Oxygen deprivation damages every single organ."

Here is the conclusion to her article: "Oxygen deficiency inhibits the development of the brain and the damage that has taken place as a result cannot be reversed." In other words, irreversible brain damage occurs when you continue to wear a mask.

If that is not sufficient to make you think, study, and do some research, how about this? Even dentists are saying that masks are unhealthy. Here is the quote: "Mask mouth," a play on "meth mouth," is spreading like wildfire, and dentists warn that it could have very serious consequences, including death. Gum disease, or periodontal disease, will eventually lead to strokes and an increased risk of heart attacks, warns Marc Sclafani, a dentist and co-founder of One Manhattan Dental. Wearing a mask regularly is causing many to experience severe mouth inflammation, the complications of which can be extremely severe. "We're seeing inflammation in people's gums that have been healthy forever, and cavities in people who've never had them before." Wow. Here dentists say, you had better not be wearing a mask. How about this one: graphene in masks? Everybody knows about asbestos, but most people do not know about graphene.

In 2018, the journal Nanoethics stated that graphene is a nanomaterial with many promising and innovative applications, yet early studies indicate that graphene may pose risks to humans and the environment. By the way, it is in the mask. The article states that a notable study found that micrometer-thick sheets of a few graphene layers can penetrate cell membranes at the sheet's corners, of which numerous exist along the irregular edges of fabricated graphene. The piercing of cells illustrates graphene's inherent potential to cause harm to organisms.

A Chemistry World article dated 2012 stated that once graphene enters the lungs, the immune system has trouble getting rid of it. Graphene nanoplatelets can penetrate deeper into the lungs than their size would suggest. Once there, the body's natural defenses cannot deal with them effectively. Chronic exposure could therefore lead to inflammation and disease in a similar way to asbestos fibers. Asbestos. Let that sink in.

Your face mask, seen as necessary to protect you from this virus that has a 99% survival rate, can result in the horrific lung damage seen with asbestos, and this has been known since at least 2012. That is why, in Canada, they had to stop kindergartners from wearing face masks because they were having pulmonary problems. They could not breathe, and they said it was like inhaling cat hair. Masks are absolutely useless except as evidence of control and submission. They harm. They do not help.

Viruses are in your body. Everyone has viruses. You have thousands of viruses. Many of them are good viruses. A few are bad. But you know why the bad do not take over and do not control and you do not get sick? And the answer is because of a healthy immune system. It's the immune system that keeps the bad viruses in control. It is not a mask. Not a mask by any stretch of the imagination. And so when one refuses to wear a mask now, what everybody thinks is, well, you're a rebel. You're being civilly disobedient. You're not concerned about your health. You're not concerned about the health of others. And so you're just got to be a rebel. Well, I want to give you a quote. This quote is from Howard Zinn, and he said this in 1970. I don't know if he's still alive. But if he's still alive, I guarantee you he would reemphasize this. Here's what he said.

"Civil disobedience is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is that people all over the world have obeyed the dictates of leaders and millions have been killed because of disobedience. Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world in the face of poverty, starvation, and stupidity, and war, and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves and the grand thieves are running the country. That's our problem."

And that is a fact. Propaganda, misinformation, error, and lies have conditioned the sheeple to obey without thinking and without resistance, which ultimately will lead to their own destruction. Here is a quote from Gary D. Barnett, which you can find on Lew Rockwell: “The next phase of this fake pandemic will be premeditated mass murder by vaccine.”

I have sent some of you some sites. I hope you know that Dr. Judy Mikovits, Dr. Sherri Tenpenny, frontline doctors, and others are

saying that as many as 50 million people in America can die from these vaccines. Not right away. Over 3,000 have already died, according to reports. Over 250,000 have had adverse effects and are disabled, some of them, and maybe even more. That does not count Europe. You have heard how, in Colorado this past week, they had to shut down mass vaccination shots because people were having adverse reactions in their automobiles.

Here is what the article says: “The stage is set. The plan is in place and the people were still asleep. The realization that this state—we’re talking about our government—has declared war on the American people is unknown to most. And when the killing reaches high levels, the sheep will be told it is due to a mutated virus variant and it is their fault for not being injected quickly enough with poisonous vaccines administered by the same criminal state. Make no mistake about it, you are the enemy of the state in this war against mankind.”

This manufactured pandemic began with lies and was perpetuated by mass propaganda, causing extreme fear and panic out of thin air. This is what real domestic terrorism looks like, executed by the United States government under the control of its masters in banking, finance, and corporate America: those at the top of the pyramid of power who make up the Council of Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and the Bilderberg Group, along with major players in science, technology, mainstream media, medicine, and the pharmaceutical industry.

This long-planned plot to depopulate the earth and take total control over all of us could be considered ingenious, but it is pure evil. The end game sought by these totalitarian monsters is to inject each and every American with an experimental, mind-altering, body-changing, genetically reshaping, deadly operating system falsely called a COVID vaccine. It is not a vaccine at all, but a control and depopulation tool purposefully designed to cause extreme sickness and death.

These adverse responses caused by these toxic injections will not be correctly blamed on the shot, but will instead be used to claim that mutated variant expressions of the non-existent COVID-19 strain are the culprit. This will allow more fear and panic in order to set up a greater demand for vaccination. These never-ending crises

will cause a much higher percentage of Americans to voluntarily seek out and take this virulent injection, leading to an unending array of critical dilemmas, just as the state desires.

I have already pointed out how Dr. Tenpenny, as well as Dr. Judy Mikovits, frontline doctors, say that this is not a vaccine but gene therapy. I challenge everyone who has not listened to Dr. David Martin to read from the patents for these so-called vaccines. He explains from the patents that it is patented as gene therapy. It is not a vaccine and does not meet the definition of vaccine. He gives you that definition and proves from the patents that it is nothing more than gene therapy. Understand something about this COVID-19, quote-unquote, vaccine: it is not a vaccine.

It is not federally approved. The FDA has not approved it; it is given only as an emergency measure. Since it is an emergency measure, you have to sign in order to take it. Once you sign, you are waiving all liability, saying that you are totally responsible and agreeing to be a human guinea pig. They do not know what it is going to do in your body, and you do not know either. Once you take it, it is irreversible. It cannot be reversed or gotten out of your system.

It will change your RNA. It will change your system, period. Read the articles. Look at the pregnant women who have taken the shot and immediately miscarried. They have already said they have no idea how it will attack fertility in men and women. But here is another article that should cause you to think: one of the European drug regulators' senior officials said there is a clear link between AstraZeneca's COVID vaccine and potentially deadly blood clots.

Marco Cavaleri, head of vaccines at the European Medicines Agency, said that CVST brain blockage, which can lead to a stroke, was occurring more often than expected in younger people. He still was admitted how he was baffled by this, but he had to concede that the vaccine was causing blood clots. Dr. Simone Gold, an MD and JD and founder of America's Frontline Doctors, recently said this.

"Vaccination mandates at the state, local, and private level are incompatible with civil liberties and subject millions of Americans to an experimental drug." Gold went on to say, "Most Americans

should not consider an experimental drug for an illness with a 99.7% survival rate; the risk of the experimental treatment would exceed any benefit." He said, "Don't do it." Investigative journalist Jim Stone said, "The CoronaVax does not fight a virus, and it doesn't. It produces spike proteins in your body." He says, "The coronavirus does not fight a virus. It instead programs your body to produce prions. So, in a delayed timetable, people start going zombie or start having seizures or whatever, depending on what part of the brain the prions build up in first. And we end up, with a year down the road, with a modified version of walking dead where the zombies don't necessarily bite you, but plenty of scary stuff is visible, and they also don't live very long."

5G Technology and Health Impacts

I sent most of you, though not all of you, a four-minute video clip of Dr. Sherri Tenpenny. It came from an hour-and-a-half program in which she and others were involved. She pointed out that all four vaccines—the J&J, AstraZeneca, Pfizer, and Moderna—produce these spike proteins, these prions, and that they penetrate the blood-brain barrier. Once they reach your brain, she said, they cause early dementia, Alzheimer's, Lou Gehrig's disease, and all kinds of things that you and I would never want. She also explains how they destroy the frontal and the temporal membrane of the brain, which produces all kinds of problems as well.

I am simply pointing out that this is an experimental vaccine. It is not really a vaccine; it is experimental gene therapy, which is what it amounts to.

Let me mention something else that you need to check into. I told you this message was a warning, and most of us have never thought about this. Everybody is talking about 5G technology, the fifth-generation technology. That 5G is 60-gigahertz technology. Everybody knows, or at least believes, that this virus started in Wuhan, China; that is why it was called the Chinese virus, and so forth. But what many people do not know is that the very first city to really initiate 5G technology was Wuhan, China.

You have to do your own research, but I am telling you what I came up with: the 5G, or 60-gigahertz, technology mimics the

so-called coronavirus down to every symptom. Corona is merely a cover for the devastating 5G network. One research paper stated, “In this research, we show that five generation 5G millimeter waves could be absorbed by dermalogical cells acting as antennas, transferred to other cells, and play the main role in producing coronaviruses in biological cells. The 5G millimeter waves could be good candidates for applying in constructing virus-like structures such as coronaviruses, COVID-19s, within the cells.”

The same article said, “Many researchers have considered the effects of 5G technology on human health.” It stated that 5G mobile networking technology would affect not only the skin and eyes but also produce adverse systemic effects. Another study, it said, argued that 5G technologies cause great harm to human health, with cancer being only one of the main problems. The claim was that 5G causes 720 factorial different diseases in human beings and can kill everything that lives except some forms of microorganisms—720 different diseases in the human body. Wow.

Big tech and big pharma have teamed up to manipulate, control, and destroy us. Big Pharma and Microsoft, it was claimed, are teaming up through something called the ID2020 Alliance, combining vaccinations with implantable microchips to create a digital ID. If you have never heard Dr. Carrie Madej on Transhumanism 2.0, you need to listen as she explains all of that in great detail.

Warnings from Experts and Depopulation Agenda

When you understand that this hooks you up to the cloud, where they can control every part of your being and know what you are doing, it is unbelievable. Dr. Mike Yeadon, a former vice president with Pfizer, spent thirty-two years in the industry and was chief scientist for allergy and infection. He said, “I’m well aware of the global crimes against humanity being perpetrated against a large proportion of the world’s population. Please warn every person not to go near top-up or booster vaccine shots. There is absolutely no need to them.”

As there is no need for them, yet they are being made in pharma and regulators have stood aside, with no safety testing, I can only

deduce that they will be used for nefarious purposes. If someone wished to harm or kill a significant proportion of the world's population over the next few years, the systems being put in place right now would enable it. It is my considered view that this could be used for massive-scale depopulation.

If you wanted to introduce a characteristic that would be harmful and even lethal, you could tune it by putting in a gene that would cause liver injury over a nine-month period or cause the kidneys to fail, but not until the person encountered a certain kind of organism. That would be quite possible. “Biotechnology provides you with limitless ways, frankly, to injure or kill billions of people. I'm very worried,” he said. “That pathway will be used for mass depopulation, because I can't think of any benign explanation.”

Bill Gates said, “If we do the vaccines properly, we can get the population down from 5 to 15 percent.” The end goal is the population. I read an article on Lew Rockwell written by Bill Sardi, who has been dealing with this for years and years, along with John Rapoport. Sardi quoted Dr. Ryan Cole, so I watched Dr. Cole give his speech on the Internet.

Vitamin D, Ivermectin, and Suppressed Treatments

Dr. Ryan Cole is the CEO and medical director of Cole Diagnostics, one of the largest independent labs in Idaho. He has conducted over 100,000 COVID-19 lab tests and treated over 350,000 patients. Here is basically what he said: coronaviruses, or coronavirus infections, are seasonal. One scientist took hundreds of so-called positive COVID-19 tests and said, “We never found any COVID or coronavirus. What we did find was influenza A and influenza B.”

The average COVID-19 age of death is 78.6 years, and the historical average annual U.S. age of death is also 78.6 years. They are one and the same. Wearing face masks outdoors is absolute insanity; no study shows any super-spreader event outdoors. The best mask of all is your immune system. There is no such thing as cold or flu season; there is only low-vitamin-D season. An inflammatory cytokine storm cannot be controlled without adequate vitamin D levels. Massive numbers of Americans have low vitamin D levels, and 96 percent of ICU patients are vitamin-D deficient. You

cannot synthesize vitamin D from sunlight during fall and winter at a 35-degree angle north.

If you are living in northern climates, you are immune suppressed if you do not supplement with vitamin D during fall and winter. Scandinavian countries—Finland, Norway, and Sweden—test their citizens twice a year for vitamin D and fortify thirty-five foods with it. Our population is left vulnerable to seasonal viral infection without a public-health program promoting vitamin D adequacy.

There is no social disparity of care, but darker skin pigmentation inhibits sunshine-vitamin-D synthesis in the skin. Dr. Anthony Fauci said he personally takes 8,000 or 9,000 units of vitamin D per day. Why, then, has he not made this a public-health message? The top three public-health messages should be vitamin D, vitamin D, and vitamin D.

He also said that, by law, the federal government cannot approve a vaccine if there is a proven treatment, which would be ivermectin; that the government is in bed with the vaccine company; and that the federal government and Moderna co-hold patents on the RNA vaccine. The fox is guarding the henhouse. Remdesivir only works during the first two or three days of infection and does not increase survival. Using it is like peeing on a forest fire. Another article said the shot cost $3,500.

Four billion doses of ivermectin have been safely taken. Ivermectin death rates decreased 70 to 90 percent in hospitals treating COVID-19 patients with ivermectin. Of the more than half a million COVID-19 deaths in North America, there would have been 375,000 fewer if ivermectin had been used. Public-health officials have blood on their hands, this doctor said. One hundred percent of ivermectin-treated patients do not get ill; it works for all genetic variants. The vaccines are an experiment on society, unproven, and long-term safety data is not even being provided.

He said ivermectin could be obtained from doctors online at MyFreeDoctor.com, or at Tractor Supply. He uses it to treat his animals; it is a parasite cleanse that kills parasites. He said it was 100 percent effective and 100 percent safe, even at thirty times the normal dosage. I am just saying what he said. I have given you a lot

of information and facts, and I will give you every site so you can research them yourself. Here is my first application: one of the biggest mistakes we have assumed in this country.

Applications: Government Distrust and Personal Responsibility

Is it that the government is our friend and has our best interest in mind? It is not our friend, nor does it have our best interest in mind. More people have been murdered by governments than in all wars combined. Think Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, and Idi Amin. One article I read said governments murdered 200 million people in the twentieth century, excluding wars. Stalin killed 50 million himself. How many did Pol Pot kill? I have no idea.

Tennent Ackham said it like this: “In general, those who resort to mass murder on a collective scale always put forward the justification that they acted on behalf of the nation.” We’re just looking out for you. George Orwell said it like this: “All tyrannies rule through fraud and force, but once the fraud is exposed, they must rely exclusively upon force.” And that is a fact.

Unhappily, there is a natural, unhealthy desire to be governed. By being governed, I mean that we want to be told what to do, what to think, and how to act. That way, we do not have any personal responsibility. We do not have to study, conduct research, or take responsibility for ourselves.

It is like those people in 1 Samuel chapter 8 who demanded a king, a human king, when God was their King. One of the reasons they gave was this: We need a king so he can tell us what to do and fight our wars for us. We do not want to have to fight ourselves. We want a man to tell us what to do. If you take the time to read 1 Samuel 8, you will find that P.J. Proudhon described it pretty much on the nailhead when he summarized what it means to be governed:

“To be governed is to be watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded by creatures who have neither the right nor the wisdom nor the virtue to do so. To be governed is to be at every operation, at every

transaction noted, registered, counted, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licensed, authorized, admonished, prevented, forbidden, reformed, corrected, and punished.

"It is under pretext of public utility and in the name of the general interest to be placed under contribution, drilled, fleeced, exploited, monopolized, extorted from, squeezed, hoaxed, robbed, then at the slightest resistance, the first word of complaint, to be repressed, fined, vilified, harassed, hunted down, abused, clubbed, disarmed, bound, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed, and to crown all, mocked, ridiculed, derided, outraged, and dishonored. That is government. That is its justice."

And that is its morality. The only thing he left out is to be vaccinated. He pretty well hit it on the head. Most of you know what I just taught, but many who listen to my sermons online have not heard this information. Let me sum everything up: You are responsible for yourself, your health, your life, and your family. The government is not responsible. The doctor is not responsible. The media is not responsible. You are responsible. If you are too lazy, sluggish, or unconcerned about your health and life, and willing to leave them in the hands of others, you will die—needlessly, and with enormous suffering.

Conclusion: Choose Life in Christ

Here it is: a 6,000 percent increase in reported vaccine deaths from the first quarter of 2021 compared to the first quarter of 2020. Who put that information out? The CDC, the Centers for Disease Control. You can listen to it on the Internet. I listened to it years ago. Dead doctors don't lie. You can also read Confessions of a Medical Heretic. Dr. Mendelsohn said, "Don't you ever go into a hospital by yourself." Have someone check every shot and every pill; do not go to the hospital alone.

His own brother went into the hospital. When he went to check on him, he discovered that they had taken his brother to surgery, although his brother was not even scheduled for surgery. When he rushed to the surgical ward, the only thing that saved his brother

from an unneeded operation was that they had him set up for a hysterectomy.

You are responsible for your health and your life. If you have never read the Nuremberg Code, check it out online. The universal right of informed consent to medical intervention has been recognized in the United States as law since 1914. Its first and foremost principle is unequivocal: “The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential.” Therefore, there is no mandatory vaccine. Mandatory vaccines are against the law. If you do not consent, according to law, it cannot be done.

I started this message with Proverbs 8, verses 35 and 36, and that is how I want to end it. Our Lord, who is wisdom personified, said, "He that findeth me findeth life and obtaineth favor of the Lord." But He said, "All they that hate me wrong their own soul. All they that hate me love death." Hating Jesus Christ is hating life, health, and happiness. Hating Jesus Christ is loving misery and death. Those who hate Jesus Christ die twice: physically and eternally. Those who love Jesus Christ die only once, physically.

I know I am about to die. I understand that. But when I die, I would like to die so absolutely healthy that people would look in my casket and say, "Hmm, I wonder what killed him." Alice and I take no medications whatsoever. 77. Last week, I met another couple, a Christian couple older than Alice and me. As I was talking to the lady of the house, I asked how her husband was, since he was not there. She said, "We're doing fine. We're 85. And neither one of us is taking any medication whatsoever." I said, "Well, that is just the grace of God. That is the goodness of God."

I want to die healthy and take care of my life. I want to die with my boots on. I do not want to die on the pulpit and scare everybody to death, but I would not mind dying right after I preach. You are responsible for your health. If you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you want to live as healthy as you possibly can, so you can live as long as you possibly can and serve Him, honor Him, and glorify Him.

We need to learn to think, study, research, and investigate. We need to learn to take responsibility for every area of our lives.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, and Your love to us. Lord, help us to be responsible, help us to research, help us to learn, and help us to honor Thee in all that we say and do. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 29

No Contradictions

September 20, 2020

Introduction and Reading of Luke 10:25-29

In Luke chapter 10, beginning with verse 25, the Bible says: “And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he, our Lord, said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?” We will stop there.

The Problem of Claimed Contradictions

I recently received an email from a friend who had come to believe that there were contradictions in the Bible and therefore stated that he could no longer accept or believe it. I answered his email and briefly explained the seeming contradictions he proposed. I told him that I had read through the Bible a multitude of times—in fact, well over sixty times—and had never found a contradiction that could not

be explained either contextually or simply by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

I have no idea how many times I have read through the Bible. When I began studying years ago, I read through the Old Testament every month and the New Testament every week, and I have constantly read through it over and over during the fifty-seven years I have been preaching. I am simply saying that I have never encountered anything that could not be explained by the context or by comparing Scripture with Scripture. The problem my friend faces is the same problem everyone faces.

Finite Minds vs. Infinite God

We pit our puny, finite minds against the infinite mind of God and try to bring God and His Word to the bar of human reasoning. If we cannot understand or reconcile the differences in our minds, we simply say that the Bible is wrong. We hardly ever conclude that we are wrong, or that we need to study, search things out, seek counsel, ask wisdom, and meditate. No, we simply say, "The Bible's got to be wrong because I don't understand it or because I don't see it."

The truth of the matter is this: no one ever truly, fully, and completely understands the Bible in this life. The Bible is not only the Word of God; it is also the mind of God revealed to us. In order to understand God perfectly, you would have to be God yourself, because only God can comprehend God. Such perfection will never be attained in this life.

Think with me about eternity. Right now, each of us has faulty reasoning powers and faulty memories. Everyone forgets things. I have to remind Alice of things, and she has to remind me of things. Even Gary, when we got in, asked, "Now, do you have any irrigators in?" "Yes." The only reason I had them was because I took them off last night and left them in the truck today. We all forget.

When we reach eternity by the grace of God, our understandings will be perfected. We will understand everything completely and fully, and we will never forget anything. Then we will spend eternity learning and understanding truths concerning our sovereign God, yet never fully comprehending Him, because only God can

comprehend God. That is basically why we can understand everything even now as well.

Moreover, when you study the Bible, you must understand that it uses figures of speech. The Bible is written in three languages, really: Hebrew, Aramaic—some of the Old Testament—and Greek. Since there are three different languages, there is opportunity for many figures of speech. I will give you some figures of speech very quickly, though it would literally take hours to study all those used in the Bible.

Figures of Speech in the Bible

There was a man, now dead, whose last name was Bullinger. He has a book about this thick on the figures of speech in the Bible. It would take a long while to explain them. But let me give you two obvious truths before we get started. First, it is not honest biblical interpretation to call something figurative merely because you do not understand it or do not believe it. Secondly, it is dishonest to declare that there is a contradiction in the Bible merely because you do not comprehend or understand it.

The truth of the matter is that God's Word is absolutely perfect. There is a reason for everything God says: why He says it, when He says it, to whom He says it, and how He says it. Psalm 12:6 says, “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” Since seven is the number of perfection, this means that God's Word is absolutely perfect.

Consider some figures of speech used in the Bible. The first is hyperbole. A hyperbole is an exaggeration, usually used for emphasis. In 2 Samuel 1:23, David gives a lamentation for Saul and Jonathan: “Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.” Obviously, Jonathan could not run as swiftly as an eagle can fly, nor was Saul as strong as a lion. A lion could literally tear him apart. David is using hyperbole to demonstrate their great strength and speed in life and in fighting.

Another example is found in Deuteronomy 1:28. The people say, “Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart,

saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven." There are no cities with walls all the way up to heaven. This exaggeration describes a great people with huge defenses; it is certainly not literal.

And we do that all the time. I can look at Alice or some of my children and say, "Now I've told you a thousand times." I had not really told them a thousand times, but I had told them more than once or twice—plenty of times. That is hyperbole, an exaggeration. The only reason you would say that is to emphasize that you have already told them several times.

I have said concerning Andrew and concerning Dean, my son-in-law, that he is as strong as an ox. Obviously, he is not going to get out in the pasture and wrestle my 3,000-pound bull. We would find out who was strong, and it would not be either Andrew or Dean. I am simply pointing out that it is an exaggeration. They are both strong men, that is for sure. But we use that all the time.

The second one is a simile. A simile is a representation, resemblance, or comparison by resemblance. For instance, in Psalm 23:1, David said, "The LORD is my shepherd." The Lord is obviously not necessarily a shepherd of physical sheep, but we are His sheep, the sheep of His pasture, the Bible says. David therefore presents the Lord as a shepherd.

Then, of course, there is Psalm 17:8: "Keep me as the apple of the eye." The apple of the eye is the pupil, and you do everything you can to protect your eyes. I have been in the woods many times when a limb comes back, and it is amazing how quickly you can close your eyes and protect your pupil. That is what David is saying: "Keep me as the apple of thine eye."

In Ephesians 5:22, the Bible says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." The wife's submission is to be a representation and resemblance of her submission to the Lord. Then Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." The husband's love for his wife is to resemble and represent the love of Jesus Christ for the church.

Again, we say all kinds of things and use similes. I guarantee every one of you in here has said to someone, "I love you a bushel and a peck and a hug around your neck." Well, that's a simile. I mean, we just use those things all the time. When I was a boy, we used to say, "You're sweeter than snuff." Now, I've never dipped snuff, but we'd always say, "You're sweeter than snuff and not quite as dusty." But I remember when I was a boy hearing this Tube Rose commercial for snuff.

There's a little song that went in with it. It said, "If your snuff's too strong, it's wrong. Get Tube Rose. Get Tube Rose," you know. But a lot of people used to say that: "You're sweeter than snuff." Well, obviously, they were not snuff. It was just simply a comparison.

Now, the metaphor is a representation. It is a comparison of one thing by representing another thing. And we could go back and even use Psalm 23 in verse 1 there, where David again said, "The LORD is my shepherd." And then, of course, in Matthew 26 and verse 26, when our Lord was instituting the Lord's Supper and when He broke the bread, He said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Well, it was not literally His body, but of course, it was indeed a comparison. It was something that represented His body.

So you have then metaphors. I've often jokingly said concerning Alice that she's my good thing. And the reason I would say that is because the Bible says in Proverbs 18 verse 22, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." So obviously I could call her my good thing, but I could also call her my treasure. I could call her my diamond. I could call her my rose. I could call her the flower of my heart. All of these things would be metaphors. And you find that in the Bible all the time.

And then, of course, the next main one is what you and I would know as personification. Personification is when you give life to something that does not have life or give lifelike abilities to something that does not have life. For instance, in Isaiah 55 verse 12.

Now, yeah, the Bible says there, "The trees of the field shall clap their hands." Well, obviously trees don't have hands, and trees do not clap. But it is a personification, pretending and saying that the tree is alive and really and truly saying that ultimately all creation is

going to praise God, whether it's a tree or whether it's those whom He saved. Here's another one. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 15 and 16, the apostle Paul says, "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body."

Have any of you ever heard your feet speak? I know you know your feet smell, but you have never heard them speak. That is personification. Paul continued: “And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body.” I do not think our ears have ever said anything, but that is personification.

I could not help thinking this morning about an individual who went into the barber shop and told the barber he wanted his hair cut and fixed so he could part it in the middle, from ear to ear, and comb the hair over on both sides. The barber said, “You’re not going to like that.”

He said, “Yes, I will.” The barber said, “You’re not going to like it.” He said, “Yes, I will. Fix it the way I told you.” So the barber fixed it. Two weeks later, the man returned and said, “All right, change my hair back the way it was.” The barber said, “I told you you wouldn’t like it.” “No, no, no, no,” he said, “I like it, I like it.”

"I'm just tired of people whispering in my nose." I am simply saying that there are personifications all through the Bible. For instance, in Leviticus 18:25, the Bible says, "the land vomited out its inhabitants." The land does not vomit; it is saying that the people were so wicked that even the land could not stand them. That is personification. If I said to someone, "I will just let my Glock do the talking," that would be personification. Pistols do not talk, but I am giving a life ability to something that does not have life per se. So you have all of these metaphors, similes, and hyperboles throughout the Bible.

Let me give you one more. This one is very important. It is called an antinomy. An antinomy is a seeming contradiction between principles or conclusions that seem equally necessary, logical, and reasonable. You could also call it a paradox. This term is used in logic, and it is also used in epistemology.

Antinomy: Seeming Contradictions

Let me tell you what the word literally means. It is made up of two Greek words: anti, which means against or in opposition to, and nomos, which is law. So, in one sense, it means anti-law. It literally refers to a real or apparent mutual incompatibility between two reasonable and logical truths. For instance, how do you explain the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man? Is the sovereignty of God clearly taught in the Bible? The answer is yes. Is the responsibility of man clearly taught in the Bible? Again, the answer is yes. Many people say there is a contradiction between those two doctrines. No, there may be a seeming or apparent contradiction, but there is no real contradiction. You may ask, how can both be true?

Spurgeon was once asked by a woman, "How do you reconcile the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man?" His response was, "You don't reconcile friends. You only reconcile enemies."

He was saying that the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man were not enemies but friends, and that both were true. I think the answer is like walking along a railroad track. As long as you are walking along the track and looking down, you see the rail on each side, taking pains to step carefully on the cross ties. As you keep looking at those cross ties and rails, those things never ever come together.

They stay exactly the same width apart all the time. But if you stood still, lifted your head, and looked way up the tracks, those two tracks would seemingly merge into one the farther up the track you looked. It is the same thing with these two doctrines. Both are clearly and obviously taught in the Bible. If you try to analyze each one and say, “Here it is”—no, no. Look up into eternity, and you will see both of these things merge into one, because both are clearly taught in the Bible.

We oftentimes use antinomies without even thinking. For instance, I have read—and probably you have as well—where certain philosophers, skeptics, and atheists proclaim that there is no absolute truth.

Now just stop and think about that: “There is no absolute truth.” What is he putting forth? An absolute. So, if there is no absolute

truth, then what he has just said is not true. It contradicts itself. I have had people tell me, “There is no such thing as absolute truth.” I would ask, “Are you sure of that?” They would respond, “Absolutely.” Well, you just denied your own proposition, but that is an antinomy.

The interesting fact about those who claim contradictions exist in the Bible is that they never consider figures of speech. They never consider hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the art and science of biblical interpretation. There are rules, principles, and concepts involved in hermeneutics, yet it is easy enough for individuals to say, “My reasoning ability does not accept this as a fact or as a truth.”

God's Roles: Lawgiver, Judge, Creator, King

Thus they rid themselves of any responsibility, so to speak, to study, think, research, and meditate. It is easy enough for them to say, “I cannot understand it, so it must be untrue, or there must be a contradiction.” In other words, everything is then determined by your own mind.

It should be clear and obvious that when someone refuses and disbelieves the Bible as the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God, there is no way in the world that you are going to convict or convince them of its truth. All your arguments, no matter how reasonable, logical, or biblical they are, will fall on deaf ears. Why?

Because the individual has already made up his mind, the Bible is not the Word of God anyhow, and so he is not going to listen. When an individual comes to that position, what he has done is usurp the throne of God. He has, in essence, dethroned God and enthroned himself by saying, “I am the standard. It is my word.” Isaiah 55:8–9 says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” One will either submit to God and confess this truth, or try to elevate his mind above God and above His Word.

The one main thing my friend suggested to me that he could not comprehend was the fact that God not only ordered, but even allowed, what you and I would call genocide, or the deaths of a lot of

people in the Old Testament, on the one hand. On the other hand, He said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” I tried to explain to my friend that he was confusing things that differ: the different roles and the different representations of God in Scripture. He was refusing to understand the attributes of God.

It is true that God is the lawgiver, but He is not only lawgiver. He is the judge, the king, the creator, and a savior. There are different roles and representations of God in the Bible. Isaiah 33:22 says, “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.” James 4:12 says, “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.” The Bible acknowledges God as the lawgiver.

God has absolute sovereign authority to lay down the law for us. God gave the law for us, and the law is to be a rule for our lives. God is not under the law that He gave. God transcends His law and is above His law because He is infinitely holy, infinitely wise, infinitely righteous, and infinitely just. It is true that God does not act contrary to His law, but God is not under His law. He is above His law. He is the giver of the law, and only God can do as He pleases. Therefore Psalm 115:3 says, “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

He will save us. In James 4:12, the Bible says, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy." The Bible acknowledges God as the lawgiver. Let me put this plainly: God has absolute sovereign authority to lay down the law for us. God gave the law for us; the law is to be a rule for our lives. God is not under the law that He gave. God transcends His law. He is above His law because God is infinitely holy, infinitely wise, infinitely righteous, and infinitely just. It is true that God does not act contrary to His law, but God is not under His law. He is the giver of the law, and only God can do as He pleases. That is why the Bible says in Psalm 115:3, "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

There is not one person alive today—not even a multi-billionaire—who can do as he pleases. When I was a young boy and teenager, I could not wait to get away from home. It was not that I did not love my father and mother; I had a wonderful home life.

But, as a boy, I had to work all the time on the farm. I wanted to get away so I could do what I wanted to do. When I got away, I found out I could not do what I wanted to do. I had to do what I had to do just to live. Only God can do as He pleases.

Let me give you a quote by Spurgeon. Listen carefully. Spurgeon says, "God's power is likened to himself, self-existent, self-sustained. The mightiest of men cannot add so much as a shadow of increased power to the omnipotent one. He sits on no buttress throne and leans on no assisting arm."

"His court is not maintained by its courtiers, nor does it borrow its splendor from its creatures. He himself is the great, eternal source and originator of all power." And that is true. God is not only the lawgiver; He is also the creator. He not only created, but also maintains absolute control and authority over His creation. Do you understand that God has an absolute right to place and displace peoples? He has the absolute right to kick off His property those who do not recognize Him, honor Him, or worship Him, and those who are in disobedience and rebellion to Him. He has the absolute right to do that. The problem is that so many people claim that right for themselves but refuse it to God.

Suppose you are a property owner with plenty of rental houses. You rent one to an individual or family, and they go for months without paying the rent they agreed to pay. They are destroying your property and tearing it up. Are you going to fold your arms and say, "Well, it's just a house. It's just property. Let them tear it up"? No. You will take every measure you can to protect your property and get that person out of your house—someone who refuses to pay the rent and acknowledge the contract they signed.

The same thing is true with God. Why were you born in the United States? Why were you not born in China, Africa, or France? Africans live in Africa, Chinese folks live in China, and French folks live in France. Have you ever wondered why these geographical places are occupied by one particular group? Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts, chapter 17.

The apostle Paul is preaching on Mars Hill, and he says this in Acts 17:24: “God that made the world and all things therein”—that is,

He's the creator—“seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth”—He's the sovereign—“dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth”—watch—“and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”

Who placed you in the United States of America? Who placed the Chinese in China? Who placed the Africans in Africa? Who placed the French in France? I'm simply pointing out that it was God who set the bounds of our habitations. So God is not only the creator; He is also the controller and caretaker of His creation. He determined the habitation of all the peoples of the earth.

And yes, He gave Canaan land to the Hebrews. And yes, He kicked out the Canaanites. There is a reason I will show you momentarily. When the children of Israel were on their way to Canaan land, God placed severe limitations upon them. Go back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy, chapter 2. Let me show you some of these limitations. Let’s begin reading with verse 2. Look what God says.

SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 2:2-6, 8-9; Deuteronomy 9:3-6 (KJV)

> "And the LORD spake unto me, saying, Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward. And command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore: meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession. Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink."
>
> But you see what God says? "Don't you meddle with these people. I gave this land to Esau and his descendants. I'm not going to give you a foot breadth. Don't even try."
>
> "And when we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, through the way of the plain from

> Elath, and from Ezion-gaber, we turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab."
>
> "And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession." Note, God says, "Don't mess with the Moabites either. I gave them their land. You're not going to get any of it."
>
> Now, it is true, obviously, clearly true that God gave Canaan land to the Israelites. He told them to dispossess the people, to kick them out. Why? Deuteronomy 9, verse 3: "Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee. Speak not thou in thine heart"—now watch—"Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Watch verse 6: “Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.” God said that He was driving the Canaanites out because of their wickedness and vileness. They were idolaters, abominable, and exceedingly wicked. Some archaeologists, excavating Canaanite cities, have seen such reprobation and wickedness in the pictures, paintings, and other things they uncovered that they became physically sick. It was awful. God said, “I am driving them out.”

Now, let me show you something absolutely amazing. Someone may say, “God shouldn’t drive them out like that. They were sinners,

yes, but everybody's a sinner." It is true that everybody is a sinner, but not everybody is as wicked and depraved as some people. Everyone is totally depraved, yet there are degrees in the exhibition of that depravity. You must understand that God is the Judge of all the earth.

Notice what God told Abram in Genesis 15: "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Why did Abram and his descendants have to go into Egypt for four hundred years? God said it was because "the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full." He waited before destroying them. "And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." In other words, God certainly destroyed them, but He allowed them to live rent free for 430 years—to rebel against Him, hate Him, and despise Him. Then God brought Israel out of Egypt and into the land.

You dispossess them. You take their lives. You move them out of the land. God put up with the Canaanite treason and refusal to pay rent for 430 years. Stop and think about this. Governments today execute criminals, and every act of treason merits a death penalty. Treason is primarily against God. If people allow a wicked civil government to execute someone for treason, when that individual is trying to murder a nation or a people, then obviously God has the right to execute those who commit treason against Him. Idolatry is indeed treason.

The Outcome of Rejecting God's Sovereignty

Here is the outcome of your position: I'm willing to allow God to be the giver of life, but not the taker of life. I will allow God to be merciful, but I will not allow God to be just. I will allow God to be the savior, but not to be the judge. I will allow God to be the creator, but not allow Him to be the condemner. I will allow God to bestow His blessings and benefits upon me, but I refuse to allow Him to remove those blessings and those benefits because of my sins and my

stubbornness and my wickedness. I will allow God to give me breath, but I will turn around and use that breath to curse and condemn God without experiencing any pain or any penalty for my cursing of God. I will allow God to give me life, but I will not allow God to take my life.

You think, "Well, I will allow God to give me all the abilities He wants to give me, but I'm not going to allow God to tell me how I can use those abilities. I'm going to be in control, not God." That's exactly where men are. Who is bringing God down to their pitiful, finite, depraved human reasoning? When you come to this conclusion, what you're saying is God is not the lawgiver. I am. I determine the law. I determine right from wrong. I'm able to say who can live and who can die. So my question would be this: How dare you condemn God? And how dare you mock the judge of all the earth? What you're doing is dethroning God and enthroning yourself.

Spurgeon on God's Sovereignty

Spurgeon said this in a sermon on Matthew 20 and verse 15: "There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that sovereignty overrules them, and that sovereignty will sanctify them all."

"There is nothing for which the children ought to more earnestly contend than the doctrine of their Master over all creation—the kingship of God over all the works of His hands, the throne of God and His right to sit upon that throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion the worlds and make the stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties.

"They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the

ever-moving ocean. But when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash with their teeth. And we proclaim an enthroned God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter.

"Then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us. For God on the throne is not the God that they love, but it is the God upon the throne that we love and love to preach. It is the God upon His throne in which we trust." You begin to proclaim the absolute right for God to do as He wills and men hate and despise Him. Now, it is true that God has commanded us to love our neighbors, but it is also true that it is God who defines love. It is also true that it is God who tells us how to love our neighbors.

Biblical Love Includes Confrontation and Defense

Love is not some sentimental, emotional, abstract thing floating around somewhere in the universe. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Romans 13:8–10 says, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." It continues: "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

What is love? It is not a feeling. It is obedience to God; it is acting biblically toward your neighbor. That is why God says in 1 John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." Love, then, is not some nebulous thing floating around somewhere. Love is obedience to God.

God has commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Has it ever dawned upon you that loving your neighbor in the way God commands may involve confrontation and possibly even danger, as well as self-defense? Look at Leviticus 19:17–18: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor

bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."

If we love our neighbor as God commands, we confront him when he is sinning against God. We try to rebuke him in Christian love, reprove him in Christian love, and do so humbly, sweetly, and kindly; but we confront him with his sin and rebellion. That is confrontation. God says that if we do not confront him, then we hate him. One does not love his neighbor if he does not rebuke his neighbor when he is in sin and seek to bring him back to obedience to the Word of God.

Loving your neighbor also includes defending him and possibly taking life. Self-defense, as I've pointed out in times past, is obligatory. The sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," is negative; the positive is, "Thou shalt preserve life." I have a duty, an obligation, and a responsibility to preserve my life. If Steve tried to kill me, I have the duty and responsibility to protect and preserve my life, even to the point of taking his life and stopping him from murdering me. If I allow him to murder me, I have violated the sixth commandment. If I defend myself against a vicious, unwarranted attack, and Steve then attacks Gary, I am obligated to protect Gary's life, even to the point of taking Steve's life. If I love Gary the way I love myself, I will protect him just the way I protect myself.

The lawyer asked our Lord, “What should I do?” Our Lord said, “What does the law say?” He answered, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.” Our Lord said, “You got it right.”

Do you realize that you cannot love your neighbor rightly unless you love God supremely? It is the love of God that fosters love for our neighbor. The one who does not love God with all his heart, mind, and strength cannot love his neighbor as himself. When someone says, “You have to love your neighbor,” yes, you do. The Bible says in Galatians 5:14, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” James 2:8 says, “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.”

There is absolutely no contradiction between God commanding the deaths of the Canaanites and the deaths of other individuals who were wicked and vile, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. God defended His own people by taking the lives of His enemies and their enemies. If we love our neighbors as ourselves, we are willing to defend their lives, even to the point of taking the lives of others.

Remember this: God is not under His law. We are the ones under His law. God is Creator, Lawgiver, Judge, King, and Savior, and He acts in each role and according to each attribute. Anytime you deny any aspect of God, you are denying God. Period.

Applications and Conclusion

We must remember that there is no comparison between the mind of God and the mind of man. God is infinite, and we are finite. If I do not understand something, I would much rather give God the benefit of the doubt: "Lord, my mind is so puny and so weak. Unless You open my eyes and enlighten my mind, I will never see the answer to this or be able to explain it. But until You give me light, I am going to trust You and lean upon You." As the Scripture says, those who walk in darkness lean upon Him. I am not going to condemn God simply because I lack understanding and cannot comprehend certain things.

The second one is this: If we truly wish to comprehend, understand, and grasp truth, we must study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the truth of God. How many people do you know who say, "There are vast contradictions in the Bible, and I've studied them out"? No, you haven't studied anything out. You have assumed certain things and come to a conclusion. You do not understand it, so it must be a contradiction.

Remember this: God does not give all men equal light. Neither does He give men light at the same time or in the same degree. Our refusal to study is sin as well, because God commanded us to study.

The third application is this: Do not mock God. Do not condemn God. The Bible says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If you start

mocking God, you are setting yourself up for destruction and mockery yourself.

Years ago, I was preaching in Ohio. In the church there was an American Indian, and we went out to eat every day. He was with us at every meal—his pastor, myself, and a couple of other men. I thought I was having decent fellowship with him, until the last day I was there, when we went to dinner.

He sat quietly across the table from me, never saying a word, with his head down. I called his name and asked, "What's wrong?" He looked up at me and said, "You white men stole our land."

I said, "Let me tell you something and listen carefully. It was not your land. It is God's land. He created this earth. The Bible says, 'The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.' Everything belongs to Him. Your people were running around worshiping eagles and trees and everything else. You were idolaters, and God had an absolute right to dispatch you and take you off the land and give it to someone else. That's exactly what He did."

"And He gave it to us." I said, "But let me go further. God has the absolute right to kick us out of the land when we refuse to give God honor, glory, and obedience. God can displace whomever He pleases, whenever He pleases, because the earth is the Lord's. He is the Creator, the caretaker, and the controller of it. God is absolutely sovereign. Never try to elevate yourself by thinking somehow you are more intelligent than God. You are not."

And you never will be, because God is God and you're not. There's no contradiction. Just as God defended His people and took lives, so, even under "love thy neighbor as thyself," we're to defend our neighbor and take life if it is necessary. God is not only Creator and Lawgiver; He's Judge. A judge has the absolute right to pronounce a sentence of execution. He has an absolute right to pronounce a sentence of dispatching or dispossessing someone.

Judges do it all the time here in the land. Moreover, our God is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is sovereign. So don't come along saying there are contradictions. Our puny minds are not able to be pitted against the infinite mind of a sovereign God of heaven

and earth. Let's give God the benefit of the doubt and say, “Lord, I'm going to trust You until You open my eyes and give me understanding in this matter.”

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth. Lord, help us to lean upon Thee, trust Thee, look to Thee, and glorify Thy great name. May, Father, we not mock Thee. There are a multitude of things we do not understand and probably will never understand in this life. But, Lord, we shall understand in eternity. Until then, we can trust You that Thou art infinitely wise and that You say and do that which is for our good and Your glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 30

Which Way Are You Inclined?

September 28, 2020

Introduction: The Meaning of Incline

In 1 Kings chapter 8, Solomon is praying at the dedication of the temple, and he makes a wonderful prayer request in verse 57: “The Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers.” He continues, “Let him not leave us nor forsake us that he may incline our hearts unto him to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers.” The verse that especially dealt with my own mind was verse 58: “that he may incline our hearts unto him.” I want to begin with a couple of illustrations that you can easily comprehend and understand.

I have a lounge chair in our living room, which I usually refer to as the petting chair. I do not sit in it very often. When I do, Claiborne, the pit bull, weighing about seventy or seventy-five pounds, jumps into my lap. I have already reclined and am nearly horizontal, but he inclines me a little farther toward the floor. Everything is fine until the Mastiff, weighing 150 pounds, jumps into my lap as well. Then I

holler for Alice to help me get up off the floor, because the chair is down and the dogs are on top of me.

We can understand that once you begin to incline in a certain direction, you will probably lean very heavily in that direction. Alice and I had two friends; one recently passed away. They had been married more than fifty years, and the way they met was extraordinary. As a young girl, Peggy was walking to town when Bob rode up on a motorcycle. They had never seen one another. Bob stopped, looked at her, and said, "Want a ride?" She said, "Yes."

He said, "Get on behind me." She climbed on the motorcycle behind him. Then he said, "You lean when I lean." She would always smile and say, "I've been leaning the way he's leaned for the last 50-something years." So, you know, inclined.

Most people have either walked or run, or done some type of athletics. Before running or walking, you stretch your muscles, and usually when you finish running or walking, you stretch your muscles again, which adds flexibility and strength to them. Let a dog take a nap, and the very first thing he does when he gets up is stretch. Stretching is something each of us probably should be aware of.

The reason I gave you those illustrations is that they do relate to our text, although you may think they have absolutely nothing to do with it. In verse 58, the Bible says that God may incline our hearts toward Him. The Hebrew word is natal, which literally means to lean, stretch out, incline, stretch forth, bow down, extend, be influenced, and be stretched out. Actually, what Solomon is praying for is that the Lord would stretch out our hearts toward Him, make them flexible, and make them leaning toward Him, in order that we may keep His commandments, judgments, and statutes.

Matthew Henry commented, "Never was a congregation dismissed with what was more likely to affect them and remain with them. What Solomon asked for in this prayer is still granted in the intercession of Christ, of which his supplication, that is, Solomon's supplication, was a type. We shall receive grace sufficient, suitable, and seasonable in every time of need."

No human heart is, by itself, willing to obey the gospel's call to repentance, faith, and newness of life, walking in all the commandments of the Lord. Yet Solomon exhorts the people to be perfect. This is the scriptural method. It is our duty to obey the command of the law and the call of the gospel. Since we have broken the law, when our hearts are inclined to it, feeling our sinfulness and weakness, we pray for divine assistance so that we are made able to serve God through Christ.

Here is a clear truth from Scripture: every person is inclined. Every person is bent out or stretched out in a certain direction.

Every Person Is Inclined in Some Direction

We are either stretched out toward the flesh or toward spiritual things; either stretched out in obedience or in disobedience; either stretched out toward study or toward playing. We are inclined or stretched out toward that which is right and holy or toward that which is wrong and wicked. The question is not whether you are inclined or stretched out, but in what direction you are inclined and in what direction you are stretched out.

The truth is that, by nature and by nurture, we are opposite from God. We are normally inclined toward our own wills, our own ways, and our own fleshly desires. It is only the sovereign power of God that can change us; it is only His grace and mercy.

The Bible says in Proverbs 16:1, "The preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord." Actually, the whole verse says, "The preparation of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." Note that the preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord. If God prepares our hearts, they are prepared. If we are ever prepared to pray, be obedient, study, or do anything righteous in God, it is simply because God prepared our hearts.

Here is the truth: we do not have the ability to prepare our hearts. We do not even have the ability to incline our hearts. However, just because we do not have the ability to incline or stretch forth our hearts does not mean that we do not have the responsibility. Ability and responsibility are two different things, and lack of ability does not cancel out or annul responsibility.

Responsibility Despite Inability

So how do we fulfill our responsibility? If there is even a hint of a desire to honor God, serve Him, pray, and do that which is right and holy, then obviously God is already working in your heart. Without His working in your heart, you would never have any desire to do that. We are commanded over and over to incline our hearts toward Him. So how do we fulfill our responsibilities?

Let me give you three ways. First of all, our first responsibility in inclining our hearts to the Lord is to stretch them out in making sure that we put away and forsake all false and strange gods. Joshua 24:23 says, "Now therefore, put away the strange gods which are among you and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel." Joshua said, "Put away the strange gods which are among you and incline your hearts," indicating that you cannot incline your heart toward God until the strange gods are put away.

First Responsibility: Put Away False Gods

While it is true that we usually do not have idols in our home, we may have idols in our heart. It is true also that sometimes we do have idols in our homes. I remember years ago, my aunt and uncle took a trip to Hawaii, and when they came back, she brought Alice and me a set of salt and pepper shakers. I thanked her for them and put them on the table. I do not remember how long we used them; it was probably a week or two. But the problem with the salt and pepper shakers was that they were little copies of the tiki gods of Hawaii.

Every time I walked by those things, I saw them. Finally, I said, "I just don't want those things in our house," and I threw them away. It was not something I was bowing down to, and certainly not something I was worshiping. But the very fact that they were tiki gods meant that I did not want them around me.

We have to learn to be like the Thessalonians. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, how ye turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God." There is a negative in one hand: you are turning from the idols. Then there is a positive: you are serving the true and living God. It is impossible to be inclined toward the

one true and living God while clinging to everything opposed to Him. So, while we may not have idols in our home, we can certainly have idols in our heart.

Usually, what we end up with are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. We must remember that anything can be an idol. Anything we put above God, before God, or even on a par with God is idolatry. It is possible to have our own family as idols. A husband or wife may be an idol, or a son or daughter.

Our Lord said it like this in Matthew 10:37: "He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Obviously, our Lord is not telling us not to love our father and mother, nor is He telling us not to love our sons and daughters. He is telling us that we cannot put our family ahead of Him or love them more than we love Him, because that is idolatry.

There is a good illustration of that in the life of Eli. Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were priests. God sent a prophet to Eli and said, "Look, I'm going to tell you what is going to happen. I'm going to destroy your seed because you have honored your sons before me." Eli allowed his sons to be wicked and vile and to steal the sacrifices of God. God said, "Look, this is it. You're not going to prosper and your seed is going to fail." God killed Hophni and Phinehas on the same day. Eli died that day when he heard, because he fell over and broke his neck. It is possible to put our families above God.

When it comes to idols of the heart, have we examined ourselves? Have we examined our hearts? You remember the passage in 2 Corinthians 13:5, where the apostle Paul said, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith or not. Know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” And Peter, in 2 Peter 1:10, says, “Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

When we think about examining ourselves and examining our hearts, we have to come to Jeremiah 17:9–10, where the Bible tells us, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Then, in verse 10, God says, “I the Lord search

the heart, I try the reins." In other words, it is only God who knows our hearts.

Here is the question. Not only may I ask, Have we examined our hearts? I could also ask, Have we besought God to examine our hearts? Since our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked, they may deceive us, but they cannot deceive God. And God is not going to deceive us.

So turn in your Bibles to Psalm 139, beginning with verse 23, in order that you might see what David says in this passage. David is praying to God, and he says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." David is saying, "Lord, I do not even know my heart, but You know my heart. So search me and know my heart. Try me."

"Know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me." In other words, if there is, reveal it to me and lead me in the way of everlasting. Clearly, it is God alone who can really and truly search and examine our hearts.

Solomon is praying at the dedication of the temple. In 1 Kings 8:38 he says, "What prayer and supplication so ever be made by any man or by all thy people Israel, now watch this, who shall know every man the plague of his own heart and spread forth his hands toward this house." He speaks of every man knowing the plague of his own heart. I suppose our greatest plague is that we are depraved. I understand that.

The Plague of a Divided Heart

But I think there is a greater plague, in one sense of the word. It is not merely that we are depraved. One of the greatest plagues of our hearts is the possession of what you and I would call a double heart or a divided heart. A divided heart or divided mind produces instability. You remember James 1:8: "A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways." Literally, he is talking about a double-hearted man. Instability disables.

We do not know which way to turn, which way to bend, or how to take a stand. If we have a double mind or a double heart, we are

always in turmoil. I thought about an illustration I heard years ago concerning a man during the War of Northern Aggression who could not decide whether he wanted to fight for the South or for the North. He put on Confederate gray pants and a blue Union coat. The Confederates shot him in the chest, and the Yankees shot him in the seat of the pants. He got it from both sides because he was double-minded.

In 1 Kings 18, one of the saddest verses in the Bible shows both the sin and the plague of being double-minded. Elijah the prophet is on Mount Carmel, confronting all the prophets of Baal.

But before he does, he speaks to the people. Notice 1 Kings 18, verse 21: "And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long hold ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him. But if Baal be God, follow him." Now watch: "And the people answered him, not a word." What did he say? Elijah said, if God is the one true and the living God, you follow him. If he is not, and you believe that Baal is the one true and the living God, then you follow him. All the people were quiet. No one would say, yes, our God is the one true and the living God. No one would say, yes, Baal is the one true and the living God. The people answered him not a word.

They were all double-minded. So let me ask you a question: Is Jesus Christ God, or is he not God? Is Jesus Christ Lord, or is he not Lord? If he is God and if he is Lord—and he is—that means we must obey him. We must serve him. If you do so, you are recognizing his Lordship and his Godship. But if you have a divided heart, if you are unsure, if you are unstable, if you do not know, you are not going to worship him. You are not going to take a stand for him. Your heart is not going to be stretched out toward him. You will have a divided heart. The very evidence of the fact that most people have a divided heart is very clearly that they embrace everything contrary to him and hold on to it.

This is like those people in 2 Kings 17, where the Bible said, "So they worshiped the one true and the living God and their own gods." How can you do that? You cannot. When you read the last of it, it says, "So they worship their false gods."

But I want to show you what our Lord thinks. Our Lord is not talking to the heathen or the wicked; he is talking to a church. In Revelation 3, beginning with verse 14, we read: "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God, I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth."

Our Lord said, "I'd rather you be out and out for me, or out and out against me, rather than being lukewarm." Our Lord cannot stomach a double-hearted, double-minded, unstable, wishy-washy, worthless, and unusable professor. This should be a wake-up call and a warning for every professing Christian, for anyone who professes the name of Jesus Christ. We need to rid ourselves of all our idols and strange gods, whether up there in our homes or in our hearts. If our hearts are going to be inclined toward God, the first thing the Bible demands is that we put away the false and strange gods.

Second Responsibility: Turn from Wickedness

The second responsibility we have in inclining our hearts to the Lord is to stretch them out in turning from every wicked thing and refusing to practice iniquity. Look at what David prayed in Psalm 141:4: "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity, and let me not eat of their dainties." We need to stay away from wicked men who practice wicked works and from their dainties.

The Hebrew word for dainties here literally refers to delicacies. The Bible says in Psalm 37:1, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." We are not to envy them. They do things that we cannot do. I have seen large trucks pulling large boats on their way to the beach, the sea, or the river. They are going fishing or boating. Normally, there is nothing wrong with fishing or boating, except that I see them on Sunday morning. What it means is that they are denying the one true and living God and heading out to fulfill the lust of their flesh and their pleasure-oriented lifestyle. It is just that simple. The day may be

beautiful and the fish may be biting, but I have no desire to be with them or to do anything other than honor and worship God, especially on His day. I am simply pointing out that the Bible says we are not to envy them.

In Proverbs 24:1–2, we see basically the same truth again: “Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them, for their heart studieth destruction and their lips talk of mischief.” Again, God says, do not be envious, and neither desire to be with them. Proverbs 23 gives us the word dainties again: “When thou sittest with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee, and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties, for they are deceitful meat.”

The word deceitful is a very interesting Hebrew word. It refers to that which is lying, deceitful, false, untrue, and deceptive. God is saying that all of these things that appear to be dainties, that appear to be pleasant, and that appear to be pleasurable are deceptive. All sin is deceptive. It appears as a delightful dainty, yet it is a deceitful meat. It promises pleasure, but it only gives heartache and death.

Proverbs 9 gives us a good illustration of someone who thinks that this is a dainty. The Bible says, “A foolish woman is clamorous. She is simple and knoweth nothing.” He is talking about an adulterous woman. “For she sitteth at the door of her house on a seat in the high places of the city to call passengers who go right on their ways.” Most people will not even listen to her. But then we read, “Whoso is simple, that is, you're void of understanding, whoso is simple, let him turn in hither. And as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”

The woman is saying that stolen waters are sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. In other words, it is a dainty, something pleasurable and desirable. But God says, “But he knoweth not that the dead are there, and their guests are in the depths of hell.” The one who turns to her does not know that the dead are there and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

Sin is always represented as something pleasurable, enjoyable, and even escapable. But the truth is, sin is not escapable. I have read

on numerous occasions about young people who decided they were going to try drugs one time. And they did. And it killed them.

Inclining the Heart to Hear God's Word

Sin is always deceptive. Look at the advertisements for the liquor industry on television, the internet, or wherever you find them. You always see handsome young men and beautiful young women enjoying themselves, laughing, and having whatever they want. They never show you an old drunk lying in the gutter in his own vomit. They do not want to show that. We have to understand that sin is deceptive, or people may become addicted for life.

Matthew Henry said, “While we live in an evil world and have such evil hearts, we need to pray that we will neither be drawn nor driven to do anything sinful. Sinners pretend to find dainties in sin, but those who consider how soon sin will turn into bitterness will dread such dainties and pray to God to take them out of their sight and by His grace to turn their hearts against Him.” Good men pray against the sweets of sin. That is why David prayed, “Incline not my heart to any, any evil thing to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity.” No, he said, “Let me not eat of their dainties.”

I do not want to be caught or addicted to their food. I do not want anything to do with them. If we are going to incline our hearts to God, we must put away the idols and the strange gods out of our hearts. We must make sure that our hearts are stretched out so that we do not desire to be with wicked men, nor be inclined to participate with them in their wicked works.

Third Responsibility: Incline Your Ears to God's Word

Our third responsibility in inclining our hearts to the Lord is to make sure that we stretch out our hearts to hear His words. The word incline means to bend; it means to stretch out. Psalm 78:1 says, “Give ear, O my people, to my law. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.” Lean my way. It is like being hard of hearing: when someone has a low voice, I find myself leaning in so that I can hear. This is what God says: incline your ears, lean your ears, stretch them out to hear the words of His mouth. Now look in Psalm 119, verse 36.

David says, “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies and not to covetousness.” We have to stretch out our ears to hear Him so that we may be wise and understanding. In Proverbs 2:1–2, he says, “My son, if thou will receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart unto understanding.” The heart must be directed toward God’s testimonies rather than covetousness, and the ear must be inclined toward wisdom and understanding. Again, God says in Proverbs 4:20, “My son, attend to my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings.”

Let me give you one from the book of Isaiah. Isaiah 55:3 says, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” He says, incline your ear, come unto me, and hear.

I remember years ago, when I was a child in Sunday school, we had a little form to fill out every Sunday. One question was, “Did you read your Bible this week?” or, “Did you read your Bible every day?” If you did, you put a little check there.

We were always encouraged to do that, but the reason we were encouraged was to make our teacher or our Sunday school department look good. I was raised in church. I went every Sunday morning, every Sunday night, and every Wednesday night. Whenever there were special meetings, my father, mother, sister, and I were there. It was just that simple.

I do not ever remember being admonished, warned, or exhorted to hear, read, and study the Word of God. Maybe it happened and I do not remember, but I certainly do not remember it, though I was in church every time the doors opened. The point is that I was taught the importance of coming to church, but I was not really taught the importance of hearing the Word of God. I certainly believe in faithful attendance at church, but if you are not hearing the Word of God, faithful attendance is sometimes rather useless and worthless as well.

Ask yourself a few questions. Do you read your Bible daily? Do you study your Bible daily? If so, why do you read and study your

Bible daily? If you do not, why do you not read and study your Bible daily?

We are not to read and study merely so that we may have intellectual knowledge. Some people read the Bible so they can appear intellectual on theological issues. Some read it for the purpose of debating, arguing, and criticism. No, we are to read and study the Bible so that we may hear the Word of the Lord, so that He may speak to us, so that we may be warned, encouraged, changed, and obedient.

We have to listen and learn His statutes, judgments, law, and principles so that we may apply them in our lives. You will never be inclined to God unless you learn to meditate upon His Word. You will never be stretched out to Him.

Someone says, "What I need is more faith." Let me ask you a question: Do you remember Romans chapter 10, verse 17? "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." What do you say? "I just need more sanctification." How about John 17:17? "Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth."

If you fail to incline your heart toward God's law and toward the totality of His Word, you will never forsake your idols. You will never turn from anything that is wicked, wrong, and unjust. You will never stretch out your heart to Him, learn His principles, or apply your heart to His Word. You simply never will, because you are going to lean one way or the other. You will either lean toward your own corrupt desires and the lust of the flesh, or toward God's Word and God's truth. It is just that simple.

Now consider what Jeremiah is saying to the people, or what God is saying through Jeremiah to the people. This is why God gives us the responsibility to incline our hearts. Jeremiah 7:23 says, "But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people, and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you." But notice carefully: "But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear."

The Consequences of Not Inclining to God

They did not incline their ear, but walked in the counsels and imaginations of their evil heart and went backwards, and not forward.

Here is the truth: If your ears and your heart are not inclined toward God, you are going to end up going backwards. You will walk according to your own corrupt imagination and your own counsel. Jeremiah 9:13-14 says, "And the Lord said, because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein, but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Balaam, which their fathers taught them."

If you do not incline your ear toward God, you are not going to walk in obedience to His Word. Jeremiah 11:7-8 says, "For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart. Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not."

Jeremiah 13:10 says, "This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk after the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing."

If we do not incline our ears and hearts toward God, we are not going to walk in His Word. We will walk after the imagination of our hearts. We will never put away our false gods or our wickedness.

"Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law, and you have done worse than your fathers. For behold, you walk everyone after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me."

In Jeremiah chapter 18 and verse 12, we read: "And they said, there is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices and we will everyone do the imagination of his evil heart."

If you are not leaning toward God, you're leaning toward your own flesh. Jeremiah 23:16-17 says: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you. They make you vain. They speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say still unto them that despise me. The Lord has said, you shall have peace. And they say, everyone that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, no evil shall come upon you."

Now, let me explain something. If we are not inclining our ears and our hearts toward God and his word, the truth is we despise him. That's just what he said. We're despising him. You cannot separate God from his word. A king rules by his law. God is a king. In fact, he's king of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods, and he rules by his law. When you deny his law, you deny his rule. You deny him.

God has commanded us to incline our ears and our hearts unto him. Do you want God to hear you in your time of need? Do you want God to hear you in your time of desperation? Do you want God to hear you in your time of danger? Do you want God just to answer your prayers?

The Lex Talionis: God Hears Those Who Hear Him

And the answer, of course, is yes. The Hebrew word for incline means to lean, to stretch out, to be stretched out. In the following verses, however, the inclining is on God's part, and it is exactly the same Hebrew word.

David says, “I’ve called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me. O God, incline thine ear unto me and hear my speech.” What is David asking God to do? He is asking God to stretch out his ear so that David can whisper in it, so that God can hear David’s prayer. In Psalm 71:2, David says, “Deliver me in thy righteousness and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me and save me.” David is in danger. He is

asking, “Stretch out your ear, God. Bend it down. Hear my prayer. I’m desperate, Lord. Save me.”

In Psalm 88:2, he says, “Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry.” He says, “Incline thine ear.” Then, in Psalm 102:2, David says, “Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble: incline thine ear unto me in the day when I call: answer me speedily.” I hope you see the desperation in this prayer: “I am in trouble, O God. Incline thine ear unto me in the day when I call. Answer me speedily. I need help, God, and I need help right now.”

It was Hezekiah who prayed to God when Sennacherib was invading Judah. He said, “Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear. Open thine eyes, O Lord, and see, and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he hath said to reproach the living God.” Here are people—David, Hezekiah, and others—who are in deep trouble, asking God to stretch out His ear and hear them.

Do you desire for God to stretch out His ear and hear you in your time of need, danger, or desperation? Do you want God to hear your prayers, requests, and needs? If so, you need to grasp a principle of Scripture known as the Lex Talionis.

That is simply Latin for the law of retribution. That law is where God makes the punishment fit the crime. Everyone is familiar with the passages of Scripture that God gave to the judges, where God said it would be an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, stripe for stripe. In other words, the punishment has to fit the crime.

Is it a sin not to stretch out our hearts and our ears toward God? Oh, yes. Is it a crime? Oh, yes. It is treason against God.

In 2 Kings chapter 22, you have godly young Josiah, who happened to be the king of Judah. The law of God was found in the temple by Hilkiah the priest, and Shaphan the scribe read the law to young Josiah. When Josiah heard the law and the judgments pronounced for violating that law, he became upset. He trembled and began to inquire of God. He knew that they were in trouble.

Because Josiah had sent to inquire of God, the Lord said: “But to the king of Judah, which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall you send him. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel.” Then He explained

how Josiah had heard: “As touching the words which thou hast heard. Because thine heart was tender, thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest when I spake against this place and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse. And as I ripped my clothes and wept before me, I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.”

God said, “Because thine heart was tender and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord. When thou heardest what I speak against this place, therefore, I also have heard thee.” So here is what God said to Josiah: You heard Me; therefore, I heard you. You inclined your ear, you stretched out your ear, and you stretched out your heart to Me. I want to stretch out My ear to you. I want to hear you. That is the lex talionis: God is doing that which is right and just.

In Jeremiah 11:14, God tells Jeremiah, “Therefore, pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them. For I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.” Why will God not hear them? They would not hear God; they would not listen to Him. God makes the punishment fit the crime: “When you cry in your trouble, I’m not going to listen to you. I will not hear you.”

Everyone is familiar with Hosea 4:6: “For my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, because thou has rejected knowledge, I’ve also rejected thee.” They would not listen to God, and He said, “I’m not going to have you.” He continues, “Because I was rejected, now that I also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest for me. Seeing thou hast forgotten my law, I will also forget thy children.” God’s law is an expression of His will for our lives, and our children are an expression of our will. God says, in effect, “You forget My law; you do not hear Me; I will forget your expression of your will. I’ll reject your children. I won’t have them.”

That is the lex talionis. It was not true only in the time of Josiah, Hosea, and Jeremiah; it is true today. God is still the same just God. He makes the punishment fit the crime and renders that which is just and right. If we want God to hear us, we must hear Him.

The first application is this: We must seek God to incline our hearts. That is what Solomon prayed for in 1 Kings 8:58—that God

would incline their hearts so that they would obey Him and keep His commandments and statutes. We may not have the ability to incline our hearts, but we have the responsibility. Apart from God's grace and mercy, we will never fulfill our responsibilities. It must be God's grace and mercy that motivate and move us to cry to Him to incline and turn our hearts and make us what we should be.

Applications and Conclusion

The second application is this: We must see the absolute importance of hearing our Lord in and through His Word.

Someone has said that when we pray, we commune with God; when we study the Scripture, God communes with us. It is true that we commune with Him not only in prayer, but in and through His Word. Here is a sobering fact: when we neglect His Word, we neglect Him. When we deny His Word, we deny Him.

In Jeremiah chapter 2 and verse 32, the Scripture says, "Can a maid forget her ornaments?" No, women do not normally walk out forgetting their jewelry. "Can a bride forget her attire?" Have you ever known a bride to forget to put on her wedding dress? No. But then He says, "But my people have forgotten me days without number." When we do not hear God, we are forgetting Him, neglecting Him, and denying Him.

So we must learn to stretch out toward Him. Do not forget the Lord. Pray to Him. Commune with Him. End it through His Word. Worship Him in spirit and truth. Like Solomon, we have to learn to pray, "Lord God, incline my heart so that I may obey thee, and keep thy law, and thy judgments, and thy commandments, and walk pleasing unto thee."

Each one of us is inclined one way or the other; each one of us is leaning. The question is not whether you will be inclined, but which way you will be inclined. You are either going to fall toward righteousness or toward wickedness. If we want God to incline our hearts, we need to pray, cry, and beseech Him to incline our hearts toward Him by putting away all our false idols, not just in our homes but in our hearts; by turning from every wicked thing and not participating in that which is wicked; and by stretching out our

hearts and ears toward His Word. If we will not hear His Word, we will not hear Him. Which way are you inclined?

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, we ask You in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that You would incline our hearts to Thee, move us, change us, turn us, and make us lean Your way and lean when You lean. Give us grace, Father, that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 31

Bad Moon Rising

January 19, 2021

SCRIPTURE READING - Proverbs 1:20-33 (KJV)

Introduction: The Song and the Text

The Bible says:

Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets. She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates, in the city she uttereth her word, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?

And the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. Turn you at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you. I will make known my words unto you, because I have called and ye refused. I stretched out my hand and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity.

I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer. They shall seek me early, but

> they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel. They despised all my reproof.

"Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own ways and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." I told you the title of the message was "Bad Moon Rising." Years ago, that was the title of a song, "Bad Moon Rising."

Alice and I were traveling. It was late at night. We had the radio on, and at that time of night, you listen to just about anything that'll help keep you awake. As far as I know, it was the only time I ever heard that song in my entire life. I'd never really heard it even since then. The only time we listen to the radio is when we're traveling, so I have not had an opportunity to ever listen to that song again. But I checked it out, and "Bad Moon Rising" was a song written by John Fogerty.

It was performed by Creedence Clearwater Revival. It was the lead single from their album, Green River. And it came out in April of 1969. So it had to be 40 years ago when I heard that song. And I'm certainly not necessarily recommending that song. And I'm certainly not recommending the group that sang that song. I did not even remember who sang the song until I looked the song up on the internet. I did remember, however, the first lyrics, and I guess that's what impressed me, because when I was reading through the book of Proverbs chapter 1, for some reason that song popped into my mind, and then I went to the internet and I looked up the words, and I want you to listen to the words of this song.

"I see the bad moon rising, I see trouble on the way, I see earthquakes and lightning. I see bad times today. Don't go around tonight. Well, it's bound to take your life. There's a bad moon on the rise. I hear hurricanes blowing. I know the end is coming soon. I fear rivers overflowing. I hear the voice of rage and ruin. Don't go around tonight. Well, it's bound to take your life. There's a bad moon on the rise." All right.

"Hope you got your things together. Hope you're quite prepared to die. Looks like we're in for nasty weather. One eye is taken for an eye. Don't go around tonight. Well, it's bound to take your life. There's a bad moon on the rise. Don't go around tonight. Well, it's bound to take your life. There's a bad moon on the rise." And I suppose the reason that song popped into my mind is because when you look at Proverbs 1 verses 20 through 33, it is a musical picture of a bad moon rising. When one rejects the truth and rebels and refuses to submit to the plain and simple commands of God, there is indeed a bad moon rising for such an individual. I want you to look, if you would please, at the first nine verses which is the first paragraph in Proverbs chapter 1, because this first paragraph sets the stage and tells you exactly why the Proverbs were written. So look in verse 1, "The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel."

The Purpose of Proverbs

“To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice and judgment and equity, to give subtlety to the simple and to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear and will increase learning, and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels, to understand a proverb and the interpretation, the words of the wise and their dark sayings. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother, for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.”

Notice the words: “to know,” “to perceive,” “to receive,” and “to give.” In other words, the Proverbs were basically written for instruction. The Proverbs are given to us for wisdom. Proverbs 2:6 says, “For the Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” When you talk about knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, you have to go back to Proverbs 1:7: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and knowledge.”

The word “fool” in the Bible does not refer to a mentally deficient person. Rather, it refers to an individual who refuses to listen, to be instructed, or to be disciplined.

Defining the Fool

He is not going to receive truth. Four Scriptures verify this interpretation. Proverbs 12:15 says, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.” So in this passage, a fool is not going to listen to counsel. Why? Because his way is right in his own eyes. He thinks he knows, and therefore he is certainly not going to listen. The Bible says that the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but the one who listens to counsel is wise.

Proverbs 15:5 explains the same truth: “A fool despiseth his father's instruction, but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.” Again, we see this truth explained. A fool is simply not going to listen to instruction. He is not going to regard reproof at all. The Bible says he despises his father's instruction, while the one who regards reproof is prudent.

Proverbs 17:10 says, “A reproof entereth more into a wise man than a hundred stripes into a fool.” You cannot beat truth into a fool. You cannot beat understanding into him. Notice verse 16: “Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?” In other words, it does not matter whether he has the wherewithal to get wisdom or not. He has no heart for it. He does not want to listen. He does not want to be instructed. He does not want to receive counsel; therefore, he is indeed a fool. The fool’s problem is not lack of opportunity, but lack of heart for wisdom.

When these four passages are put together, a fool is someone who is wise in his own eyes. A fool is someone who thinks he knows it all.

A fool is someone who has no heart for instruction and one that you cannot even physically discipline to get him to understand and hear. Seemingly, he is never going to change simply because he is a fool.

Wisdom Crying Out

Now look back in Proverbs 1 at verses 20 and 21. In this passage, we have wisdom crying out. “Wisdom crieth without. She uttereth her voice in the streets. She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates, in the city she uttereth her words, saying…” First, note that wisdom is crying out publicly in the streets, in the gates. You remember that in the gates of the city was where the government was exercised. That is where the king and the leaders of the city sat, and where people congregated. This is a public exhortation and a public crying.

Before we go any further, we need to identify wisdom: Who and what is spoken of? Who is wisdom, and what is wisdom? First and foremost, wisdom in the Bible refers to Jesus Christ personified. Wisdom is personified in a person, and that person is Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 8 speaks of wisdom. Verse 11 says, “For wisdom is better than rubies,” and the passage continues. If you read all of it, it becomes clear that we are talking about wisdom. Verse 33 says, “Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.”

“For whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favor of the Lord.” That is true: whoever finds Jesus Christ finds life and obtains favor of the Father. Verse 36 says, “But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.” So Jesus Christ is wisdom.

Now, I want you to see this in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 1:30, the Bible says, “But of him,” that is, of God the Father, “are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” So Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Then, if you look in the book of Colossians, chapter 2, let us read verses 2 and 3. Again, Colossians 2, verse 2. The Bible says, “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of

Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." So, first and foremost, wisdom is personified in the Old Testament, and Jesus Christ is that person who is speaking.

In Luke 11:49, our Lord refers to the Bible, to the Scriptures: "Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute." Note what the Bible is called: the wisdom of God. Jesus Christ is the living wisdom, and the Bible is the written wisdom. Just as Jesus Christ is the living Word, the Scriptures are indeed the written Word. Therefore, when we look back in Proverbs chapter 1, where wisdom is crying, we have first and foremost the Lord Jesus Christ speaking. Secondly, it refers very clearly and easily to the Word of God.

Since wisdom is crying in the streets, in the public places, this is what you and I would refer to as the common call. It is nothing more than the public preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His Word. Especially here, it is not only by Jesus Christ and not only by the Word of God, but also by His preachers, who are exegeting, explaining, and applying that Word.

Wisdom is presented publicly: "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets." She crieth in the chief places of the concourse, in the opening of the gates in the city, she uttereth her words, saying, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge."

Three Classes of Hearers

The question is, What does wisdom say? Her appeal is not hidden or private; it is made in the most public places, at the gates and in the streets. Wisdom's voice is therefore heard in the chief places of the concourse and at the opening of the gates in the city. This passage identifies three groups: the simple ones, the scorners, and the fools. The simple are ignorant, easily led astray, easily seduced, and easily duped; they have no real conception or understanding of reality. Proverbs was given, as chapter 1, verse 4, says, "to give subtilty to the simple." Yet the simple are not mentally deficient individuals. They are simply people who are easily deceived and led astray.

I thought about this earlier today. Years ago, I had a van full of teenagers, and in that group was this sweet little blonde. She was a sweet little thing, and her family, of course, were members of our church. We were driving in Coffee County, and since she was sitting right behind me, I called her name. “Sasha,” I said, “I know a lady over here that takes a bath in coffee every day.” She said, “Really?” I said, “Yes. She takes a bath in coffee every day.”

She looked at me and said, “Regular or decaffeinated?” I finally had to say, “Sweetheart, this is Coffee County. She takes a bath in water, but she still takes a bath in Coffee County every day.” “Oh, pastor,” she said, “I thought you were serious.” I said, “Yeah, I know. I understand.”

That is why we can tell children oftentimes that the moon is made of green cheese, or something like that. You tell some little child something, and they believe it because they are simple. They do not know. The simple here are not necessarily someone who is mentally deficient. It is just someone who is simple, has never really been taught, and has never really grasped reality.

Secondly, you have the scorners. The scorners are those who mock, ridicule, scoff at, and despise the truth. In their pride, arrogance, and haughtiness, they think they are right, and that it is absolutely their right to mock God, His Word, His law, and anything that is holy and righteous. That is why the Bible says in the book of Proverbs, chapter 19 and verse 29, “Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the backs of fools.” So God always prepares judgments for the scorners.

Thirdly, you have in this group that which is known as fools. In this sense of the word, a fool is someone who is hardened, obstinate, and perverse—someone who hates knowledge, despises instruction, despises counsel, and simply will not listen. We have wisdom, we have the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the Word of God, and we have His preachers crying out to these three groups: the simple, the scorner, and the fool.

But what is being cried? Look, if you would please, at verse 23. Here it is: "Turn you at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, and I will make my words known unto you." First of all,

the exhortation to each one is to turn. It does not matter whether it is a simple individual, a scorner, or a fool. The first instruction and exhortation is to turn. The Hebrew word means to turn, to return, and to come back.

The Call to Repent and the Promise

What you and I would say today is what the New Testament says quite frequently: repent. But note something. He says, "Turn you at my reproof." Repentance is based upon reproof.

The Hebrew word for reproof here refers to a rebuke, an argument, a chiding, or a correction. Usually, most people are not going to repent unless they are rebuked, unless they are confronted. If they are not confronted or rebuked, they simply continue with their sin. But watch this: not only is repentance based upon reproof, reproof is based upon the Word of God. For instance, "Turn you at my reproof."

"Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you. I will make known my words unto you." In other words, once an individual repents, it is because he has been reproved and rebuked, being corrected. Once he turns, then the Word of God is made known unto him; that is, he understands it. One reason God inspired the Scripture is for reproof. You remember 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." One reason God wrote this is for reproof.

Moreover, it is also the duty and responsibility of a pastor to reprove and rebuke. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2, “Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, exhort, rebuke, reprove with all longsuffering and doctrine.” Notice that even the exhorting, rebuking, and reproving are with doctrine. It is the same thing found here: “Turn you at my reproof. Behold, I’ll pour my spirit upon you and I will make known my words unto you.”

When you think of admonitions, exhortations, preaching, teaching, and proclamations of the truth, these are God’s demands to repent, turn from evil and wickedness, submit and surrender to Him, and obey Him. If you hold Proverbs 1, but look in your Bibles

to Ezekiel 33:11, you will see these things put together. God says, “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” God is pleading for them to turn from their wicked ways.

The interesting thing is that, in Proverbs 1, all our pleadings and prayers will not avail those who are simple, scorners, and fools because they refuse to listen and hear. They simply go merrily on their own way, ignoring everything placed before them. They do so to the point that they greatly anger God.

Look at verse 23, and then through verse 25: “Turn you at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you. I’ll make known my words unto you.” Then God says, “Because I have called and ye refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof.” God said, “I spoke to you. I proclaimed the truth. You refused to listen.”

The Lex Talionis: God's Just Retribution

In this passage, we begin to see what is known as the Lex Talionis of Scripture. Lex Talionis is simply Latin for the law of retribution. It is where God makes the punishment fit the crime, where you actually reap that which you sow.

He is addressing the simple, the scorners, and the fools—individuals who mocked God. Now God is about to mock them. They would not listen to God; now God is not going to listen to them. They had no delight in God; now God is not going to have any delight in them. They could not stand to hear the Word of God; now God is not going to hear their words.

If you want to sing about a bad moon rising, for someone in this position, it is indeed a bad moon rising. Hold Proverbs 1, but look in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 6, verse 10. God has sent Jeremiah to preach and declare the truth. But he asks, "To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear?" Who is he going to preach to? Who is he going to speak to? "Behold, their ear is uncircumcised and they cannot hear."

"Behold, the word of the Lord is to them a reproach. They have no delight in it." Jeremiah said, "I want to preach, but nobody's going to listen to me. Their ears uncircumcised, they cannot hear. Besides that, they despise the Word of God. It's a reproach to them. They have no delight in it. They do not want it whatsoever." When you look in Proverbs chapter 1, what you are going to see is this: God will even the score.

You have heard that old adage: He who laughs last, laughs best. I can assure you that God will have the last laugh. God says, "Ye have set at nought all my counsel," verse 25, "and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer."

"They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." I can assure you of one thing: if God laughs at you, you have a good reason to cry. You scoffed at Him, and now He is going to scoff at you. In other words, God is going to give measure for measure. You laughed off His words, His warnings, His exhortations, His teaching, and His counsel, and now God is going to laugh at you. You laughed at Him through your stupidity, your sinfulness, and your senselessness, and now He is going to laugh at you. When God laughs, it indicates that He is not going to have mercy at all.

For instance, look at Psalm 37, verses 12 and 13: "The wicked plotteth against the just and gnasheth upon him with his teeth." You talk about plotting against the just; look at all the plots that are going on today from our own government, from other governments, and from men in high places and positions of authority. "The wicked plotteth against the just and gnasheth upon him with his teeth." But verse 13 says, "The Lord shall laugh at him. For he seeth that his day is coming."

The Lord is going to laugh at him because He is going to judge him and destroy him. The man is going to fall into the very pit which he dug. Consider Psalm 2: "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" The heathen are raging, and the people imagine a vain, useless, worthless thing. But that is not all. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel

together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." They do not like the limitations that God has placed upon them. They do not like the restrictions that the Word of God demands. They do not like God's commandments or God's rule. So they say, "Let us break their bands asunder, cast away their cords from us." What is the result? "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision."

"Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." So when God laughs at you, you have a very good reason to cry. Look again at Proverbs chapter 1, verse 26: "I will also laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer."

"Then shall they seek me early, but they shall not find me." What an absolute horror it must be when a person realizes that he is nothing but a fool, but it is too late. Can you imagine the anguish and fear that arise when he cries to God in distress, and God will not hear what he pleads and begs? God shuts him out and says, "I'm not going to talk to you. I'm not going to listen to you."

Someone will say, "Wow. How could God be so mean?" It is not meanness, dear friends. It is justice. You would not listen to God, hear Him, or heed Him, so God will not listen to or heed you. It is absolutely just.

You earned, merited, and deserved that response, and God measured it right back to you. Do not come blaming God. If God laughs at you, you indeed have good cause to cry. And if you look at verses 29 and 30, here is why God is being, quote-unquote, so mean. It is not meanness; it is just: "For that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord."

The Reason for Judgment

"They would none of my counsel. They despised all my reproof." God says you were warned, but you would not listen. You were admonished and exhorted, but you refused to hear. You mocked,

ridiculed, procrastinated, and now it is too late. The door has been shut in your face. The fault is yours. The sin is yours. The rebellion is yours. The consequences of your attitude and actions are yours.

You are reaping that which you have sown. Do not blame God. You rejected the truth and believed a lie. You wanted your way, and you got it. There is an interesting question in Lamentations 3:39: "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" We have an old adage: if you do the crime, you will do the time. Why complain when you are reaping that which you have sown? You ignored God and scoffed at Him; you will be ignored and scoffed at as well.

This is what most people have never really grasped: the sentence, the judgment placed upon these individuals. It is no light judgment. It is very severe, exceedingly heavy, and grievous. Look at verses 29 and 30, and then verse 31. Verse 29 says, "For they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord."

"They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Therefore, shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices." This is no arbitrary sentence; it is a just and accurate sentence. You will eat of the fruit of your own ways and be filled with your own devices. Your sin and rebellion may have been sweet in your mouth, but they are now bitterness in your belly, and they will end in destruction and death.

Hold Proverbs 1, but look in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 3. God places this same truth in another setting. Isaiah 3:10 says, "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." What is wrong with that? Nothing. It is absolutely just. If a righteous man lives righteously, he will eat the fruit of his doings. It will be good fruit. But verse 11 says, "Woe unto the wicked."

"It shall be ill with him for the reward of his hands shall be given him." In other words, God says in verse 10, “I'm going to give the righteous that which is their due.” And in verse 11, “I'm going to give the wicked that which is their due.” That's simply justice. That's all there is to it.

Years ago, I was preaching in Illinois, and in the service was a young Mormon man. He was so irritated and upset with my preaching. After the service, he came up in anger and confronted me. Every time he would say something, I would just quote Scripture, and he became very upset. He said, “Let me just ask you one question.” I said, “Ask it.” He said, “Is not God just?” I said, “Absolutely.” He said, “All I want from God is justice.” I looked at him and said, “Son, that's exactly what God's going to give you.”

But I can assure you, once you get it, you will wish a million times over that it had been mercy and not justice. Yes, God is just, and He is going to give men exactly that which they deserve, exactly that which they have earned.

When God says, “Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices,” one of the greatest judgments God can place upon an individual is simply to let him alone—to let him have his own way and do his own thing. I don't know about you, but I am thankful God stopped me from my own way and from doing my own thing. It is a very grievous judgment.

The Danger of Believing a Lie

This is truth crying in the street: if you do not believe the truth, you will believe a lie. In fact, if you do not believe the truth now, you already are believing a lie. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, beginning with verse 10, the Bible says, “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.” We are talking about people who are perishing; they are unsaved. Why are they perishing? “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” They refused truth. They did not want it. Now watch what happens in verse 11.

“And for this cause,” what cause? Because they refuse to receive truth. “And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie. That they all might be damned.” Why are they going to be damned? “Because they believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” If you do not believe the truth, then you are going to believe a lie.

When you look back in Proverbs 1, and when God says in verse 31, "Therefore, shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices," that means the lie they believed in, the lie they have lived for all their lives, is going to come piling down upon them. Now look, if you would please, at verse 32. God explains this truth quite well: "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them."

The turning away of the simple means turning away from truth, from our Lord, from righteousness—in other words, from the Word of God. They refuse to believe in the perfect atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, His finished work. They scoff at it, mock at it, ridicule it, and do not believe it. And it destroys them.

There is an old Puritan saying, which you have heard me quote many times: God often curses His enemies with great riches and wealth. Why? Because they trust in their riches and wealth. One thing for sure, George Soros is not trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, is he? Bill Gates is not trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am simply pointing out that many of these individuals trust in their wealth, and it certainly destroys them. That is why our Lord Himself said in Proverbs 8:36, "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death."

The Alternative: Hear and Obey

Verses 20 through 32 describe a bad moon rising because this is the lex talionis of Scripture: God makes the punishment fit the crime. Thankfully, however, there is an alternative. In verse 33 He says, "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely and shall be quiet from fear of evil." The alternative is listening, hearing, and hearkening in such a way that you obey. It is hearing the Word of God, submitting to it, obeying it, and recognizing His divine authority. Since God is sovereign, He has the absolute right to command.

In Acts 17:30, He commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Why does God command men to repent? The Bible says, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the

dead." Just as surely as God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, there will be a judgment; therefore, He commands all men everywhere to repent. In 1 John 3:23, the Bible says, "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." God has commanded men to repent and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He has commanded men to hear His Word, study His Word, and bring their lives into conformity to His Word.

The alternative is simple: hear and obey. Over and over, God says, "Hear and your soul shall live." This is not merely audible hearing; it is hearing that produces obedience and brings our lives into conformity to the Word of God. If you refuse to hear Him, you are not only sinning against God; you are sinning against your own soul.

Applications: Bad Moon vs. Sun of Righteousness

Consider a couple of applications. When you think of "bad moon rising," you may think of hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods if you know the song's lyrics. I am not downplaying those. But if you truly want to contemplate a bad moon rising, contemplate a holy, righteous, just, and sovereign God who has been spurned, mocked, ridiculed, hated, and despised, now arising in anger to execute His justice. I can assure you that would be a bad moon rising for certain individuals. So do not be simple, a scorner, or a fool.

Listen to wisdom as wisdom cries. Anything that is not of the truth is a lie. James, especially chapter 3, verse 14, commands, "Lie not against the truth."

When you search the Scripture, you will find that God is true and cannot lie, as Hebrews chapter 6 teaches. Jesus Christ is truth: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of truth, and the Scriptures as the Scriptures of truth. Therefore, whenever you refuse or reject the wisdom, counsel, reproof, exhortations, and admonitions of the Word of God, you are not only believing a lie, but lying against the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Scriptures. So he says, "Lie not against the truth."

For the wicked, for those who will not listen, it is a bad moon rising. But for the righteous, for believers, Malachi 4:2 says, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with

healing in his wings." I believe I would rather be under the Sun of righteousness than the bad moon rising. And you shall live.

Father, thank you for your word, your truth, warnings, and exhortations. Thank you, blessed Lord, for being truth, our truth incarnate, and thy word being truth written. Help us to love thee, live for thee, obey thee, and bring our lives into conformity unto thee. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 32

Crying Unto God, What We Can Learn From Birds

February 20, 2022

The title of the message is, "Crying Unto God, What We Can Learn From Birds." Notice Job chapter 38, beginning with verse 39. We are going to be reading verses 39 through 41. God asked Job, "Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion, or fill the appetite of the young lions when they couch in their dens and abide in the covert to lie in wait? Who provided for the raven his food? When his young ones cry to God, they wander for lack of meat."

Introduction: Learning from Creation

I made an observation years ago, and I still believe it's absolutely true, and that is that most people are so busy making a living, they actually forget to live. We fail to observe and refuse to look at and consider and contemplate God's creation and God's providence. When we think about animals, we only look at animals for food or for pets or for entertainment. Moreover, the animals that we're usually concerned with are only the animals that we own or the animals that we use. Most of the time, we do not even consider

animals that are outside of our realm of existence, unless one happens to be seemingly exceptional. We have no interest in taking care of animals, except the ones we own or the ones that we use. We certainly never, ever consider learning from animals.

Men Can Be Dumber Than Beasts

We always consider animals inferior, less intelligent, and nothing more than brute beasts. But I'm going to point something out that you should consider: a lot of times men are dumber than the animals. We do not stop to consider what God has placed before us in His creation, or what His providence teaches us through it.

In Isaiah chapter 1, verses 2 and 3, God says, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. For the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. But Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." So, in this instance, the ox and the ass are smarter than His people. The ox knows his stall, and the ass knows his crib. They know exactly where they get fed.

I've had cows for many, many years. Just this past week, I was putting water in the watering trough when I looked down and saw a cow that seemed to be lying down. Usually, when a cow is going to have a calf, she lies down, so I thought, I'll walk down there and check on that cow. I walked straight to her, no more than 7,500 yards from where I had originally been standing, and found that she was not necessarily even lying down. She was kind of in a depression.

When I got there to see, about fifteen or twenty other cows suddenly came to surround me. I had to pet every one of them before I could leave. The point is that they knew exactly who I am, and they knew I fed them, so they came to me. My father used to have several hundred cows, and I have seen him drive his truck out into the pasture, with every one of them surrounding that truck because they knew food came out of it as well.

This is what God is saying: these oxen and asses are sometimes smarter than men. Psalm 49:12 says, "Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not, he is like the beasts that perish." Then verse 20

says, "Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." A man who does not honor or recognize God, or recognize the station God has assigned him in life, is really dumber than a brute beast.

In fact, those who do not know God, refuse God, and will not submit and surrender to Him are described in Scripture as nothing more than brute beasts to be destroyed. Look at 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 12, and then we will go to the book of Jude. There you will see exactly what has just been said.

Wicked Men as Brute Beasts

Speaking of these wicked men, 2 Peter 2:12 says, "But these, as a natural brute beast, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of things that they understand not, and they shall utterly perish in their own corruption." So they are a brute beast; they do not understand, and God says they will perish in their own corruption. Then, in the book of Jude, right before the book of Revelation, verse 10 says, "But these speak evil of those things which they know not. But what they know naturally, as brute beasts in those things, they corrupt themselves."

We should not think ourselves above learning from animals, birds, and insects. In one sense, they certainly have much that they can teach us. You have to believe this and understand it: God did not make anything by accident. Everything that God made, He made for a purpose, for our good and for His glory. Therefore, we can learn from anything that He has created.

God's Creation Teaches Us

Since we are in the book of Job, consider Job 12:7: "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee, and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee, or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee, Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?" This may surprise you, but the Word of God says that the hand of the Lord has wrought this for us. We may be educated and taught by beasts, birds, fish, and the earth, if we will simply pay attention.

Here is a good question: Have you ever really, seriously, and closely paid attention to your animals, especially those that you call your pets? I will tell you this: I usually can read mine like a book.

Occasionally I get surprised. That is true. But usually I can read them like a book. Jackson, our big mastiff, will come down to the office while I am petting him. He stands there with his head up so I can scratch his throat and chest. When I quit to turn around and go back to work, he rolls those eyes. When I see him do that, I know exactly what he is going to do: bump me because he wants me to continue petting him. Then, while I am working, he will come up beside me, and if I ignore him, he takes his head and bumps my arm, putting it around him so I can pet and scratch him. I have to do that while trying to type with this hand.

We used to have a golden retriever named Funny. Everywhere I went, just like Claiborne, she rode with me in the cab, never in the back of the truck. She was either lying on the seat with her head in my lap or sitting up, leaning against me with her head on my shoulder. Many times, while I was driving down the road, she would bump my arm, and it would go around her. She would lay her head there, and I would have to drive like that.

Alice was following me one day when Funny did that. When we got home, Alice said, “If I didn't know better, I'd swear you had a blonde on your shoulder and in your arms.” I said, “I'm thankful you knew it was that golden retriever.” Sometimes they do surprise you. I never have to look at the clock to know when it is time to go to the post office or take off the trash. Claiborne comes to my office door, jumping around. He turns toward the front door, then comes back as if to say, “It’s time. You’re wasting time. Let’s get up. Let’s go.”

I am simply saying there have been many instances, and I would challenge you to do this: when you get home, get on your computer, go to the Internet, and type in “wild animals that have asked humans for help.” There are documented cases of dolphins, whales, turtles, and even sharks approaching humans and wanting help, usually because they are caught in nets or have hooks in them.

Similarly, if you look again on the computer, you will see koala bears and kangaroos coming up in Australia asking people for water,

especially during drought. In one instance, a person is holding a bottle of water while a little koala bear drinks it, guzzling it right down. It is a wild animal. There is also a mother elephant approaching humans for help for her baby, which has fallen into a well, as well as bears approaching people. It is astounding what you can find and how these animals approach. What I am trying to show is that they communicate in ways we can understand, even if they cannot speak.

The truth is, we can learn from anything God created, even insects. I will never forget sitting years ago behind a little oak tree, about this big around, while deer hunting. I was watching several hundred yards in front of me when I suddenly looked at that tree and saw a praying mantis and a granddaddy longlegs trying to outmaneuver each other. The praying mantis wanted to have him for dinner, but the granddaddy longlegs did not cooperate. I watched them for two hours. When it became dark, I had to leave, and I do not know the outcome, but the praying mantis did not get him during those two hours.

Lessons from Insects: The Ant

Did you know that in martial arts, in Kung Fu, there is a praying mantis style of fighting? There is also a monkey style of fighting. They observed animals, saw how they fought and defended themselves, and developed those things. There are things we can learn even from insects. Turn in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 6. What in the world can you learn from an insect? Here is something we need to learn in this country, and probably in every country as well. In Proverbs chapter 6, beginning with verse 6, notice what God says.

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise." What can you learn from an ant? He says, "Which having no guide, overseer or ruler, provided her meat in the summer, and gathered her food in the harvest." And then he says this, "How long will you sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou rise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth on thy want as an armed man."

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard. Consider her ways, and be wise." The ant does not have a foreman, the ant does not have a king, the ant does not have a ruler, but the ant has sense enough to know that it has to get and harvest while it can get, and it has to provide for itself when it cannot get.

So you can learn not only a biblical work ethic from ants, you can also learn preparation from ants, you can also learn provision from ants, and providing for yourself and for others as well. We need the lesson of a biblical work ethic, and God says you can go to the ant and learn that. Isn't that amazing?

Now, in the context of our text, God is questioning Job. If you will look in Job chapter 23 and verse 4, we're going to come back to the context, but look at it. In fact, let's begin with verse three. Job said, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him." He's talking about God, "that I might come even to his seat." What would you do, Job, if you found him? He said, here's what I would do.

Context: God Questions Job

Job said, “I would order my cause before him and fill my mouth with arguments.” He knew he was suffering and being afflicted. He knew he was a sinner, but he also knew he had not done anything to deserve what was happening to him, and he did not really know what was happening to him. If he knew where he might find God, he would order his cause before Him, and then fill his mouth with arguments.

The interesting thing is this: Job got that opportunity. In Job 38, verses 1 and 2—in fact, through verse 3—we read: “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee and answer thou me.” God was saying, Job, you do not know what you are doing; you are talking as someone who has no sense, as someone without knowledge. But if you want to talk to Me, gird up your loins, act like a man, and answer Me. I am going to ask you some questions, and you try to answer Me.

God began asking those questions in Job 38 and continued all the way through Job 42. Job could not answer any of them. In chapter 42, beginning with verse 1, after God had finished asking all of these questions, Job answered: “Then Job answered the Lord and said, I know that thou canst do everything and that no thought can be withholden from thee.” He continued: “Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? That's me. Therefore have I uttered that that I understood not. Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak. I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.”

Then Job said, “Wherefore, I abhor, I hate myself, I will repent in dust and ashes.” Job no longer wanted to challenge God. He did not want to go through with it; he had spoken out of turn. Now, going back to Job 38, beginning with verse 39, consider one of the questions God asked him: “Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion?”

The Raven: A Despicable Bird

"Or fill the appetite of the young lions? When they couch in their dens and abide in the covert to lie in wait." And then he asks, "Who provided for the raven his food? When his young ones cry to God, they wander for lack of meat." God is speaking not only of ravenous beasts, but also of ravenous birds. He asked Job, Can you feed the lions? Can you feed the young lions? Can you feed the ravens? Can you feed their offspring? He mentions the lions, normally known as the king of the beasts. Then he mentions ravens, which are a despicable bird in one sense of the word.

Although we recognize lions and stand in awe of them as king of the beast, a lion is exceedingly cruel itself. Look at the small animals that it kills, the little antelopes. It does not matter if it is a grown antelope or a baby antelope; the lion will kill and eat it. Here is a beast that we recognize as the king of the beasts, and yet he is very cruel.

Then we are talking about these ravenous birds, and he mentions ravens particularly. Ravens are not only unclean, they are also repulsive in one sense of the word. In Leviticus 11, verses 13-15, we read, "And these are they which you shall have in abomination

among the fowls. They shall not be eaten. They are an abomination, the eagle and the ossifrage, and the osprey, and the vulture, and the kite after his kind, and every raven after his kind." The raven is mentioned as an unclean bird.

Proverbs 30:17 shows again the despicableness of ravens in one sense of the word: "The eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagles shall eat it."

SCRIPTURE READING - Isaiah 34:1-11 (KJV)

So we're talking about a dead carcass, and here the ravens come and pick out the eyes. And of course, vultures will do exactly the same thing. So we think of ravens then as very, not only unclean, but despicable in one sense of the word. And if you will turn right on over to Isaiah 34, I want you to look at the Bible with me as I read through the first 11 verses, because evidently, ravens are part and parcel of God's judgment.

Isaiah 34, beginning there with verse 1. Notice this is the context of judgment. He says, "Come near ye nations to hear and hearken, you people. Let the earth hear in all that is therein in the world, and all things that come forth of it. Why? For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies. He hath utterly destroyed them. He hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountain shall be melted with their blood. And all the hosts of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all their hosts shall fall down, as the leaf falleth from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword," says God, "shall be bathed in heaven. Behold, it shall come down upon Edomaea, and upon the people of my curse to judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood. It is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, and with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the Lord hath a sacrifice in Basra, and a great slaughter in the land of Edomia. And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls, and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.

> "For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance on the year of recompense, for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night or day. The smoke thereof shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste, and none shall pass through it forever and ever.
>
> "But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it, the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it. And he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness." So, he says, it's going to be so destroyed that the only thing that can live there is the cormorant and the bittern and the owl and the raven. So, this is all included in God's judgment. But note, if you would, here is that raven listed again.

Look back to Job 38:41, and you will see why this caught my attention, especially in light of everything I have said about the ravens. God asks Job, “Who provideth for the raven his food?” Then He says, “When his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.” Most animals take care of their young, defend them, and sometimes even care for the young of other animals.

Ravens Forsake Their Young

The first year Alice and I were married, so long ago that neither of us can really remember it, my father’s dog came home with two unharmed baby squirrels in his mouth. My sister took one, and Alice and I took the other. It was so small that we had to feed it with an eyedropper. At the time we also had a little Chihuahua and had been given a very small tomcat kitten. The Chihuahua had one little puppy, so we had the dog, the puppy, the baby squirrel, and the baby kitten. Did you know that the mother Chihuahua nursed the puppy, the kitten, and the squirrel?

They grew up together, lived together, and slept together. The dog never bothered the cat, and the cat never bothered the squirrel. We kept them until they were gone. Eventually I let the squirrel go, but he kept coming back for two months or so before finally going wild after he was fully grown. I am simply pointing out that animals may care for the young of other animals. In fact, one of the men showed

me a little video sent to him that week: a big white mother hen sat on a nest, and when the owner lifted her by the chest, three little kittens came out from underneath her. She had been sitting on the kittens. It is astounding how animals do things like this.

But I told you all of that to say this: the ravens are not like that. Ravens do not really care about their young. They usually kick them out of the nest by the time they are five to seven weeks old.

Hence, the Bible says in verse 41, “who provided for the raven his food? When his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.” In other words, the parents are not taking care of those baby chicks. They are like the ostrich. Look in Job 39, beginning with verse 13. Here is the dumbness of an ostrich. God asked Job, “Gavest thou the goodly wings of the peacocks?” And of course, the answer is no. “Or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?” No. What does the ostrich do? “...who leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust.” She lays her eggs, covers them in the dirt, and that is it.

“...and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them, or eat them.” “She's hardened against her young ones as though they were not hers.” She does not care. “Her labor is in vain without fear.” Why? “Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath He imparted her to understanding. What time she lifted up herself on high, she scorned the horse and the rider.” And yes, an ostrich's skin is run as fast or faster than a horse. But God says they are so dumb, they put their eggs in the dirt, cover them with the dirt, walk off, and leave them.

If they hatch, they hatch. If God did not take care of the ostrich, then they would have gone extinct a long time ago. But God is saying it is the same thing with these ravens. Remember, a little bird that is five to seven weeks old just about cannot take care of itself. It is almost impossible.

Years ago, Alice and I found a baby bird. Neither of us can remember whether the dog brought the bird up in its mouth or whether we found it in the yard somewhere. We had a screened-in porch, about a quarter the size of this room, so we put that little bird in it. I even fixed little branches for it to sit on. We had a little box beneath it, with towels in the box to keep it warm, and Alice and I

would go in and feed it every day. Usually, she would feed it most of the time.

Occasionally, I would do so. We carried little insects, worms, and bird feed into the room. I could never get Alice to put the worms into her mouth as the mother bird did and poke them down the bird's throat, but at least she would feed it. Eventually, the bird grew feathers and began hopping and flying around the little room. We had to be very careful, because although it could fly, it was still very young, and we were not sure whether it could take care of itself.

One day, I went in to feed the little bird. It was positioned just right, because when I opened the door, it flew right past me. I shut the door, went back in, and told Alice, "Well, the bird's gone. Maybe you'll be able to take care of yourself. I don't know."

But he flew out, and I couldn't stop him. She said, "Well, we've done the best we can do." The next day, she was out in the garden working when, all of a sudden, something fell from the sky right at her feet. It was that baby bird, with his mouth open: "Feed me, feed me, feed me." She picked him up, took him in, and fed him again.

Birds are not stupid, not by any stretch of the imagination. Usually, mamas and dads take care of their young, but not with ravens. Matthew Poole says, "Having mentioned the noblest of brute beasts, or creatures," speaking of lions, "he now mentions one that is most contemptible and loathsome to show the care of God's providence over all creatures, both great and small." This is even more remarkable in ravens because, first, they devour flesh, which is not easy for them to find; second, they are greedy and eat very much; third, they are generally neglected and forsaken by mankind; and fourth, their young are so soon forsaken by their dams that, if God did not provide for them in a more than ordinary manner, they would soon be starved.

He then quotes Volkart, who observes that the raven expels its young from the nest as soon as they are able to fly. Being unable to obtain food by their own exertions, they make a croaking noise, and God is said to hear it and supply their needs. Schubert suggests that the raven is specified rather than other fowls because it is an offensive bird, showing that no object, however regarded by man, is

beneath God's notice. He carefully provides for the needs of all His creatures.

These ravens cannot provide for themselves even when their parents kick them out of the nest. They make this croaking noise, which God is said to hear. That is why the Bible says in verse 41, “When His young ones cry unto God,” they “wander for lack of meat.” If God did not feed them, the raven would be extinct as well.

God's Provision for All Creatures

Now look in your Bibles at two passages: Psalm 50 and Psalm 147. Keep in mind what was just said. Psalm 50, beginning with verse 10, says, “For every beast of the forest is Mine.”

"And the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine." Isn't that amazing? God says, "For every beast of the forest is mine," no matter what it is. He says, "I own them. I created them. They're mine." I have often wondered how the state acquired ownership over all the wild animals to require a license to hunt them, because they claim to own them. But God says they don't own them. They're His; He created them.

Psalm 147 and verse 9 says, "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." The young ravens are crying. Matthew Henry said concerning this verse in Job 38:41, "See the all sufficiency of the divine providence."

"It has wherewithal to satisfy the desire of every living thing, even the most ravenous. See the bounty of the divine providence, that wherever it is given life, it will give livelihood even to those creatures that are not only not serviceable, but dangerous to men. And see the divine sovereignty that it suffers some creatures to be killed for the support of other creatures. The harmless sheep are torn to pieces to fill the appetite of the young lions, who yet sometimes are made to lack and suffer hunger to punish them for their cruelty, while those that fear God want for no good thing."

That is the truth expressed in Psalm 84 and verse 11: "...they that fear the Lord shall not want or shall not lack for any good thing."

God takes care of His creatures and provides for every living thing, regardless of how despicable or repulsive we count them.

I've never known of anyone who wanted a vulture or a buzzard for a pet. I don't even want a crocodile for a pet. I might consider an alligator, but I don't really want one either. But God takes care of and provides for every one of those creatures.

A lot of these animals, you and I would consider extremely dangerous, and we do not even want to be around them. We sometimes wonder why God even allows them to live. I've said it before: I can see a purpose for everything except maybe gnats and mosquitoes. Sometimes I wonder, but I know God has a purpose for them as well.

When you and I think about wicked and dangerous animals, here's another question: Why does God allow such wicked and dangerous men to live? I don't have to name names right now. You could probably think of a half a dozen right off that are so anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Bible, and anti-Christian.

It's unbelievable. Yet some of these men are billionaires, and they use all their money to try to destroy the kingdom of Christ. So why would God allow them to live? I've often said that I'm so thankful I am not God. For if I were, I would have killed me and a whole lot more a long time ago. But I'm going to show you the answer to that.

In Matthew chapter 5, verses 44 and 45, our Lord says, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Now, why is it that God allows the wicked to live? Here is the answer: because of His mercies. In fact, the truth is, that is the reason He allows any of us to live. 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.

But listen: God is indeed merciful to the wicked. In Romans 2, the more mercy that He gives them, the more wrath they incur and the more punishment they merit. Romans 2 explains that they will never

escape abusing and misusing the mercies of God. Verse 4 says, "...or despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Do the wicked really interpret the mercies of God as being for their good and designed to lead them to repentance?

No. What they say is, "Look how God is blessing me. There must not be a God. I'm doing this. He doesn't care. I don't care. I'll just use whatever I want." Now look at verse 5: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasures up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds."

All of those mercies that God bestows upon these wicked men, which they abuse and misuse and interpret as though there is no God or judgment, are only treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. God says they are bringing extreme judgment upon themselves.

Turn back, if you would please, to Matthew chapter 6. Let us begin reading with verse 25. God says, "Therefore, I say unto you. Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor yet for your body what you shall put on. Is not life more than meat and the body more than raiment?"

Argument from Lesser to Greater

What you see in this passage is an argument from the lesser to the greater. Many times in the Bible, this argument is used. If something is true in the lesser, how much more is it true, or how much surer is it, in the greater? He said in verse 25, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought." Now watch what he says in verse 26: "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." Then he asks, "Are ye not much better than they?" If God takes care of the fowls of the air, are you not much better than they? Is He not going to take care of you?

Verse 27 says, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.

And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Again, he is arguing from the lesser to the greater. If He takes care of the grass of the field, He certainly can take care of His own. He says, "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Then he says, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow," in other words, do not worry about tomorrow. "For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

You have more to think about today. Do not waste your time thinking about tomorrow.

In Luke chapter 12, notice how he says it. In Matthew he said, "Consider the fowls of the air." But in Luke 12:24, he says, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them."

Here is that argument from the lesser to the greater: “How much more are you better than the fowls?” Matthew says, “Consider the fowls,” and Luke says, “Consider the ravens.”

Now turn back to Matthew, chapter seven. I want to ask you several questions before I give you the answer. Those of you who are married and have children, do you care for your children? The answer, of course, is yes. If your child gets in distress and trouble and begins crying, do you listen to your child’s cries? The answer is yes. Do you do and give good things to your children? Again, the answer is yes.

Now, here is my question: If you love your children, hear them, listen to their cries, needs, and wants, and supply them, do you think that you are any more generous, gracious, kind, or loving than God Himself? You would say, “No, I would not think that.”

Well, let me show you. Look in Matthew chapter seven, beginning with verse 7. “Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Hang on. “Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?” Of course not. Now look at what He said in verse 11.

"If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more," an argument from the lesser to the greater, "how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" How much more? Please note that He gives to those that ask; those that seek, find; and those that knock, it is to be opened.

If raven chicks make a croaking noise, crying unto God for food which they cannot provide for themselves, and they are unclean, ravenous, despicable birds, how much more do you think God is going to provide for His own children, whom He loves and regards as His own?

Applications: Cry to God Like Ravens

We need to learn to cry unto God as do the young ravens. They are kicked out of the nest. They may be able to fly, but they cannot do anything. They cannot attack a larger animal; they have no strength and no ability. They make this croaking noise, screaming and begging for food to eat. I would imagine they cry consistently, constantly, and out of desperation, realizing that if God does not feed them, they are gone. I am afraid that if things keep going in this country the way they are, we may really learn to cry like these raven chicks, out of real desperation.

Consider the children of Israel. Deuteronomy 26:7 says, "And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice and looked upon our affliction and our labor and our oppression." They were crying out of desperation. Judges 3:9 says, "And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother." I think it is

probably time we start crying to God for a deliverer in this country, someone who will get rid of the tyrants and the wicked and the ungodly.

That is what he said: “Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish thou the just.” That is what we need to pray. David said it like this in 2 Samuel, chapter 22 and verse 7: “In my distress, I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears.” I cried to the Lord in my distress. We need to learn to cry like these young ravens, consistently, constantly, and in desperation.

The second thing is this: This message should encourage and embolden us to cry to the Lord, thinking about arguing from the lesser to the greater. If God hears these ravens, surely He is bound to hear His own children. Look at this through the Bible, especially the Psalms, and see how many times David said that he cried. Psalm 3:4 says, “I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill.” Psalm 13:2 says, “O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.” Psalm 34:6 says, “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all of his troubles.” Psalm 66:17 says, “I cried unto Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue.” Psalm 77:1 says, “I cried unto my God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and He gave ear unto me.” Psalm 88:1 says, “O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee.” There is nothing wrong with crying to God. We need to cry to Him consistently, constantly, and in desperation.

Applications: Recognize God's Providence and Be Thankful

Here is the third thing: Do not be like a brute beast in the sense that you do not recognize God's sovereignty, creation, or providence. You have to know from whom you receive your blessings, who sustains you, preserves you, and protects you. He deserves all the honor and all the praise. Years ago, I preached a message titled “Do You Know Which Side Your Bread Is Buttered On?” Of course, it is God who butters our bread. The Bible says in Psalm 50:23, “Whoso offereth praise glorify me.” This leads me to this: We need to remember to learn from the animals.

I enjoy watching cows eat. I feed my cows every day. They put their heads down in a pan, grab a mouthful of sweet feed, and then lift their heads toward heaven and chew and chew and chew, as though relishing every bite. At the same time, they look toward heaven as though they are thanking God: This is so good. I appreciate this so much. It is a joy to watch them eat. Most people never really thank God for what He has given them. I am simply saying that we need to learn. There are things they can teach us, and we need to learn to be thankful and grateful. Alice can tell you; anyone who has been around our cows knows this.

Every now and then I walk out to the barn, and one single cow has come up. The cow sees me and starts moving and starts slowing. I know what the cow wants: another scoop of feed. I usually give it to them. We have calves that Alice and I raised on a bottle, and calves that she and I delivered. There is one right now that weighs about 2,000 pounds, and he is not full grown.

But he thinks I am his daddy. I am not. I delivered him, cleaned his nostrils, and blew my breath into them. Since he had to be pulled and his front legs were not strong, I had to hold him up while his mother cleaned him. She would lick him, then lick me; lick him, then lick me. For nearly three or four days, I had to hold him up so he could nurse until his legs became strong. Now, of course, he seems to think I am his daddy. I am simply saying that they seem so appreciative and thankful for anything you can do. And look at us.

We hardly ever praise God. We need to remember every blessing He has given us, every time He has delivered us, and every time He has done something special for us. We need continually to thank Him and praise Him. That would give us confidence in what God can do now and in the future. We need to learn a lesson from the birds: to cry consistently, constantly, and in desperation like these young ravens. They may be despicable; they may be ravenous. But God hears them. And if God hears them, He will hear His own.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You, Lord, for the illustration that You've given us from creation and from the animals and from the insects and from the birds. Help us to learn, O Lord. Help us to understand an argument from the lesser to the greater. And if You're

going to take care of those animals, and those insects, and those birds, and those fish, Lord, You're going to take care of Your own. May we rest in Thee, lean upon Thee, trust in Thee, believe in Thee, and praise and glorify Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

CHAPTER 33

How Long?

May 19, 2021

Introduction: The Question 'How Long?'

We are going to read the first four verses, and I believe that you will see the connection. Habakkuk chapter 1, beginning with verse 1:

"The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me, and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth."

The question, "how long," is very significant. Anyone that has ever traveled with children has heard that question thousands of times in differing frameworks: How long before we get there? How long before we eat? How long before we get to the next bathroom? How long, how long, how long?

It resounds over and over in the ears of parents, that is for sure. It seems sometimes that I think some ask themselves, “Well, how long is he going to preach?” I usually tell people it does not bother me when you look at your wristwatches. I do get a little nervous when you start pulling out calendars and thumbing through the months, you know, but no, there is an end to everything.

Interestingly, the question “how long” is repeated many times in the Bible. Sometimes it is asked by the people, sometimes by prophets, and many times by God himself. So, by way of introduction, let me give you a few biblical examples of how “how long” is given to us.

For instance, in Exodus chapter 10 and verse three: “And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me.” And then, of course, in Exodus 16 and verse 28: “And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?” When you get to Numbers 14 and verse 11: “And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?” So twice in that passage, God asks, “how long.” Then in Numbers chapter 14 and verse 27, God asks, “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.” And then in Psalm 4 and verse 2: “O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?”—or lying. So twice in that verse, God asks, “how long?” Then in Psalm 13 and verse one: “How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?”

When you think about the question “how long,” it could express, number one, an urgent need or an urgent desire. “How long will it be before dinner’s ready?” What does that mean? I’m ready to eat now. Really? Of course, it can also be used to express exasperation. “Alice, how long will you continue that?” In essence, I am saying, “I’m tired of that. Stop it.” When you hear the phrase or the question “how

long," it can reference an earnest desire, an earnest expectation in one sense of the word, or an earnest exasperation as well.

Habakkuk's Name and Character

The name Habakkuk is a very interesting name because it actually means "strong embrace." As you read through this short book, you find that he lives up to his name because, regardless of the circumstances, the situation, the chastening hand, and the judgment of God, he strongly embraces God and holds to Him. For instance, look in your Bibles to Habakkuk chapter 3, the last chapter in this short book, and look at how strongly he does embrace God regardless of the circumstances. He says in verse 17, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom," in other words, no figs, "neither shall fruit be in the vine," no grapes.

"The labour of the olive shall fail," no olives. "The field shall yield no meat," so there is no wheat or rye. "The flock shall be cut off from the fold," and they die as well. "And there shall be no herd in the stall." In other words, they are hungry and desperate. There is famine and drought; they are in dire straits. Yet Habakkuk says, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." Then he says, "To the chief singer on my stringed instruments." Interestingly enough, he lives up to his name in this book.

Habakkuk's Struggle with God's Justice

There is another interesting truth about Habakkuk. He does not really and truly prophesy in the sense that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, and the other prophets prophesied. He is called a prophet, a minor prophet, that is for sure. But when you read this book, you find that he is one of those men who wrestled with God much as Jacob did at the brook.

Habakkuk knows that judgment is coming. He knows that God is going to use the Chaldeans—Babylonians; they are one and the same—to bring judgment upon the nation. His problem is that he cannot figure out how God could use a far more wicked and vile people to chasten and judge another people who were less wicked.

For instance, in Habakkuk 1:13 he says, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity," that is, You cannot look upon it condoningly or approvingly. "Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?"

There is a faint resemblance between Habakkuk and Job in the fact that both seek to comprehend the proceedings of God in governing His world, especially His government of this world toward His saints when chastisement and judgment are involved. The question arising in both books is basically why the righteous are afflicted while the wicked and unrighteous prosper and have dominion. You will also find that question in Psalm 73, when Asaph is praying unto God; it is the same question that confounds him.

Habakkuk is not denying that his people are sinners, that they have violated the law of God, or that they deserve judgment. What confounds and confuses him is how God can use a nation more wicked and more vile than they are to chasten them.

Look at us in this country. We are indeed sinful and wicked. We have violated the law of God over and over. We have offended Him persistently, consistently, and constantly. We have rejected Him, forsaken Him, become idolaters, and become blasphemers. Yet, as bad and wicked as we are, if God sent the communist Chinese over here to destroy us and our country, you could say, “At least we’re not atheists like they are. At least we have a little morality left.”

This was the same position Habakkuk was in. He knew that they were sinners and wicked, but he could not understand how God could use another nation, more wicked than they, to correct them. However, he did understand that it was for correction. In Habakkuk 1:12 he says, “Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die.” That is, they would not be totally wiped out. “O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.” What he could not grasp was how the best would be chastened by the worst, devastated and dominated by the wicked. Usually, you and I hardly ever see the seriousness of sin in such matters.

The Greater Culpability of God's People

Sins are bad, wicked, vile, and sinful. But they are even more sinful, vile, and wicked in a saint. How can I say that? When you drove to church this afternoon, how many noticed the weeds along the road? Hardly anybody. You do not pay attention to weeds. You may have seen azaleas or dogwood trees blooming and remarked how beautiful they are, but you never really notice the weeds. You do not pay much attention to weeds until they are in your garden. Once they are there, you understand that they have to be ripped out, or they will literally take over the garden. It is the same with sin in the life of a saint. You have to understand this: in one sense of the word, it is worse for a saint to sin than for the wicked to sin. Why?

Because we have the truth, we know the truth. When we sin, we turn our backs upon the truth. Moreover, we have given our allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. When we turn from Him and do that which is contrary to Him, we are acting as treasonous and traitorous individuals against the Lord Jesus Christ. So sin is even more vile in a saint.

Consider Jeremiah's words in Lamentations chapter 4, verse 6. Jeremiah saw the destruction of Jerusalem; in fact, he wrote the book of Lamentations. There are five Lamentations in this book, and he wrote these five Lamentations concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. He was known as the weeping prophet. He said, "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her."

Isn't that an amazing statement? He says the punishment of Judah and Jerusalem was worse than the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah. You have to understand that, in this context, obviously Sodom and Gomorrah was overthrown in a moment of time. They were alive, and then they were dead. They were aware of what was happening one moment; the next moment they knew absolutely nothing. They were destroyed.

But it was not like that with the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. They were surrounded by armies, and many were starved to death. Women killed and ate their own children. Many were

slaughtered inside the city, slaughtered outside of the city, and, of course, many were taken captive into Babylon. Thus, he is saying that the destruction of the daughter of his people was greater than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Why? It was in Jerusalem that they had the temple; it was at Jerusalem that they had the law. They had the teaching priest and the Levites. They had a greater opportunity and a greater blessing than Sodom and Gomorrah.

Our Lord gives the same principle in Luke 12:47–48: “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.”

The man who knows deserves far greater punishment than the man who does not know, because the one who does not know sins in ignorance, while the one who does know sins out of meditation, premeditation, and sins deliberately, openly, and willingly. Then He makes this statement: “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” Therefore, the greater the opportunity and the greater the blessings, the greater the culpability and the greater the punishment.

This is what we are seeing in the book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk begins with a lamentation. In Habakkuk 1:1 he says, “The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.” He begins by calling this a burden. Before we are through, I think you will understand that the situation in Habakkuk’s day was practically the same as the

Habakkuk's Burden and Cry

This is the situation in our day and our time as well. He says, “The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.”

The Hebrew word for burden is massa, and it literally means a burden. It means a heavy load, that which weighs one down, something extremely heavy to be carried or to be borne. The word is translated as “burden” fifty-seven times in our Bible. Habakkuk says, “Here is a burden that has been laid upon me. It is very heavy. It is very weighted.” What in the world is that burden?

Look at verse two: “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!” Notice that he said, “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear?” Habakkuk had been crying to the Lord concerning the wickedness in Judah and Jerusalem. It seemed to Habakkuk that God was asleep, or at least that God was not listening, or that God was not interested. Therefore, he pleads with God and asks, “How long? I’ve been crying, I’ve been crying, I’ve been crying. How long will it be before you hear me?”

Notice that he was crying out of violence: “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence?” The Hebrew word for violence is chamas. It is translated in our Bibles oftentimes as violence, injustice, oppression, or cruelty. It refers to that which is unrighteous, wicked, and wrong. Habakkuk is saying, “I’m crying out to thee of violence. People are murdering. People are robbing. People are beating others. People are oppressing others. There is cruelty everywhere I turn. There are all kinds of wickedness that is wrong and ungodly.”

Think about the situation Habakkuk was in, and now glance around at your city, your town, your county, your state, and your nation. Do you see exactly what he saw? The truth of the matter is, you see it, I see it, and we see it. But the question is this: Have we been crying to God about it? Does it really concern you? Does it really burden you? Are you plagued by it? Are you weighted down by it? Are you grieved by it? How often have you been asking God to intervene? How often have you been crying to God, asking Him to deal with this situation, rectify the situation, and bring us justice?

Have you ever considered this? When God does intervene, it may disrupt our lives as well. What is more important: our comfort, or righteousness and justice? Would you choose between being inconvenienced and seeing the wicked judged and punished? Obviously, when judgment comes, many people will be inconvenienced and disrupted.

Hold Habakkuk, but turn back to Jeremiah chapter 12. Jeremiah is right before Lamentations. In Jeremiah 12:1, you will see that Jeremiah had an awful lot in common with Habakkuk. In fact, many

of these prophets did. Jeremiah says, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments."

Now look at the questions he asks God: "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" He is saying, God, I do not understand this. Why are the wicked prospering? They are violating Your law. They despise You and hate You. Why are treacherous individuals happy? I am not happy about this situation. I am not happy about the wickedness in our capital or among the people. God, I do not understand this.

This is exactly what he is saying. Like Jeremiah, Habakkuk was crying out and could not understand why God was not answering, doing something, punishing evil, and rescuing the righteous. It is almost like what Abraham said to God in Genesis 18, when the Lord said He would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot, Abram's nephew, was in Sodom. In verse 23, Abraham drew near and said, "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" He pleaded with the Lord and got Him down to ten. Finally, in verse 25, he said, "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee."

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" So here Abram is even praying and pleading with God to let the righteous live and go ahead and destroy the wicked. Habakkuk was crying. That is what he said: "I was crying out." But he said, "thou wilt not save." When Habakkuk was crying out, he was not murmuring, distrusting God, or displaying impatience with God. He was simply crying out with a consistent, passionate, importunate, and concerned prayer. He was praying, and he kept on praying.

I want you to hold the book of Habakkuk, but turn in your Bibles, if you would please, to Luke chapter 11. I want us to begin reading there with verse 5. Luke 11 and verse 5: "And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves?"

The Call to Importunate Prayer

Well, I have got news for you. You come to my house at midnight and knock on my door. First of all, I probably would not hear you, but I have some big ferocious fellas in there that would hear you and wake me up, that is for sure. Here is someone coming at midnight. Think of how inconsiderate it would be to come to your house at midnight and start banging on your door.

Now look, if you would please, in verse 6. Here is why he was doing that: "For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him." And he from within shall answer and say, "Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee."

So here I am in bed; it is midnight, and Steve is knocking on my door. He says, "Pastor, I need some bread, I need something to feed a friend who has come to me in his journey." I say, "Steve, it is midnight, go home." "No, you do not understand, Pastor. I do not have anything at the house, and I need something to feed this fellow." "Steve, it is midnight, go home." He says, "No, I have got to have this food." I say, "Steve, let me tell you something. If you do not leave right now, I am going to shut this door in your face and go back to bed."

Do you understand? I shut the door in his face. In time, I turn around. "Pastor, I have got to have this food." That is all there is. I have got it.

Finally, I said, “Steve, I’ll give it to you. Just take it and leave me alone and let me go back to bed.” Why did I say that? Look at verse seven again: “And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.” Our Lord said, “Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend”—friendship has its problems—“yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.”

“And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

Note first of all that he is talking about importunity. Steve is not going to give in, give up, or give out. Although I consider him a friend, he will not go home or leave me alone. He is shamelessly pounding on my door, and I cannot get any rest, so I will give him what he needs just to get rid of him. Still a friend.

Do you know what importunity means? It means to be shameless. If most of us went to someone's house at midnight, we would think, "They are probably already in bed. I do not want to wake them." But someone who is shameless will nearly tear the door down, blow the horn, and do anything and everything just to wake you. This is what he is talking about: shamelessly knocking on that door.

When our Lord said, "Ask, seek, and knock," those are present active imperatives. An imperative is a command, and what He is commanding you to do in prayer is to keep on asking, to keep on seeking, and to keep on knocking. Our Lord says that those who keep on seeking will find, those who keep on asking shall receive, and those who keep on knocking will have it opened unto them.

Habakkuk kept on. Even though it seemed as if God was totally ignoring him, he kept on praying, asking, and seeking God to intervene. He understood that it must be God who intervened, restrained and corrected, and removed the wicked and his wickedness. He simply could not understand why God was not answering his prayer. So, if you will go back to the book of Habakkuk, look in chapter 1 and verse 2 again. He says, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!"

He is crying and pleading, seemingly without getting anywhere. Then look at verse 3. He says, "Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me, and there are that raise up strife and contention." Instead of answering Habakkuk's crying and pleading in verse 2, God showed him worse sins, more wickedness, and more vileness. He asked, "Why dost thou show me iniquity? Why do you cause me to behold grievance?" Then he says, "spoiling and violence are before me, and there are those around me that just simply raise up strife and contention."

Do you not understand this? It should be the most troubling and grievous thing to a godly man to look around and see the depth and prevalence of sin and depravity, with no restraint, correction, or punishment. It should trouble us and weigh us down. Every godly man should be disturbed by such a sight. The implication is that everywhere Habakkuk turned, God opened his eyes and he saw more: more violence, more strife, and more contention. Wickedness and violence were rampant; they were everywhere. They were out of control and unchecked. Now, in verse 3 he says, “Why dost thou show me iniquity?” We understand that iniquity is sin. Then he says, “and cause me to behold grievance.”

Now the word grievance actually refers to that which is burdensome, wearisome toil. It can refer to spoiling, to open robbery. It can also refer to strife and contention. In other words, there were many who were in open violation of God's law. They were killing, raping, stealing, doing everything wicked and vile. However, some were not quite as bad as those; what they were was at each other's throats, seeking to take advantage of one another. They were plotting any way and every way they could to take advantage of their fellow man. Then he adds, “Spoiling and violence are before me, and there are that raise up strife and contention.”

I want you to listen as I give you a quote from Matthew Henry. This quote was written several hundred years ago, but it seems as if Matthew Henry were alive yesterday or today. Here is what he wrote: Judah and Jerusalem were broken into parties and factions continually biting and devouring one another. This is a lamentation to all the sons of peace. There are that raise up strife and contention, foment divisions, widen breaches, incense men one against another, and sow discord among the brethren.

Modern Parallels and Applications

Strives and contentions that have been laid asleep and begun to be forgotten awake and are industriously raised up again; they blow up the sparks hidden under the embers. If blessed are the peacemakers, cursed are the peacebreakers who make parties and so make mischief that spreads further and lasts longer than they can imagine.

It is sad to see bad men warming their hands at the flames which are devouring all that is good in a nation and stirring up the fire too.

If what I am about to say does not open your eyes, I do not think anything will. If what Matthew Henry wrote does not open your eyes, I do not think anything will. Look at our nation, our states, and our communities. People are at each other's throats, even over these stupid masks. Do you realize that several people have been murdered over the mask? Look at COVID-19—scandemic, or whatever you want to call it—and how it is being used to divide people and set one group against another. Look at the race problem and how the races are being set against each other. Look at the cultures and how the cultures are being set against each other.

It is absolutely insane when someone wears something that looks African and is accused of stealing from that culture. You wear something Hawaiian, and you are accused of stealing from their culture. What if you simply happen to like something Hawaiian? What if I accused our sister of stealing that cowboy hat from the West—stealing a Western culture? That is ridiculous. But what is happening is turning people against each other: religion against religion.

All I am trying to say is this: what we are seeing today is the same thing that happened in Judah and Jerusalem. While we are at everybody's throats and are being divided, those in power, control, and authority are laughing their heads off while we destroy ourselves and they rake in billions at the same time. That is what was happening in Habakkuk's day. That is what is happening in our day.

I want you to see the apex of his lamentation in verse 4. After he says, let us read verses 2 and 3, and then we come to verse 4. He says, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me, and there are that raise up strife and contention."

The Decay of Law and Justice

Now look at the next word, “therefore.” It is a conclusion based upon what he has just said: “therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.” What he is saying in verse 4, first of all, is that every institution was corrupt, even those responsible for justice.

He makes a very interesting statement in verse 4: “therefore the law is slacked.” What does Habakkuk mean when he says the law is slacked? The Hebrew word is “pug,” and it literally means to faint, to become feeble, to be slacked, to grow numb, and to become benumbed.

If you are a normal, healthy individual, your pulse, reflecting the beat of the heart, is consistent, constant, and strong. But if you are unhealthy, dying, and your body is shutting down, your pulse becomes weak, faint, slack, and inconsistent. It continues that way until it stops, until you are dead.

God’s law is the pulse of civilization. God’s law is the pulse of society. When God’s law is honored and applied, civilization and society are healthy. When God’s law is dishonored and neglected, civilization and society begin to die.

That is why our Lord said in Proverbs 8 and verse 36, “But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.” When Habakkuk says the law is slack, he is saying that Judah and Jerusalem were dying. Their civilization was almost dead.

Here is the next truth. Look in verse 4: “therefore the law is slacked.” Here is the consequence of a slackened, faint law: “And judgment,” or justice, “doth never go forth.” The Hebrew word for judgment is “mishpat,” and it refers to justice or judgment, the act of deciding a case, the issuance of a sentence, and the execution of the law.

When the law is slack, judgment or justice never goes forth. In other words, justice is perverted, distorted, wrested, and slack. In such an instance, the righteous are condemned and the ungodly are justified. Proverbs 17 and verse 15 says, “He that justifieth the

wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." They are a stench in His nostrils. You look around today and ask where justice is.

I usually tell people I am not a communist. I have no sympathy with communism. But there is one communist I occasionally quote, and he was right. His name was Gus Hall. Years ago, Gus Hall said the reason we refer to our judicial system as the halls of justice is because the only place you can get any justice is out in the halls. That is the sad truth. You really cannot get it in the courtrooms.

Psalm 82 is written to the magistrates and judges. In verse 1, the Bible says, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods." The word "gods" does not refer to idols, Baal and Ashtaroth, or false gods. It refers to judges and magistrates. Our Lord Himself, I believe in John chapter 10, said that He called them gods to whom the law came. The judges received God's law, and they were to execute God's law; thus, they were called gods in that sense of the word. The context explains the use of the word "gods" here.

"How long will ye judge unjustly?" He is talking about judges, about men: "How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked?" The judges responsible for justice are perverting justice and producing injustice.

Here is what they should be doing: "Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked." That is what justice is about. But where are the judges? "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course." In other words, they reject God's law and hate God's law. They turn everything upside down because they refuse to give forth justice.

How did we get into the state of affairs that we are in? Go back to Habakkuk, chapter 1, verse 4, because he answers that: "therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth," that is, there is not going to be justice. Why? "For the wicked doth compass about the righteous." In other words, the wicked are in charge. They have the authority, the power, and the dominion. Consequently, because

the righteous are compassed or surrounded by the wicked, "therefore wrong judgment proceedeth." It is the wicked that can pass the righteous. It is the wicked in this situation who are calling the shots. They do not care about God and are not interested in listening to God or His law or understanding anything about God.

Psalm 50, verse 16, notes the question God asked: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes? Or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him," that is, you took some bribery, "and hast been partaker with adulterers." You either engaged in it yourself or took a bribe there as well. "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son."

Look what God says to them: "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Habakkuk says the law is slack, and judgment does never go forth, because "the wicked doth compass about the righteous"; consequently, when they are in charge, "therefore wrong judgment proceedeth." Proverbs 29:2 says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn."

One of the main reasons for mourning is a lack of justice. The clear implication is that justice is lacking because the wicked bear rule, and therefore wrong judgment proceeds. The rulers themselves are fueling the fire of rebellion and wickedness. They were responsible to see that God's law was applied and executed, but they are the most lawless. The most lawless individuals in this country are those in Congress, those in the judicial system, and those in the White House.

Here is a quote from the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of Olmstead versus the United States: "In a government of laws, the existence of the government will be imperiled if it fails to observe the laws scrupulously. Our government is the potent, the

omnipresent teacher. For good or for ill, it teaches the whole people by its example. Crime is contagious. If the government becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for law. It invites every man to become a law unto himself, and it invites anarchy."

The government, if it does not keep the law scrupulously, teaches everyone else to become criminals and lawbreakers.

So here we are today, right where Habakkuk was, because the wicked are in positions of authority and totally neglect or usurp the law of God and the law of the land. How often have you heard of a politician refusing to vote yea on a bill because the bill violated the law of God or was contrary to the Constitution of the United States?

Congressman Jerry Nadler gave this statement: "I think God belongs in religious institutions, in temple, in church, in cathedral, in mosques, but not in Congress." We now have a Congress that gives lip service to the Constitution, which is supposed to be the supreme law of the land, but the sovereign God of heaven and earth and His law has been literally kicked out of Congress.

All I'm simply saying is we're in the same predicament that Habakkuk was in. So here are some questions: How long can this go on? How long before we wake up? How long before God stirs his people? How long before he intervenes? How long before God judges and punishes us because of our sins, our rebellion, our idolatry, and our blasphemy? How long?

I'm not making these questions up. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Psalms, holding Habakkuk, and begin with Psalm 74. In verse 10, look at this question. It's a good question to ask and to pray: "O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?" How long, God, are you going to put up with this? How long will we be in distress?

Look in Psalm 79 and verse 5: "How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever? Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?" Note the next verse: "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name."

How long, O Lord, wilt thou be angry forever? Look in Psalm 80 and verse 4: "O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?" How long? How long?

Look in Psalm 94, beginning in verse 3: "Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?" What do they do? "They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage."

"They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." How long, O Lord? He asked it twice. How long, O Lord, shall the wicked triumph? How long is an excellent question. How long? How long? How long?

Let me give you some applications. The first one is this: we are unlike Habakkuk in one self-defeating way. When we look around and see the trouble that we're in, we complain, we bellyache, we endure, we criticize, and we whine, but we do not cry out to God for intervention.

Our Lord teaches importunity in prayer: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary."

"And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." That's importunity. She shamelessly kept coming: "I want justice, I want justice, I want justice."

Finally he gave in and gave her what she wanted just to get her off his back. But our Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."

"Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The faith referred to is the faith that keeps crying to God for vengeance, for justice, for righteousness, with importunity. That's how Habakkuk was praying, and that's how our Lord teaches us that we must pray. The mess we're in will require divine

intervention. We're not going to resolve it on our own. God must do something. As Isaiah 58:1 says, "Cry aloud, spare not."

"Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." How long? The question "how long" is also a cry of faith. You find this expression not only in the Psalms, but in the Prophets as well. It can represent an urgent desire or need, exasperation, or absolute certainty. Let me show you.

The Certainty of God's Vengeance

Turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 6, beginning with verse 9. "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, Dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

Hear what they are crying: "How long, Lord, before you give us vengeance? How long before you give us justice? We know you're going to do it, but how long will it be?" Verse 11 says, "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season," until "their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

That is, be patient. God said, I'm going to take care of it. It is certain that God will do so. We must learn to cry. Be assured of this truth: if we cry consistently, shamelessly, with importunity, we are assured that God will hear.

Conclusion: A Call to Cry Out

He said in Jeremiah 33:3, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." So how long will we sleep? How long will we put up with what is going on? How long will it be before we truly, consistently, and shamelessly cry unto God to do something? How long will it be before we learn to put God's honor, God's glory, and God's justice ahead of our comforts

and conveniences? How long? We must learn to cry as did Habakkuk.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Teach us, Lord, to cry and to pray with importunity. Help us to love Thee, to live for Thee, and to be concerned with Thy honor and Thy glory. We ask, Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, for His glory as well, and in His name. Amen.

CHAPTER 34

Starting Out Right, Ending Up Wrong

December 15, 2021

Introduction: The Christian Life as a Race

The title of the message is “Starting Out Right, Ending Up Wrong.” In 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 5, the Word of God says this: “And if a man also strive for masteries, yet he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully.” Let that verse sink in. When you read through the Bible, there are many examples and many pictures of the Christian life. In fact, in 2 Timothy 2, there are several pictures of a Christian. First of all, he is pictured as a soldier in verse 3. He is also pictured as a racer or a runner in verse 5, and as a farmer in verse 6. Each one of these pictures conveys a different aspect of the Christian life. For instance, the soldier pictures the hardness, the strength, the endurance, and the obedience that are necessary in the Christian life.

The runner pictures the need and necessity of running according to the rules. The farmer pictures and speaks of the patience that is necessary in the Christian life. Two other passages demonstrate the fact that, in the Bible, we do have the Christian life pictured as a

race. The first one is 1 Corinthians 9, and the second one is Hebrews 12 and verse 1.

Biblical Principles for Running the Race

In 1 Corinthians 9 and verse 25, the Apostle Paul makes this statement: “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.” “They do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.” Going back to verse 24, he says, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?” Then he makes this statement: “So run, that ye may obtain.” Every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. He talks about running the race and only one receiving the prize, and then says, “So run, that ye may obtain.”

Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 1 says, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” First Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 24 therefore speaks of the necessity of preparation and conditioning if you are going to be running in a race.

I remember years ago I ran some track when I was in high school, and my strong point was the two miles. I never smoked, I never drank, and I was long-winded—you can tell by my preaching. So I had plenty of wind. I remember going to a race hungry, having eaten nothing. I stopped by the Dairy Queen and ate two or three hamburgers and a milkshake. I don't think I quite made that race, because I should not have eaten all of that. But I am simply saying, 1 Corinthians 9:24 says that if you are going to run in a race, you had better be temperate in all things. You had better make sure that you can obtain that prize.

When you get to Hebrews 12:1, He tells us that we have to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, so that we will run and possibly win. If we are going to be crowned, adorned with victory, or honored, He is saying that we must strive lawfully, in 2 Timothy 2:5. I want you to go back and look at that again. He said, “...if a man also strive for masteries, yet he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully.”

The word “lawfully” is nominos in the Greek, and it literally means lawfully, or that which is agreeable to the law, that which is proper, or that which is in conformity to the rules. If I enter a race and am the first one to cross the finish line, that does not necessarily mean that I have won, because I could have cheated. I could have cut across the racecourse or violated the rules. Just because I was the first one there does not mean that I won. I could be disqualified if I did not run according to the rules.

Here is an interesting thing. I have seen races where the runners were all lined up, and when the starting gun was fired, one of the racers stumbled and fell. He ended up winning the race. He stumbled at the beginning, but he took off and made up for it. I have seen other races where people trip, stumble, and fall during the race. Of course, they get up, dust themselves off, catch up, and end up winning.

It really does not matter how you start; it is how you finish that counts. It is wonderful when you can start out right, continue right, and finish right. To be honest, I have only known one individual who has done that perfectly, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. But the truth of the matter is, if we do not stumble at the beginning or in the middle, it is wonderful, that is for sure, but we are certainly never perfect, not by any stretch of the imagination.

Matthew 13 gives us another illustration of starting out right but ending up wrong. Our Lord Jesus Christ gives the parable of the sower and speaks of how the seed falls on the ground, with different responses to its reception. He says in Matthew 13, verse 5, “Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.” “And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.”

When you think about stony ground, do not think about a field simply covered with stones. Plants can grow up in and around those stones. I was preaching in Pennsylvania years ago at a beautiful camp, and I took a walk down by the river. I was absolutely astounded to see a rock half as big as this room—a huge rock, probably twelve to fifteen feet high, with a diameter about half the size of this room. Sitting right on top of it was a pine tree about this

big around, with its roots going around the rock, down into the ground, and into the creek.

When Christ speaks of stony ground, He is referring to a solid sheet of rock with only a couple of inches of topsoil. Once the seed goes there, it cannot take root and go downward. All its energy is then given to the plant to shoot upward. Every gardener has had plants like this. You walk out after planting the seed, and suddenly you see a nice, green, healthy plant that has shot up, and you think, “Wow, I wish the rest of my garden would do like that.”

But you come back the next day and it is dead because it could not make a root or take root and go downward. There are a lot of people just like that. It is not how you start out; it is how you finish. You may start out in glory and end up in shame. You may start out with a burst of speed, but end up being drunk over the finish line. You may start out shining, but your luster turns to darkness.

Here are the two principles I want to emphasize before we get started today. These principles should be kept in mind. The first deals with Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 1, where he said that we must run the race with patience.

The word "patience" happens to be the Greek word hypomone, and it literally means a patient continuance. It means constancy, steadfastness, and endurance. For instance, if I am running two miles against five other racers, I might start with a burst of speed temporarily, just so I could take the lead. But after that, I must pace myself because I obviously could not run two miles while maintaining that initial burst of speed. The Word of God is talking about constancy.

The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9 and verse 24, said that only one man gets the prize. Then he said, "so run that ye may obtain."

Another verse ties in with this beautifully: Philippians chapter 3 and verse 14. There the Apostle Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." If you are going to run with constancy, consistency, and endurance, then you have to keep your eye on the finish line and on the prize. You have to keep your eye upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Running patiently with

endurance and keeping your eyes on the end, on the finish, he says, will enable you to run successfully.

Old Testament Examples: Kings Who Started Right but Ended Wrong

The reason this message is being preached is that I was reading through the book of 2 Chronicles. You say, "But you have not said anything about 2 Chronicles." I know—not yet, but I am. I was absolutely astounded and amazed at men who started out right but ended up wrong. Then I got to thinking: it is not just Old Testament saints, but New Testament as well.

Before we get there, turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 4, verses 6-8. Here is how we should desire to finish our race. Beginning with verse 6, the Apostle Paul says, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” You remember, he was in a Roman prison. They were going to cut off his head, and they did. He said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but also unto them that love his appearing.” So he said, “I've fought a good fight, I've finished my course, I've kept the faith.”

No wonder he said, “I'm ready to be offered.” In other words, he realized that he was finishing well, and he said there was going to be a crown given to him. I don't know about you, but I would like to have a crown as well—not that I can wear it around and show everyone, “Look, I've won a race.” No, I would like to have a crown so I can do like those elders in the book of Revelation, take it off, throw it at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, and say, “Thou alone art worthy, O Lord.” That is exactly why I would want a crown: just to throw it back at His feet, because everything that we are, we are by His grace.

Now, I want to show you some men in the Old Testament who had a wonderful start, but a wicked finish. You will recognize these names because they were what you and I basically would refer to as good kings. Turn to 2 Chronicles 14. The first one is King Asa. Asa, of course, is known as a good king and as a godly king. Think with me

of how absolutely, astoundingly wonderful this is. You would think, just reading what I am going to share with you right now, that it could not get any better. I want to let the Word of God preach to you today. I want you to see this with your own eyes. So, in 2 Chronicles chapter 14, beginning with verse 1: “So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David.

And Asa his son reigned in his stead, and in his days the land was quiet ten years. Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord God. For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves.

Anytime you see the word “groves” in the Old Testament, with one exception—and that is when Abraham, in the book of Genesis, planted a grove—he planted a grove of trees. When you and I hear the word “grove,” we think of a grove of pecan trees, or a grove of some other trees. But Abraham planted a grove of trees. All the other times in the Old Testament, when you hear the word “groves,” it is the plural for Asherah, or Asherim, which was a female sex goddess. That’s what it was. So here Asa cut down, the Bible says, the images, probably of Baal, and cut down also the groves, that is, the Asherah. Thus, this reference is not to trees, but to the Asherah.

"And he commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. And he took away out of the cities of Judah the high places and the images, and the kingdom was quiet before him. And he built fenced cities in Judah, for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years, because the Lord had given him rest. Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about them walls and towers and gates and bars, while the land is yet before us. Because we've sought the Lord our God, we've sought Him, and He's given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered. Asa had an army of 300,000 men from Judah who bore targets and spears, and 280,000 from Benjamin who bore shields and drew bows—580,000 soldiers in all, mighty men of valor.

"And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian, with a host of a thousand thousand," a million men. Thus they were outnumbered two to one. Besides, he had 300 chariots and came

into Mareshah. "Then Asa went out against him and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah."

"And Asa cried unto the Lord his God and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude, O Lord. Thou art our God. Let no man prevail against Thee." So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. Asa and the people with him pursued them unto Gerar. The Ethiopians were overthrown and could not recover themselves, for they were destroyed before the Lord and before His host. They carried away very much spoil and smote all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of the Lord came upon them; and they spoiled all the cities, for there was exceeding much spoil in them.

"They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem." Here was a man facing tremendous odds, and he prayed this absolutely astoundingly wonderful prayer. God was entreated, God heard, and God gave the victory. How could Asa ever possibly forget anything like this? You might think it could not get any better than this, but yes, it can.

Look in 2 Chronicles chapter 15, beginning with verse 8, and see what Asa continued to do. "And when Asa heard these words," the prophet Oded had been prophesying to him and encouraging him, "and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and he renewed the altar of the Lord, that was before the porch of the Lord. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon."

For they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him. So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. "And they offered unto the Lord at the same time of the spoil which they had brought seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart, and with all their soul, that

whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. And they sware unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets."

"And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about."

Now let me show you how dedicated Asa was at this point. Look at verse 16: "And also concerning Maachah, the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen." Why? "Because she had made an idol in her grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron." He took his own mother off the throne because she was an idolater. The point I am making right now is this.

Here is a man that had an absolutely wonderful start. You would think, reading chapters 14 and 15, that nothing could ever go wrong at this point. You could never forget such a wonderful victory over the Ethiopians. You could never forget the prayer, the trust and faith, the dedication, the great sacrifice, and the covenant.

But look in chapter 16, beginning with verse 1, and things begin to deteriorate: “And in the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and built Ramah to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the Lord, and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-Hadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There is a league between me and thee. As there was between my father and thy father, behold, I have sent thee silver and gold, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he might depart from me. And Ben-Hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel. And they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-Maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali.”

Now lay aside for a moment the fact that Asa is not trusting in the Lord and is looking to Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria. What right did King Asa have to go into the temple, steal the treasures of the Lord, and give them to Ben-Hadad, an infidel and an idolater? The answer

is none. He was a thief. He did take some of his own, that is for sure, but he took it out of the temple, out of the house of the Lord.

God now sends a prophet to rebuke Asa. Asa not only refuses the rebuke; he persecutes the prophet. Then he turns around and oppresses some of the people at the same time. Hanani the seer confronts Asa: "And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand."

"Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly. Therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars."

You would think someone with Asa's background would be willing to suffer a rebuke, willing to say, "Yes, I was wrong." Did he? No. "Then Asa was wroth with the seer and put him in a prison house. For he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time." Thus he turned to tyranny.

Nor was that all. "And behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. And Asa, in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great. Yet in his disease he sought not the Lord, but to the physicians." Isn't that astounding? He would not even seek the Lord for his own benefit, health, or blessing.

Here was a man who started out strong and well, but ended up wickedly. How could such a thing happen? Remember this: it does not really matter how you start; it is how you finish that counts. Asa would not suffer rebuke or the Word of God. He would not listen to the preacher proclaiming God's Word to him. He had all the advantages, and he ended up wrong.

Let me give you another absolutely astounding example. In 2 Chronicles 22, there was a man named Joash. To me, this is unbelievable. Joash had so much going for him. As a child, he was

rescued from murder. He was the son of Ahaziah. When Ahaziah died, Joash's grandmother, Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, did a very ungrandmotherly thing.

She murdered all of her grandchildren so that she could be queen. The only reason Joash escaped was because of his aunt, who rescued him and hid him. Second Chronicles 22:11 says, "But Jehoshabeath the daughter of the king took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath the daughter of King Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, for she was sister to Ahaziah, hid him from Athaliah so that she slew him not." The only reason Joash was not murdered was because of his aunt. His aunt happened to be the wife of Jehoiada, the high priest.

He was hidden in the temple for six years. Verse 12 says, "And he was with them hid in the house of God six years, and Athaliah reigned over all the land." For six years, he was protected by Jehoiada, taught by Jehoiada, raised by Jehoiada, and provided for by Jehoiada. Everything that he had was because of the high priest and his aunt.

Jehoiada gathered all the army and the princes together, and he made Joash king. In the seventh year, "Jehoiada strengthened himself and took the captains of hundreds ... into covenant with him. And they went about in Judah and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God."

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 23:4-11 (KJV)

> And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David. This is the thing that you shall do. A third part of you entering in on the Sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, shall be porters at the doors. And a third part shall be at the king's house, and a third part at the gate of the foundation, and all the people shall be in the courts of the house of the Lord. But let none come into the house of the Lord, save the priests. And they that minister of the Levites, they shall go in, for they are holy. But all the people shall keep the watch of the Lord. And the Levites shall compass the king

> round about every man with his weapons in his hand. And whosoever else cometh into the house, he shall be put to death. But be ye with the king when he cometh in and when he goeth out. So the Levites and all Judah did according to all the things that Jehoiada the priest had commanded, and took every man his men that were to come in on the Sabbath, and with them that were to go out on the Sabbath. For Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses. Moreover, Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds spears and bucklers and shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of God. And he set all the people, every man having his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the temple to the left side of the temple, along by the altar of the temple and by the king round about. And they brought out the king's son, and they put upon him the crown and gave him the testimony, which is the law of God, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him and said, God save the king. Jehoiada had raised Joash, taught Joash, and made him king. Later, he took wives for Joash as well. Everything that Joash had was in reference to what Jehoiada had basically done for him. Joash did indeed do some wonderful things.

It was Joash who ordered that the temple be cleaned and repaired. He ordered that money should be raised for the temple according to the law of Moses. He made sure that all the instruments needed in the temple were there, and that those lacking were resupplied. Joash did indeed do some absolutely wonderful things, but, like so many people, Joash did that which was right while Jehoiada was alive.

But when Jehoiada died, everything went south. Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died. A hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house.

Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them. They were wicked princes. And they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves, the Asherim, and idols. And wrath

came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them to bring them again to the Lord, and they testified against them, but they would not give ear.

And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, the priest, which stood above the people and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The Lord look upon it, and require it.

Zechariah was one of the sons that helped anoint Joash king. Had it not been for Jehoiada, Joash would not have even lived. He repaid the kindness of Jehoiada by murdering his son and turning into an idolater. Here is a pattern: These men start out very well, but they end up very wickedly and very wrongly. I want to mention one more from the Old Testament, then we are going to go to the New Testament, and that is Uzziah. Uzziah was basically what you and I would call a good king and even a great king.

Uzziah did many wonderful things in Jerusalem and Judah. He built cities, towers, and fortified walls. He installed engines of war, invented by cunning men, to defend all these places and all his people. He reigned for fifty-two years; he had to be doing something right.

But the problem with Uzziah was the same problem that happens with most of us: pride, arrogance, and haughtiness. Second Chronicles 26:15–16 says, “And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name was spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.”

The king had no business doing that. “And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were

valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God."

"Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD from beside the incense altar." The priests saw that he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out. He also hastened to go out, because the LORD had smitten him. Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death and dwelt in a separate house, cut off from the house of the LORD. Jotham his son governed the king's house and judged the people.

"So Uzziah slept with his fathers," and Jotham reigned in his stead. When we consider all the mighty and good things Uzziah did, it is sobering that he ended so wickedly and wrongly because of the pride and arrogance of his heart. He assumed that, since he was king, he could do whatever he wanted. No.

New Testament Examples: Demas and John Mark

Now, there are many more Old Testament men that I could name, but I'm going to give you some New Testaments as well very quickly. The first one I want you to consider is a man by the name of Demas. I want you to turn in your Bibles if you would to 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 10. Demas happens to be mentioned three times in the Bible. I'm going to give you the two other verses where he is mentioned and make a comment upon them. But in Colossians 4 and verse 14 the Word of God says, "Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you." So Demas evidently traveled with Luke the physician, who happens to be the author of the book of Luke. When you get to Philemon chapter 1 and verse 24, Paul writes this, "Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow laborers." So Demas is called one of Paul's fellow laborers. But when you get to 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 10, this is what you read. Look at it. I want you to hold this passage.

We're going to come back. But in verse 10 of 2 Timothy 4, he says, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia." So evidently Crescens and Titus remained in the ministry, they just went on to different mission fields. But Demas forsook Paul, he said, having loved this present world. In other words, he wanted the pleasure, he wanted the happiness, he wanted to satisfy his flesh, and so he forsook Paul.

One of the greatest problems, I think, one of the greatest heartaches, one of the greatest trials for the Apostle Paul, is the same heartache and trial for modern day preachers. And that is to be forsaken by people that you have loved, worked with, and trusted. I have had numerous pastors literally cry on my shoulder over people that had been in their church for years. They had been faithful, they loved them, they worked with them, and all of a sudden over some trifle, some insignificant little thing, they get in a huff and just leave, and just never, ever come back.

I want you to look in 2 Timothy 4, verses 15 and 16, and we'll read through verse 17. In verse 15, he says, "...of whom be thou ware also." He's talking about Alexander the coppersmith who did him much evil in the previous verse. He said, "Of whom be thou ware also, for he hath greatly withstood our words." So there's a lot of tribulation, a lot of persecution.

"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, that all the Gentiles might hear, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." What did he say? All men forsook me. Under intense persecution, everybody left me. I was just there, there alone.

Demas started out well because he worked with Luke and the Apostle Paul, but he finished wickedly. Starting out well is wonderful, but if you do not finish, it does you no good to start out well.

Let me give you another example. There was a man by the name of John Mark in the New Testament. John Mark was a disciple who

stumbled, fell, got up, dusted himself off, and then became a disciple worthy of the Apostle Paul to work with.

Acts 12:25 says, "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark." John Mark, the author of the book of Mark, worked with Barnabas and Saul.

But something happened. At some point, Mark left the work. He left the Apostle Paul. Why did he leave? The Bible does not say. It could have been because of youth, immaturity, homesickness, or some secret sin. I do not know. The Bible does not say. But he left the Apostle Paul and Barnabas and would not help them.

Paul and Barnabas actually split over this. Acts 15:35 says, "Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord with many others also. And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we've preached the Word of the Lord and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought it not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work."

“And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder, one from the other, no more Paul and Barnabas. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed into Cyprus. And Paul chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.” John Mark caused the split between Paul and Barnabas. He caused Paul not to trust him. John Mark had to prove himself, and the truth of the matter is, he did stumble. He did fall. What happened? I don't know. He just left the work and left them needing help and needing labor. But he did repent and recover.

Paul writes, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed into Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” Isn't that amazing? He's profitable.

The word “profitable” literally means to be useful, to be meet for use, to be suitable, to be easily worked with. So, whatever was the

cause of Mark's stumbling and falling, he got up and finished his course. Paul said, “Bring him to me. He is now profitable.”

There is another phrase used in James chapter 3 and verse 17 when God is talking about the wisdom that is from above. One aspect of that wisdom is that it is easily entreated. The words “easily entreated” mean very easy to work with—just willing to do whatever needs to be done. So he says, “Bring John Mark with you, because he's now profitable to me for the ministry.”

Application: Finishing Well Through Repentance and Endurance

It doesn't matter how you start. It's how you finish that counts. Just because you've stumbled, fallen, sinned, or rebelled against the Lord does not mean that you cannot ever be useful. Our Lord not only saves sinners; He uses sinners for His own honor and glory. There is no man that has not sinned. There are no perfect saints, and there are no perfect preachers.

The issue is not whether or not you have sinned, rebelled, stumbled, or fallen. The issue is, have you repented? Have you made it right? Have you made restitution where it's possible to make restitution?

Have you done what needs to be done? Have you presented your body a living sacrifice unto the Lord Jesus Christ? The Apostle Paul said it like this: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels.” And he was right. We are frail, weak, and sinful, but God can use a crooked stick to draw a straight line. So we need to repent and present ourselves before the Lord. I love that passage in Proverbs chapter 24 and verse 16, for the Bible says, “For a just man falleth seven times and riseth again.” A just man will get up, dust himself off, make things right, and keep going.

The older I get, the more I think about departing from this life. I know I am not going to live forever, and the more I think about departing from this life, the more I think about facing the Lord Jesus Christ.

The truth of the matter is this: I want to finish well. I may have stumbled, fallen, or done wrong horribly, but I want to end well. I

want to make sure that I have gotten up, dusted myself off, repented, and finished the way I should. I want to correct everything that I can correct, and I want to make sure that there are no unconfessed sins in my life and no sins of which I have not repented. I want to make sure that when I face Him, I do so with a clean and a pure heart by His grace and His mercy. I want to hear Him say, by His grace, "Welcome home, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

Finishing well is more important than starting well. You may be young, middle-aged, or older, but none of us know the hour of our departure. It could be twenty years from now, next week, or today. That is why the Bible says that we are not to say, "Tomorrow we're going to such and such city and buy and sell and get gain," for we know not what our life will be tomorrow. What we should say is, "Lord willing, we'll go into such a city and buy and sell and get gain." No man is promised another day. Today is the day that the Lord has given us.

We must learn to run the race patiently, obediently, and repentantly at the same time. We must keep our eyes upon the prize, and that is honoring the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to lay aside those weights—anything that would slow us down or weigh us down—and those sins which so easily beset us, so that we may run and finish successfully.

The issue is not whether or not you have sinned, whether or not you started well, or whether or not you messed up during the middle of your life. The issue is whether you are going to finish well. You can finish well by living for Him and giving Him the praise, honor, and glory.

Start out right, continue right, but make sure that you end right. Do not end up wrong. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, help us not just to start well, but to end well. How we finish is far more important than how we start. We have each stumbled and fallen many times. It is only by your grace that we are still alive, still listening, and still have an obedient heart. Help us to run this race lawfully, according to the precepts of your word and the rules that thou hast laid down. Give us grace and mercy, that we may finish as the Apostle Paul and say, “I fought a good fight. I finished my course.

I'm ready to be offered, my departure is at hand." Because of this, there is a crown laid up for us, so that we may throw those crowns back at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ and say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honor and glory." Help us, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 35

God's Definition, Love, and Demand For Justice

August 10, 2023

When I received the topics and the assignments, I said to myself, "Tim Yarbrough did this." I knew it. Pastor Mooney did not quite go as far as Charles had in Spurgeon. Spurgeon has a book commenting on commentaries, and one of his comments was concerning one book: "This book is an absolute must for handmaidens who wish to start a good fire each morning." That is exactly what Spurgeon said about one commentary.

Introduction: Justice and Righteousness Are the Same

We are dealing with biblical justice. The theme of this conference has already been spoken and read: "He has showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Psalm 11:7 says, "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright." Now, you might ask, what in

the world does Psalm 11:7 have to do with justice? Because in this verse, the psalmist is talking about righteousness. And I understand that. But you need to understand that justice and righteousness are the same. In fact, justice and righteousness are from the exact same Hebrew word, and it is translated in our Bibles as both righteousness and justice. Whatever is just is right, and whatever is right is just.

Justice and righteousness are one and the same. If there is no justice, there is no righteousness. If there is no righteousness, there is no justice.

The Hebrew Word for Equity (Mishpat)

There is another Hebrew word that is used over and over in our Bibles—in fact, 200 times—and that is the word mishpat, which is translated in our Bibles as equity. Equity is that which is not only just, but that which is right and equal as well. It is that which fits everyone.

Psalm 98:9 says, “Before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.” So, with righteousness shall he judge the world and the people with equity. Psalm 99:4 says, “The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.” And then, of course, Isaiah 11:4 says, “But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.” He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

I want you to see that God does indeed desire justice. God has a unique love for justice. God also demands justice, which we shall see later. But the Bible tells you in Psalm 89:14, “justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.” Notice that he said, “justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”

God Loves Justice and Prefers It Over Sacrifice

God loves justice so much because God himself is just. One of the verses that you should automatically seek to remember is Deuteronomy 32:4, where the Bible says, “he is the Rock, his work is

perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." So God is a God of truth, and he is just and right.

Justice Defined

Scripture teaches us that God prefers justice over sacrifice. Proverbs 21:3 says, "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." The word acceptable is the Hebrew word for "choose," and it literally means that God chooses justice over sacrifice and that justice is more excellent than sacrifice. Sacrifice, apart from and without justice, is unacceptable; sacrifice apart from obedience is unacceptable. Without the knowledge of God, the knowledge of His Word, and obedience to His law, it is impossible to please Him. You are not coming in faith, for you are not believing Him, and without faith it is impossible to please Him as well. The reason that you and I are accepted before God is the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ gave to the law a perfect obedience, and then gave Himself as the perfect, sinless sacrifice before God. Thus His obedience and His righteousness are imputed to us as well.

You remember 1 Samuel 15:22, where Samuel said to Saul, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The fat of rams was the chiefest part of the sacrifice, and it was always given to God. To hearken—to listen to God, hear God, heed God, and obey God—is better than the chiefest part of the sacrifice. Our Lord said it in Hosea 6:6: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." God would rather have our obedience. God would rather have our justice, acting in righteousness toward Him, than any sacrifice that we could ever give Him.

Justice Defined: The Importance of Biblical Definitions

Justice must first be defined. Without a proper definition of justice, and without a proper definition of terms, it is impossible to

communicate. Oftentimes, we communicate the wrong thoughts using the exact same words. Years ago, there was a nursery up the road from us, owned by the McDonald family, and everyone referred to it as McDonald's.

My mother called me and asked if we could meet her for dinner. I said, "Sure. I tell you what, so that we won't get messed up, let's just meet at McDonald's." Well, I went to McDonald's nursery and waited and waited. Finally, it dawned on me: my mother was at that McDonald's restaurant uptown waiting on us. Without a proper definition of terms, you really and truly cannot communicate.

Liberals especially love to play games with words. If you were to ask a liberal, a modernist, or a religious professor, "Does he really believe that Jesus is the Son of God?" he would probably answer yes. You might think, "I know this man is a modernist; I know he is a liberal." You see what he is doing? He is playing with words because his definition is not the same as your definition. When he says that he believes Jesus Christ is the Son of God, he means that Jesus Christ is a son of God the way you and I are sons of God. He does not believe that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, nor that He is the only begotten of the Father.

That word is monogenēs in the Greek. It means He is the only one of a kind; He is unique. There is no one like Him because He is indeed the God-man. He is the Theanthropos. When the Bible says plainly in 1 Timothy, chapter 3, verse 16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," it declares, without controversy, that great is the mystery of godliness.

Now I want to show you how important it is for you to define justice and understand its definition. I am an old man, and you might say I am even kind of decrepit, but I can do something you probably will not believe. I can jump flat-footed, with both feet on the ground, straight up in the air twenty feet. You say, "You can't do that." Sure I can. I'll tell you something else I can do.

I can lift a thousand pounds with one hand. You say, "You cannot do that." I can do that. In fact, I can even lift a thousand pounds with

this bad hand, with that arthritic finger. You say, "You're lying to me." No, I'm not lying, and I'm not exaggerating. I can jump twenty feet straight in the air, flat-footed, and I can lift a thousand pounds with one finger if you allow me to define a foot and a pound.

I'm not going to say a foot is twelve inches with my definition, nor am I going to say a pound is sixteen ounces. As high as I can jump, that might be two inches or six inches, but I'm going to define that as twenty feet. I might be able to pick up a pound with this finger, but I can define it as a thousand pounds. You see what I'm saying?

As long as I can define my terms and make terms mean what I want them to mean, I can do whatever I want to do. I can be as holy as I want to be as long as I can define holiness. I can be as righteous as I want to be as long as I can define righteousness. I can be as just as I want to be as long as I can define justice. Definitions matter. If your definition is not God's definition, then you are simply playing games, just as I played a game with you.

Biblical justice is based on the eternal, fixed standard of goodness and righteousness found in the character of God and revealed in His Word. God is the only perfect, eternal, immovable standard of justice. God creates and defines reality and gives meaning to everything. Reality is not what you think, wish, or determine; reality is what God declares. Equally true is the fact that God and His law are the standards for justice.

Apart from God and apart from His Word, there is no justice, because God is absolute truth and His Word is absolute truth. Any time you try to come up with a definition in your mind of what you think justice or righteousness is, you are just playing games.

The Bible says it like this in Psalm 94, verse 11: "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." That is, they are useless and worthless. David said in Psalm 119, verse 113, "I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love." Have you ever had a vain thought? I can assure you, you have. I have had vain thoughts today—worthless, useless, frivolous—and you have to confess them and say, "Lord, I don't want that. I refuse that. I repudiate that. I hate vain thoughts."

In the book of Jeremiah, chapter 4, verse 14, God said, “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?” Any time we begin to define reality in our terms, it is nothing more than vain thoughts, because God is the only source of righteousness and justice. Therefore, any pretended justice and righteousness on our part is vanity, because it is not in conformity to God or to His word. It is false and vain.

Our fundamental problem is rebellion: rebellion against God, against God’s law, and toward His righteousness and judgment. We do not usually think in terms of God’s justice, but we must distinguish between biblical justice and humanistic justice. All you have to do is look around today. Look at the Department of Justice. There is no justice, but it is called the Department of Justice. It is kind of like all the rehabilitation centers that you see. How many people are they really rehabilitating?

Humanistic Justice vs. Biblical Justice: The Law of Restitution

I passed by a prison detail in Indiana, where inmates were working beside the road. On their shirts was written, “Indiana Department of Corrections.” I told my wife, “I sure would love to stop and ask the officer there, how many are they really correcting?” Stop and think about this. Let me show you what I mean by the difference between biblical justice and humanistic justice.

In Exodus chapter 22, the whole chapter deals with the law of restitution. Verse 1 says, “If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.”

“If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him. If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.” So I want you to note: here is theft. God says, “Thou shalt not steal.”

So here is a man stealing an ox, and here is a man stealing a sheep. Note the ratio God says you restore: four sheep for a sheep,

and five oxen for an ox. There is also a double restitution in the Bible, which we just read about, and a seven-fold restitution mentioned in the book of Proverbs, chapter 30. Why is this restitution different? Stop and think about a sheep.

You can use the wool for clothing, eat the meat, and the animal produces. That is good. But when you look at an ox, you can have its meat and use its hide, yet it is an animal that works, and you can produce with this animal—not just by breeding it, but by actually working it. Let me put it to you with an illustration that you can understand. Here you have a car that you only drive once a week or once every two weeks, something like that.

But now you have a work truck with all your tools in it, whether you are a plumber, carpenter, or electrician. You have this truck loaded with your tools and materials. If somebody comes to your house to steal either your car or your truck, which would you prefer him to steal: the car that you drive once or twice every week or two, or the truck that you work with every day and has all of your materials in it? Obviously, that truck is worth far more than your car, and the tools in that truck are worth far more.

So God is saying here that the ratio for sheep—four sheep for a sheep—and five oxen for an ox, and the ratio of restitution, are dependent upon the worth and value of that which is stolen.

Now, if a man stole and got caught before he could kill or dispose of what he had stolen, he only had to restore twofold. Because the owner was inconvenienced, he had not really lost anything. You have heard the old expression, "Crime doesn't pay." That is only true in biblical justice and biblical law. The reason there is so much crime today is because it does pay according to humanistic law.

Let me show you. We are talking about justice. I said there is no justice like God's justice. Here is your work truck. You drive it every day and have all your tools in it. Someone comes along, hot-wires it, and drives it away. You wake up the next morning to go to work, and your truck and tools are gone. Then you hear on the radio that there is a chase going on: the police are chasing a truck, and tools are being thrown everywhere. You turn on the news and discover it is your truck, with your tools lying along the road.

You find out that the man who stole your truck was drunk or a dopehead, high as a kite. The police chase him at breakneck speed; he goes around a curve, loses control, and wraps your truck around a tree, totaling it. The police pull up, and of course he is not hurt. He comes out, says, “You caught me,” and laughs.

Wait a minute. You have been ripped off once because your truck was stolen. You are ripped off a second time because, even if you have insurance, your rates will now go up. You are ripped off a third time because this man is arrested and thrown in jail, and your tax dollars are at work. You are ripped off a fourth time because he cannot afford an attorney, so one is appointed for him at your expense. The attorney represents him and collects his money. The man is convicted and thrown into prison.

Now you are ripped off again because you get to support him for years while he is in prison. You even support him while he learns to be a better thief, communicating with others who are far more advanced in thievery than he is. If he stole that truck and was caught before he was two blocks down the road, God says he owes you two trucks. If your truck was worth $20,000, that man now owes you $40,000.

Some say, “These people never have any money or anything; I am simply out.” No. He still owes you $40,000. Let us see what the Bible says.

“If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.” What does that mean? He becomes a slave, your servant, until he works out the $40,000. If a man knew that, when caught, he would pay two, four, or five times what he stole, would that make him think twice before stealing? If he has no money, he is sold as a servant, as a slave, until he works it out. He may be sold to you, but he has to work it out. Nothing is going to stop him from running away, leaving you holding the bag. Really? Read Deuteronomy 17. Now there has been a biblical court of law. Look what the Bible says about anyone who refuses to obey that court.

Deuteronomy chapter 17, verse 11 says, "According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel."

If you follow biblical law and biblical justice is executed, does crime pay? No. But if you follow humanistic law, crime does pay.

If you read the original charters and constitutions of the colonies, they will always say something like this: no one can hold public office unless he confesses faith in Jesus Christ and in the inspiration of both the Old and New Testaments. Many go as far as Massachusetts, which said, "The laws of this colony are the laws of God as given through Moses."

The point is this: what you do today is take a man, throw him in prison, separate him from his family, put him around men more wicked than himself, and put him at everyone else's expense. I have a friend who was in a Muslim country. He said, "Yes, they do have prisons." But if you are thrown in prison in a Muslim country and your family does not feed you, you starve and die. They do not pay; they do not feed you. You just die.

Here is the difference between biblical justice and humanistic justice. Justice is that which is done in agreement and accord with the nature of God and the revealed Word of God. For instance, in Psalm 45, verses 6 and 7, we are talking about the Messiah: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

Notice: "Thou lovest righteousness." The word righteousness there is the same exact word for justice: "Thou lovest justice and hatest wickedness." To love justice is to hate wickedness; to love justice is to love righteousness. Biblical justice involves equity. Once you understand equity, it means that each one is answerable and

accountable for his actions, sins, rebellions, and transgressions. Biblical law holds everyone accountable. Our Lord said in Matthew 12:36, "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." You are accountable. Romans 14:12 says, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Justice Demanded

Let this sink in: you are accountable. For everything you say and everything you do, justice demands accountability. The problem is that most people do not want to be accountable. We do not want to be men of our word. If we mess up, we do not want to fess up. If we do wrong, we do not want to repent, and we do not want others to know that we have done wrong. We have to understand that biblical justice requires personal accountability. God does hold us accountable.

Biblical justice is distinct from humanistic justice. In biblical justice, we follow God's righteousness, not necessarily the righteousness of man. Therefore, when you and I act justly, we may have to go beyond the dictionary definition of justice. We may even have to go above the legal definition of justice, because what we want is biblical justice. Justice is defined by God; it is His standard. Secondly, I want you to see justice demanded. It may surprise you that God demands justice.

Justice Demanded: Consequences of Forsaking God's Standard

Turn in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 1. If I were to ask you to name the political books of the Bible, you could probably do so, and Proverbs is one of those political books. But Proverbs is more than a political book; it is a book on justice and equity. Beginning with verse 1, notice what he said: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion." Did you see that? God

says this book of Proverbs is designed to give you justice, judgment, and equity.

One of the clearest passages on God's justice is found in Isaiah 59. Notice verse 1: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

SCRIPTURE READING - Isaiah 59:3-15 (KJV)

"For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper."

"Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths." I want you to think what has been happening in this country in the last several years as you read this.

"The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes."

"We stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; in transgressing and lying against the Lord, and

> departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter."

"Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment." When we forsake God and His standard, there is nothing but chaos and confusion, violence, wickedness, and transgression. Look at our country and where we are. I usually tell people I am not a communist and have no sympathy with communism whatsoever, but there is one communist who said something with which I agree. It was Gus Hall. He said the reason we refer to our court system as the halls of justice is because the only place you can get any justice is out in the halls. That is just about the truth.

Now look in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 15, because what happened then is happening exactly the same today. It is not merely that we transgress, sin against God, and reap what we sow. One of the worst curses in all of this is that we lose the blessings of God. What did He say? "My ear is not heavy that I cannot hear. My hand is not shortened that I cannot save. I can do that. It's your sins. It's your iniquities. You're the ones that left me. You're the ones that turned from justice and righteousness." In all this, we lose God's blessings.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 15, beginning with verse 1, think about what has happened in this country: "And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with him. And if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

"Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law." How could Israel have been without the true God? Because they did not have God's law or God's standard. "But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in."

Justice Is Desired

"But great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity." In those times, there was no peace to him that went out or came in, but great vexations; and God did vex them with adversities. Look at everything we are going through, and you wonder why. The answer is because we have sinned against God.

There is no justice—not His justice. There is no righteousness. Justice is normally defined, justice is demanded, and here is the third thing: justice is desired. Go back to our text in Psalm 11 and look at verse 7: "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. His countenance doth behold the upright."

Justice Desired: God Loves the Upright and Hates the Wicked

If God, who is perfect in righteousness, holiness, and justice, loves it, and we desire to be like Him, since He is our Father, we too must love righteousness and justice. He loves justice. The upright are those who are straight, upright, pleasing, righteous, and just. He beholds them with delight because they are a reflection of His own nature and His Word. He observes them, approves them, and delights in them. He sees His own image in them.

He looks upon them with the eye of approbation and blessing and with tender affection: "His countenance doth behold the upright." God takes pleasure in those who are just, righteous, and upright.

But we must also consider the opposite. Every positive has a negative, and every negative has a positive. If God is pleased with those who are upright, He must be displeased with those who are not upright. If He is pleased with those who are just, He is displeased with those who are unjust. Psalm 11, beginning with verse 4, says:

"The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For

the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright."

Which do you desire? To be loved by the Lord or hated by the Lord? Which do you desire? His favor or His wrath and vengeance? Which do you desire? For Him to look upon you with blessing, or for Him to look upon you with curses? Because the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. He loveth justice.

Isaiah 33, beginning with verse 5, says, "The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure." Notice: wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times. Without wisdom, without knowledge, without righteousness, and without justice, there is no stability. Biblical justice is based upon the eternal, fixed standard of goodness and righteousness found in the character of God.

Applications: Man Despises Biblical Justice; God Requires Us to Do Justly

Biblical justice is defined by God and God alone, and it will ultimately be rendered by God to each man after death. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad, that is, good or worthless.

I want you to turn one more passage, if you would, one more, Romans chapter 2, because I want to make a couple of applications. Here is the first application: man, by nature, despises biblical justice. Why? Because he wants to be the determiner of what justice is. He wants to set his own standard. He wants to set his own definitions so that he can be as just, as righteous, as he wishes to be.

If he can define it, he can do it. There is a vast difference between biblical righteousness and humanistic righteousness. Humanistic righteousness is loved by fallen man because he is its originator and also its executioner.

Romans chapter 2, beginning with verse 1, says: “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein

thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds."

God is ultimately going to give absolute justice to each one. That is why I am so thankful I am in Jesus Christ, because the justice of God fell on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Years ago, I was preaching in Illinois, and a young Mormon boy came every night to the meeting. One night he asked me, "Is not God just?" I said, "Absolutely." He said, "All I want from God is justice." I said, "Son, that is exactly what God is going to give you." But when you get it, you will wish you had mercy.

God is just. Here is the second application: God requires each of us to do justly. How do we live justly? We live justly by bringing our lives into conformity with His law, applying the principles of justice in our lives, and demonstrating those principles in obedience toward God and toward others. Then you have to ask yourself, What does God require? And here is the answer.

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Justice is defined by God alone, for He is the just God. Whatever you do or think that is not in conformity with the Word of God is wicked, unjust, and unrighteous. God requires obedience, and He requires that we walk humbly with Him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this night. We thank You for Your Word. Lord, we live in such a day and time when there is such injustice, or simply no justice, and we need to cry out to Thee for justice. Only You can right so many of these wicked wrongs—political wrongs, national wrongs, societal wrongs, and

judicial wrongs. Lord, only You can right them. I pray, Father, that You would help us to see Your divine justice as well as Your divine mercy. We ask for Your grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 36

Then

March 12, 2022

Introduction to Psalm 107

Psalm 107:1-8: "Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way. They found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

Of course, all of the Psalms are absolutely wonderful. In my opinion, we need to read the Psalms over and over. On top of our regular daily Bible reading, it is absolutely astounding to consider the truth we can find in the Psalms. The Psalms are unlike the Proverbs. Proverbs are short, pithy sayings that simply reveal a truth without a lot of additional verbiage. For instance, when you look at

Proverbs 15:1, the Bible says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." If you answer anger with anger, matters very quickly deteriorate and worsen.

So the proverb instructs us how not to get into heated arguments. In other words, we answer with a soft answer. A soft answer is that which turns away the wrath; but if we answer with anger, we are simply making matters worse. Thus, in one simple sentence, the proverb instructs us in the way to avoid heated arguments. The way to avoid volatile confrontations is simply to answer softly, control your spirit, and do not retaliate. These are the best steps to avoid having problems.

The Psalms, on the other hand, usually give a detailed illustration or a detailed problem, and then present solutions to that problem. They also reveal a great deal concerning the nature and tendencies of men. Psalm 107 is one of those kinds of psalms. In one sense, Psalm 107 reveals our stupidity, apathy, and wickedness. It demonstrates very clearly man's tendency to put his trust in his own arm and in his own flesh, and also his tendency to follow his own will and his own way. It shows what happens to us when we bottom out from following our own way and simply doing our own thing. This psalm will discourage us in one sense, and encourage us in another. If you look at the two preceding psalms, Psalms 105 and 106, you will find that they also speak of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, and His dealings with His people.

God's Sovereignty Over All People

Those two psalms point out His providential deliverances, not only of His people, but also, interestingly, oftentimes of the unsaved. Not only is God the God of the saints; He is also the God of the heathen, even though they do not acknowledge Him. He is not simply King of the church. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is King of nations, and He is also King of the world. When you stop and think about God being the God even of the heathen, you have to remember that He causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike. He sends the sunshine on the just and unjust alike. He sustains, preserves, and protects even the heathen, though they will not acknowledge it. They breathe His air, eat His food, and live on His

blessings, even though they deny Him. Many times God will bless the heathen so that they may be a blessing and benefit to His people.

Let me show you. Hold Psalm 107, but look in your Bibles to Isaiah 45, and begin reading with verse 1. In Isaiah 45 we read about King Cyrus. He was king of Persia, and God used Cyrus to conquer Babylon. Cyrus then gave the order, or decree, that the Judahites could return to Judah and Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

Later, Nehemiah came and rebuilt the wall surrounding Jerusalem. But notice what God said about Cyrus. Isaiah 45:1 says, "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus." God calls Cyrus His anointed: "Whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him." God was going to use him to conquer other nations.

"And I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut," that is, the gates into Babylon. God says, "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron." Babylon would not succeed or keep them out. He continues, "And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by name, am the God of Israel." God named Cyrus.

Why would God hold his hand, give him these blessings, and let him conquer all these nations? "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me." Then He says, "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." God did all this for Cyrus although he was a heathen and a pagan who did not know Him. He used and blessed Cyrus for the benefit of His people.

When we return to Psalm 107, we find a treasure in itself. It reveals truths that are plain and, I will also say, uncomfortable. It is a psalm that will discourage us in one sense and encourage us in another. It demonstrates the calamities and distresses that fall upon man, and why at times they become so desperate. It also teaches the need and necessity of praising the Lord and thanking Him for every

blessing He gives us. Psalm 50:23 is a verse everyone should memorize.

"Whosoever offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of the Lord."

We tend to think of salvation in a spiritual sense every time we hear the word, but the word refers to many different types of salvation. You can have salvation from a financial problem, a health problem, or a marital problem. Even the Apostle Paul, in the book of Philippians, when he was asking prayer, said, "this shall turn to my salvation." Paul was locked up in prison at that time. His salvation was basically a release from prison. The Bible says, "whosoever offereth praise, then glorifieth me." We need to learn to praise Him. God said He will order our salvation from multitudinous things if we order our conversation aright.

The Command to Praise and Give Thanks

Look back in Psalm 107 at the first three verses. The psalmist says, "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south." The very first sentence in this psalm commands us to give thanks unto the Lord: "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord." Then he gives us two good reasons why we should give thanks: "for he is good," and "for his mercy endureth forever."

Then he says, "let the redeemed of the Lord say so." When I first started preaching fifty-seven years ago, we were members of a Baptist church in South Georgia, and we used to have what were called say-so meetings. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of the enemy." It was a time for personal testimonies. If God had blessed you or delivered you in some particular way, usually there would be fifteen, twenty, sometimes thirty minutes for people to stand up and say, "Let me share with you what the Lord has done for me this week or what He's done in my life." There was always encouragement in hearing what God was doing in the lives of other people.

It also encouraged us because it meant that if He delivered them, He can deliver us in the same manner as well. We simply called them say-so meetings. Psalm 107:3 says, “And gathered them out of the lands from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south.” The truth of the matter is, He gathers together His outcasts, and you will find many times that His people have been cast out from societies and from families as well. Isaiah 56:8 says, “The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet I will gather others to Him beside those that are gathered unto Him.” So He gathers together the outcast of Israel. Obviously and clearly, He is the God who does great things.

Structure of Psalm 107: Four Repeated Refrains

Psalm 107 is a psalm that is very easily divided. There are four verses in this psalm that are identical. Actually, there are two truths that are repeated four times each. One of them is found in verses 8, 15, 21, and 31: “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” In verse 8, it says, “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” In verse 15, “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” In verse 21, “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” In verse 31, “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” Obviously, we have this same verse repeated four times.

That means you can divide this psalm very easily based upon that one verse that is repeated four times. For instance, in verses 2 through 9, he speaks of banishment, dispersion, distress, being lost and hungry, and being in such desperation that, in verse 7, they cry unto Him, and then verses 8 and 9, He

He delivers them, and this comes with that great truth: “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.”

Secondly, verses 10 through 16 speak of captivity, imprisonment, sin, rebellion, and near-death situations. In verse 13 they cry unto Him, and in verses 14 through 16 He delivers them. Thus, in verse 15,

we have the same exhortation: “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men.”

The third section, verses 17 through 22, deals with sickness, diseases, and near-death experiences. In distress and desperation they cried to Him in verse 19; verses 20 through 22 speak of deliverance. In verse 21, the same truth is repeated.

The fourth section deals with dangers and distresses at sea, particularly a storm at sea. The illustration could also be expanded to any storm. It does not necessarily have to be at sea; it could be a hurricane or a tornado. The principle is the same. This section runs from verses 23 through 32. In verse 28 they cry unto Him, and in verses 29 through 32 He delivers them. The answer to distress is to cry to the Lord, and in His grace and mercy He delivers them.

This psalm is filled with applications as well as a conclusion to the four specific sections. God is sovereign. Here is a truth that is really taught in this psalm: God in His sovereignty will not only deliver the disobedient and the sinful into judgment, but He will also deliver the disobedient and the sinful from judgment as long as they repent and call unto Him.

The specific perils mentioned in this psalm do not negate other perils that are not mentioned in it. God is the sovereign God of deliverance, and all of these perils are merely illustrations. There are many more perils into which men fall. In order to understand this psalm, consider the blessing mentioned in verses 42 and 43.

At the end of the psalm, verse 42 says, "the righteous shall see it." What is the "it"? It is the deliverances that are mentioned, especially the last deliverance, etc. He says, "...the righteous shall see it and rejoice, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

These last two verses in Psalm 107 tell us that if we understand this psalm and really grasp its significance, it will cause us to rejoice. We will understand that God is the Deliverer. He is the Sovereign; it does not matter about the situation or the circumstance. He is quite able of delivering us.

To go through the book of Psalms, read through it, and underline every time the word deliverance or deliver is used would be an encouragement. Let me give you just a couple of illustrations.

For instance, in Psalm 32 and verse 7, David said, “thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.” In Psalm 37 and verse 40, “shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.” In Psalm 39 and verse 8, David said, “deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.” And then he said in Psalm 14 verse 13, “be pleased O Lord to deliver me: O Lord make haste to help me.”

So this is why verse 42 says, “the righteous shall see it and rejoice.” Every time God delivers us, we should be rejoicing in Him and His deliverance. “The righteous shall see it and rejoice, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.”

What does that mean? Usually it is the wicked who are taunting, mocking, and ridiculing the people of God when they are in distress and desperate situations. They will say, “Where is your God?” “If God really loved you, why are you going through what you’re going through at this particular point?” “Why does He not save you? You say that you’re His.” “Why does He not deliver you?”

What the Bible is saying is that when God does deliver, it shuts their mouth. In the book of Lamentations, chapter 3 and verse 46—and you have to remember that Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations—he saw the destruction of Jerusalem and wrote, “all our enemies have opened their mouths against us.” They were mocking and ridiculing. The Bible says in Titus, chapter 1 and verse 11, speaking of wicked men, “whose mouths must be stopped.” God has a way of shutting the mouths of the wicked, and one way He does so is by delivering His people.

If we understand this psalm and grasp it, we will be rejoicing and will understand how God shuts the mouths of His enemies. “Whoso is wise and will observe these things.” What things? His deliverances. It is wisdom to observe the many facets of God’s deliverances. Observation and knowledge of God’s multitudinous

deliverances give hope and encouragement in our troubles. If He delivered Clay, He will deliver Steve. If He delivered Steve, He'll deliver me. If He delivered me, He'll deliver Leah. There is encouragement in observing the deliverances of God.

Here is the third truth. Look at it in verse 43: "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." If you really want to comprehend God's loving kindness, you must understand His deliverances. His loving kindness, of course, includes His mercy, His goodness, and His faithfulness.

One of the main thrusts of Psalm 107 is to make us more thankful, more grateful, and more appreciative of all God's grace and mercy to us. Four times in this psalm the Word of God says, "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men." So here are some questions: How can you praise Him for His goodness if you do not recognize His goodness? How can you praise Him for His works if you do not observe, study, and meditate upon His works? How in the world can you praise Him for His works if you have no pleasure in them?

What do I mean by that? Look in Psalm 111 and verse 2, just a few psalms over. The Bible says, "the works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." If you have no pleasure in the works of God, if you have no pleasure in His providential deliverances, if you have no pleasure in His redemption, if you have no pleasure in His salvation, you are certainly not going to praise Him for all of those things, because you are not going to seek them out. You are not going to grasp them, and you are not going to understand them.

Let me tell you another truth that is in this psalm, which I said earlier: this psalm will also put us in our place. This psalm reveals the fact that most Christians are takers. What I mean by that is this: we take, take, take, take, and take from God our Father and return very little praise, thankfulness, appreciation, or gratefulness.

Let me show you how this works out. We are kind of like King Hezekiah in one sense. Hold Psalm 107, but turn in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 32. You will remember that during the lifetime of

Hezekiah, Babylon attacked and sought to destroy Judah and Jerusalem. At that particular time Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, “set your house in order for you shall die and not live.” Hezekiah turned himself to the wall and wept, the Bible said, and he prayed and asked the Lord how in the world he could order his people if indeed he was going to die.

God heard Hezekiah's prayer and gave him fifteen additional years: "I've added 15 years to your life."

Consider Hezekiah's response to this grace and mercy. 2 Chronicles 32:24 says, "In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the Lord, and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign." The degrees on the sundial went back. "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him. For his heart was lifted up, therefore was there wrath upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem."

God spared Hezekiah, Judah, and Jerusalem, but Hezekiah did not render according to the benefit done to him. He did not truly thank the Lord or humble himself. When the ambassadors from Babylon came, he showed them everything in his palace. Isaiah said, "everything you showed them is going to go to Babylon." Hezekiah took, but he did not render unto the Lord the benefit due unto him.

Luke 17 gives another clear illustration of the fact that we are takers and do not give God the glory due unto His name. "And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go, shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed?"

"But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." Only one out of the ten returned to give Him thanks, and he was a Samaritan. Assuming that

the other nine were Israelites, they totally ignored Him. They failed to honor Him, failed to praise Him, and failed to thank Him. In other words, they were takers. They were willing to take everything that God gave them, but not willing to offer Him honor, glory, and praise. In that sense, we indeed are takers. We ignore and fail to praise and honor the Lord for all the benefits that He has given to us.

Here is an interesting truth. You will find it first in Psalm 29:2: "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto His name. Then He says basically the same thing in Psalm 96:8: "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts."

I do not suppose that any of us could actually give God all the glory that is due unto His name, because we are sinners. But the truth of the matter is, we could probably do a whole lot better than we do.

Look at David's attitude in Psalm 116. In verse 3 he described his situation: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." Then he said, "Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." So God heard his prayer.

Now look at verse 12 and the question that he asked: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" The Lord has blessed me; now let me render something back to Him. He has rendered to me; let me render to Him. David continued, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all of his people." In other words, he would tell all what God had done for him and how God had delivered him. He would give Him the praise, honor, and glory.

So let me emphasize this: you may not have put two and two together, but it is a sin not to give God the glory that is due under His name. It is a sin not to praise God for His multitudinous benefits. It is a sin not to be grateful, thankful, and appreciative of everything God has done for us.

Why are we not more appreciative, thankful, and grateful than we are? Here is the answer: in one sense, we either think that God owes us, or we simply assume that God is going to bless us.

Alice and I have just celebrated fifty-nine years of marriage. I am thankful for every year. Actually, I suppose it is 118 years that we have been married—fifty-nine for her and fifty-nine for me. That is longer than many people have lived. Stop and think about that. I jokingly told her that I was going to keep her for at least another fifty years. But God does not promise us another year. He does not. We assume that we will live next week, but we may not. We assume that we will wake up in the morning, but we may not. We assume that we will have plenty to eat, but we may not. We assume that we will be in good health, but we may not be.

And here's where we should be. In Genesis 32:10, as Jacob is coming back and about to face Esau, he says this as he is wrestling with the Lord: "I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies, and of all the truth that thou hast shewed unto me." When we really grasp this one fact—that God does not owe us anything—it will make us appreciative of whatever God does give us. As long as we assume that God owes us and that we deserve something, we're never going to praise Him, thank Him, or be appreciative. We're never ever going to be appreciative.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:6, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." First of all, be careful for nothing; that is, be anxious for nothing. Don't be bent out of shape over anything. Second, be prayerful about everything: "in every thing." Third, be thankful for anything: "with thanksgiving." We should be careful for nothing, prayerful about everything, and thankful for anything.

Psalm 92:1-2 says, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: to shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night."

Stop and think about this: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. The least, the very least, that we could do is

every morning thank Him for His lovingkindness, for allowing us to live through the night, and every night before we go to sleep, thank Him for His faithfulness and keeping us alive during the day. That's what he is talking about, showing forth his lovingkindness every morning and his faithfulness every night. When you stop and think that God doesn't owe us another night or another day, it would tend to make us thankful for every minute that he gives us. I have quoted this passage many times, and it is a passage that I quote every day. I quote Psalm 92:2 every day as well, but I always quote Lamentations 3:22-23.

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Great is thy faithfulness. Without his faithfulness, we are in trouble, that is for sure.

Psalm 107 is designed to make us grateful and thankful and to praise the Lord. You may ask, "Pastor, you told me the title of this message is 'Then,' but you haven't even mentioned that word. What has the title got to do with the message?" Let me remind you that two verses in this Psalm are repeated four times. We have looked at the first: "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

Now consider the second. Psalm 107:6 says, "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." Verse 13 says, "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." Verse 19 repeats, "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." Verse 28 says, "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses."

The 'Then' Pattern: Desperation Before Prayer

Four times we are told, "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men," and four times we are told, "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and he saved them out of their distresses." Each time they cried and He delivered them, the following verse called them to praise the Lord for His goodness and wonderful works.

Observe the position and condition of the people before they cried. Psalm 107:4 says, "they wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way." They were lost and alone; "they found no city to dwell in." Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord. Wandering, lost, without help, hungry, thirsty, and fainting—then they cried.

"...such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the word of the Lord, and contemned the counsel of the most High: therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." Here are people in affliction, sitting in the shadow of death, reaping what they had sown because of their stubbornness and rebellion. "Then they cried."

Look at verses 17 and 18: "fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death." Then verse 19: "then they cry." They are afflicted because of their sins, unable to eat, and near the gates of death. "Then they cried." Verse 25 says, "For he commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof."

Here are sailors in a boat. They mount up to the heavens and go down to the depths. Their soul is melted because of trouble. They have lost control, being driven back and forth by the waves and wind. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man. They are at their wits' end. They do not know what to do and have no place to turn. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses."

Human Stubbornness and Delayed Prayer

Nothing has changed. People have not changed. We do not cry to the Lord until we reach a state of absolute desperation. We ignore God's Word, His warnings, His signs, and the danger before our eyes. We close our eyes to all the evidence surrounding us. In one sense, we understand that we are under judgment, yet more judgment is on the way.

Why do we not listen? Why do we not pray? Why do we not open our eyes? Why do we not deliberate before we get into trouble?

No prayers are mentioned in this psalm until the people are in a state of desperation. They would not seek help from above as long as they thought there was help below. They would not cry out to God as long as they thought their own arm could save them. They would not humble themselves and seek Him as long as they thought they could do it themselves. But when God brought them down and all their hopes were dead, then they cried.

How wicked it is to trust in the flesh, to seek Him—or not seek Him—only after trouble arises. Why do we wait until we are at our wits' end, almost at the point of desperation and destruction? Why do we wait to cry unto Him who is, in reality, the only one who can deliver us and the only one who can help us? Why do we wait? Why are we like these people?

We are like Hezekiah, like those nine lepers, and also like the disciples. Look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 8. They are in the ship, a storm arises, and our Lord is asleep in the hinder part of the ship. “And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and woke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.” Really? Did they not see the clouds, the storm coming, and the rain? Did they not hear the wind? Why did they wait until the ship was filled with water before they said, “Lord, save us”? We are just like that.

Can you not see what is happening in our country? Can you not see how our republic is being destroyed? Can you not see how organized famine is on its way? When our government is paying farmers two and a half times what they would make by planting a crop not to plant a crop, and when truckers cannot cross from Canada into the United States without being vaccinated, while American truckers cannot cross from the United States into Canada without being vaccinated, what is happening? One article said there were up to 32,000 truckers going to be out of a job. Go to your grocery store. Alice went yesterday; many items were missing in our local Wally World, and the shelves were bare.

Can you not see the design of the vaccine mandates, the lockdowns, the virus camps, and the legislative regulations? Can you not see that pure, unadulterated communism is being forced upon us? Can you not see that none of our politicians give a flying flip about the Bible, the Constitution, our rights, our lives, or our freedoms? They do not care.

The only thing they are interested in is money, power, and control. So our question is, why do we wait until then? Why do we wait until our backs are up against the wall and we are hungry and starving? Why do we wait until soldiers are knocking at our door before we cry unto the Lord?

The Call to Persistent Prayer and Praise

Luke chapter 18, beginning there in verse 1: “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” Not just when you get into trouble. Daniel prayed when he was cast into the den of lions, and the Lord sent an angel and shut the mouths of the lions. But the reason Daniel prayed effectively while he was in the den of lions is that he was used to praying before he got into the den of lions. So he says, “men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”

“Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.”

Now I want you to know something about this judge. He could care less about justice. He could care less about righteousness. He did not even care about that widow woman. The only thing he was concerned about was himself. He says, “I don't fear God and I have no regard for man, but I'm going to give this widow woman what she wants just to get her off my back, because she's going to wear me down if I don't do it.”

Look at the application. Verse six says, “And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.” Do you think our heavenly Father is

like that unjust judge? He is indeed the Judge of all the earth, but He is not like that. “And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” This is the kind of faith that cries unto God day and night to remedy and rectify the wrongs on this earth.

Our problem is that we do not cry day and night. We are not in the habit of praying, praising, and thanking the Lord. We wait until we get into desperate situations, and then we pray. God has promised to hear us speedily if we call upon Him.

According to Psalm 107, we need a praying heart, a thankful heart, and a heart that acknowledges all of God’s blessings. We need a heart that will praise and honor Him, who is the giver of every good gift and every perfect gift. James 1:17 tells us, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

Applications: Gratitude and Proactive Prayer

Think of all the multitudinous blessings that God has given you. David said in Psalm 103, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. And forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things." He said, Do not forget those benefits. Bless the Lord.

Suppose you had a child or grandchild for whom you wanted to do something special. You went out and bought an expensive present, gave it to him, and he opened it and said, "Oh, I've never wanted anything like that. I'm not interested in that." Then he threw it down and walked away. Would you rush right out and buy him another present?

You would say, "You ungrateful, unthankful, unappreciative little imp. I'm not going to buy you anything else." You would not spend money on someone who is ungrateful, unthankful, and unappreciative. Yet look at the times God has blessed us immensely

in innumerable ways, and we fail to acknowledge it. If God gave us what we deserved, we would all be dead.

This is what Psalm 107 is about. We are takers. We take, take, take from God and fail to give Him honor, worship, praise, and glory.

Here is the second truth about Psalm 107: You must see the amazing, wonderful, and glorious grace of God in this Psalm. Go back and read Psalm 107. Many of these people condemned the Word of God, and in doing so they were condemning God. They sinned against Him and rebelled against Him. They were in desperate straits, facing death. Then they cried, and what did God do in His grace and mercy? He delivered them. They did not deserve it, and they certainly did not earn it, but God graciously delivered them.

Jeremiah said in chapter 14, verse 7, "O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy great name's sake: for our backslidings are many, and we have sinned against thee." The words are, "Lord, deliver us. Not because we deserve it. Lord, we don't. But deliver us for Thy great name's sake." God has mercy upon us, not only for His name's sake, but because of His covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives us grace and mercy through Jesus Christ.

I believe the whole impetus of Luke 18 is this: if we cry unto Him, surely He will hear us. Everyone in this room knows there is a cabal intent on destroying this country and the world and bringing it under absolute demonic control. You know that as well as I do. So why in the world would we wait to cry to God to deliver us? He said in Luke 18 that if we cry day and night, He will hear us speedily.

Our enslavement will be our own fault. We are already in desperate straits, and we do not even recognize it. Inflation is killing us. I read the other day that for each Federal Reserve note you had in 1913, you now need twenty-nine to equal its value. We are already being destroyed, and we know it not.

We are asleep at the wheel, running off the road. We should not wait until we are turned upside down in the ditch to start praying and calling upon God. I would much rather head off problems by consistent and constant prayer and praise. The book of Proverbs says, “the prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but

the simple pass on, and are punished." The prudent man looks ahead, sees, and does not get into the situation unprepared.

We need a praying heart, a praising heart, a grateful heart, and a thankful heart. We need to learn to praise the Lord daily and hourly. Whenever God brings it to our mind, offer Him praise, for He said, "whosoever offereth praise glorifieth me."

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth, dear Lord. We ask for a praying heart and a praising heart. Prepare our hearts to worship and honor Thee. Help us to foresee the evil and hide ourselves, and to seek Thee before we get into such a desperate situation. Call us, Lord, to repentance. Quicken us, O Lord, and we shall call upon Thy name. Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned.

It is only Your grace and Your mercy that will save us. Give us, Lord, an obedient heart and a holy heart. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 37

Doubting God's Word Is Fatal

February 2, 2023

Introduction and Scripture Reading

The Word of God says this: “And the people went out and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord. And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gates, and the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him. And it came to pass, as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria.”

And that lord answered the man of God and said, “Now behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be?” And he said, “Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof.” And so it fell out unto him, for the people trod upon him at the gate, and he died.

The Fatal Nature of Doubt

Doubting is fatal in many ways, because when one doubts, he hesitates, and hesitation always leads to destruction. I've often stated that when it comes to self-defense, preservation of your life, and the preservation of the lives of your family members, there should be no hesitation. Before one gets in a life and death situation, in a life and death struggle, he should know what the Word of God says about the lawful taking of life.

It is too late to try to figure things out when seconds count and you must either act or die. Likewise, it is fatal when one doubts, especially the Word of God. There is a vast difference between not understanding, not knowing, and wondering, and then specifically doubting the validity and the veracity of the Word of God.

Our text in 2 Kings 7 teaches us several very important truths. The first one is this: it is never right, it is never feasible, and it is never appropriate to question the Word of God. Elisha spoke as the prophet of God, and he spoke the Word of God. Notice what he said in 2 Kings 7, beginning with verse 1: "Hear ye the word of the Lord, thus saith the Lord, Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria." It was indeed the Word of the Lord.

Then the lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" And he said, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof." Here was one man who questioned the truth that Elisha declared. He not only doubted the truth; he spoke of its impossibility. In essence, he was saying that Elisha's prophecy could not possibly be true. So Elisha said to the man, "You will see it for yourself, but you will not eat thereof."

Consequently, when he was appointed overseer, the people trod him to death, according to verse 17: "And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate. And the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down unto him." Doubting was certainly fatal for this man; he was actually trampled to death. When it comes to doubting, there are some honest doubters and some

dishonest doubters. An honest doubter doubts simply because of ignorance, lack of information, or lack of exposure to the truth. But dishonest doubters place their mind, their education, and their understanding ahead of God and ahead of His Word.

Honest Doubters: The Disciples' Example

Here is a good distinction from the Bible. Honest doubters are those who still continue to worship God and do what is right until God gives them further enlightenment and illumination.

Matthew 28:16–17 concerns the eleven disciples, some of them: "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted." That is interesting. They worshipped Him, but some doubted. The passage shows that their doubting did not cause them to cease worshipping Him. In one sense, it is understandable how some doubted, because a bodily resurrection was unknown to most people.

It is true that Jesus Christ raised people from the dead, but that is different from His raising Himself from the dead. These people believed, of course, that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. They believed that He was Messiah, and so they worshipped, although they did not understand and had not put two plus two together. They were waiting for further enlightenment and illumination. They had not rejected the truth about Christ; they simply had not yet understood this particular truth concerning His resurrection.

To be honest, I think that is the proper response for an honest doubter. In Luke 24, beginning with verse 44, we find that our Lord did indeed enlighten their minds to this particular truth. He said: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Obviously, these

individuals who doubted had their doubts cleared up when He opened their understanding and taught them the Scriptures as well.

SCRIPTURE READING - John 20:19-29 (KJV)

Dishonest Doubters: Thomas's Failure

Other doubters, I think, doubt because of their complacency, because of their sin, and because of their unthankfulness, and I would say also unfaithfulness. I want you to turn in your Bibles to John chapter 20, because everyone in this room has heard of doubting Thomas. I want to emphasize some things in this passage that relate very clearly to what I am going to be teaching a little bit later.

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week," we are talking about Sunday, "when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord."

Do you notice a difference now? Do you remember there when we read in Matthew chapter 28, they worshipped but some doubted? Now it says no one's doubting. They are just glad they know it is Him. They had their understandings enlightened. "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord."

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

> Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Thomas was not at the original Sunday meeting when Jesus Christ revealed Himself. Why was Thomas not there? The answer is not given specifically in the Bible. He could have been sick; he could have been disheartened, discouraged, or disillusioned. All of those are possibilities. But the fact of the matter is that when our Lord came to reveal Himself to His disciples, Thomas was not there.

Thomas missed the meeting. Why was he not there? I do not know, but he did miss the meeting, which teaches us something. We should be wary about missing the public worship of the Lord on the Lord's day. Why? Because we never know when Jesus Christ is going to reveal Himself in a special, peculiar, or particular way. That is what He did on this Lord's day. You remember the passage in Matthew chapter 18 and verse 20, where Jesus Christ said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Our Lord is right here in our midst. I do not know whose mind He is going to enlighten, whose heart He is going to open, or what blessing He will bestow on some individuals. I am simply saying that there are times when our Lord does indeed move particularly and in a very strange way.

This has happened to me only twice in my ministry. Once I was preaching in Illinois. I finished preaching, we had the benediction, and everyone was standing around. It was a small church, but eighty to one hundred folks were there. I jokingly said, "Well, had I known that everybody was going to stand around, I'd preach again." Everybody sat down. So I preached a second time, and when I finished, the pastor preached a third time. We got out about two o'clock in the morning.

That has happened only twice to me in about fifty-seven years, and nobody left; everybody stayed. You never know when everybody is going to be blessed by God, so I would be wary about missing. Here is the second thing: Thomas not only missed the meeting;

Thomas missed the message. That is where Jesus Christ revealed Himself, told them, showed them, and proclaimed peace unto them. Whenever you miss the meeting, you are always going to miss the message. I do not know about other pastors, but I know this.

I make a special prayer request to the Lord almost every day: "Lord, please give me what your people need for this week." I could have chosen from fifteen or twenty different messages because I am that far ahead, but I pray specifically. If you miss the message, you miss the food God has ordained for you for that week. He knows what is coming during the week; you do not, and neither do I. I ask Him to prepare my heart so I can give you what you and others who hear these words need.

Thomas missed the meeting and the message. He also missed the mission, because our Lord said, "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you," and then breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." He sent them out to be witnesses.

Here is the fourth thing: when Thomas missed the meeting, the message, and the mission, he was in a position of doubt. When the brethren told him, "We have seen the Lord," he said, "Unless I can take my finger and put it in the hole where the nails were and take my hand and thrust it inside, I will not believe." Isn't that interesting? When you miss the meeting, the message, and the mission, you do not receive the testimony of the brethren. It always leads to doubt.

Faithfulness and Revelation

This is very important. Our Lord reveals Himself in His Word and through His Word to those who are faithful. He does not reveal Himself to those who could care less. In John 14, Judas, not Iscariot, asked Him, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" Jesus answered, "If a man love me, he will keep my words:" that is, he'll be faithful, he'll be obedient, "and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." In other words, our Lord said, if you are faithful, if you keep His words, He will manifest Himself unto you.

This statement concerns Thomas. He missed the meeting. He missed the message. He missed the mission. Therefore he doubted. He would not believe. First Corinthians 4, beginning with verse 1, says, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” Isn’t that interesting?

A steward is that which each of us are before our Lord. He has given us gifts. He has given us a mission. He has given us responsibilities. We are stewards of whatever God has given us, and it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful.

Let me add to that by giving you 2 Timothy 2:2. The apostle Paul wrote Timothy, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” The things which Timothy had heard were to be committed to faithful men, who would be able to teach others also. Commit them to whom? To faithful men. Do you realize it is not the pastor’s responsibility to chase somebody down and teach them? They are to be faithful. That is why more is required of a steward than a man be found faithful.

When you stop and think about Thomas, why was he not there? He could have been there, probably, but he just was not, for some simple, unknown reason. I have no earthly idea, but the truth of the matter is, he was not there, and he missed everything. Doubting will usually get us into trouble in more ways than one. In fact, it gets us into trouble over and over. We usually doubt because of our ignorance, because we do not know.

Doubting as Sin

I have often said this, and it is true: Have you ever noticed that a problem is not a problem if you know the answer? You do not have problems when you do not know what to do, when you do not have the answers. In Romans chapter 14, 1 Corinthians chapter 8, and a few verses in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, we find a truth concerning meats that had been offered unto idols.

There was a division, a schism, so to speak, between some of the believers. Some knew that the idol had absolutely no influence upon

that meat; it was just a good cut of meat. Others thought that somehow the idol polluted the meat and, therefore, it was not acceptable to eat.

This all has a relationship to doubting. In 1 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 4, the Apostle Paul says: “As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”

"Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled." We understand that there is simply one God. Often, an idol was worshipped by people who sacrificed all these animals. They would have an abundance of meat left over, and they would sell that meat at a discounted rate to anybody who wanted to buy it.

To put it in terms we can understand, if you went down to your local Publix and a ribeye steak was eight dollars a pound, while the same cut of meat was two dollars a pound at the shambles, which would you prefer to purchase? If you knew the truth and did not doubt, you would buy the same ribeye at two dollars a pound and eat it, because you know the idol had nothing to do with it. But if you doubted and did not know the truth, you would not buy that two-dollar-a-pound ribeye. You would spend eight dollars if you wanted one, because you thought that somehow the idol had polluted the meat.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, the place where they sold this meat is called the shambles. The apostle Paul said, "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." In other words, if you get a good cut of meat that had been offered to some idol, eat it. Do not worry about it, because there is only one God, and the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

Remember, he said, "There is not in every man that knowledge." Paul deals with this same issue in Romans chapter 14. We are not looking at all of it, but in verse 23 he deals specifically with this issue: "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

The word "doubteth" is the Greek word dialogismos, which means disputing, doubting, or being doubtful. It refers to someone who is vacillating, wavering, and uncertain which way to go or what to do—like that proverbial squirrel that runs across the road, backtracks, and backtracks because it does not know which way to go. That is why so many squirrels end up crushed on the highway.

You remember James 1:8, where he says that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. The Greek word for double-minded is dipsuchos, which actually means double-souled, but it still means the same thing: someone unstable, wavering, vacillating, and unable to make up his mind. In Romans 14:23, while discussing meat dedicated to an idol, he says, "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat." Why? "Because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

The Greek word for "damned" is katakrino, meaning someone condemned, judged worthy of punishment, or worthy of censure. Why would he be worthy of censure, condemnation, or judgment? The answer is because of his doubting. Doubting is sin. That is why the Bible says the plowing of the wicked is sin.

Let me ask you another question: If doubting is sin and faith is not, where do we get faith? I know faith is a gift of God, but there is also the means. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Why are people doubting? Many miss the meeting, miss the message, miss the mission, and refuse to listen to those who say, "Let me tell you what God has done for me. Let me show you what God has shared with me in the Word of God." It is important to know what we believe, why we believe it, and where we can find it in Scripture. It is important for us to study and reach our conclusions based upon the Word of God, because whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Doubting in Prayer and Worship

Doubting is especially sinful when it comes to prayer and worship. In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul gives the key verse in the book: “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God.” He is talking about the church, “which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” Paul says, in effect, that he is telling us how men and women ought to act in the house of God, and how children ought to act there as well. How should men act? In 1 Timothy 2:8 he says, “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”

Let me give you a little surprise. The Greek word translated “doubting” in 1 Timothy 2:8 is exactly the same Greek word found in Romans 14:23, where God says, “If he eats, he’s damned if he eats, because he eats not of faith, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” In this context, doubt concerns prayer and worship.

Reasons for Doubt: Unbelief and Ignorance of Inspiration

Why is it that some people doubt the veracity, truthfulness, and accuracy of the Word of God? Why do some doubt? I have been dealing with several people. I think one is an honest doubter, while one is very dishonest. But why do some doubt? Let me give you two reasons.

Number one, many people are unsaved; they are unbelievers. If you are an unbeliever, you are not going to believe that God’s Word is His full, final authority for us. That is all there is to it. If you are unsaved, your attitude will be like Pharaoh’s. When Moses came to Pharaoh and said, “Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me,” Pharaoh responded, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.”

That was his attitude: I do not recognize God. I do not recognize His sovereignty. I do not recognize His authority. Who does He think He is to command me? That is the attitude of unbelievers.

Those who are unsaved will not believe the Bible because they clearly do not believe in God. But what about some folks who claim to be professing Christians? A second reason many people do not really understand the Word of God is that they do not understand the doctrine of inspiration.

If someone is unsaved, if someone is an unbeliever, the doctrine of inspiration does not bother him. In fact, no doctrine bothers him because he does not believe anything. But we have to understand what inspiration is. We are talking about the Bible. The Greek word for Bible is Biblia or Biblios. In the Old Testament, in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, you will find that word in Psalm 40 and verse 7. You will also find it in the Greek New Testament, Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 7.

There are many other phrases that denote the Bible, like "the scriptures," "the law," "the prophets," "it is written," or "the Word of God." When you stop and think that the Bible was written over a period of 1,600 years by forty different authors, that is astounding. The Old Testament was compiled and put together in one book by the fifth century B.C., during the time of Ezra. The New Testament was completed well before 100 A.D.

The amazing truth is that there are no contradictions in the Bible. You would expect a book written by more than forty authors who did not know each other, over a period of 1,600 years, to be absolutely full of contradictions. But it is not. Why? Because it is not the work of man; it is the work of God. He inspired the authors to write, and the Bible tells us that these men were moved by the Holy Ghost.

In 2 Timothy 3:16–17, we read: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." He said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Theopneustos.

Do you know what that word means? God exhaled. Spiration deals with breath. God exhaled His words. That is why the Bible says in 2 Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Inspiration is the strong, conscious in-breathing of God into men, qualifying them to give utterance to the truth, so that the words which they wrote and spoke were and are indeed the very words of God Himself.

I have preached a number of things through the years, all of them biblical, and people have come up to me and said, "Well, pastor, if I heard God say that I would believe it." That is what inspiration is. God said it. He exhaled it. It is His breath. He spoke it. He used the authors and their personalities, but it is His Word. Therefore, when you and I read the Bible, and when you hear the Bible expounded, explained, and applied, it is God speaking, because this is His Word.

Consequences of Rejecting God's Word

When you deny the doctrine of inspiration, when you say the Bible is not the Word of God, you are also saying that God is not the author of the Bible, and consequently that it has no authority or binding influence. If the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, God did not author it; therefore, it has no authority and no binding influence. The doctrine of inspiration is indeed a very important doctrine.

When one doubts the Word of God, he refuses to hear it. He refuses to heed it. He refuses to obey it. There will be no application of the Word of God in his life. When one doubts the Word of God, he is also denying that God is the author of it. When anyone doubts the Word of God and that God is the author, he is inevitably going to turn to another god or another authority. You cannot have a life without authority. You cannot have a life without a standard. You cannot have a life without permanence.

Turn in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 17, and see what Israel and Judah did in rejecting the Word of God and what happened. When you deny the inspiration and the authority of the Bible, you are denying God. You will not hear, you will not heed, you will not believe, you will not make application, and you will turn to another god or to a different authority.

In 2 Kings chapter 17, beginning with verse 13, we read: "Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep

my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God."

So when they did not believe God, they did not believe his word. What happened? Verse 15 tells us: "And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity," that is, idolatry, "and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them."

“And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel, which they made. And the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.”

When they rejected God’s inspired, infallible truth and word, they immediately turned to idols and whatever they wanted to do. If you turn away from God, there is only one alternative: man. In 2 Kings 17:7, we read, “For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods.” They rejected God and feared other gods.

How did the fearing of other gods manifest itself? Verse 8 says, “And walked in the statutes of the heathen,” that is, the laws, “whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.” All the kings of Israel were apostates. They made the golden calves—Jeroboam I, and everybody else after him served those golden calves.

They turned from the law of God to the law of man. Thus verse 19 says, “Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel, which they made.” Humanistic, man-made laws had become a substitute for God’s word and God’s law. In line with that, there is another passage in Micah 6:16.

Micah said, “For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.” When he said, “For the statutes of Omri are kept,” let me tell you who Omri was. Omri was the father of Ahab. Ahab was the most wicked king in the northern kingdom. He said, “For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels,” that is, you walk in their laws.

When you turn from God and you turn from God's Word, the only place you can turn is to man. It may be government; it may be some philosophical bent of someone, but it is still man. What is your source of authority? Who is your authority? If the Word of God is not your authority, what is? You cannot exist without authority. If you doubt God's inspired, inerrant, infallible Word, your only recourse is the mind of man. If you reject and refuse the divine mind, the only thing that you can receive is the mind of a fallen, sinful, wicked individual. To trade the mind of the infinite, sovereign, majestic God of heaven and earth for the mind of a fallen man is absolutely insanity and foolishness.

The Certainty of God's Word Standing

The truth of the matter is, that is exactly what a lot of people do. They think that somehow their thoughts, their mind, and what they believe will outweigh and overthrow the mind and the Word of God. That has been tried, and it did not work out well.

In Jeremiah chapter 44, the people of Judah, the remnant of Judah, had come to Jeremiah and said, “Pray for us, we want God's will.” Obviously, they were hypocrites; they really did not want God's will. Most of the people had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, and many had been killed. They wanted to flee down into Egypt.

Jeremiah said, “Okay, I'll pray for you.” He prayed and said, “Here's what God says, do not go down into Egypt.” They answered, “Oh, God didn't tell you to tell us that. God didn't say that.”

The people said, “No, no, we're going to go. And let me tell you something, Jeremiah. We never had any of this suffering and we never had any of this problem while we were pouring out our oblations and pouring out our sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven.” Jeremiah said, “You know, you're stupid. That's what got you into this problem.” They answered, “Oh, no, no, no, no. That's not it. That's not it, Jeremiah. And we're going to keep on. We're going to keep pouring out our offerings to the Queen of Heaven.”

They went down to Egypt. They kidnapped Jeremiah and took him, and they took the children that were left who belonged to the royal family. Jeremiah chapter 44, verse 24: “Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt.”

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.”

“Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth. Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them.

“Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs. And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the Lord, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil.”

We are going to find out whose words will stand. It is wicked, vile, and sinful to doubt God and His Word. You may scream, holler, cry, protest, yell, think, and proclaim all you wish, but in the end, it is God's Word that will stand. What stands? Proverbs 3, verses 5 through 7, says—and most of you can quote it: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

Applications and Conclusion

The passage gives the command plainly: trust in the Lord, not in your own understanding. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil." He does not tell you to trust your own thoughts, your own judgment, or your own heart. He tells you to trust Him, acknowledge Him, fear Him, and depart from evil.

If you lean to your own understanding, you are foolish. If you do not acknowledge Him, you are foolish. If you think you are so smart that you do not need God and His Word, you are foolish. And if you trust in your heart, you are really foolish, for Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." That is true.

If one persists in refusing, rejecting, and denying the Word of God, it will prove fatal. Stop and think about this: one day you will stand before the Judge of all the earth, and that Judge, according to John chapter 5, will be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. You are going to be judged.

You are going to be judged out of this book. He said in John 12:48, "He that rejecteth me," that is the living Word, "and receiveth not my words," that is the written Word, "hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." I can assure you that when a man stands before our Lord Jesus Christ and is judged out of the books according to Scripture, he will be speechless.

You remember, I think it is Matthew 20—I am not sure of the exact chapter—where the Lord gave the parable of the wedding feast. A man came in without a wedding garment, and the wedding master said, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding

garment?" The Bible said, "And he was speechless." The wedding master said, "Cast him out."

You can rant and rave all you like and desire, but when you stand before God, all your arguments and protestations will be worthless, and you will be speechless.

Here are two applications. The first is exceedingly simple, but it is something most of us never think about. It truly boils down to one choice: Who will you believe? Will you believe God or the mind of man? Will you believe the Word of God or your own thoughts? Will you believe God's divine, sovereign authority, or reject that and think you have authority in and of yourself? Who is your standard? What is your standard? If you do not believe the Word of God, then you believe your own thoughts. You are pitting the finite mind of fallen man against the infinite mind of a holy, righteous, sovereign God. Here is the second one.

If the Lord allows me to live just a few more months, I will have preached for fifty-eight years. Whether you believe this brother or not, it is the truth: in fifty-eight years, I have proven the Word of God over and over in my own life, in every area and sphere. I know, not only from the truth of Scripture but from personal experience, that the Bible is indeed the Word of God.

Here is the second point: if you think that somehow the Word of God is not going to stand and that you are going to escape, you are very, very mistaken. When it comes to fighting against God and fighting against the Word of God, stronger, mightier, and richer men than you have fought and failed. Think of Emperor Diocletian, Domitian, and Nero. All of them thought they had successfully destroyed Christianity and the Word of God. They did not.

Most of you have heard of the noted French infidel Voltaire. Some time ago, I read about the dying statements of wicked men, and Voltaire caught my attention. He had invited a number of his atheistic friends to watch how an atheist died. The article said that, right before his death, he sat straight up in bed with absolute horror on his face and in his eyes, screamed, “There is a God!” and fell back dead.

Voltaire stated in 1776, “One hundred years from my day, there will not be a Bible on earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker.” He said that within one hundred years all the Bibles would be gone. Yet in August 1836, only fifty-eight years after Voltaire’s death, Reverend William Ackworth of the British and Foreign Bible Society saw with his own eyes Voltaire’s former residence in Geneva, Switzerland, being used as a repository for Bibles and religious tracts.

The house was occupied by Colonel Henry Trochan, president of the Evangelical Society of Geneva. Furthermore, only sixteen years after Voltaire’s death, in 1794, the Bible began making inroads in Ferney, France, where he had spent the last eighteen years of his life. On the very printing presses Voltaire had employed to print his irreverent works, editions of the Bible were printed, on paper especially made for a superior edition of Voltaire’s works. The Voltaire project failed, and the paper was bought and devoted to a better purpose: printing Bibles. Within sixteen years, his own presses and his own paper were used to print Bibles.

When you drink the Kool-Aid of humanism, it will prove fatal. When you think that the mind of fallen man is greater than the mind of God, it will prove fatal. You may not be trod down in the gate, like the one lord of the king, but it will prove fatal. I'd much rather believe the Word of God than the word of man, and I'd much rather lean upon His divine authority than my own stupidity and my own finite understanding. I may not understand everything in the Bible, and I don't.

But I can submit and worship until He gives me further enlightenment. I know that the Bible is the Word of God. So it boils down to this: We either have the Bible or we don't. God is the author or He isn't. It is binding and has binding authority, or it doesn't. So who is your authority? And I choose the Lord.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. And we ask, Father, that you would build us up in the most holy faith, open our eyes, grant us understanding, and teach us. In thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 38

A Biblical Mindset

January 20, 2024

Introduction: The Mind Controls Actions

Let's open our Bibles today to the book of Luke chapter 9, and we're going to be reading verse 51. The title of the message is Mindset. The Bible says, "...and it came to pass, when the time was come, that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." Now, there's much in the Bible concerning the mind, and the truth is that everything stems from our minds. Our minds control our actions, and they certainly control our lives. I've pointed out many times in the Bible that the mind is the understanding. Occasionally, when you read the word heart, occasionally it refers to affection, but most of the time it refers to the heart. Because the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 7, "For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." So it's the heart that does the thinking. And that's why the Bible says in Proverbs 4 and verse 23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

Evil Thoughts Proceed from the Heart

Now, I want you to turn, if you would, hold in Luke 9, but turn back in your Bibles to the book of Matthew, chapter 15, and let me just show you this. In Matthew, chapter 15, our Lord is speaking. He's teaching His disciples, and look what He says, beginning there with verse 18. Notice, if you would, in fact, let's begin reading with verse 15. Watch this. Matthew 15 verse 15, "Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable."

And Jesus said, "Are you also yet without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." Now the interesting thing is, our Lord says in verse 18, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart." Now look if you would, what is the first thing that comes from the heart? Notice, if you would, He says in verse 19, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." And then, of course, murders, adulteries, fornications. The truth of the matter is, see, you can't do any of these things without thinking. Everything in your life comes from your heart or from your mind or from your understanding. So, if I reach down and pick up this pair of glasses, I've already thought about the fact that I'm going to reach down and pick up this pair of glasses. It's impossible to commit adultery without thinking. I've heard people say, "Well, Brother Weaver, it just happened. I didn't plan it." That's hogwash. You thought about it well before you ever did it. That's a fact. "Well, I didn't mean to steal. The money was just there." No, no, no. You thought about it before you ever took it. You can't act. You can't move without everything coming from your mind.

Illustrations of Thoughtless Actions

In this passage, evil thoughts proceed from the heart. It is impossible to act without the mind, without thinking. People who have done something very stupidly say, "Well, I guess I was not just thinking."

No, you were thinking; you were just thinking stupidly. Our mind actually controls our actions. A good friend years ago, now dead, was a very talented carpenter who could build anything. In his house, for their children, they had a swimming pool. He was going to do some work out by the swimming pool with an electric drill, drilling into the concrete. The bit got hot, and he thought, "Well, I'll cool the bit and dip it into the water." He was instantly electrocuted. Did he think? Yes, he thought, but he did not think it through. He did not think, "This is not just going to cool this bit; it's going to electrocute me." His mind was working, but it was certainly a stupid thought. That is all there is to it.

The Concept of a Set Mind

I've seen videos online of people who very stupidly look into the barrel of a weapon to see why it didn't fire. One, I suppose still up, shows an Islamic terrorist who actually looked into the barrel when it wouldn't fire, then stupidly hit it on the ground—and of course shot himself in the head and killed himself. We do things without understanding what we're doing. So what I want to emphasize today is mindset. Everyone knows the implication of a set mind. We use that phrase all the time, especially in reference to individuals and actions. We can say he set his mind on finding work. He set his mind on marrying that girl. He set his mind on doing certain things. In other words, we understand that everyone has a mindset. Now the question you have to ask is this: do you have a biblical mindset on every subject? You say, "Brother Weaver, I can't think of every subject." Really? The Bible tells you in 2 Corinthians 10, verse 5, that you're responsible to bring every thought into captivity to Jesus Christ. If you're responsible to bring every thought into captivity to Jesus Christ, it means you must learn to think biblically on whatever you're thinking about. I don't care if you're thinking about marriage. I don't care if you're thinking about work. I don't care if you're thinking about buying an automobile. I don't care what you're thinking about. You need to learn to think biblically on every subject.

People say, "His mind was set on being a martial artist. His mind was set on being a carpenter. His mind was set on being a welder. His mind was set on being a grocer or whatever." We understand when we talk about someone having a mindset that nothing is going

to stop him, nothing is going to change his goal. In other words, that mind is set and he's going to accomplish what he wants.

Biblical Examples of a Set Face

The truth of the matter is this: we need to make sure that we have a mindset when it comes to Scripture. There are not very many passages that will say, "Here's a mindset," but there are many passages that will show you the exact same truth, although different words are used. Let's go in our Bibles, hold Luke chapter 9, but let's go in our Bibles to the book of Genesis chapter 31. I'm going to run you through some of these things very quickly just to show you. Look in Genesis chapter 31, and notice if you would, verse 21. This is about Jacob. The Bible says this.

"So Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled." Now that's verse 20. Look at verse 21. "So he fled with all that he had, and he rose up and passed over the river and set his face toward Mount Gilead." So what did he do? He set his face. He set his mind. In other words, that mind was absolutely set on going home. Nothing was going to stop him.

Turn to Numbers chapter 24, verse 1. The Bible says that when Balaam saw that it pleased not the Lord to bless Israel, he went not as at other times to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. In other words, he went to bless them because he knew that God was not going to curse them. In 2 Kings chapter 12 and verse 17: "Then Hazael, king of Syria, went up and fought against Gath and took it, and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem." What does that mean? I'm determined to fight against Jerusalem. I'm determined to conquer it. I'm determined to make sure that that place is mine. It was a set mind. In Luke chapter 9, verse 51, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ: "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."

The Meaning of 'Steadfastly Set His Face'

The word "steadfastly set" is from the Greek stēridzō, which means to make stable, to set fast, to confirm in one's mind and establish. When he set his face, he was actually confirming in his mind, stating

in his mind that he was going up to Jerusalem to die. Nothing was going to stop him from doing his Father's will. The word prosōpon denotes the countenance that is on one's face based on the determination of his mind. For instance, you could look at my face and tell whether or not I'm angry, whether or not I'm happy, whether or not I'm determined. In other words, our mindset is usually demonstrated by our face. That is why the Bible said, "He set His face." In Luke chapter 13, verse 33, our Lord says, "Nevertheless, I must walk today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." So he said, "My face is set, my mind is set. I am going to fulfill my Father's will. I am going to die."

Now, I want to give you several quotes from different authors on this verse just to show you how everyone understands this is exactly what the set face is. It is a mindset. So, here's what they say. Number one, "He steeled his forehead against all discouragements." Number two, "The readiness and resolution of our Lord Jesus in prosecuting His great undertaking for our redemption and salvation." Here's number three. "He steadfastly set His face, that is, after proper and mature deliberation, He chose now to go up to Jerusalem and firmly determined to accomplish His design." Now here's one more. "He determined to go to Jerusalem or he set out resolutely. When a man goes toward an object, it may be said, he set his face toward it." "The expression here means only that he resolved to go, that is, he had a mindset, and it implies that he was not appalled by the dangers, that he was determined to brave all and to go up in the midst of his enemies and to die." Now, if there's any question over those statements, if you would look in your Bibles, Isaiah 50 and verse 7, that will certainly verify everything that I have just read. So look in your Bibles, Isaiah chapter 50, and look, if you would please, at verse 7, at what the Bible says. Isaiah 50 and verse 7. Here it is. Look at this. Isaiah 50, verse 7.

"For the Lord God will help me. Therefore I shall not be confounded. Therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." That's concerning our Lord. If you look back in verse 6, of course, that refers to the Lord. "I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." And then He said, "I've set my

face like a flint." So obviously, clearly, like a flint means our Lord's face was hardened toward the end which His Father had ordained. His mind was set that He was going to accomplish it. He was not going to die outside of Jerusalem. So He was determined to do exactly what God demanded. This truth should greatly influence our lives. We must understand that we too have mindsets. We also must understand that we normally have mindsets, but our mindsets must be biblical, and they must be biblical on every subject. We should have one mindset that we're going to love our Lord Jesus Christ the way that He commands and the way that He demands.

Loving God with All Your Mind

Look back to several passages. First, Matthew chapter 22. You will see the significance of this momentarily. A lawyer asked our Lord, "What is the greatest commandment?" Our Lord does not quote any of the 10. Matthew 22:37: "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Note what our Lord says: we are to love Him with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind.

If we love Him the way He demands and deserves, we must have a mindset on that subject. Let me show you where this originated. Turn back to Deuteronomy chapter 6, the passage known as the Shema Israel. In Orthodox synagogues, most will recite, "Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one." Look at verse 4: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." Now watch: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might." Note that this is exactly what our Lord said in Matthew chapter 22. We must love Him with all of our mind, heart, and souls.

Now see the implication. Read verse 5 again: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might." Then He says, "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart," or in thy mind, "and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, and thou shalt bind them

for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land, which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not," and so on. He says you are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and body. But if you love Him that way, if you have that kind of mindset, "These words, which I command you, shall be in your life."

In other words, if we're talking, walking, writing, dreaming, and placing His words before our eyes, we understand that He is central in our lives, and His word is central. His words, His truth, are the warp and woof of our being. It's impossible to separate us from His words if we have the mindset we need toward Him.

Now, it is the truth that our Lord said in John chapter 6 that He is the bread of life. We live on Him. We live on His words. We have to walk pleasing unto Him. Did you know that there was a special promise in Isaiah 26 and verse 3 says this, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." Here's a good question, how in the world do you keep your mind on Jesus Christ? The answer is you keep your mind on Jesus Christ by keeping in your mind His word, whether you're walking, whether you're talking, whatever you're doing. Whether you're working, what does His Word say in this area? How does His Word apply to me?

So you must consider then that there are precepts and there are principles in the Word of God that you and I must learn and you and I must hold to tenaciously. I've had people say to me in time past, "Boy, I wish the Bible covered every instance of everything that could ever happen. And it was there in black and white." Well, let me tell you something. If God did that, you would never be able to read the Bible all the way through. And you'd never be able to carry one around. But what God has done is He's given us everything that we need in precept and in principle form, and we need to have a mindset on this.

The Danger of a Doubtful and Double Mind

Now, the Bible says that our Lord steadfastly set His face. That is, He steadfastly set, had His mind set.

Now, we're talking about, in reality, obedience and disobedience. Because if we have a biblical mindset, we're going to be obedient, if we do not have a biblical mindset, we're going to be disobedient. And you have to remember this, that God's blessings always follow obedience and God's curses always follow disobedience.

Now, here's why I'm telling you this. I want you to look in your Bible, if you would, to Luke chapter 12. Luke chapter 12. And I want you to see. Verse 29. Look at this, Luke 12, verse 29, we're going to look at some of the other verses. Luke 12, verse 29.

Verse 29, He said, "And seek not ye what you shall eat or what you shall drink." And then He says this, "Neither be ye of a doubtful mind." If you have a doubtful mind, you do not have a mind set. Actually, this word, meteōrizō, is a metaphor taken from ships that were tossed in the sea by the wind and by the waves. So it said, "And be not of a doubtful mind." So someone who has a doubtful mind, listen carefully, is someone who is unsure, he's someone who is agitated, he's someone who is anxious, he's someone who is perplexed.

In other words, he doubts everything—his course, his direction, his actions, his thoughts. Don't be of a doubtful mind. That's what He said: "Be ye not of a doubtful mind." Now, a doubtful mind is absolutely contrary to Scripture. So listen, if you would, to Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 17. God says, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Now, if you've got a doubtful mind, you're unwise. If you've got a doubtful mind, you do not understand what the will of the Lord is. And the word for unwise is the word aphrōn, which means foolish, unwise, stupid, one without reason and one without sense. So He says, "Be not stupid." That's what He actually said. "Be not senseless. Don't be a fool," is what He's saying. "But understand what the will of the Lord is." And the reason we're in doubt at many times is because we don't know what the will of the Lord is. We don't know how to act, how to think, how to move or how to proceed.

Now, the Bible tells you in Proverbs chapter 25 in verse 2, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but it is the honor of kings to search a matter out." And so if our Lord then has made us kings and priests unto Himself, it's our responsibility to search out those precepts and those principles and to keep them in our lives so that we can love the Lord with all of our heart, mind, soul, and body.

Now, I want you to look in your Bibles to the book of James chapter 1 and verse 8. James chapter 1. Hebrews, James, look in James chapter 1 if you would please at verse 8. Okay, alright. James chapter 1 and verse 8, look at what God says. "A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways." Wow. A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. You know what a double-minded man is? Actually, the Greek word is dipsychos. It literally means a double-souled man. A double-minded man is someone with basically two faces, two minds, he's a wavering, unstable, uncertain individual. He's an individual that's divided in his interests. And so, God says a double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. Who wants to be around an unstable man? Who wants to be around someone who never knows which end is up and what to do and how to act and what to say. They're always confused. They're always causing heartache and anxiousness and problems. I'm just simply saying a double-minded man, He said, is unstable in all of his ways.

Contemporary Threats Requiring a Biblical Mindset

We cannot be of a doubtful mind, and neither can we be of a double mind, in light of what is going on in our country, in our state, and in our communities. We are facing multiple threats in our nation. We are staring at an economic collapse. You say, "I'm making more money now than I've ever made in my life." I understand, but it's more worthless than it's ever been. When Alice and I got married 61 years ago, I used to give her 10 bucks a week to buy groceries and I'd fuss at her if she didn't bring two or three of it back. Can you imagine that two people could live a whole week on six or seven bucks? That would be meat, milk, bread, veggies, fruit, whatever we needed. You can't even buy a loaf of bread for that today. The interest on the national debt is a billion bucks a day. The national debt is a big fraud and scam anyhow, but the point is, you look around. If I had time, I could tell you about the hyperinflation in Germany in 1923, when the

Deutschmark was so worthless they wallpapered their houses with it. One of my favorite stories is about the German woman who had a wheelbarrow full of money. She was on her way to the bakery to buy a loaf of bread and she saw a fight. She put her wheelbarrow down and parted the people so she could look in and see who was fighting. When her curiosity got satisfied, she turned around and someone had emptied the wheelbarrow of all the money and stolen the wheelbarrow. The wheelbarrow was worth more than the money. We're facing an economic collapse. We're talking about the power grid possibly going down. Our power grid has not been updated since the 1970s. California was taken offline by someone who shot up some of the huge transformers. There is only one manufacturer of high voltage transformers, and if you placed an order today it would take six months to a year to get one. We're not only talking about an EMP from China or North Korea; talk about the solar flares!

The Carrington Effect shut down all the telegraph lines about a hundred years ago, in 1849 or thereabouts, from a solar flare. I get notices from an astronomical laboratory in Australia every day, and have for years, about solar flares—when they originate, their intensity, and when they disappear. Sometimes I get a dozen a day, because the sun is continually shooting out these solar flares. All you have to do to take down the power grid—did you read just this past month where some Iranian hacker shut down the power grid in Pennsylvania? Shut it down! An Iranian hacker! I'm simply saying we're facing an economic collapse and a failing power grid. Not only that, and I'm being very precise when I say this, we are facing one of the most corrupt and treasonous administrations that has ever been in the seat of power in years. The collapse of our nation and our way of life is at hand.

God has allowed me, and I know Dr. Bowen and several others, to live long enough to see changes in this nation, our state, our community, and people. It's the absolute truth: when I was a teenager and a younger man, if I wanted to see a cop, I had to go uptown and look around because there were so few. Back when I was a boy, at least most people lived by the Ten Commandments; they may not have been Christians, but they at least had morality. When I was much younger, my father used to take us down to Miami, Florida, where relatives were, for a two-week vacation every year.

We never locked the house or moved expensive equipment anywhere; it was all outside. When we came back after two weeks, everything was exactly the way we left it. You try that today.

All I'm trying to say is there have been changes. Now, Christian principles no longer hold sway in our Congress, our judicial system, or our administrative offices. I have friends right now fighting injustice through the courts, and even the higher courts are just as corrupt as the day is long. It doesn't really matter to them about truth. So let me make something exceedingly clear right now: I'm certainly not advocating revolution or sedition. But what I am going to advocate is a biblical mindset when it comes to our defense, our families, and our property.

You have to know how to act biblically and scripturally during times of great stress and anguish. I have endeavored for years to get pastors and Christians to train in multiple ways, one of which has been self-defense. You would be astounded at how long it took me to get preachers out here to train with weapons. Read history: do you realize the movers and shakers during the war for independence were pastors?

The Necessity of Training and Preparation

Jonas Clark at Lexington and Concord, when Sam Adams and John Hancock asked him, "Would his men fight?" said, "Yes, for this very hour, I have trained them." Look at Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg and James Caldwell. The same was true during the War of Northern Aggression: it was the pastors. Pastors are responsible to train their people, and we need training not only in self-defense but medically, in communication, and in a whole lot of areas. For instance, we have a class coming up February 10 and 11 on survival trapping. I've had people tell me, "Brother Weaver, I don't know how to clean a chicken, gut a deer, or skin a squirrel." If everything goes down like they're saying, we're going to be back in the 17th and 18th century, and you better know some of these things. You better know how to plant a garden, have heirloom seeds, and have whatever you need so your family can survive. You have to have a biblical mindset. If we're going to protect our families, we're not going to do it with a doubtful mind or a double-minded, double-souled individual. It's not going to

happen; you're not even going to protect anyone else. You remember what the Bible says: when our Lord was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He said the first is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind." And the second is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." That means if I love myself and I'm willing to protect my life, if I love Alma as myself, I'm willing to protect him. If I love Gordon as myself, I'm willing to protect him. I have a duty and responsibility to protect my neighbors just as I have a duty and responsibility to protect myself. So how in the world can I protect my family if I cannot even protect myself? And how can I protect my neighbor if I can't even protect my family? I'm just asking these questions.

Have you developed a biblical mindset when it comes to the defense of your life, your family, and your property? Do you know what God demands and commands, what He allows and does not allow? When someone is attacking your home and attacking you, it is too late to try to figure out what God allows you to do. When your life or your family's life is on the line, you will have wished that you had really learned to operate your weapon smoothly. Every weapon will malfunction. Most malfunctions are induced by the user—an improper grip, all kinds of things like that—but if you do not know how to correct a malfunction quickly, easily, and naturally, you are going to be in trouble. You will have wished you had practiced more often.

It boggles my mind when I think about all the scenarios that could possibly come up. You will wish you had spent more money on ammo. I get tickled when people ask me, "Brother Weaver, how much ammo do I need?" My response is always, "One more box." And that is the truth, because it is not just you you are preparing for, but your family and your friends as well. So it is too late to try to develop a biblical mindset once everything falls down. If you do not have a biblical mindset, you are going to be a quitter. You are going to give up, give out, quit, and die. It is just that simple. You should have this mindset that you are not going to allow evil to triumph. So many people at this point are going to play the pietist and say, "Well, I'm just willing to die for the Lord." Let me tell you something, folks. I am willing to die, and I am willing to die for the Lord, but I am not willing to die until He ordains it. The truth of the matter is, I had

much rather the wicked die and the righteous live. Augustine, one of the early church fathers, said it like this: "Though defensive violence will always be a sad necessity in the eyes of men of principle, it would be still more unfortunate if wrongdoers should dominate just men."

I don't know about you, but I do believe that Larry Craig was right, the senator, when he said that self-defense is God-given. It predates government. It predates Constitution. It does because God has ordained it. That is a fact. General Black Jack Pershing, and I love General Black Jack Pershing, he's been dead for years, but here's what he said. In fact, he died in 1948. But he said this, "If you know how to shoot and are quite ready to shoot, the chances are you won't have to shoot." And that's a fact.

"Resistance to sudden violence," said John Adams, one of our founders, "resistance to sudden violence for the preservation not only of my person, my limbs, and life, but of my property, is an indisputable right of nature, which I have never surrendered to the public by the compact of society, and which perhaps I could not surrender it if I would." So he says it's just simply a natural right to defend yourself. Now.

We're going to get on some of this a little bit later, but in Nehemiah. There's a verse, in fact, I'm going to be looking at several verses later, but just think about this. If you do not possess the training that you need to protect yourself and your family, your neighbor, then you must require and you must maintain a biblical mindset about training. Nothing comes easy. Nothing. Everything requires work. And when Nehemiah was building that wall, we'll look at it a little bit later, but Nehemiah said they built the wall, why? Because they had a mind to work. Had a mind to work. Do you realize that training is work? I tell people, when we go through the basic class, the basic class is hard work. It really is.

Because you have to learn all the principles, you have to learn muscle memory, all of this. It's just plain hard work. But when you get to the advanced class, that's where the fun part comes in. Because all the hard work has been done. And someone says, "Well, you know, I'd really love to train, but, you know, I just don't have any time." Really? May I tell you something?

Everybody has 24 hours in one day. It's not you don't have enough time. It's that you do not prioritize your time and that's not a priority for you. That's what it means. If you had a biblical mindset on defending yourself and your family and your property, you would have time. You would find time. Someone says, "But you know," and I've heard this one, "ammunition is so expensive." I understand.

But once again, sore funerals. You will wish you would have sacrificed and had the ammo you needed and the training that you needed. So if you think you're going to rely upon the sheriff, his deputies, or the police to help you, you're mistaken. Once you call them, they're only 15 or 30 minutes away. It's just that simple. And I want to tell you this, whether you laugh or whether you cry, and those that hear this, it's still the absolute truth. Most cops, deputies, as well as police, cannot shoot. Now, there are exceptions. I understand that. I know some who are exceptions. I know some who train. But as a whole, they cannot. I have shot beside sheriffs, beside deputies, beside cops.

The worst student I ever had in my entire life out on the range was a cop. He couldn't shoot, he wouldn't listen, he muzzled himself and muzzled everybody else and nobody wanted to be around him. I'm going to tell you one more quick story. The last time, I guess it was, Alice and I were at Front Sight. Front Sight is no longer in existence. It's been bought out by Prairie Fire. But the last time we were there, there was a class of deputies right next to our range. There were 40 deputies, 40 men in the class, 40 of us in our class. And these deputies were not newbies. They were older men.

They were, you know, middle-aged. And some of them had been, I guess, on the force for a number of years. But I knew the instructor. I knew the rangemaster. And so what he would do, he would bring them over to watch us, to watch our range, our students. And he told them, he said, "You watch Pastor Weaver and Alice." And a lot of them got behind us. I know most of you don't ever get to see Alice shoot.

But believe me, she can. And she just really does not miss. And we were making headshots, and we were making those headshots from 10 and 15 yards. And every time I'd shoot, and every time Alice would shoot, boy, those deputies were back there, they were

high-fiving, they'd turn around, they'd high-five Alice, you know, this kind of stuff. They came over every day for four days. They watched the whole class and they would, you know, congregate behind Alice and I and all the other students there. And so we had to leave early the last day of class. And so I walked over to the range master and I said, "Look, these deputies have been coming over every day and watching us shoot. We've got to leave early. Would it be all right if Alice and I came by for about 15 minutes and just watch them shoot?"

He said, "Yes, you may come." After we gathered our things and put them in the car, we walked in and everyone was sitting down. When we entered, every one of them turned and looked at us. I thought, "Why are they looking at us?" The rangemaster came over and whispered in my ear, "I told them they were going to have to shoot against you and Alice." But that was not going to happen, and I knew that.

Now listen to this. I'm telling you the absolute truth. There's a man-on-man competition, and this was the time of day they were doing it. The very first thing: two men, one on the right, one on the left. When they give you the buzzer, you have to come out and shoot and save a hostage. You have a whole hostage there, and a little metal plate just about that wide and about that high, and you're at about 10 yards. You have to flip that plate over without hitting the hostage. Then, at about 15 to 20 yards, there's a full size. You have to hit that plate, put it down, hit another plate, put it down. Whoever does that the fastest and successfully wins that round. You keep doing this until one man is standing.

When we got over all these deputies, we're doing this. If you hit the hostage, if you even graze the hostage, you're out. You lose. I am not making this up. 38 out of the 40 deputies kill the hostage the first thing. Finally, only two did not kill the hostage, and one finally won.

I thought to myself, "Lord, now I understand that bumper sticker, 'I don't dial 9-1-1.'" I'm simply pointing out the fact: we've got to have a biblical mindset. If you don't have that mindset, you're not going to work, you're not going to train, you're not going to do anything except quit.

God Gives a Sound Mind, Not Fear

Now I want to show you something. Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to 2 Timothy, chapter 1, and look, if you would please, at verse 7. I hope you can quote this verse. This is a wonderful, wonderful verse. Notice what the Bible says: "For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." God has not given us a spirit of fear. Let me tell you something, if you have fear, it did not come from God. It may come from your own ignorance, it may come from peer pressure, it may come from the world, it may come from the devil, but it does not come from God. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. You know what the word sound means? It means a mind that is rational, one without illusion, one that is purposeful, one that is deliberate, one that is set.

God gives us a set mind. Here is the problem in Christianity today: most professing Christians do not have a set mind on any subject, not just defense. They live as children who refuse to grow up, think, and apply truth. Mark this down: God requires you to think, to have a biblical mindset on every subject imaginable that He tells us in the Bible. So here is the question. You do have a mindset. Is it biblical or humanistic? Are you thinking rationally, biblically, scripturally? Or are you just thinking, "Well, I'll trust whatever happens"? No. God demands a biblical mindset. Did you know the Scripture says, "Let this mind be in you which also is in Christ Jesus"? Did you know the Bible says, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind"? God requires you to bring every thought into captivity to Jesus Christ, so you have a mindset that is biblical and scriptural. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for your grace and mercy. We pray, Lord, that you would continue to teach us, make us, and give us a biblical mindset in all of these areas. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 39

Cataclysmic Judgments

August 24, 2023

Introduction and Scripture Reading

Today we will look at three passages: Matthew 24, Luke 17, and 2 Peter 2. You will understand why in just a little bit. In Matthew 24:38–39, the Word of God says, “For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.”

Luke 17:27 says, “They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.”

Review of Previous Message on Divine Dispossession

Then, in 2 Peter 2:5, the Word of God says, “And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.”

Let me remind you that some of you were not here last week. If you have not listened to that message or looked at it, I would encourage you to do so. The title of the message was "Will America Be Destroyed? And Will You Be Dispossessed?" I went through the Bible and showed where God was absolutely sovereign and had the right to dispossess any nation that He chose to dispossess, because everyone was under His sovereign control. God is not limited in His authority over nations.

It was just like you and I, if we had rental properties and someone would not pay his rent, or someone was destroying our property. We would do everything we could to kick them out. That is exactly what God did to several nations. He had the right to dispossess them, and that is exactly what He did.

To the southern kingdom and to the northern kingdom later on, as I showed. Today we are building upon that with this message on cataclysmic judgments. When I mention cataclysmic judgments, I must ask: What kind of scenery arrives in your mind when you hear the word cataclysmic? Usually, when we think about that word, we conjure up images of death, destruction, chaos, confusion, and upheaval.

If you were to look up the word cataclysm or cataclysmic in the dictionary, you would find two basic definitions. Number one is this: any violent upheaval, especially one of a social or political nature. Number two, in physical geography, is a sudden and violent physical action producing change in the earth's surface. A devastating earthquake or a flood would be an example of what you and I would call a cataclysmic change in the earth's surface or geography.

Defining Cataclysmic Judgments

The French Revolution would also be an excellent illustration of a political cataclysm. During the French Revolution, thousands were beheaded and murdered, churches were destroyed, and businesses were destroyed, all under the guise of democratic tyranny.

There are also theological cataclysmic judgments. Those judgments take place in time and in history. God does indeed judge nations in time and in history. I pointed out last week, and I am

going to quote it again, that someone has said, “Nations do not have a soul to damn nor an arse to kick.” The word “arse” is an old English word for the rear end. That is exactly right. That is why God does indeed judge nations in time and in history.

So I want you to look in your Bibles, if you would, to Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 31. Proverbs 11, and look, if you would please, at verse 31. Here is a truth that goes along with that statement. Proverbs 11,

Temporal Judgments Point to Final Judgment

Verse 31, God says, "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." So the righteous are going to be recompensed in the earth. That means they are going to be recompensed in this life, in time and in history. The word "recompense" means to pay back. I give you what you deserve. The truth of the matter is this: Christians do not have to wait until we get to heaven to be blessed. We are blessed in time and in history. God's blessings always follow obedience. Certainly God is saying in Proverbs, verse 31, if I give the righteous rewards in time and history, how much more am I going to give the wicked and the sinner what they deserve in time and history as well?

So we have what are known as temporal judgments. Here is a point that most people have overlooked, because we see temporal judgments everywhere. We see them in tornadoes and hurricanes and floods, in all kinds of what you and I would call tragedies or catastrophes. But in Job chapter 19 and verse 29, here is a passage that would do you well to memorize, so that you can apply it and think of it every time you see what the world calls a tragedy or catastrophe. God says, "Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment." What God is saying is that every temporary judgment, every temporal judgment that you and I see in time and history, is simply pointing to the reality and the fact that there is an eternal and final judgment.

Every passage that I read when we began this message—in Matthew, in Luke, and in 2 Peter—was about Noah's flood. Every time you saw the word "flood" in each of those passages, it came

from a special Greek word. That Greek word is kataklusmos. That is the word flood, and that is where we get our English word cataclysm.

The Flood as a Cataclysmic Judgment

So God is saying that the flood was a cataclysmic judgment, a cataclysmic event. Genesis 7:11-12 explains why. The Bible says, "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights."

Note that certain day of the month: all of a sudden, the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. Noah preached approximately 120 years and apparently never had any converts. The Bible says that he was indeed a preacher of righteousness. Here is a good question: Why did those people not believe Noah when he talked about rain coming, a flood coming, God opening the windows of heaven, and the foundations being broken up?

Why did they not listen to Noah? Why did they not believe him? Here is why. The antediluvians—those people who lived in Noah's day—had never seen rain. Rain is a common occurrence for us; it has happened about every day this past week or so in our place, for which I am thankful. But Genesis 2:6 says, "But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground."

Back in Noah's day, it was the mist that went up. Noah preached that there was going to be a great flood, but they had never seen a flood, experienced a flood, or experienced rain falling from heaven. The truth of the matter is that this is exactly what happened. That is why 2 Peter 2:5 says, "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the cataclysm upon the world of the ungodly."

It is called a cataclysm. God then brought a cataclysmic judgment upon the old world. He judged them in time and in history. Please understand that this is referred to as a cataclysmic judgment.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain was also the result of a cataclysmic judgment. Look in your

Bibles, if you would, to Genesis chapter 19 while you are there. As you are turning to Genesis 19, let me explain something in light of an article that I am going to read to you momentarily. But let us read this first. Look in Genesis chapter 19, beginning with verse 23. The Bible says: "The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."

Sodom and Gomorrah as Cataclysmic Judgment

God not only destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah; He also destroyed the cities of the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. Watch this carefully: the judgment extended beyond those two cities to the cities of the plain, their inhabitants, and everything that grew upon the ground.

When the Bible says that God rained, in verse 24, brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, the word "brimstone" is actually burning sulfur. It is a stone that actually burns. The reason I explain this is to show the difference between an immediate work of God and a mediate work of God. An immediate work of God is when God works without the use of means. A mediate work of God is when God works, but He uses means.

If Dinah got sick, say with a terrible disease, and we all came and prayed for her, and God just miraculously healed her and raised her up, that would be an immediate work of God. If we came and prayed for her and God did not raise her up immediately like that, but He did use medicine and He did use doctors, that would be a mediate work of God. God would be working through and using means.

So how in the world did God rain fire and brimstone out of heaven? There are some who suggest, based upon some evidence, that God sent a meteorite to hit Sodom and Gomorrah. God certainly controlled it one way or the other. It was either an immediate work of God, or a mediate work because God used means one way or the other. They suggest that it might have been a meteorite because of the super-heated material found upon the land.

Researchers presented preliminary findings on the subject at this year's annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research in November and had been developing the theory since at least 2015. Radiocarbon evidence indicates that a group of civilizations flourished in the area for over two millennia, until approximately 1700 BC, when the mud-brick walls of the buildings simultaneously disappeared, leaving only the stone foundations.

At the same time, pottery in the settlements was heated into glass within milliseconds. Analysis of the zircon crystals formed in the process indicates that they were briefly exposed to temperatures of approximately 4,000 to 12,000 degrees Celsius, comparable to the temperature of the surface of the sun. Four thousand degrees Celsius equals 7,232 degrees Fahrenheit. The source then states that multiplying 7,232 by four gives 21,696 degrees Fahrenheit, emphasizing that the temperatures found in the zircon had to be super, super hot.

According to two of the archaeologists, the explosion also rained platinum and molten lava on the region. This further confirms that a meteor was the source, since platinum is found in higher concentrations in meteors than on earth. The researchers estimate that approximately 40,000 to 60,000 people living in the region were killed, and that a 500-square-kilometer area was rendered uninhabitable for 600 to 700 years. They believe the area was stripped of its topsoil and that salts from the nearby Dead Sea spread over the land, destroying its fertility.

Genesis 19:27-28 says, “And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.” In other words, it happened instantly and suddenly. It was a complete and total devastation.

When we think of something like this happening, we normally think of a nuclear explosion. If you have not recently researched how to prepare for and survive a nuclear explosion, you need to do so, especially in light of what has been happening in Russia, where there was an insurrection and reports that one man, whose name I cannot pronounce, may even have had access to nuclear weapons. I hope

that has been worked out. I am simply saying that if you are in the impact of a nuclear weapon, no preparation is needed because you will be incinerated instantly. However, if you are miles and miles away, it is not the impact or explosion that will get you, but the radioactive fallout, from which you can protect yourself. That is a fact.

But when we think of something like this, we today think of a nuclear explosion. Let us turn to Matthew chapter 24 and look at verse 7: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." Clearly, then, we would consider a famine God's divine judgment, especially based upon Amos chapter 4, and certainly pestilence. Wars can be very destructive, and they can happen instantly.

I remember reading about Selco in the Bosnian war. He was from Bosnia. They went to bed fine, with no problems, and woke up the next morning surrounded by armies. He went on to say how they had to burn all the trim in their houses and the trees around them just to stay warm and cook. Then they had to go out at night and try to evade the snipers simply to find things to eat. We would call that a catastrophe, a tragedy, or a cataclysmic judgment.

But notice that our Lord is simply talking about the fact that these things are going to happen. Certainly an earthquake would be a catastrophic judgment. That is for sure.

So let me ask you this question. Since we have looked at Sodom and Gomorrah and at the flood, are there examples of cataclysmic judgments outside of the Bible? The answer is yes. I am going to give you two of them today, and mention a third one in passing. I want you to understand that things like this do indeed happen in time and history.

The first example is the island of Jamaica. A lot of people go to Jamaica for a vacation; it is certainly one of the beautiful islands, that is for sure. Jamaica was originally claimed by England, but it was too far for England to protect. Therefore, Jamaicans turned to privateers, buccaneers, and pirates to protect them from Spain, because Spain was on the warpath at that particular time. The

unofficial capital of Jamaica was a city called Port Royal. It was one of the busiest and wealthiest ports in the West Indies, known as the storehouse and the treasury of the West Indies.

Historical Cataclysmic Judgments: Port Royal, Jamaica (1692)

It was also known as one of the wickedest places on earth. It was a port for all of these pirates, privateers, and buccaneers. Port Royal grew to surpass Boston—that is, Boston, Massachusetts—as England's most prosperous New World settlement. Since it was the port for the pirates and buccaneers, drinking and gaming houses, slave trading, brothels, taverns, and grog shops attracted pirates, cutthroats, and whores. It was considered one of the vilest places upon the face of the earth. It was called the wickedest city at that time and also the Sodom of the New World.

The privateers, buccaneers, and pirates attacked Spanish ships and stole all the gold, silver, and whatever else they wanted. They brought it back to Port Royal in Jamaica. Thus, the city became extremely wealthy, but also extremely wicked. So what happened?

At 11:43 AM local time on June 7, 1692, Port Royal, Jamaica, was hit by a powerful 7.7 magnitude earthquake. The earthquake caused a landslide, forcing a section of the harbor to collapse into deeper water, and then generated a tsunami that destroyed 90 percent of the city's buildings. Furthermore, after the main shock, a further two-thirds of the city slipped into the sea within two minutes. The city was completely covered with water. Approximately 2,000 people drowned, and about 1,000 more perished from the earthquake.

Graves were opened, and bodies were washed about. Enormous waves tossed ships from the harbor into the buildings, and in many places the ground literally opened up and swallowed people alive, then sealed back together.

The National Geographic article titled "How the Wickedest City on Earth Was Sunk by an Earthquake," dated July 29, 2022, describes what happened. On the morning of June 7, 1692, the church rector of Port Royal, Jamaica, was running late for a lunch appointment. A friend entreated him to delay just a while longer.

That small choice saved his life. The ground began to roll and tumble, the quaking increased in intensity, and the two men heard the church tower collapse into the rubble. The rector sprinted outside for open ground. By his description, the land split open, swallowing crowds of people and homes in one gulp and then sealing closed. The sky darkened to red, mountains crumbled in the distance, and geysers of water exploded from seams ripped in the earth.

He turned to see a great wall of seawater swelling high above the town. In three minutes, Port Royal—"the fairest town of all the English plantations, the best emporium and mart of this part of the world, exceeding in its riches, plentiful in all good things"—was shaken and shattered to pieces.

Reverend Heath wrote, "Port Royal was terribly destroyed by an earthquake and breaking into the sea upon it. The destruction was sudden. In four minutes multitudes were killed by the falling houses. I believe God I never in my life saw such a terror. The earth opened and swallowed up people before my face. The sea swallowed up the greatest part of that wretched sinful place. They're so wicked I fear God will utterly destroy all by this dreadful judgment. By this terrible judgment God will make them reform their lives, for there was not a more ungodly people on the face of the earth."

A Quaker resident, John Pike, wrote on June 19, 1692, "Ah brother, if thou did see those great persons that are now dead upon the water thou couldst never forget it. Great men who were so swallowed up with pride that a man could not be admitted to speak with them, and women whose top-knots, their hairdos, seem to reach into the clouds, now lie stinking upon the water and are made meat for fish and fowls of the air." Samuel Bernard wrote, "We shall be unworthy of God's mercies if we be not by His judgments taught to learn righteousness."

What was left of the Jamaican Council issued this order: "We are become an instance of God Almighty's severe judgment. Therefore, every future 7th of June be kept and observed by all the inhabitants of this island as an anniversary day of fasting and humiliation, in hopes that acknowledging manifold sins and wickedness committed against His Divine Majesty may appease God's imminent wrath and

prevent heavier judgments." Everyone who was left alive recognized that this was a cataclysmic judgment from God.

The Reverend John Shower wrote this in 1693: "It is dreadful to think how atheism and infidelity prevails, and barefaced deism with the rejection of Christianity and all revealed religion. If you do not unfeignedly give up yourselves to God in Christ as your Savior and sovereign, your judgment is near, your destruction is at hand. You must perish, and that more dreadfully than most others in the world."

Here is what I want you to think about: three minutes' time—two, three, four at the absolute most. Two would be the earthquake, three the swallowing, and four, of course, the devastation of all the houses. In three minutes' time, it was over for Port Royal. Not only were hundreds of people drowned or buried alive, but corpses floated upon the water. Skeletons were torn from the tombs in the graveyard. The buccaneers' loot and all of that wealth was gone. Their royal, rowdy living was over.

The fall of economic Babylon is described in Revelation 18: "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come." And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

“And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried

when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate."

When you stop and think about the destruction that could happen to economic Babylon in one hour, and the destruction that happened in Port Royal, Jamaica, in three minutes, have you considered this? Some people do not even get the luxury of three minutes. Consider how fast a bullet can travel and how quickly an automobile can crash. You do not get three minutes. Port Royal, Jamaica, was totally destroyed by a cataclysmic judgment from God.

If you have never read anything on the Johnstown flood, I would encourage you to do so, because you will see, I think, where we are today by studying it. Johnstown, Pennsylvania, is another example of cataclysmic judgments. The account of the flood is found in excerpts written by Edwin Hutchinson in "Floods of Johnstown," published in 1989. The flood actually happened on May the 31st, 1889. By that morning, there was water in the streets of Johnstown. People had water up to their ankles. Store owners moved their wares out of the water, while people in their homes lifted their furniture and stacked it on blocks or anything that would keep it dry.

Historical Cataclysmic Judgments: Johnstown Flood (1889)

Because they understood that water usually came from snowmelt, they were accustomed to excessive rain and this kind of flooding. Even as the residents of Johnstown prepared for their long wait, supposing it was merely normal flooding, activity at the South Fork Dam, just fourteen miles above the city, was frantic. The South Fork Dam held back Lake Conemaugh, the pleasure lake of the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club. Officials feared the dam would fail and, since mid-morning, had worked to prevent it because they feared the consequences. The lake was a little more than two miles long, little more than a mile wide at its widest spot, and sixty feet deep at the dam itself.

Among the attempts were efforts to add height to the dam, dig a second spillway to relieve pressure from the breast, and finally release the heavy screens placed on the overflow to keep the stock fish from escaping into the streams below. A little after three p.m., while most people in Johnstown were settling in to be marooned for the evening, club officials and the laborers they recruited, together with a good-sized audience from the little community of South Fork just below the dam, watched in dumbfounded horror as the dam just moved away.

Within an hour, a body of water that engineers estimated moved into the valley with the force of Niagara Falls rolled into Johnstown. Within fourteen miles of accumulated debris, including houses, barns, animals, and people both dead and alive, followed it. Those who saw it coming described it as a rolling hill of debris about forty feet high and half a mile wide. Most only heard the thunderous rumble as it swept into the city, adding Johnstown to a wake that already included bits and pieces of South Fork, Mineral Point, Woodvale, and East Conemaugh.

Some continued to wait out the disaster in their houses. Others were picked up by the flood wave for a wild ride through town to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company stone bridge, where debris piled 40 feet high over 30 acres and then caught fire. I do not know how fire can burn with all the water and wet, but it did. Still others were shot down the Conemaugh River, to die or to be rescued at Nineveh, Bolivar, or some other community downstream.

The dam that washed away was a 72-foot-high earthen dam—72 feet high. When it broke, when the dam washed away 14 miles from Johnstown, it was over for Johnstown in 10 minutes. The scale of this flood is almost unimaginable. We are talking about a cataclysmic judgment. Here are some statistics: 2,209 people died. Ninety-nine entire families died, including 396 children. One hundred twenty-four women and 198 men were left widowed. More than 750 victims were never identified and rest in the plot of the unknown in Grandview Cemetery.

Bodies were found as far away as Cincinnati, and, as best I can tell, Cincinnati, Ohio, was nearly 400 miles away. Bodies were found as far away as Cincinnati as late as 1911. The flood happened in 1889;

in 1911 they were still finding bodies. Sixteen hundred homes were destroyed, and $17 million in property damage was done. That would have been $17 million in gold dollars in 1889, which should have been in the billions today. Four square miles of downtown Johnstown were completely destroyed. The pile of debris at the stone bridge covered 30 acres. The distance between Johnstown and the dam was 14 miles.

The dam was owned by the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club, an exclusive club that counted Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick among its members. The dam contained 20 million tons of water before it gave way—about the same amount of water that goes over Niagara Falls in 36 minutes. If you have ever seen Niagara Falls, you know the water is astounding. Flood lines were found as high as 89 feet above river level. The great wave measured 35 to 40 feet high and hit Johnstown at 40 miles per hour. Think about that. The force of the flood swept several locomotives, weighing 170,000 pounds each, as far as 4,800 feet.

That is almost a mile. A 170,000-pound locomotive was swept nearly a mile away. And $3,742,818.78 was collected for the Johnstown relief effort from the United States and eighteen foreign countries. Today that would have been a whole lot more; that was 1889 money. Johnstown continued to have floods, in 1936 and 1977. The American Red Cross, led by Clara Barton herself and organized in 1881, arrived in Johnstown on June 5, 1889. It was the first major peacetime disaster for the Red Cross.

Why in the world did these people stay in their homes when water was ankle-deep inside them and perhaps deeper in the streets? Why not say, “I know there is a dam fourteen miles away. That rascal might break. Let me leave”? They were accustomed to a little flooding—the snow melting, excessive rain, and additional water released from the dam.

Moreover, their attitude was, “That could never happen here. That dam would never break. We will never experience anything like that.” You remember that I talked about American exceptionalism, even Christian exceptionalism and national exceptionalism. This is the attitude we have in America: we can never experience anything

like this because we are a Christian nation—which we are not, not by any stretch of the imagination.

Consider 2004, the tsunami that struck Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. A 9.1 earthquake occurred in the Indian Ocean and propelled a tsunami toward the shoreline. It struck with such force that approximately 230,000 lives were lost, probably more. Why would God not judge us? We are wicked, vile, and transgressors.

Why do we consider ourselves the exception? We have oceans—not only on the West Coast, but on the East Coast—and the Gulf of Mexico. Russia has a Poseidon torpedo, actually a nuclear torpedo, that can be activated miles out in the ocean and produce a tsunami that will come on land and wipe out miles inland. When you stop and think, we have oceans. Even if

The Danger of Exceptionalism

There were not attacked by a foreign enemy; we have fault lines and shifts in those fault lines. All I am saying is, it could happen here as it could happen anywhere else.

Now let me show you how God clears up exceptionalism. In Luke 13, beginning with verse 1, we read: “There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.” Which was an atrocious thing. “And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Now remember that Jesus Christ Himself was from Galilee. He was from Nazareth in Galilee. Yes, He was born in Bethlehem, Judah, but after they came back from Egypt, He was raised as a Galilean. He was a Nazarene. They came to our Lord and said, “There were some Galileans down here worshiping God and giving His sacrifice, and Pilate had them murdered, and their blood mingled with the sacrificial blood of their animals.” Our Lord said,

"Do you think these Galileans were exceedingly great sinners, sinners above everyone else? I tell you, no."

Then He brought up the eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them. Were they sinners above all men who dwelt in Jerusalem? "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Cataclysmic Judgments

What is our Lord doing? He is destroying exceptionalism. You do not have to be a big, bad, ugly sinner to perish in judgment. You are a sinner—that is sufficient in itself. Our Lord is warning us and demanding that we repent of our sins. Mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically, we must not only turn from sin; we must turn to Him.

There is no Galilean exceptionalism, no Judean exceptionalism, no American exceptionalism, no national exceptionalism, and no individual exceptionalism. No, no, no: unless you repent, you shall perish. Repent or perish. That is exactly what our Lord is saying.

Application: America Under Judgment

Most Americans and most American Christians think that nothing like that can happen here. Let me make a couple of applications. I am tired of seeing a certain sign every Sunday morning as I drive to church. Beside the highway, in big, bold letters, it says, "God Bless America." I have to stop and ask myself, Why should He bless America? We do not bless Him. We do not worship Him. We do not obey Him. In fact, we do everything contrary to Him. We will not even mention His name in schools, governmental buildings, or courtrooms.

What I am about to tell you happened probably twenty to twenty-five years ago. I was in a courtroom supporting a Christian brother, a fellow pastor. He and his wife were being charged with something absolutely ridiculous. Another pastor's wife was on the stand to testify about the duties of a pastor's wife, showing that my pastor friend's wife was totally innocent. When she took the stand, the judge said, "You cannot mention the Bible in this courtroom."

How can you explain the duties of a pastor's wife without mentioning the Bible or Scripture? That was twenty or twenty-five years ago. We know what the Bible mentioned in this classroom. We know what the Bible mentioned in this courtroom. We know what the Bible mentioned in this governmental building. Why?

The point I am trying to make is that water is around our ankles and knees, and we are not even paying attention. We are already under His judgment. All you have to do is look around at our sick, perverted, and wicked societies. Consider the so-called "pride parade." There is nothing to be proud of. Perversion is not something to be proud of. Yet this is what they were chanting: "We're here and we're queer and we're coming for your children." Really? Don't come for mine, and don't come for yours. I am simply pointing out the fact that we are already under God's judgment. Look at what is being promoted by our government, approved by our churches, and tolerated by the people.

It is going to get worse until God sends His cataclysmic judgment and wipes out many people. "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." The truth is, it is only a matter of time until we experience a cataclysmic judgment, because God does judge nations and societies in time and in history.

Conclusion and Prayer

He judged the antediluvians in Noah's day. He judged the people of Sodom and Gomorrah in Lot's day. He judged the people of Jamaica in 1692 and the people of Johnstown in 1889. All you have to do is look around at the hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, famine, and pestilence. God is in control of all this. All you have to do is read Amos chapter 4.

Years ago, Pastor Bob McCurry and I were at a meeting where about a hundred preachers had gathered. Hurricane Andrew had just come through Florida. Dr. Dixon asked a tall, lanky black preacher who was there to pray. Brother McCurry and I were sitting side-by-side, and that old preacher began praying. We looked at one another with our eyes and mouths open. He prayed, "Lord, we know that You are sovereign. We know that Hurricane Andrew has gone in the path You directed before the foundation of the world. We know

that You are in control. We know that Your judgments happen." After he finished, I said to Brother McCurry, "That man did more preaching in five minutes than most preachers have done all day."

There are cataclysmic judgments. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth. May we be forewarned. May we pay attention, Lord, to the water around our ankles, up to our knees, and coming up to our loins. Father, we pray that You will grant us repentance as individuals and help us to be wise to prepare and wise to be warned. As Your Word declares, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." Give us Your grace and mercy, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 40

Do You Have A Canon?

August 24, 2023

The title of this message, “Do You Have a Canon?” is serious. It is not a joke, nor is it simply an attention-getter. The Apostle says, “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly.”

Introduction: The Meaning of 'Canon'

If you normally ask a Southern man, “Do you have a cannon?” the normal reply would be, “No, but I've always wanted one.” Obviously, the title is a play on words. I spelled it C-A-N-O-N, a canon, not C-A-N-N-O-N, a cannon. A cannon is the type that shoots, much like

that 12-pound Napoleon, a devastating piece of equipment used during the War of Northern Aggression. We may live our entire lives and never own a cannon, C-A-N-N-O-N, the kind that shoots.

Our English word “canon,” C-A-N-O-N, is derived from the Greek word “kanon,” or “canon,” K-A-N-O-N, or K-A-N, we would say Omega N, which would still be a long O. Literally, the word means a measuring stick or a measuring rod. The Greek word “canon” can be used in three particular ways. First, it can refer to what we would call a carpenter's line or carpenter's measuring tape. It can also refer to a sphere of activity or authority that is limited, or what we would call a fixed boundary. It is also used as a rule, a standard, a principle of law for life and activity.

We cannot live our lives without a canon—that is, without a measuring stick, without a measuring rod. The truth of the matter is, you cannot live your life without one. You cannot have a home, a school, a church, a society, or a state without a fixed rule of law. If you do not have a standard, a fixed rule of law, then inevitably you will fall into either totalitarianism, tyranny, or sheer anarchy. The very first obstacle we have to face in ourselves, therefore, is whether or not we are going to live our lives according to God's law.

The Necessity of a Fixed Rule

The real issue is always between theonomy and autonomy. Theonomy refers to God's law. Autonomy refers to self-law or man's law. Our dilemma, our choice, is always between God's will and our will. The truth of the matter is that each of us must face this dilemma. We are either going to honor God by following His canon, His measuring stick, His measuring rod, or we are going to dishonor God and substitute our own standard for it. That standard inevitably is going to appease and satisfy our lusts and our flesh.

Unless we obey God, we cannot control ourselves. The reason we cannot control ourselves without obeying God is that our flesh is never satisfied, and our lusts are never satisfied. In fact, the more we get, the more we want. It is like our Lord said, "You cannot serve God and mammon, because either you'll love the one and hate the other."

The Flesh Cannot Be Controlled Without God's Law

The truth of the matter is, we are much like Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. Rehoboam did some wise things, and he did some very unwise things. Second Chronicles 11:29 tells us one thing that Rehoboam did that was wise and another thing I believe was very unwise. The Bible says, "And he," that is Rehoboam, "dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city: and he gave them victuals in abundance. And he desired many wives." He was not satisfied with one, five, or ten. He just desired many wives.

Consequently, the more you appease the flesh, the more the flesh desires and wants. It is only by the law of God that we are enabled, by His grace and mercy, to control ourselves. Without divine help, we can do nothing.

Let me give you a good illustration. Hold 2 Corinthians chapter 10. Look in your Bibles, if you would, to Proverbs chapter 16, and then to Proverbs chapter 25. Proverbs 16:32 says, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

If you can control yourself, you are better than the mighty. If you can rule your spirit, you are better than the greatest warrior who is able to capture a city. This is explained a little better in Proverbs 25:28: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

If a city is broken down and has no walls to protect it, you simply walk in, get what you desire, and walk out. The principle is very simple: I cannot make you angry unless you allow me to make you angry. If you can control your spirit, if you can rule yourself, there is no way in the world I can make you angry. I cannot make you jealous unless you allow me to make you jealous. I cannot make you irritable unless you allow me to make you irritable.

In other words, if you can control your spirit and yourself, and rule over your own feelings and emotions, God says you are better than the man who can capture a city. You are greater than the greatest warrior whatsoever. God is telling us that there is indeed a

boundary, a limit, and a law that enables and teaches us to rule ourselves and our spirits. That law is indeed the law of God.

Context: Paul Defends His Apostleship Against Judaizers

In 2 Corinthians chapter 10, the apostle Paul is defending his apostleship and his authority against a group known as the Judaizers. He says, “Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.”

“For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.”

The apostle readily confesses that he belongs to Christ exactly as these Corinthians belong to Christ. He also points out that he has been given authority over them for their edification and not for their destruction. His apostolic authority is there as well. Although some were making fun of him, saying that he was willing to terrify them by letters but that his presence was weak and his speech contemptible, he says, “Yes, wait till I get there. You're going to find out that I'm going to be exactly in person that which I am in letters.”

In other words, his letters might be weighty and powerful, but he would be weighty and powerful in person, too, because he belonged to Christ and because of the authority Christ had given him. Here is the problem: these Judaizers were constantly commending themselves while condemning the apostle Paul and those associated with him. How in the world could they condemn the apostle Paul? How could they condemn those who worked with the apostle?

The answer is that they very easily condemned them because they had their own standard, their own rule. They were measuring themselves, as we will see, by themselves and among themselves.

The Judaizers had their own standard, their own rule, their own canon, so to speak. They were saying that it was all right to believe in Jesus Christ—in fact, that one should believe in Jesus Christ—but if one really wanted to be saved, then one had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. They were adding works to grace and adding works to faith.

The Judaizers' Self-Commendation and Folly

In Acts 15:5, the Apostle says, “But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed,” so they were believers in Christ, “saying that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” It was all right to believe in Jesus Christ, but they demanded that these works be added to faith.

In Galatians 2, the Apostle Paul actually refers to these Judaizers as false brethren. He says, “Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.” Remember, Titus was a Greek. “And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue.”

These Judaizers were constantly belittling the Apostle Paul and those associated with him. He refers to them clearly as false brethren because they were trying to bring believers back into bondage, making them not only be circumcised but also keep all the works of the law, referring to the ceremonial law and everything involved.

These Judaizers were always commending themselves, and what they wanted was for the Apostle Paul to end up doing what they were doing. So, if you will look in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 3

and verse 1, the Apostle Paul asks this question of the Corinthians. Remember, he was the founder of the Corinthian church. They knew him; he was their minister. The Bible says, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others," that is, the Judaizers, "epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?" Paul said, "Why do we need to commend ourselves?"

They were the ones who had been there. The Corinthians were converted under their ministry, and the church started under their ministry. They knew them. They did not need any letters of commendation.

Notice also 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 12: "For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart." He is talking about the Judaizers again. They wanted to glory in appearance; they wanted to glory in circumcision. That is what they wanted to glory in, not in the heart. The apostle says that they were not going to commend themselves like that.

Now go back to 2 Corinthians 10 and look at verse 12: "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

The interesting thing in verse 12 is when the Apostle Paul says, “For we dare not.” The Greek word for “dare” there is “tolmao,” and it refers to extreme conduct. In other words, the thought is this: “We would never do something so rash, so unethical, so brazen, so stupid. We would never dare to do anything like this.” Clearly, he says in verse 12, “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves.”

He is saying that we do not want to be identified with these people in any way whatsoever. Whatever they are doing, we are not going to do. We are not going to fall into that trap. According to this passage, there are people, institutions, and organizations with which we, as Christians who believe in Jesus Christ and in the Word of God, do

not want to be identified or associated. Those who hate God, those who despise His Word—there is no way in the world.

The Danger of Setting Your Own Standard

That is why the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians, "What fellowship hath light with darkness? What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" The answer is absolutely none. There is no way that we want to be associated with these people. Paul said, "I don't want to be associated with them."

Moreover, he says in verse 12, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves." The Apostle Paul is saying that other people are not our standard. I can be as holy, brave, bold, upright, righteous, and just as I want to be, as long as I can define those terms and set my own standard—as long as I can make my own rule. This is why there are cliques in churches: this group, that group, and another group. You get these little cliques going.

The reason you get these little cliques going is that you do not meet my standard, they do not meet my standard, and I do not meet their standard. So we associate with our own little clique. You will also find this in the prison system. Prisoners thrown into prison for being thieves, say for robbing banks, will congregate together, but the thieves will not associate with the murderers because they are not murderers. The murderers will not associate with the pedophiles, for at least they are not pedophiles. You get all kinds of cliques because people are setting their own standards.

It is the same way with what we would call the snobbish folks: "We have more than you, are better educated than you, or do not dress like you dress. We do not go the places you go." The reason there are snobs is that they have set their own standard and are comparing themselves with others, which the Apostle Paul is going to say is absolutely, totally unwise.

Anytime you compare yourself to someone whom you think is inferior, you will always come away feeling superior. I could look around and see a man rolling in the ditch, drunk in his own vomit, and say, "Well, at least I do not do that. I have never been drunk. I

would never do that." I could come away feeling so far superior to that man. Yet pharisaism and self-righteousness are just as much sin as drunkenness. Just as much.

When you compare yourself with someone or commend yourself by comparing yourself with someone, the Apostle is saying that it is deception, self-deception, error, and heresy. We have a brother in our church who has very little hair and shaves his head. He is as bald as a peeled onion. So I told our people this morning, "You know, I could compare my head of hair to Tom's head"

I do not have a full head of wavy black hair, but compared to Tom, I have a lot of hair. Yet if I compared myself to Steve, I would not have much hair. Anytime you compare yourself to someone else, if you believe that person is inferior or worse than you, you will come away feeling superior. That is why we usually do not compare ourselves with someone greater or superior to us: we know we will come away feeling inferior.

Watch what Paul says again in verse 12: "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves." Then he says, "But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." The charges being brought against Paul by the Judaizers were actually what they themselves were doing. They warned Paul to have letters of commendation, yet they were obtaining letters of commendation from themselves by comparing themselves with themselves.

Thus, the Judaizers had set themselves up as the standard for orthodoxy. If you were really orthodox and truly believed the truth, they said, you would believe what they believed. I have known pastors like that. They believe their understanding is the epitome of all understanding. If you agree with them, you have it; but if you disagree or do not see what they see, you are absolutely worthless.

The apostle Paul did not measure up because they had set their own standard, their own rule, their own canon, so to speak. I can be as holy as I want to be as long as I define holiness. I could say, "I can jump, as old and decrepit as I am, flat-footed straight off the floor,

twenty feet into the air." You say I cannot do that. Sure I can, if you allow me to define twenty feet as an inch or two.

That is exactly what these people were doing. You can be whatever you want to be and do whatever you want to do as long as you can define your own standard.

Now Paul says this is not wise; it is foolish. The man who does this is deceived. He has no understanding and is in error. It is like the story of the king who was supposed to be getting a new set of clothes. The scoundrels did nothing, but told the king they had made a suit of clothes that only wise men could see. They pretended to clothe him, and the king admired the clothes because he was not going to admit that he was a fool, that he was unwise. Finally, when they held a parade to show off his new suit, everybody admired it until one of the boys hollered out, "The king is naked. He doesn't have any clothes on."

You see, the truth of the matter is that this is exactly what is happening here. As long as you think you are meeting your own standard, your own rule, you can elevate yourself until all of a sudden your bubble bursts and you see that your rule is self-made and worthless.

Look at verse 13: "But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you." Paul is stating that his boasting will relate only to the measure of the rule which God had distributed unto them, a measure which would reach even unto them. The word "rule" is the Greek word "canon." God's standard, God's rule, measured the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Paul is saying, "I'm thankful that that measure reached even unto you."

God Limits Every Ministry

Has it ever dawned upon you that God limits every minister and every ministry? Look again at verse 13: "But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule," the canon, "which God hath distributed to us, a measure to

reach even unto you." Paul is saying that his ministry is limited by God.

The word "canon" means a measuring stick or measuring rod. It could relate to a carpenter, and it can also relate to a fixed boundary or limitation that God has supplied and given. That is exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying here. Has it ever dawned upon you that God limits every minister and every ministry?

I have had people tell me, "Well, Brother Weaver, surely God does not limit ministers. Surely God does not limit ministries." Well, yes, He does. Consider Isaiah chapter 6. Did God limit the ministry of Isaiah? This is where God calls Isaiah into the ministry. Look at verse 8: "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

"And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

Then said I, Lord, how long? How long do I have to go to a people like this? And he answered, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land."

Now, here is what God told Isaiah: "I want you to go preach, but nobody is going to listen to you. It is not going to be successful. You are not going to have a great awakening. You are not going to have a great revival. Your ministry is just to preach to these people and to tell them that I am going to judge them and destroy them." And that is exactly what God did. So God limited Isaiah's ministry.

If you look in your Bibles to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 1, you will find that He also limited Jeremiah's ministry. Watch this in Jeremiah chapter 1, beginning with verse 7: "But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the

Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." There were three times as much destruction as there was building and planting. And did God limit his ministry? The answer is yes.

Well, let me ask you another question. Did God limit the ministry of Noah? Noah preached for 120 years and never had one convert. Did God limit the ministry of the Apostle Paul? The Apostle Paul had already said that in 2 Corinthians chapter 10. But if you will turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts, chapter 16, beginning with verse 6, you will see that God did indeed limit his ministry: "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." They wanted to go to Asia, and God said, "No, you are not going there." Then, "After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not." Paul's ministry was indeed limited by God.

There is no minister or pastor alive today who has equaled or matched the preaching, teaching, revivals, and ministry that God gave under George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. God gave them an enlarged ministry. It is God who determines the limitations of a ministry.

That is what Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 10: "Thank God I've had a measure given to me by God, but at least that measure has reached even unto you." Paul wanted to stretch out what he could in the portion God had given him, but he was not going beyond that portion. He says in verse 13, "But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule"—that boundary, that fixed boundary—"which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure." We are not trying to go beyond what God has given us. "So we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ."

He goes on to say that he will not boast in other men's labors, because God has clearly given him his own ministry; he has not been given their ministries. Look again at verses 12 and 13: "For we dare

not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you."

First of all, no one has the right, power, or authority to make a competing standard, measuring stick, or rule. No one has the right to make a different canon. God is sovereign. God is absolute. God sets the standard, not man. It is His measuring stick and His measuring rod; therefore, we must obey Him. Everything is to be measured by His measuring rod. Doing the best you can, being good, and doing good occasionally are not His standard.

Following your own rules, instincts, thoughts, or feelings are not His standards. You may have high standards or low standards, but they are not His. Without His standard, you will be condemned. The very thought that you can set your own standard manifests the pride, arrogance, haughtiness, and rebellion of your heart.

You are the creature and not the Creator. You are the child and not the Father. You are the servant and not the Savior. You are the sinner and not the Sovereign. The very thought that you are capable and wise enough to fix your own standard, your own rule, is an insult to God and a demonstration of your pride, your arrogance, and, I would add, your ignorance.

Here is the third thing: setting your own standard, setting your own rule, blinds you to the gifts and the greatness of others who are not of your company. When you set your own standard and rule, you recognize only those who agree with you, only those who follow your standard and rule. I have known pastors who thought that what they believed was the apex of faith, the height of it, and if you did not agree with them, you were in trouble. In fact, I am thinking of two particularly right now who believed they had the right to grill everyone, to see exactly what they believed, and whether their beliefs measured up to their own beliefs and their understanding measured up to their own understanding. That is absolutely insane, because it means they do not understand the doctrine of illumination. No man

can see any truth unless God opens his eyes. No man can understand anything except the Lord gives him understanding.

I have often used Job 12:2 when dealing with these people. Job told his friends, "But no doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." Stop and think about it. "No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." That is the way many people think. They believe they have the epitome of wisdom, and it is going to die with them; you must agree with them or else.

Here is the fourth thing: self-commendation is worthless, and it is not real commendation. In 2 Corinthians 10:18, the Apostle Paul knocks the wind out of the sails of the Judaizers when he says, "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

Matthew Henry gave this brief statement concerning the passage: "Of all flattery, self-flattery is the worst, and self-applause is seldom any better than self-flattery and self-deceit. At the best, self-commendation is no praise, and it is oftentimes as foolish and vain as it is proud. Therefore, instead of praising or commending ourselves, we should strive to approve ourselves." When he says to approve ourselves, he is talking about finding the approval of God through obedience to His word and to His law. So remember this.

The Canon of Scripture as Our Measuring Stick

The word “canon” refers, first, to a carpenter’s measuring rod or stick; second, to a fixed boundary, such as a fixed boundary of authority or of ministry, like the Apostle Paul; and, thirdly, to the rule of law whereby you and I must live and bring our lives into conformity. We refer to the Old Testament as the Old Testament canon and to the New Testament as the New Testament canon. Or we can combine them and say that it is the canon of Scripture.

The word “canon” means a measuring stick or measuring rod. Since the Bible is our canon, it is our measuring stick and measuring rod. Everyone and everything must be measured by the Bible. That is why we as believers say that the Bible is our sole authority for faith and practice.

Do you have a canon? Philippians 3:15 says, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

First, consider the word “perfect.” When he said, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect,” the word “perfect” here does not mean sinless. It does not refer to sinless perfection. The Greek word is teleios, which refers to a man of full age, one who is mature, one who is being brought to an end. So it does not refer to that which is sinless. “Let us therefore, as many as be mature,” that is, there are some areas in which we are mature, “be thus minded. And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded,” in other words, you are not mature in those areas.

"God shall reveal even this unto you." How in the world is God going to reveal to us that wherein we are not mature? He is going to reveal it to us by the Scriptures. Look in verse 16: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained," that is, in the areas where we have reached maturity, "let us walk by the same rule." That is, let us walk by the same canon. What is the canon? It is God's measuring stick, God's rule, His Word. "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same" measure, the same measuring stick, the same measuring rod, the Scriptures. "Let us mind the same thing." The only way that you and I can mind the same thing is by walking by the same rule, which is the canon. Our standard, our rule, our measuring stick is the Word of God. It is not some imagined, fanciful, autonomous structure that someone else has set up or imagined, such as the Judaizers, the government, the Great Reset, the Great Society, or the New World Order. None of those things is our measuring stick. Our measuring stick is the Word of God. We are to walk by this same rule, this same canon.

Paul says in Galatians 6:14-16, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule," this canon, this measuring stick, this measuring rod, "and as many as

walk according to this rule," that is, God's Word, "peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

So who is the Israel of God? Is it those people who live in Israel? No. Is it those people who claim to be Jews? No. He said the Israel of God are those who walk according to this rule, those who walk according to the canon of Scripture. If you are walking contrary to the canon of Scripture, you are not God's. If you walk according to the canon of Scripture, if you will look in verse 15, you are in Christ Jesus.

You've been made a new creature. According to verse 16, you're going to be walking according to His rule. That means you have bowed to Him and recognized Him as Lord. You understand Luke 6:46, when Jesus said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" In other words, if you believe the Lord Jesus Christ and have bowed to Him, you're going to walk according to His rule.

In Philippians 3:3, he says the same thing in different words, but with the same truth: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." If you're walking according to God's rule, you are rejoicing in Jesus Christ, worshiping God, and having absolutely no confidence in the flesh. You understand that you're not capable or able to have a different standard other than God's standard.

Applications: The Folly of Self-Standards and the Necessity of God's Standard

There is nothing more certain, or a more certain indication of folly, than for a man to think that he is capable of setting his own standard of excellence and then, when he has reached that standard, to think that he has arrived. Such an individual is blind, foolish, deceived, and without understanding. That's what the apostle Paul said, and that's why the Judaizers did it. They had their own standard, were meeting their own standard, commending themselves, and measuring themselves by other people. Paul said, "This is totally unwise."

The only way that you may have your own rule or standard is to reject God's standard. When you reject God's standard, you reject His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; you reject His law and His Spirit. It is impossible for any man to set up a different standard than God's without refusing, rejecting, and despising God's standard. So, do you have a canon? The answer is yes. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you have a measuring stick. I can measure Steve by the measuring stick of God's Word, and Steve can measure me by it. We can measure any situation, circumstance, or individual by the measuring stick of God's Word.

Even our Lord said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." In other words, we measure by the Word of God. We do have a canon. We do have a measuring stick, and we need to use it. And we need to bring our lives in conformity to it. Father, thank You for Your love, grace, and mercy. Help us, Lord, to understand Your canon and apply it to our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 41

Why Some Understand and Others Do Not Understand

Part Two of Two

May 25, 2025

Introduction and Scripture Reading

In Matthew 13, beginning with verse 10, we read: “And the disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and

hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

"But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

Understanding as a Sovereign Gift

The title of the message is "Why Some Understand and Others Do Not Understand." This is the second part, because last week I brought a message from this text on why some do not understand and others will never understand. The reality is basically what I preached last week: some will indeed never, never understand. Thankfully, there are some who do comprehend and understand, while others simply do not. Why is this truth given to us and not to others? Why do some understand truth and others not understand truth?

If we go back to verse 10, the disciples came to our Lord and asked Him why He spoke unto them in parables. He answered, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Our Lord answers in such a way that we automatically see the sovereignty of God. Wisdom and understanding are His gifts. Truth is His gift. Therefore, He has absolute authority to dispense His gifts as He sees fit, whenever He pleases, to whomever He pleases, and however He pleases. He said, "unto you it is given," and, as I pointed out last week, the word "given" is didōmi, which literally means it is a gift.

It is something that comes from outside of you. Truth and understanding do not originate in us. They are not of us. They come strictly from God alone. Now, this is the absolute truth from the Word of God.

God Determines Where His Word Is Preached

The truth is, many may not agree with this, but that does not cause it to cease being truth. Many do not like it, but it is still truth. You may

argue with it all you desire, but it is still truth. So, let me give you a good illustration from Acts 16:6-10. The Bible says, “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.”

Now, note first of all that they wanted to go into Asia. Who stopped them? Who forbade them to go? It was God the Holy Ghost. Then they tried to go into Bithynia, and someone stopped them again. It was God the Holy Ghost. So notice: they wanted to go somewhere, and God said, “No, you are not going there.” They tried to go to another place: “No, you are not going there.” In other words, it is God who determines where His Word is preached, how that Word is preached, and how it is sent.

Now, notice the little phrase found in verse 10. The Bible says that they endeavored to go into Macedonia, “assuredly gathering that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel there.” The words “assuredly gathering” come from one Greek word, sumbibazō, and it literally means to cause to coalesce, to cause to come together, or to put together in the mind. They understood in their minds that they were not going to Asia or Bithynia, but were going into Macedonia. Macedonia received the Word of God when Bithynia did not and Asia did not.

We see the same truth in this world today. There are some countries that have the Word of God and some countries that do not have the Word of God. Look at some of the places in Africa. Look at China. Look at Pakistan. Look at any country that you want to look at. It is absolutely heathen, and they simply do not have the Word of God. Clearly, in this instance, the Word of God was withheld from some countries and given to others, at least during that particular time.

Psalm 107:19–20 says, “Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.” Now, here is my question: Did He heal everyone? Did He deliver everyone? Did He save everyone from their destructions? The answer is no. In the context, He saved and healed those to whom He sent His word. It is God, then, who determines where that word is sent. He is sovereign. Truth is His gift.

The Blessing of Seeing and Hearing

He dispenses it as He will. Notice back in Matthew chapter 13, our text, because they ask our Lord, “Why is it that you’re preaching in parables?” What He says is, “Unto you it is given to know the truth. Others, it is not given to know the truth.” That is for sure. He then talks about the reasons, which I will cover momentarily. But look at verses 16 and 17, where He tells His disciples, “But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”

Our Lord says, “You are exceedingly blessed.” Why? Because many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you have seen, but they did not see it. Have you ever stopped to thank the Lord for the gift He has given us in being able to hear the Word of God? The truth is that we hear the Word of God weekly. If we wanted to hear it daily, we could; if we wanted to hear it three times a day, we could. The Word of God is being preached everywhere in this country. We also have many sermons on CDs and DVDs, and anyone can pick up a Bible and read.

If I were to ask how many Bibles you have in your possession, I have no idea how many I possess. I am sure it is fifteen or twenty. The average home probably has three, four, five, or six. But think about all the other countries that do not have the Word of God, and all the homes that do not have the Bible. We should be extremely thankful that God has been pleased to give us truth and to give us understanding of the truth. It is true that we do not have perfect understanding, and that we do not understand all truth.

Nevertheless, a large portion of truth has been given to us that we do understand, and we should be extremely thankful.

J. Barton Payne found 574 verses in the Old Testament that referred to, or pointed in some measure toward, the prophecy of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Alfred Edersheim found 456 such verses. Conservatively speaking, most scholars say there are a minimum of 300 verses referring to Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

Here is why our Lord says, “But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. But many righteous men and prophets have desired to see what you see and hear what you hear.” In other words, He is saying, “I am the Messiah. I am the fulfillment of all these prophecies. I am here before your eyes. Salvation is here.”

In Josh and Sean McDowell's book, "Evidence That Demands a Verdict," printed in 2017, they quote Professor Peter W. Stoner, chairman of the Department of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College. Out of the hundreds of prophecies he examined, he said, the statistical possibility of one person randomly fulfilling just eight of those prophecies is a statistical impossibility.

Remember how many I told you: conservative over 300. He took eight prophecies concerning Christ. First, that He would be born in Bethlehem, Micah 5 and verse 2. Second, that He would be born of a virgin, Isaiah 7:14. Third, that He would be a descendant of David, Isaiah 9:7. Fourth, that He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, Zechariah 11:12. Fifth, that He would be mocked, Psalm 22:7-8. Sixth, that He would be crucified, John 3:14. Seventh, that He would be pierced, Psalm 22:16. Eighth, that He would die with the wicked and be buried with the rich, Isaiah 53:9.

He said that one person fulfilling these eight prophecies by random chance is considered a statistical impossibility. He continued, "...we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all of these eight prophecies is one in ten to the seventeenth power. That is a one with seventeen zeros behind it, or one to what you would call a hundred quadrillion."

No wonder our Lord said, "Blessed are your eyes for they see I'm standing in front of you and blessed are your ears for they hear because you're hearing Me teach and you have everything in front of Me." In light of this, we still have to ask: Why is it that there were some who understood and some who did not understand? I pointed out last week that there is a natural blindness or a natural depravity.

Natural and Judicial Blindness

The Bible tells you in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." So the unsaved man has no ability to perceive, receive, or understand the things of God. I also quoted Ephesians 4:17-19, where the Apostle Paul said, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in

By nature, men are blind, they're dumb, they're darkened, they're alienated from God, and they understand nothing. They are "past feeling"; they walk after lasciviousness and all filthiness. In other words, God says that the blindness of their heart leaves them without understanding. Of course, there is also a judicial blindness that comes from God. We understand that. But let me show you another verse. Look in your Bibles to the book of John, chapter 8. Here is a very interesting passage. In verse 43, our Lord asks a question of the Jews standing before Him: "Why do ye not understand my speech?" Then He says, "Even because ye cannot hear my word." Look at that question: "Why do ye not understand my speech?"

"We're speaking the same language. You know the language that I'm speaking in. Why am I a barbarian to you in the sense of the word that you really don't hear and you really, really do not understand?"

They did hear with their physical ears. They heard audibly, but they certainly did not hear spiritually. They heard the sound of His words, but they did not understand the impact, the importance, and the spirituality of His words. In verse 43 He says, "Why do ye not

understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word." Then He explains it in verse 44: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

John Calvin comments on these two verses: "What is the reason why my speech appears to you barbarous and unknown, so that I gain nothing by speaking to you, and so that you do not even deign to open your ears to receive what I say?" Calvin goes on: "In the former clause, therefore, he reproves their stupidity. And the latter, he reproves their obstinance and ungovernable hatred of his doctrine. And afterwards, he assigns a reason for both when he says that they sprung from the devil."

He asked, "Why is it that you do not understand my speech? Even because you cannot hear my word." We understand that the unsaved cannot understand. But why is it that many Christians do not understand? Why do some understand, but others do not? We must be taught by the Holy Spirit. He must open our eyes, our ears, and our minds, and grant us understanding.

There are plenty of Christians who can quote verses, memorize verses, and read. But just because you can quote or memorize a verse does not mean that you understand it. Some put themselves on a schedule and read their Bible through every year, and I am thankful for that. I am not against it. But I would much rather read one chapter and understand it than read twenty chapters and not understand what I have read. So why do some understand and some do not? The answer is this.

Illumination vs. Revelation

Illumination is the act, work, or ministry of the Holy Spirit whereby He enlightens our minds to the truth that God has already revealed. There is a difference between illumination and revelation, and most people confuse the two. I have had godly individuals say to me, "Well, let me just share with you what God just revealed to me." I shake my head and say, "No, God did not just reveal something to you. What God did was open your eyes to understand what He had

already revealed." God does not newly reveal something to a believer; He opens that person's eyes to understand what He has already revealed.

Revelation is the act of God whereby He reveals things previously unknown to the human mind. Revelation has ceased because we have the totality of the Word of God, and Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God. You can read that in Hebrews 1:1-3. Anytime someone claims additional revelation, he is denying that Jesus Christ, the Bible, and God's Word and truth are their fullness.

What is revelation? How did Moses know what happened at creation? He was not there. How did he know what happened to Noah in the flood, or what happened to Abraham? He was not there. Yet he wrote and told us everything that happened, or at least that which we need to know. The way he knew was that God revealed it to him, and the Holy Spirit inspired him to write, so that we have the infallible, inerrant Word of God. We have the Word of God without error, and we have it where it will never, ever fail. In illumination, God opens our minds to understand that which He has already revealed to us.

Our Lord was the greatest teacher who ever lived. He not only could communicate truth; He Himself was and still is truth. He spoke with absolute authority and with clarity. Yet many people did not understand what He said when He preached. Even His own disciples did not understand. Let me show you some Scriptures and quote some for you.

The Disciples' Need for Opened Understanding

In Matthew 15:17, speaking to His twelve disciples, Jesus said, "Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?" He had just taught them, yet He asked, "Do you not yet understand?" Again, in Matthew 16:9, He said, "Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?"

Matthew 16:11 asks, “How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the

leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?" Mark 8:21 records, "And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?" Even His own disciples did not understand some of the things that He taught. If the disciples who were with Him constantly and consistently did not understand, how much more do you and I need Him, illumination, and enlightenment to understand?

What did it take for the disciples to understand what Jesus Christ taught? Did it take more concentration—"I've got to think harder"? Did it take more education—"I have to get my Ph.D."? Did it take more determination—"I'm going to sit here and study this until I figure it out"? Luke 24:44 says, "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Then verse 45 says, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."

The word "open" is very important and informative. The Greek word is dianoigō, which literally means to open by dividing or drawing asunder. It means to open thoroughly that which has been closed. This word is used of the opening of the womb of a woman on her first child: the womb is opened so the child may be delivered. When the Bible says He opened their minds, or their understanding, He did so thoroughly and completely, so that they could grasp and understand.

The word "understanding" is the Greek word nous, referring to the mind and the intellectual faculties. It is in that area that we grasp the truth. The word "understand" is suniēmi, which literally means to bring together, or to cause to stand together in the mind.

It is only when things come together in our minds that we really, thoroughly, completely understand. Casey is an electrician. He could stand up and tell us all about electricity, giving us fact after fact. But until we put those things together in our minds, we will not understand them. Steve could stand up and tell us all about mechanics. I am not a mechanic; I have no mechanical ability whatsoever. He could tell me about combustion engines and pistons, and I still would not understand it. But if I took all the facts and were able to put them together in my mind, then I would understand

exactly what he was talking about. No one can understand anything until he puts it together, until he is able not merely to repeat it, but to apply it. That is how we learn.

Our Lord opened the minds of His disciples so thoroughly, completely, and totally that they understood His Word. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 2:6, “For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” Proverbs 9:10 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”

These verses tell us plainly that the Lord has to give wisdom and understanding. Those are His gifts. He may dispense them as He pleases, to whom He pleases, when He pleases, and wherever He pleases. This is why many Christians do not understand the same truth at the same time. I may be ahead of Steve in some areas, while Steve may be ahead of me in others. Casey may be ahead of both of us, and I may understand far more than all of us put together. God does not give the same truth at the same time to the same people.

If truth belongs to God and understanding belongs to God, and out of His mouth comes these things, then here is a good question: Is God obligated to give you truth and understanding, or are you obligated to seek God for truth and understanding? You cannot bring God into obligation to you. Therefore, it is your obligation, your duty, and your responsibility to seek after God and His gifts. Our Lord said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Stages of Christian Growth

Why do some Christians understand truth and others do not understand truth? I am not going to say that if you do not understand everything I understand, then you are lost. That is hogwash. God is sovereign in giving wisdom, understanding, and truth, but you must also remember that Christians are at different stages of growth.

In 1 John chapter 2, John divided Christians into three categories: babes, young men, and fathers. A babe does not understand what a

young man understands, and a young man certainly does not understand what a father understands. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, "I had to write unto you as babes." He asked, "Are ye not yet carnal?" He said, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat."

He said the same thing in Hebrews chapter 5: "Ye have become dull of hearing, and ye have need of milk again instead of meat." There are different stages in the Christian life. Obviously, a babe is not going to understand what a young man does, and a young man is not going to understand what a father does. I am not saying that someone is lost just because he does not understand everything. There is a period of growth, and there are real spurts in our life when we truly grow.

God commands us in Proverbs 23:23: “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.” When it comes to wisdom, instruction, and understanding, the price is not negotiable. We are to buy them regardless of how much they cost. How in the world do we buy the truth?

The word “buy” is the Hebrew word qanah, meaning to get, acquire, create, buy, possess, or obtain. God tells us to buy the truth—to obtain it. We are not to worry about the cost; we are simply to get the truth. So how do we get the truth? How do we buy the truth? There are three main ways to acquire and understand truth, wisdom, and understanding.

How to Acquire Understanding

The first way is exceedingly hard and difficult: acquiring truth and understanding by experience. Experience comes at a mighty cost. Every father and mother tries to spare their children the heartache and hard lessons they have learned by teaching them. Often, however, the children will not listen or learn, and they must experience the school of hard knocks themselves.

How many times must you put your finger in the fire before you understand that you are going to get burned? How many times must you stumble and fall flat on your face, perhaps breaking your nose or

your arm, before you realize, “You know, I need to pick up my feet. I don’t need to scrub my feet”? How many times?

Those who will not listen and those who will not receive truth will go through the school of hard knocks. They will attend the university of experience, and they will be hurt over and over. I can assure you of that.

Proverbs 9:6 says, “Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.” If you are not going in the way of understanding, you are going the way of foolishness, and you are going to die. You are going to get hurt. It is just that simple.

Proverbs 12:11 says, “He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.” In other words, there is no work ethic. It is difficult many times to get up at five o'clock in the morning, go work in the fields, and do whatever is needed and necessary to make a crop. But some people say, “Well, I'm going to follow about vain persons. We will beg. We'll borrow. We'll steal. We'll do whatever.” God says, “You don't have any understanding. You don't have a work ethic. You're not going to work. You're not going to eat. You'll learn the hard way.”

Proverbs 18:2 says, “A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.” All he wants to do is party and play. I told you before, the word “muse” in the Bible means to think. When you put the alpha, or the “a,” in front of it, it is “amuse,” which means not to think. It negates the word. Amusement is that in which you do not have to think. You do not have to think when watching television or movies. You can get subliminal messages, but you do not have to think. So that is what God says a fool is: he has no delight in understanding. All he wants to do is play.

Proverbs 21:16 says, “The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.” God says you are dead if you have no understanding. Do you realize how dangerous it is to live without understanding, and to do something absolutely stupid? How dangerous would it be to hand a loaded pistol to a four- or five-year-old child? He has no understanding. He does not know the danger of that pistol or that it could end up killing him or someone else. This is what God is saying.

Proverbs 13:15 says, "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard." This is what you learn by the school of hard knocks. Everything is difficult when you refuse to listen and refuse to be taught. Those who will not listen discover that experience without counsel and without truth will always take them to the school of hard knocks.

The second way to acquire truth, understanding, and wisdom is simple and easy: ask for it. Pray, seek the Lord's blessings, and ask Him specifically for His truth, understanding, and wisdom. David did that. In Psalm 119:34 he said, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." There is no way that you can understand the totality of God's law or Word unless He enlightens and illuminates your mind concerning what that Word means. You cannot keep it unless you understand it.

Psalm 119:104 says, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." How do you know what the false way is if you do not know what truth is? It is only through God's Word that we get understanding. David said in Psalm 119:125, "I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies." Then, in Psalm 119:169, "Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word."

Our Lord said in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Yet most Christians never ask, never seek, and never knock when it comes to truth, understanding, and wisdom.

And consequently, we do not have either of them. Look around today at all the immorality going on, even among professing Christians. Look at the adultery and fornication. Yet Proverbs 6:32 says, "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul." God said that if you do this, you lack understanding. So the truth is, anytime we sin against God in any way whatsoever, it is a demonstration and manifestation of a lack of understanding. If we really understood that the way of transgressors is hard and understood the consequences of our sin, we would not be doing it.

The second way is to ask. The third way to acquire truth, understanding, and wisdom is combined with the second: we are not only to pray, ask, and seek for it; we are also to consider the Word of God. David said, "Through thy precepts I get understanding." Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:7, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

Understanding is God's gift. Truth is God's gift. Wisdom is God's gift. Yet God does not give those gifts willy-nilly. He does not give them to slothful, indolent, lazy, and unthoughtful people. It is impossible to go to bed dumb and wake up smart, or to go to bed ignorant and wake up intelligent. Yet many people think they will somehow acquire knowledge through osmosis: "Put the Bible under a pillow. I'll get it through osmosis." No, you will not. We have to consider.

Think about the word "consider." Paul said, "Consider what I say." The Greek word is noeō, and literally it means to think upon, to heed, to ponder, to consider, and to perceive with the mind. We would probably use the English word "meditate." Meditation is when we think about something, turn it over and over in our minds, and consider it from every possible angle.

Another good illustration is how a cow chews her cud. She eats the grass, lies down, and chews the cud. Later she may regurgitate it, chew it some more, and swallow it again. She repeats the process to draw out everything from it. That is how we must consider the Word of God.

That is what we are talking about: “Consider what I say.” We turn it over and over in our minds, and finally something may come up to distract us. A little while later, we come back and say, “You know, I never finished thinking about that. Let me see if there are any more implications or applications.” We start chewing it over and over in our minds. We are meditating upon it.

By the way, when the Apostle Paul said to Timothy, “Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things,” the word “consider” is a present active imperative. An imperative is a command. Active means that you are actively involved in it, and the present means that it is being done consistently and continually. So

when he says, “Consider what I say, and the Lord gives the understanding,” he is commanding Timothy to consistently and constantly consider what he says.

So why is it that some understand and others do not? Here is one answer: not only because God is sovereign and dispenses His gifts as He pleases, but because some use the means God has ordained to acquire truth, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Most people do not have these things because they do not pray and ask God for them. They do not seek Him for His gifts, and they do not meditate upon or consider His Word.

The problem is that we are like the Pharisees. You remember what concerned the Pharisees? You can read it in Matthew 15 and Mark chapter 7. They came to our Lord and asked Him, “Why do Thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders?” We all have our traditions, ceremonies, and rituals. Many times, we value them over and above the Word of God, just as those Pharisees did.

I have been in churches explaining things and have had someone say, “But we’ve always done it another way.” Just because you have traditionally done something one way does not mean that it is the biblical way, the right way, or the correct way. Let me point something else out: we do not want to be wrong. We do not want our families to be wrong, and we do not want our friends to be wrong.

We are oftentimes afraid that if we really learn truth and get understanding, it will take us out of our comfort zone. It will change us and make us more obedient in areas where we have never been obedient—or perhaps do not want to be obedient. Consequently, we do not really study or pray because we do not want to be changed. Yet you cannot live without change. There is change in all of us, in our lives and in our homes. Things change for you. You cannot live without change.

So many people are uncomfortable with it. We do not want to get out of our comfort zone. But when Paul said, “Consider what I say, and the Lord gives the understanding in all things,” he was not only giving a command; he was telling us a way to get understanding: praying, seeking, and considering what God has said.

David said it like this in Psalm 119:130: “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.” When we perceive the Word of God and grasp its impact, implications, and applications, that gives us understanding. David continued in Psalm 119:144: “The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.”

Earlier I quoted, “He that does not understand walketh in the ways of death and destruction.” David said, “Give me understanding and I shall live.” Real, genuine life is understanding God and His Word. We will never understand it perfectly in this life, but we can understand to the degree that God gives us His truth, wisdom, and understanding, and to the degree that we study, ask, and seek for those things.

Applications and Conclusion

The first application is this: the two things you need to receive understanding are, first, a disposition to believe God. God is right; He is always right. Our traditions are wrong, we are wrong, our family is wrong, and our friends are wrong. Whatever God says is right. We are going to believe Him and put Him first and foremost. The second thing you need is a strong and overwhelming desire for truth. Most people do not want truth.

I will tell you this. Years ago, I discovered that most everything I had been taught in school was a lie or half-truth. I also discovered that a number of preachers who had taken me under their wings when I was a young boy, newly saved and called to preach, had taught me things that were wrong and in error. Although they were genuine and sincere, it upset me greatly.

It made me angry because I had wasted my time and part of my life listening to them and believing what they said when I found out it was totally, completely wrong. I found out that old black preacher was right when he said that their Bible showed us shed a whole lot of light on them commentaries. That is a fact. When you stop and think about history, it is the same thing. I know what I was taught, and then I find out that everything I was taught was totally, completely wrong. The victor gets to write the history, and they write it to please themselves and praise themselves, when in reality history is

something totally different. When I found out I had been lied to, I was not only angry, but it gave me a strong desire to really know the truth in every area.

What I initially thought hurt me turned out to be a big help. Years ago, our church was attacked by the state. They wanted to give us a license to drink water out of our own well. The well had been in the ground over forty years. There had never been a complaint, and no one had ever been sick. Do you know what a license is?

You can find it in Bouvier's Law Dictionary and Black's Law Dictionary. Here is the definition: “Permission from a competent authority to do that which otherwise would be unlawful to do.” You mean to tell me I have to have your permission to drink water out of my own well? I don't think so. One of my men asked me, “Can they do this?” My answer was, “I don't know, but I'm going to find out.”

That is what got me studying Romans 13. That is when I wrote my first book. It got me studying the Constitution and the law. We need to know the truth in every area. Any time we are told a lie, it destroys us; it enslaves us. Our Lord said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Now, here is another truth. Listen carefully. We must learn the truth of Proverbs 21:30: “There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.” You can fight against Him all you want, and you can deny His Word all you want, but it does not do you one little bit of good. It does not change reality. God is the determiner of reality, not you.

I know wives who fight against their husbands when I say that. According to the Word of God, the husband is supposed to be the head of the house. The Bible says that if any woman, any wife, wants to learn anything, let her ask her husband. He is supposed to be the one teaching her. Yet I can tell you of wife after wife who fights against her husband and says, “No, no, no, I'm not going to listen to you. I'm not going to believe that. I know how I was raised.” May I tell you something else?

Children do the same thing. They rebel against their parents, and it is the mama and daddy who are responsible to teach their children. Many times, parishioners rebel against the pastor. I know

that not every pastor is a godly man, and not every preacher has been called to preach. But the truth of the matter is that most of us want comfort. We do not want to be disturbed or pushed out of our comfort zone. Consequently, we would rather fight than submit to the truth.

God is telling His people that when they repent and become obedient, here is a promise that God is going to give: "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." You can be fed with knowledge and understanding if you will listen to the Word of God expounded, explained, and applied.

In 1 John 5:20, the Word of God says, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Notice: "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true." What is that understanding? If you go back to John 17:3, the Bible says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

The understanding is that we know God the Father through Jesus Christ. We know that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Savior, and the Lord. He has come to give us that understanding, and we know that we are in Him. Although Christians may be divided into little children, or babes, young men, and fathers, every true Christian knows the Father in truth through the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever your stage in the Christian life—whether babe, young man, or father—you know the Father.

Jesus Christ said in John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." You do not get eternal life when you die; you have it now. It is an intimate relationship with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not have that relationship now, you are not going to get it when you die. We will enjoy and experience our intimate union and communion with God the Father through Jesus Christ now in time and history, and in eternity it will be magnified.

Who would stop and think that you could ignore God, hate God, despise His Word, never pray, study, attend church, or hear preaching, and then, when you die, suddenly love those things? It does not work like that. If you love those things now, you are going to enjoy them much more in eternity. If you despise them now, I am afraid you are going to be disappointed in eternity, because eternal life is a personal, intimate knowledge of God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why is it that some understand and some do not? Some use the means God has ordained, seeking Him and asking Him for truth, while others do not. Do not be one who fails to pray and seek Him for wisdom, understanding, and truth. Consider His Word. Meditate upon it. Contemplate it. Chew the cud of it over and over in your mind while seeking God for understanding.

What did He say to Timothy? “Consider what I say and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” But God does not give that understanding without your consideration.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to leave this day. We thank You for Your Word and truth, and we pray for understanding. Give us a heart that seeks Thee, knocks upon Thy door, and continually asks for wisdom, understanding, and truth. Enable us to consider, meditate, and chew the cud of Thy Word. Enable us to bring that Word to bear in our lives through obedience and its application. Make us holy, godly, and obedient. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 42

No Abortion Or How To Become Pregnant With Sin

August 24, 2023

Introduction: Abortion and the Spiritual Realm

James chapter 1, verses 13–15, says, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Abortion is a prevalent issue today.

Strictly speaking—and I might also add, biblically speaking—abortion is murder. Life begins at conception. It has to do so, or there would not be a child formed or the growth of a child. Life must exist for there to be growth. Thus, it is not simply a fetus. It is a child. It is a being.

Murder takes place when life is taken contrary to God's law. The sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” is basically, “Thou shalt not murder,” or, “Thou shalt not take life except on God's terms.”

Since God is the giver of life, He is the only one who can authorize why life may lawfully be taken. If you remember the message I preached some time ago on the biblical doctrine of self-defense, I enumerated from Scripture those reasons why life could lawfully be taken. If life is not lawfully taken, then clearly it is murder, plain and simple.

The reasons governments, as well as individuals, hold positions contrary to this are simply that they reject God as sovereign and reject His Word as authoritative. Hence, they deny God's objective standard and go for their own subjective standard. Therefore, we have a multitude of subjective standards floating around in our world today. Most people, and yea, sometimes even Christians, will say, “Well, the way I see it,” “Well, I think this,” “Well, in my opinion,” or “Well, I feel this way about it.” Hardly ever does anyone say, “The Word of God says,” or, “God says.” Our words always refer to our subjective standard instead of God's objective standards.

The Bible is indeed the only sufficient rule for faith and practice. It is our canon, our measuring rod, our measuring stick. While there are many excuses given for abortion as well as other sins, there is one particular area where there is no abortion: the spiritual realm, the realm of sin and wickedness.

The truth of the matter is this: we sin because we are sinners. We do not become sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners, and our sinning evidences the fact that we are indeed depraved by nature. Adam’s sin and rebellion were imputed to each one of us. That is why the Bible says in Romans 5 and verse 12, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

Before someone objects and says, “But that’s not fair,” may I remind you that Adam was our federal head and representative? What he did, we did. People say, “Well, if I had been there, I would not have done that.” Yes, you would have. It is just like our elected representatives today: what they do, we do, whether we like it or whether we do not like it. Because Adam was our federal head and representative, his sin was imputed to us.

If you still do not like that, then probably you do not like the truth that, because of the person and work of Jesus Christ, His obedience, and His sacrifice, His righteousness is also imputed to us. If you object to Adam's imputation of sin to us, then by the same standard you would have to object to the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us as well.

The Bible teaches us that condemnation came by one man and righteousness came by one man. In Romans chapter 5, verse 15, the Word of God says, "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one"—the first Adam—"many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ"—the last Adam—"hath abounded unto many."

"And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation"—the first Adam—"but the free gift is of many offences unto justification"—the last Adam. "For if by one man's offence"—the first Adam—"death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ," who is the last Adam.

Verse 18 states it plainly: "Therefore as by the offence of one"—the first Adam—"judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." And again: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

In light of the fact that we are sinners, and in light of the fact that we are depraved, have you ever wondered how sin is birthed in us? How do we come to the place where we actually sin against God? How does sin begin? Is it instantaneous, or is it a process? Is there a way to stop and break the links in the chain of sin? The Word of God has the answers to those questions. Look back to James 1, verse 13, and let me show you the absolute beginning point, the starting point. Never, ever, under any circumstance, blame God for your sins.

God Is Not the Author of Sin

Notice what he says in verse 13: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." The first four words in this verse form a present active imperative. That means it is a command. He is saying, "I command, let no man say." Do not say it; do not even think it: when he is tempted, "I'm tempted of God." Why? "For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

God is not the author of sin, the infuser of sin, or the instigator of sin. But since God is sovereign, He is the controller of sin, and God may use sin for His own honor and glory if He so chooses, even though sin is contrary to Him and contrary to His law. That is why the Bible says in Psalm 76 and verse 10, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." In other words, the only sin that is actually going to happen in this world is that which will redound to God's honor and glory. It will reveal God's holiness, God's righteousness, and God's justice. What will not, God will restrain.

When he says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God," he tells you why: "For God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man." There is absolutely nothing in the nature or person of God that is unholy, sinful, or wicked; therefore, sin cannot be laid to His charge. Moreover, there is nothing in God's sovereign providence that would give men an opportunity to lay sin to God's charge.

Now, I want to point something out. I have done this in times past, but in light of this message, I want to emphasize it again. He said, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.” The word “tempt,” the noun, is peirasmos in the Greek. That word is used both in a good and in a bad sense in Scripture. When you get to the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Bible says, “God did tempt Abraham.” The word “tempt” would be, “God did test Abraham.” “God did try Abraham.” In other words, the good sense of the word is this: God will test us; God will try us. He will try a man’s faith. He will try a man’s character. But He will not tempt him to sin. He will not lead him in

sin. Neither will He put sin in front of him. It is impossible for God to tempt any man because God is absolutely holy.

Now, the same word is used in verse 13 as is in verse 12. So, if you look in verse 12, it shows you the proper usage of the word in the good sense. The Bible says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." So what you have in verse 12 is the same Greek word, peirasmos, but it is a noun, and the word "temptation" there means a test, a trial, or an affliction. But when you get to verse 13, "Let no man say when he is tempted"—here the verb, peirazō—it is the same word, but here it means to entice, to seduce, or to lead into sin or evil. So you have a good sense of the word in verse 12 and the bad sense of the word in verse 13. It really does not matter whether or not it is a noun or a verb. In other words, the word may be used in a good sense or in a bad sense, and you have to depend upon the context to determine its usage.

Let me give you a quote from Matthew Henry. He has been commenting on verse 13, and he says this: "We are here taught that God is not the author of any man's sin. Whoever they are who raise persecutions against men, whatever injustice and sin they may be guilty of in proceeding against them, God is not to be charged with it. And whatever sins good men may themselves be provoked to by their exercises and afflictions, God is not the cause of them. It seems to be here supposed that some professors might fall in the hour of temptation"—testing—"that the rod resting upon them might carry"

Some are led into ill courses and made to put forth their hands unto iniquity. But though this should be the case, and though such delinquents should attempt to lay their fault on God, the blame of their misconduct must lie entirely upon themselves.

There are so many men who try to excuse their sins. When I say men, I am using the word anthropomorphically in one sense; man includes women as well. I have heard people say, "Well, God made me this way. If God had not made me this way, I would not be doing these things. So it is God's fault." Or, "God put me in this position. If He had not put me in this position, I would not have done this. So basically, it is God's fault."

Have you ever noticed that whenever we sin, it is never our fault? It is someone else's fault: "You made me." When God said to Adam, "Adam, what have you done?" Adam said, "It's the woman you gave to be with me. It's her fault." When Eve was asked what she had done, she answered, "It was a serpent You made, Lord. He tempted me. He beguiled me." Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent; both said, "God, You put us in this position. You created this serpent. Basically, Lord, it is Your fault."

That certainly is not true. Scripture's first consideration concerning sin is this: God is not the author of sin. God does not seduce us, tempt us, or lead us into evil and wickedness. If God is not the author of sin, and we know that we are sinners, how do we sin? How does it happen? I have said this before: there's no such thing

Temptation is not necessarily an instant sin. We think about things before we do them. Consider verses 13 and 14 together: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

Look again at the word "tempted." It is the same Greek word found in verses 13 and 12: peirazō. Peirazō may be used in a good sense and in a bad sense. It is sometimes used in a very good sense, though most of the time it is used in a bad sense.

It is not necessarily a sin to be tempted. How can I say that? Remember Matthew chapter 4 and verse 1: the Spirit led our Lord into the wilderness, where He was tempted of the devil forty days and forty nights.

The Nature of Temptation and Lust

Our Lord was tempted, but He did not sin. He was sinless. Therefore, temptation in itself is not necessarily sinful. Temptation usually arises from our own lusts and desires. If there is no lust, if there is no desire, there can be no temptation.

Let me explain it this way. Never in my entire life, in nearly seventy-nine years, have I ever been tempted to be a drunkard or to get drunk, because I have no use for alcohol. Outside of medicinal

use, I have never cared anything about it. In all my life, I have never been tempted to murder anyone, because I have no desire to harm anyone. To try to tempt me to become a drunkard or to get drunk would be useless because I could care less for alcohol. To try to tempt me to murder someone would be useless as well, because I have no desire to harm anyone. A temptation without lust or desire is basically useless; without that lust and desire, it fails.

Now look back at verse 14: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” Obviously, the temptation in verse 14 is a temptation to sin. Notice first the word “lust.” When we hear that word, we normally think of sexual sins, but the truth is that the word is extremely broad. The word for “lust” here is epithumia. In our Bibles, it is translated as “lust,” “concupiscence,” “desire,” and “to lust after.”

The word epithumia, like peirasmos, can be used in a good or bad sense. Epi is a preposition meaning "upon," and thumos is the word for "passion" or "desire." What is your lust? Your lust is whatever you set your passion or desire upon.

Let me show you how this word is used in a good sense. Hold James chapter 1 and look back in your Bibles to Luke chapter 22 and verse 15. Our Lord said to His disciples, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." The word "desire" is epithumia. Literally, our Lord said, "With lust have I lusted to eat this passover with you before I suffer." He had set His heart, His desire, and His passion upon eating the last Passover with His disciples before He suffered and died.

It is the same word, epithumia, used in a good sense. You remember Psalm 42, verse 1, where David said, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my heart after thee, O Lord." We could change that a little bit. I did not check it in the Septuagint, and I do not know what it is in the Greek, but we could say, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so lusteth my soul after thee, O God." In other words, I have set my passion upon You; I have set my desire upon You. In fact, that is what Scripture commands in Colossians chapter 3 and verse 1: "Set your affection on things above, where Christ is on the right hand of God."

The word can be used in a good sense. However, usually it is used in a bad sense because it is connected with our depraved desire. When we talk about lust, one may lust after another's spouse, another's money, another's possessions, another's abilities, or another's beauty. You can lust after anything. You can set your desire upon anything, and whatever you set your desire upon, that is your lust.

Now let us go back to James chapter 1 and look at verse 14, because lust is the starting point: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Lust is the starting point. Note what he said: our lusts are drawn away and enticed. Consider the words "drawn away." "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away." The Greek word for "drawn away" is exelkō, which literally means to draw away or to draw out.

The Fishing Illustration: Drawn Away and Enticed

Metaphorically, the word is used in hunting and fishing to draw game out from its place of safety so it may be captured. Look at verse 14 again: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." The word "enticed" is deleazō, which means to entice, to beguile, to lure, to bait, and to lure or to catch by bait. Put this together. God is not only telling us where and how sin is formed in us, but He is also giving us a very clear illustration.

My favorite food—and Alice's favorite food—happens to be fresh fish, pond fish. I would rather have fresh fish than a T-bone steak, much rather have fish any day. I know that in my pond there is this big bass, and Alice and I want to have him for supper. But if I went in that water after that bass, first of all, he can outswim me. He can outmaneuver me. There is no way in the world I could catch that bass.

Let us say a bass has a place of safety under some rocks, a place from which I cannot reach him. How in the world am I going to get that bass so we can have him for supper? I would get my fishing pole, line, and hook, along with a big, fat, juicy worm. I would put it on the hook and dangle that worm either beside the bass or in front of him. I cannot get to him; he is under the rocks and in the water. But when I dangle that big, fat, juicy worm and he sees it, he rushes out from

under the rock and bites it. The hook catches him, I pull him up, and we clean him, cook him, and have him for supper.

Now, how did that happen? He was in a place of safety. I could not get to him. Listen carefully: I dangled something in front of him that would fulfill a desire inside him. He desired a full stomach; he desired that big, fat, juicy worm. Thus, something appeared on the outside that would fulfill his desire on the inside. He was lured, baited, and seduced into biting that hook.

Think about this. Verse 14 says, in another way: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” Whenever something outside of us promises to fulfill a desire inside us—whether pleasure, profit, or whatever kind of fulfillment it may be—we are being drawn away from God’s law and obedience. We are being baited, lured, and seduced into what we want instead of what God wants.

Matthew Poole, commenting on verse 14, said: “He shows the great cause of sin, that lust hath a greater hand in it than either the devil or his instruments, who cannot make us sin without ourselves. They sometimes tempt and do not prevail. But when lust tempts, it always prevails, either in whole or in part, it being a degree of sin to be our own tempters.” John Trapp wrote: “Satan only hath a persuading slight, not an enforcing might. Our own concupiscence, our own lust, carries the greatest stroke.”

Satan's temptations are very rare, and they are not necessarily successful. If he made us sin, then we would not be responsible for our sin. Obviously, we are responsible for our sin. Satan gets blamed for a lot of things that he does not do, that he is not interested in, and that he does not even have to have a hand in.

Galatians 5:19 says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: This is not satanic. This is the works of the flesh. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, fussing and fighting, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." He goes on to say, "Of the which I told you before, and I've also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." All of these are works

of the flesh. Satan does not have to tempt us to do these things. They are already in us. Evil, wicked lusts are sinful, and now we are being drawn away, enticed, and baited to fulfill these lusts and desires.

The Conception and Birth of Sin

James 1:14-15 says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Then, "when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Lust is the starting point, but there has to be a conception. Here we are given the picture of pregnancy. In fact, the Greek word is sullambanō, which means to bring together, to take together, or to conceive. When the sperm and the egg come together, there is conception, the conception of life. God says it is the same way when we have our lusts and opportunities to fulfill those lusts, and they come together and sin is conceived. What is sin? Sin is a violation of God's law. First John 3:4 says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." The conception produced by lust produces sin.

However, that is not the whole thing. Look at it again. Verse 15 says, “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Sin, when it is finished, brings forth. It produces; it gives birth. That is exactly what the verse says. Lust brings forth sin, but sin brings forth death.

The word for sin is hamartia, which means to miss the mark, to fall short of the glory of God. It means to err, to wander from the path of righteousness, and to violate God’s law, which I just quoted. The conception produced by lust brings forth sin, but the process does not end simply with the production of sin, because verse 15 says, “And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Sin, when it is finished, brings forth; it produces. The word translated “bringeth forth” is apokueō in the Greek, literally meaning to give birth from the womb, to produce, or to bring forth. Bluntly stated, it means to cease being pregnant. Since the verse uses the word “conception,” it gives the picture of pregnancy. When sin is finished, it brings forth; when it ceases being pregnant, it brings forth death. A woman conceives, carries a child, and after nine months gives birth. After she gives birth, she is no longer pregnant.

So God says that once lust conceives, it brings forth sin; and when sin is finished, when the pregnancy ceases, when it is over, there is death—death. The Greek word for death is thanatos, from which we get “euthanasia.” Eu is a preposition meaning “well” or “good,” and thanatos means death; euthanasia therefore means a good death.

But thanatos here is not merely the death of the body. It also includes the misery of the soul and all the miseries that sin produces—not simply the loss of life, but the loss of a life lived for God. In other words, when sin is finished, all you have is death. Here is what you must grasp: once the process is started, there is no abortion. Once your lusts meet the opportunity for fulfillment, sin is brought forth, and when sin finishes being pregnant, there is death.

So what God is saying is that there is a conception, a maturation, and a completion. The truth of the matter is that all our lusts and desires contrary to God's Word always promise happiness, joy, and life, but all they produce is misery and death. Do not ever blame God, because your sin originates in you, with your own desires and lusts. When you have the opportunity to fulfill those lusts, sin is conceived; and once there is conception, there will be maturation and completion, and it will be death.

Now let me make some applications and try to tie this together for you. The very first thought of sin, the very first inkling of desire to go contrary to God's Word and God's law, should be immediately refused, rejected, and replaced.

Application: Reject Sinful Thoughts Immediately

Think about this. If I were to ask you, "What am I holding in my hands?" you would tell me, "A pair of glasses." If I asked you what was in my hand, you would tell me, "It's a phone." No matter how hard you try, you cannot think of one thing at a time. When you are thinking about my glasses, you are not thinking about that phone; when you are thinking about that phone, you are not thinking about my glasses.

When a thought comes into your mind and you know it is unbiblical, unscriptural, and contrary to God, do not entertain it. Repudiate it: "Lord, I don't want that thought. I refuse that thought,

and, Lord, I'm going to replace that with Your Word. Your Word says, 'Thou shalt not lust,' 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' 'Thou shalt not steal,' 'Thou shalt not bear false witness,' whatever it is."

What if that thought comes back five minutes later? Do it again. What if it comes back three minutes later? Do it again. You cannot entertain that thought in your mind. Pretty soon you will learn the truth of Isaiah 26: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee."

We have an old adage in South Georgia: "You can't stop a bird from flying over your head, but you can stop him from building a nest in your hair." The world, the flesh, and the devil can throw thoughts into your mind quicker than lightning can flash. It is not a sin for that thought to go through your mind. The sin comes when you say, "Whoa, wait a minute. Let me think about this. I like this.

“Let me chew on this awhile. Let me meditate on it. Let me see if I can work this out.” That is how it starts. That is why we are not to have any thoughts in our minds that are unbiblical. We are to have the mind of Christ.

Here is the second one: When you and I have first see the opportunity to fulfill our lusts and our desires—here it is, here is the opportunity—we say, “This is what I have been waiting for. This is what I have been wanting.” We have to understand that we are now being baited, lured, and enticed to violate God’s law. If we give in to that opportunity to fulfill those desires, there will not be any stopping after that, because there will be a maturation and a completion, and it will bring forth death.

Now turn in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 7. Usually I tell people to read Proverbs 5, 6, and 7 together. I want to read the entirety of Proverbs chapter 7, and I want you to listen, watch, and follow me. I want you to see lust, opportunity, and death. I want you to see how God commands us, from the beginning, not to give in. Look at Proverbs 7, verse 1.

Illustration from Proverbs 7

He said, “My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments within thee. Don’t forget them. Keep my commandments, and live.

And my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. Say unto wisdom, 'Thou art my sister,' and call understanding thy kinswoman: That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words."

Now he is going to give you the illustration: "For at the window of my house, I looked through my casement, and I beheld among the simple ones"—those who forget God's Word and God's law—"I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding"—he did not have God's wisdom—"passing through the street near her corner, he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house."

Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner. So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, "I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows." In other words, "My religious duties are over with, so now I can fulfill my flesh." "Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face. I have found thee. I've decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. For the goodman"—that is her husband—"is not at home, he is gone a long journey: He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed."

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

In Proverbs chapter 7 we see the exact same truth preached from James 1:14–15: you have lusts, opportunity, sin, and death. We need to learn that our lusts, our desires, lead us into opportunities to sin against God. When we see those opportunities, we are being baited and lured away from God, wisdom, truth, and righteousness, because something appears on the outside that seemingly will satisfy what is inside us. When we fall for that, we end up with misery and death. For the wages of sin is death. So let no man say when he is tempted, "I am tempted of God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

Conclusion and Prayer

And when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished—when it ceases being pregnant—it brings forth death. Once it gets started, there is no aborting sin. It will always produce death.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow. We thank you for your Word. We thank you for your truth. We ask, Lord, that you teach us and help us to be holy, help us be godly. Help us to control our thinking and to bring our lives in conformity to your Word. Lord, may we never forget your Word, may we never forget the principles, and give us your grace, your mercy, and your power to live holy, godly, obedient lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 43

Where and How it Begins

July 20, 2024

In Daniel 1:8, the Bible says, “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with a portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank. Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”

Introduction: Questions About Spiritual Progress

Let me begin by asking a number of questions for you to entertain in your mind. How much have you accomplished in your life? Are there certain things yet that you desire to accomplish that you have not yet accomplished? Have you tried numerous times and failed? Have you analyzed your failures? Are there some things that you have just simply given up upon, that you are no longer even endeavoring to try to accomplish?

If this is true in your personal, economic, and vocational life, I would then ask: Is it also true in your spiritual life? Think about these questions. Are you doctrinally sound? Are you where you should be as a Christian? Are you competent in the Scripture? Can you find any book of the Bible with speed and ease? Are you more

satisfied with your progress in sanctification this year than you were last year? Are you now more thankful, more grateful, and more appreciative this week than even last week for the Lord's mercy and grace? In light of that, why are we satisfied with mediocrity?

Why is it that we do not pray, focus, and strive to be more holy, more obedient, and more godly? Why is it that we drift around, sit around, and oftentimes just simply waste our time? We spend so much time on our entertainment. We spend so much time on our relaxation. But we hardly ever spend nearly as much time on our education and on our sanctification. Why do we not give these spiritual matters the same attention we give to other areas of life?

We set goals for our financial benefits. We set goals for our vocational benefits. We set goals for our recreational benefits. But we hardly ever set any goals for our spiritual benefits. Have you ever determined in your mind, in your heart, that you are going to read the Scripture more, that you are going to study more, and that you are going to pray more? And then the next question would be, have you done it? And a follow-up question, if you have not done it, why is it that you have not done it?

The Example of Daniel and Other Godly Men

I talked with a friend of mine this past few months. He is not nearly as old as I am, but he is certainly a grown man with children and grandchildren. He told me, "I'm just reading through the Bible for the first time in my entire life." I thought, Wow.

I am asking these questions in order to demonstrate an answer to them from the Bible. Do you realize that there are only three men in the Bible of whom we never ever read anything derogatory? Those three men are Joseph, Job, and Daniel.

There is another man in the Bible who is named as a man of integrity, honor, and prayer, and that is Noah. Yet we do know that Noah got drunk. It may have been an accident. I do not know that for a fact, but certainly, in the book of Ezekiel, he is classified as a godly man.

In Ezekiel, chapter 14, verse 14, God names these three men as godly men: "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in

it, they should deliver their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord." He is talking about the wickedness of the land and how wicked the people were. If these three men were in it, they would simply deliver their own souls.

Then, in verse 20 of the same passage, he makes it even plainer: "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter."

“They shall deliver their own souls by their righteousness.” So in this passage, he speaks about Noah, Daniel, and Job rather than Joseph, Daniel, and Job as well. We may learn from each of these men, obviously and clearly. In fact, we may learn from other men in the Bible, because there are men in the Bible who were evil, men who had bad traits, and godly men who had some bad traits. What we may learn from them is not to fall into the same sins that they fell into, and not to do what they did. But there are also many good, godly examples in the Bible, and we are to emulate those individuals as well.

The Principle of Profiting from Others' Examples

Here is a principle that I want to make very clear: this message is of vital importance in one sense of the word, because God demands that you and I learn and profit from His work in the lives of other people. Let us look at this in Matthew chapter 21, beginning in verse 28. Our Lord is talking to the scribes and Pharisees, and He says, “But what think ye? A certain man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in my vineyard.’ And he answered and said, ‘I will not.’ But afterwards he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ and went not. Whether of these twain did the will of his father?” They say unto him, “The first.”

Jesus said unto them, “Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.”

John came in the way of righteousness, and they did not believe him. But the publicans—the tax collectors, the hated individuals—and the harlots believed him. That is, they repented, they were baptized, and they were the ones who followed the teaching of John.

When you had seen it, you did not profit. You did not repent. You did not believe, even though you saw the grace of God in the lives of others. So the truth of the matter is this: we are responsible, and our Lord holds us responsible to profit from the work of God in the lives of other people.

We must see the sin in the lives of other people so that we may avoid those sins, but we must also see the righteousness in the lives of other people so that we might emulate that righteousness as well. When you consider Daniel, you can hardly ever think of him without at the same time thinking of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These young men were taken captive into Babylon, undoubtedly when they were very young. Most scholars will tell you that they were probably between the ages of twelve and twenty; most settle on the ages of fifteen to seventeen. It is unusual to find such integrity and character in the lives of young men.

Yet the Bible tells us in 2 Timothy, chapter three and verse 15, what the Apostle Paul said concerning Timothy: “And from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Even from a child, Timothy knew the Scriptures. So the question that has to be answered, and that remains to be answered, is this: How in the world did Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego maintain their character and integrity in the carnal world of Babylon, under the tyranny of Nebuchadnezzar?

There is a parallel in this country, because we now live in a very wicked nation. The world is very carnal, and basically we are under tyranny in this day and time as well. How did Daniel and these boys keep themselves pure, and how can we do so in the situation in which we find ourselves? I want to give you three thoughts today. First of all, if you will go back to Daniel 1:8, I want you to see Daniel’s purpose.

Daniel's Purpose: A Determined Mind

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank. Therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Daniel purposed in his heart. What does that mean? First, consider the Hebrew word for purpose. It is how we would pronounce it—the word "soon." It literally means to set to a point, direct, establish, determine, and fix. Daniel fixed his heart, directed his heart, established his heart, and determined in his heart.

This word is closely connected to the truth found in Psalm 17:1, where David said to God, "Thou hast proved mine heart. Thou hast visited me in the night. Thou hast tried me and shalt find nothing. I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." This teaches us that it is important to have a purpose in life.

If you are a child of God, you already have a purpose. You are to obey God, glorify God, and enjoy Him forever. Your purpose is to be obedient, to conform your life to the teaching of His Word, and to live as a witness to His grace, mercy, and love.

When you stop and think about the unsaved, in one sense they have no real purpose. Their only purpose is to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life—to do what they want to do. They often find that very unsatisfying and unfulfilling. Although the flesh may be satisfied, there is an emptiness in their life. Unsaved people say, "I have no purpose in life. I have no reason to live. I have no purpose to live."

I have even heard professing Christians say, "I've had no purpose to live." Well, I know better than that. I have all kinds of purposes and reasons to live: I want to continue to preach and teach, and to continue to honor and glorify God. I told people I do not want to leave Alice. That is a purpose. We have a multitude of purposes.

The Bible said Daniel purposed in his heart. You will remember, I hope, the message that I preached a number of years back on keeping the heart. It was from Proverbs 4 and verse 23, where God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.”

I am not going to re-preach that message, but I am going to remind you of one truth. The Hebrew word “leb” or “lab,” however you would want to pronounce it, is translated in our Bibles as mind and understanding and reason over and over. Our hearts, according to the Bible, are our minds. Occasionally, the word “heart” is used in reference to our affections, but usually it refers to our mind and our understanding.

When Daniel 1:8 says Daniel purposed in his heart, “heart” is exactly the same Hebrew word “lab” or “leb” used in Proverbs 4:23. Daniel purposed in his mind, in his understanding, in his reasonability. We normally refer to our hearts as our innermost being; therefore, when we speak of the heart as our innermost being, it has to be our mind.

Not only does Scripture teach this, but when you see someone determined, what does he normally say? “My mind is made up. You’re not going to change me.” That demonstrates a purpose, an understanding, and a determination strongly and firmly implanted in the mind, from which we will not be moved.

Here is a principle that we must grasp in light of this. If we are ever going to live a holy, godly life, a sanctified life, a life that is pleasing to God, a life in which our lives are brought into conformity to the Word of God, there must be a purpose. Daniel purposed in his heart. We have to purpose in our hearts as well. In other words, there must be an understanding in our minds and a conviction in our minds.

That purpose has to be absolutely unwavering. It is not going to change. It is not going to be tossed back and forth like the waves of the sea, nor tossed around like the wind blowing a leaf or some other object out on the street. No, it must be based upon a biblical principle. We have a purpose. Daniel purposed in his heart, and we have to purpose in our hearts as well. You have to remember this: principles do not die. Principles do not have funerals. If our purpose is based upon the Word of God, it should never, ever change.

Have you ever purposed in your heart to cleave unto the Lord and to follow Him? I ask that because I want to show you Scripture. Hold in Daniel chapter one, but turn to the book of Acts and look at

chapter 11, verse 23. In fact, let us begin with verse 22, so you can see who is involved: “Then tidings of these things came into the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem. And they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, who, when he came and seen the grace of God, was glad.”

The Call to Purpose in Our Hearts

Now look at this: “And exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” With purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. So, if you do not wish to be a Demas, if you do not wish to forsake the Lord in His ministry, you must have a purpose of heart, or a purpose in your mind.

The word "purpose" in the Greek here is prothesis, which is literally a setting forth, placing something in our view. Pro is a preposition meaning before or in front of. Thesis is from the Greek word tithami; it would be pro tithami. The word tithami means to cause to stand. So what does prothesis mean? It means something caused to stand, something in plain view. This word is used in the New Testament of the showbread. You remember how that bread was baked every day and set forth in full view there in the tabernacle and in the temple as well.

So this is what he is saying: with purpose of heart, you have to cleave to the Lord. In other words, here is something that you must see, know, and recognize. It is something in front of you. It is something that you have purposed, something that you have determined, something that you are not going to forget. So the question is, have you purposed in your heart? Daniel purposed in his heart.

Daniel's Preparation: Practical Steps

It is insufficient to purpose in your heart. Yes, you must purpose in your heart, but that is just the beginning. If you go back in your Bibles to Daniel chapter one, look at verse eight: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with a portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank. Therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now, God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love

with the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said to Daniel, 'I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink. For why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? Then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.' Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 'Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days, and let them give us pulse to eat and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee and the countenances of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat. And as thou seest, deal with thy servants.' So he consented to them in this matter to prove them ten days." Now, what in the world did Daniel do?

What did these boys do? They said, “What we would like to do is for you to just give us pulse—peas, maybe some other vegetables, but just peas—and we’ll drink water.” If you’re from the South, you know that peas happen to be good food, especially black-eyed peas and some of the other peas. They were saying, “Just give us pulse. Give us veggies. We will take that and water. We don’t want anything else.”

So he said, “Why in the world should your flesh not be as beautiful and as fair as all these others who are eating this meat?” Daniel said, “Prove us ten days. Just give us ten days and look upon us, and then deal with us.”

You have heard the expressions “food fit for a king” and “ate like a king.” You have also heard about gout. Gout is often called the rich man’s disease. It is a form of arthritis caused by urates in the body, which form around the joints and are extremely painful at times. Daniel said, “Look, we don’t want the king’s food. We don’t want the rich man’s food. Just give us pulse and just give us water.”

When it says Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself, the word “defile” means that he did not want to become polluted or unclean. Here is a good question: Daniel and his friends did not wish to drink the king’s wine, but they did drink wine. Why would they not drink the king’s wine? Daniel and his friends also ate meat. Why would they refuse to eat the king’s meat?

If you look in your Bibles at Daniel 10:2–3, Daniel was doing a partial fast in order to understand. He said, “In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh or wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.” Notice that he did drink wine and eat flesh, but he was not going to drink the king’s wine or eat the king’s flesh. Why? Because the heathen normally dedicated their wine and food to their false gods. Daniel understood and knew this.

John Trapp lists five reasons why Daniel and his friends would not drink the king's wine or eat the king's meat. First, it was often forbidden by the law of God. Certain things were considered unclean, like swine and shellfish, and undoubtedly they ate those things. Daniel therefore said, “No, we're not going to eat that.”

Second, the food was used in a way that would defile him and his fellows against the word of God. The heathen, to the shame of many Christians, had their grace before a meal, as it were, consecrating their dishes to their idols before they even tasted them. Trapp mentions this in Daniel chapter 5, verse 4, and in the New Testament it is mentioned in 1 Corinthians chapter 8.

Third, they could not do it without offense to their weaker brethren, with whom they chose rather to sympathize in their adversity than to live in excess and fullness. Fourth, they well perceived that the king's love and provisions were not single and sincere. He meant them for his own profit, to assure himself the better of the land of Judah, that they might forget their religion. In other words, he was not feeding them for their benefit, but for his benefit.

Lastly, they knew that intemperance was the mother of many mischiefs, as in Adam, Esau, and the rich fool. Trapp concludes with a memorable story recorded by William Shickard concerning eleven Jewish doctors whom the heathen king of Burgundy had in his power. He gave them the hard choice either to eat swine's flesh, drink wine consecrated to idols, or lie with certain harlots. They chose rather to drink the wine than to do either of the other two. But when they had drunk wine liberally, they were easily drawn to do the other two things also.

Any one of these five reasons would have been force enough to prevail with Daniel and the other three to forbear. They knew well that the least hair cast to the shadow of a barleycorn laid on the side of the eye will keep out the light of the sun as well as a mountain. The eye of the soul that will see God must be kept very clear.

Now, the whole point that I'm trying to make right now is this. If you and I have a purpose, there must be preparations or our purpose is never ever going to be fulfilled. So Daniel purposed in his heart he's not going to defile himself. And what he did, he came to the prince of the eunuchs and said, "We don't want the king's wine. We don't want the king's meat. We're going to prepare ourselves. And what we're going to do is just eat pulse and drink water." So listen, if I'm going to fast, I have to prepare my body and I have to prepare my mind. And if I'm going to fast, I'm going to have to stay away from food. I'm going to stay away from odors and smells that would tempt me away from my purpose. If I purpose that I'm going to study, I must stay away from anything and everything that is going to distract me from my study, and I must have the materials on hand from which I'm going to study.

In other words, I've got to prepare if I'm going to do this. If I'm going to pray, if I'm going to worship, I have to prepare my mind. I have to say, "Lord, help me." I have to do whatever's necessary to tune out any and everything else. My purpose is to no avail if there are no preparations in my life. So if I have a purpose, I have to prepare. Let me show you.

Biblical Examples of Preparation

I want you to turn back in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Ezra, Ezra, Nehemiah. Look, if you would, Ezra chapter 7, right after 2 Chronicles, you have Ezra. Look in Ezra chapter 7 and verse 10. Look at what the Bible says concerning Ezra. Look at this, Ezra 7 and verse 10. "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." So Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord. That is, he purposed in his heart. And then he prepared that heart. Not only to seek it, to know it and understand it, but to do it and then to teach it. Now, if you will turn back a few books to 1 Chronicles, chapter 4, 1

Chronicles, chapter 4. And look, if you would please, at verses 9 and 10. 1 Chronicles, chapter 4. Look, if you would please, at verse 9.

Consider 1 Chronicles, chapter 4, verse 9: “And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, ‘Because I bare him with sorrow.’” But look at verse 10: “And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, ‘Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me.’ And God granted him that which he requested.” Look at that. He besought God to bless him, to enlarge his coast, that His hand might be upon him, and that God would keep him from evil, that it might not grieve him. When I read this passage, I think of this: “Lord, I want to be kept from evil that it might not grieve me. But I’d also like to be kept from evil that I might not grieve Thee.” So here are men that purposed in their heart. Now let me show you something: 2 Chronicles, chapter 12.

As a contrast, consider Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, in 2 Chronicles 12:13-14: “So King Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem and reigned. For Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.” He did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord.

Here is the point: Daniel purposed in his heart, and then he prepared to fulfill that purpose. Many times we purpose in our hearts, but make no preparations to fulfill our purpose. Without preparations, our purpose fails. Preparations demonstrate the reality of our purpose, the intensity of our purpose, and whether or not we are going to succeed in our purpose. Without preparations, everything fails.

Daniel had a purpose and a preparation; now consider, thirdly, his performance. Daniel and his friends actually accomplished their purpose. I am sure that each of these boys had the same conviction and determination.

Daniel's Performance: God's Blessing

It is a whole lot easier to fulfill your purpose and prepare to do so if you have friends around you who have the same purpose and are making the same preparation. You can encourage each other and help each other. We are always encouraged when we get around brethren who think the way we think, believe the way we believe, and want to perform the way we want to perform as well.

Daniel and these young men not only purposed and prepared; because of this, they also performed. In Daniel 1:17 we read: "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." God honored their purpose and their preparation, giving them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. Then, in verse 18, "Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince

The eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. The king communed with them, and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. "And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, the king inquired of them. He found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." Ten times better than all! Blessings always follow obedience.

If Daniel and these boys were around today and refused the king's wine and meat, the world would say that they were literally insane for rejecting the king's cuisine. It was the best that Babylon had to offer, undoubtedly because it came from the king, who always had the best. But whatever Babylon had to offer was not good for these boys. Even the best that Babylon had to offer was not good for them.

So we have to learn a very simple truth: the world is not our friend, and the best that the world can give us is not for our good. There is a stanza in the hymn "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?": "Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend of grace to help me unto God?" The answer, of course, is no. The world is not our friend; it is our enemy. It tempts us and seduces us away from God, away from our purpose, and away from

our preparations, to keep us from performing that which God has allowed us to purpose and prepare for.

Paul said concerning Demas in 2 Timothy, chapter 4 and verse 10, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present evil world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.” The best the world had to offer was not a help for Demas; it was his destruction. So the world does not have anything to give us.

We will never perform according to our purpose and our preparations if we have a divided or a double heart. That is why the Bible says in James 1:8 that a double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. We are tossed to and fro, backwards and forwards. If we are going to purpose in our heart, there must be preparation. There must ultimately be performance.

I have given you three things today: purpose, preparation, and performance. I want you to understand something. These three truths go together; they are integrated truths. You cannot have one without the other two. If you purpose, you must prepare. If you purpose and prepare, you must perform. If you do not prepare, you will not perform, and you cannot perform without a purpose and without preparation.

The Integration of Purpose, Preparation, and Performance

Daniel tells us basically why most of us as Christians drift around, never really accomplish anything, never really reach any spiritual goals, and never really master theology or anything: we have no purpose, no preparation, and therefore no performance. These three truths must go together.

Here is my first application, in light of these truths, in the form of a question. You do not have to answer it aloud, but answer it in your mind anyhow: Do you really float through the day or float through the week without having a purpose and without preparing to fulfill that purpose? Do you consciously think when you awaken each morning, “I have a purpose today. I have a purpose this one”?

Application: Living with Daily Purpose

We all have duties and responsibilities. There are things we want to do and things that must be done, but that is not what I am talking about. Do you wake up and say, “I have a purpose. My purpose today is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. My purpose today is to honor Him. My purpose today is to obey Him. My purpose today is to bring my heart and my life into conformity to His Word. My purpose is not to sin against Him”?

Do you have a purpose each day, each week, each month, and for the entire year? If we do not have a purpose, we will not prepare; and if we do not prepare, we will not perform. Here is my next question: Is your purpose to please God? Is your purpose to abstain from anything and everything that is displeasing to Him, or that would be sin against Him? Is your purpose to be that you would not grieve Him, quench Him, or vex Him?

The Bible tells us that we must walk pleasing unto the Lord, but that means we can also walk displeasing unto Him as well. If you have a purpose that you really want to please the Lord, what are your preparations to do so? How do you prepare your life? But let me give you some answers. Our Lord, in His high priestly prayer in John 17:17, said this as He was praying for His disciples.

"Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth." If we are going to be sanctified through His truth, we must know His truth. We must not only know it; we must be able to apply it and bring our lives into conformity to it. Most of us in this meeting today are older men and women, but Psalm 119 applies to old men and old women just as it does to young men and young women. David asked, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" Listen to his answer: "By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

"With my whole heart have I sought thee." That is, I have a purpose. "Oh, let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee." How shall any man cleanse his way? "By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee." That is my purpose. What is my preparation? "Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee." If I have a purpose and

preparation, I am going to perform. If I do not have a purpose and preparation, I am not going to perform.

You remember what our Lord said in Matthew 26:41? "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." A heart that is prayed up and a mind that is filled with the Word of God and taught by the Spirit of God is prepared and will undoubtedly perform and accomplish that for which it purposed and prepared.

Conclusion: Where and How It Begins

We are not going to live a godly, obedient life without a purpose and without preparation. We will never, ever perform.

Where it begins is in our minds. How it begins is what we purpose or determine in our minds. Our purpose that begins in our minds will either be holy or unholy, righteous or unrighteous, godly or ungodly. Whether it is holy or unholy, it begins in the mind. If I am going to steal from Gary, I will be preparing in my mind the way to steal from him and not get caught. You see what I am trying to tell you?

It doesn't matter whether we are talking about holiness or unholiness, righteousness or unrighteousness, obedience or sin: everything begins in the mind. Then we make preparations to fulfill the purpose we have determined. Even the ungodly do this without understanding it. But you and I understand it, and so we must have a purpose. We must prepare our hearts and our lives. Especially since we are sinners, we must prepare ourselves so that we can perform in a biblical framework and live a life pleasing unto the Lord and glorifying unto Him.

We will never do that without purpose, without preparation. Those two are necessary for performance. If we want performance, there must be preparation and purpose.

Let us pray. Father, we ask You, in the name of Jesus Christ, that You would help us, lead us, guide us, direct us, and give us, Lord, Your grace and Your mercy today. Help us to purpose in our hearts that we had not sinned against Thee, that we had not grieved Thee or quenched Thee or vexed Thee in any way whatsoever. Lord, help us

to prepare, and then help us to perform. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 44

Losing Your Wisdom and Losing Your Mind

November 16, 2025

Introduction and the Question of Losing Wisdom

Let us open our Bibles to Proverbs chapter 4 and look at verse 7: “Wisdom is the principle thing, therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” It is a very simple verse. Look at it again: wisdom is the principle thing; therefore, get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding. I am not necessarily expounding this one particular verse, but I am going to show you, I think, one of the greatest applications of it.

This message today is the first in at least a four- or five-part series. Although each message will stand on its own, they will be self-explanatory and needed to help us understand each one. The title is “Losing Your Wisdom and Losing Your Mind.” Is it possible for one who is wise to become unwise? Is it possible to lose your wisdom? If so, what is the cause of the loss of wisdom?

False Wisdoms to Forsake

Some types of wisdom need to be lost and forsaken as quickly as possible. These are false wisdoms; they are not the true wisdom of God.

Anyone who has read Pilgrim's Progress knows that one character was Mr. Worldly Wise Man. If you have not read it, I encourage you to do so; if you have read it, I encourage you to read it again. Mr. Worldly Wise Man gave Christian all kinds of direction and counsel, totally and completely wrong.

There is indeed a worldly wisdom. This worldly wisdom is not known for obedience to God, nor for holiness or righteousness. Worldly wisdom, and the worldly wise man, is the kind of wisdom that will survive in a dog-eat-dog world.

He does not care what it takes, he does not care who it hurts, he does not care what he does or how it is accomplished, just so he can make it to the top. Fraud, deceit, immorality, blackmail, lying, conniving, backstabbing, and character assassination are all in the arsenal of the worldly wise man.

The purpose is to delineate this worldly wisdom, show how wrong it is, and show how contrary it is to God and His Word. In 1 Corinthians 1, verses 20 and 21, the Word of God says, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

The wisdom of the world, as accurate as it may be worldly speaking, does not know God whatsoever. The wisdom of the world does not know God, while the wisdom of God is a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world under our glory. In 1 Corinthians 2, verses 6 and 7, the Apostle Paul says, "Albeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world, nor the princes of this world that come to know it. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world under our glory."

Here is the contrast between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. In 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 19, again, the Word of God says, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”

For it is written, “He taketh the wise in their own practice.” The wisdom of this world is absolutely foolishness with God. Worldly wisdom is also known as fleshly wisdom. The apostle says in 2 Corinthians 1:12, “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in sincerity and godly, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly toward you.” He says, not in fleshly wisdom, but in real godly sincerity and simplicity.

Psalm 73, written by Asaph, is the apex, the height of worldly wisdom, and shows you exactly the worldly wise man. Asaph writes, “Truly God is good to Israel, even as such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps and will not slip.” Why? “For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” He connects foolishness with the wicked immediately.

“For there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compassionate them about any change; violence covered them as a garment.” Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than the heart could wish.

“They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens,” and their tongue walks through the earth. They do not mind cursing God. Therefore his people return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.

They say, “How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the most High?” Verse 12 says, “Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.” Here is the worldly wise man, absolutely corrupt. He does not object to cursing God. He will take his thumb and walk through the heavens and say whatever he pleases.

Now, if you will turn in your Bible to James chapter 3, James will show that there are other types of wisdom as well. James chapter 3

distinguishes between a hellish wisdom and a heavenly wisdom. Look at the difference, because this is why some types of wisdom must be forsaken quickly. Skip down to verse 13. He asks, “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?” If anyone claims to be wise, here is what he is to do: let him show, out of a good conversation, his conduct and works with the meekness of wisdom.

Now watch verse 14. “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.” This wisdom “descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.” For where envy and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work. Now watch the difference: “the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” “And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by them that make peace.” So worldly wisdom and hellish wisdom must be lost and forsaken as quickly as possible.

Biblical Definitions of Wisdom

The word wisdom is used in different ways in the Bible. The Hebrew word for wisdom is kokmah, and it refers to wisdom evidenced in skill, in shrewdness, in patience, and also in ethical and biblical behavior. Now, there are five books of wisdom in the Bible. They are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. These five books are known as wisdom literature.

Have you ever wondered how those Israelites made everything that God required for the tabernacle, and later for the temple, exactly the way God ordained it to be made? He gave Moses the pattern of the mount. Go back in your Bibles to the book of Exodus, chapter 28. Look at Exodus chapter 28, verse 3. The Word of God says, “And thou shalt speak unto all that are wisehearted, whom I have with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron’s garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office.” But notice it: God filled them with the spirit of wisdom.

Now, if you look in Exodus chapter 31 and verse 3, Exodus 31 and verse 3.

Now we are talking about Bezalel. God says, “See, I call by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I filled him with the spirit of God in wisdom,” and in understanding, knowledge, and all manner of workmanship. Then He says in verse 4, “To devise cutting works, to work in gold and silver, and in brass, cutting of stones.” God gave him wisdom, ability, and understanding. Verse 6 says, “And I, behold, I have given with him a holy ad, the son of Isamach of the tribe of Dan. And in the hearts of all that are wise hearted, I put wisdom,” that they may make all that He had commanded me.

I have often wondered whether any of these people had what you and I would call natural abilities and skills. Regardless of whether they did or did not, what gave them the ability to perform as they did was that God gave them wisdom and understanding. I have shown Alex little clips of little children; one was five or six years old, playing the violin. You would think a five- or six-year-old playing the violin would play something like “The Cat and the Mouse,” but here they are playing Beethoven and Bach. Alice would always say, “Well, they have natural skills, and God gave them skill as well.” And that is true.

So I have often wondered: Did these people lose those skills and ability after they finished the work of God? The answer is probably not, because the Bible tells us that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. If God gave them those gifts, in all probability, they kept them.

Remember, I told you the title of this message was “Losing Your Wisdom or Losing Your Mind.” In order to understand how we are going to lose wisdom, if we are going to lose it, we have to know what wisdom is. The truth is that we lose almost anything and everything. We’ve lost our skills, our patience, our morality, our health, our money—everything imaginable. You’ve probably heard the old adage: “Of all the things I’ve lost, I miss my mind the most.” That’s about the way it goes, because we have certainly lost a lot of things. But the loss of wisdom, in one sense of the word, is the loss of the mind. When we lose our wisdom, when we lose our mind, we cease thinking biblically and in reference to God and His law.

Losing Wisdom as Losing the Mind

Now, there are two Greek words, and I am going to show them to you, that are translated as madness and folly. I will tell you what they really mean. I want you to turn in your Bible, if you would, first of all, to Luke chapter 6, verse 11. Luke chapter 6 and verse 11. This passage concerns the Pharisees and their anger at the Lord Jesus Christ because He healed a man on the Sabbath day. If you look at what the Bible says, notice in Luke chapter 6 and verse 11: "They"—that is, the scribes and Pharisees—"were filled with madness and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus." Of course, they wanted to put Him to death. Notice again what the Bible says: "They were filled with madness."

This Greek word for madness is anoia. It is translated in our Bibles as madness and folly. It implies a lack of understanding, with madness expressing itself in absolute rage. I've seen people like that. They are raging monsters; they have basically lost their mind.

To understand Anoia, its latter part comes from the noun nous, meaning mind. In our Bible, nous is repeatedly translated "mind." Whenever alpha is placed before a word, it negates that word. Thus, when the Bible says they were filled with madness, it means they were out of their mind, not in their right mind; they were insane. One would have to be insane and out of one's right mind to be angry and upset with the sinless Son of God, the Lord Jesus, who had done only what He should have done in healing that individual on the Sabbath day. Yet the Bible describes them as mad, or out of their mind.

Second Peter 2:15–16 refers to Balaam, the false prophet: "Which have forsaken the right way, and are going astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but was rebuked for his iniquity, the dumb ass speaking with a man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet." Here is another word for madness: paraphronia. It has reference to Balaam and, of course, literally means madness or insanity.

You have to remember that God told Balaam not to go. Finally, more princes were sent, and finally God said, "If they get up and call you in the morning, you go with them." But Balaam did not wait for

them to call. He wanted the money. So he got up and said, “Let's go.” That was when God met him with the angel, and the angel had a sword drawn. Notice that the Bible calls it madness. It must therefore be a type of insanity knowingly and willingly to go against God and against His plain, evident Word.

Paraphronia is the Greek word. It is literally “with madness,” or “with insanity.”

Years ago, when I was in the university in my first year of Greek, I was preaching in Marsden's Cafeteria. Every Sunday morning, they would allow me to preach there. I forget what time it was; it was early, eight or nine o'clock. I got to preach to all of the employees of Morrison's Cafeteria. They would have them there, and I would come in and preach for about thirty minutes before the day started.

There was a young black boy there, and he had a T-shirt with big letters across the front: Filippo Nino. I asked him, “What does that word mean?” He said, “I don’t know, man. It’s just a T-shirt. I’ll wear it.” I said, “Well, now wait a minute. I don’t think I’d wear a shirt if I didn’t know what was written on it. I just started taking Greek. Phila, I know, is love, because phileo means I love, and philos would be the noun. That’s where we get our English word phileo and family from. I know the first part is love, but I don’t know the last part. I’ll look it up and tell you.”

I went home and got my Greek lexicon. It is the word for insanity. Literally, what he had written across his shirt was “a lumber of insanity.”

This is what the Bible is saying about Balaam: paraphronia. In other words, he is going along with insanity. He is out of his mind; he has lost his mind. He is going absolutely contrary to God. I want you to understand this word so that you can also see what is prevalent in our society and our land today. Look at our counties, our state, our society, and our nation, and see how insane people really are and what they are doing.

The Fear of the Lord as the Beginning of Wisdom

It seems like absolute madness. You have heard the old adage that common sense is not so common anymore, and that is true. So what

in the world has happened to us, and why are we so absolutely insane? I am going to show you. If you look in your Bibles at Proverbs 9:10, you will have the answer: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.” Since the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, where there is no fear of God, there is no wisdom. Since the fear of the Lord and its knowledge are understanding, where there is no fear of the Lord, there is no true wisdom and no true understanding.

Men may understand in terms of the world, the flesh, or hellish wisdom, but it is impossible for them to understand in terms of righteousness, holiness, and obedience. Let me give you a verse that I have given you before. First Corinthians 2:14 says, “The natural man,” that is, the unsaved man, man by nature, “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them.” He does not have the ability, because they are spiritually discerned. Those who do not fear the Lord and do not obey Him cannot understand the truths, principles, and precepts of Scripture. Thus they are out of their mind; they are insane, and they have committed absolute folly.

The Foolishness of Rejecting God

Let me give you a good illustration. Look in your Bible to the book of Romans, chapter 1, beginning with verse 21. “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up.”

I am not speaking about giving them up, although that is another sermon in itself. But look at verse 22: “For fessing themselves to be wise, they became as fools.”

The interesting thing is that the Greek word is morano. It literally means to become a fool, to act foolishly, or to prove a person or thing to be foolish. You may not be familiar with the word morino, but the noun is moros. It means foolish; it means fool; it means to be

impious or godless. The word moros, if you conjugate the word, brings you to the Greek word moros. You know what a moron is?

We used to use that term all the time when I was a child, and there were even moron jokes—the little moron. But the word moron means foolish. It means to be stupid, to be insane, literally to be out of your mind. So let me show you what a moron is. Look in your Bible to the book of Proverbs, chapter 15, and look at verse 21. Here is a good illustration. Look what the Bible says.

Folly is a joy to him that is destined to wisdom. But a man of understanding walketh uprightly. Folly, that is foolishness, is a joy to him that is destined to wisdom. A moron enjoys foolish, insane, stupid things. That's exactly what he's saying. Now, what is our source of wisdom? Well, let me quote it. You can look at it if you like, but it's Proverbs chapter 2 and verse 6.

God's Word as the Source of Wisdom

Listen carefully what the Bible says. For the Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Now, I want you to think about this verse. For the Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. Now, God may give wisdom and God may give understanding immediately, that is, without the use of means. That's exactly what he did to Bezalel and Aholiab. He just immediately gave them wisdom to know how to do all of these things. But usually, however, when God gives us wisdom, when God gives us understanding, it is immediately that is through the use of means.

So I did not go to bed totally ignorant and wake up with a master's degree the next morning. It does not work like that. So that means usually you have to study, you have to work for the knowledge and for the understanding that is for sure. I want you to notice Proverbs 2 and verse 6 one more time before we go to Proverbs 1. I want you to watch this. For the Lord giveth wisdom out of his mouth immediately cometh understanding and knowledge. In other words, God gives us wisdom through his spoken word. Where is his spoken word? It's our Bible.

This is what the doctrine of inspiration is all about. We say the Bible is the inspired word of God. Well, what is inspiration? Here it is. Inspiration is the strong conscience in breathing of God into men, qualifying them to give utterance to the truth so that the words that they spoke and wrote were and are indeed the very words of God himself. So let me say this another way. The Bible is just as if God spoke every single word himself. He did, but he inspired men to write it.

Now, if you will go back in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 1, I told you that Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon were known as wisdom literature. So look in Proverbs chapter 1 and let's read at least the first four verses. Watch this. The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel. Why did he write this? Here's why. To know wisdom and instruction. To perceive the words of understanding. To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice and judgment and equity.

“To give subtlety to the simple and to the young man knowledge and discretion.” Look at verse five: “A wise man will hear, and will increase in learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.”

So let me tell you something about a fool. A fool in the Bible is not a mentally deficient person. A fool in the Bible is someone who will not listen, someone who will not hear, someone who will not read, and someone who will not receive instruction.

God speaks through His Word. His Word is absolute truth. For you and me to obtain wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, we must read, study, meditate, and apply the truth that He has revealed.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:15, “And from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” If you want wisdom concerning salvation, you must get it from the Bible. The Bible makes you wise unto salvation.

What else did the Apostle Paul tell Timothy? In 1 Timothy 2:7, he said, “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” It is true that understanding is the gift of God, but God does not give that understanding willy-nilly. He said, “Consider what

I say, and the Lord give me understanding." In other words, God gives understanding as we read, study, think, and meditate.

Israel's Wisdom and Understanding in God's Law

God then gives the understanding. God's Word is our wisdom; it is our understanding. Now go back in your Bible to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 4. I want you to see what the Word of God teaches concerning God's Word and God's law. Look at Deuteronomy 4, beginning with verse 5. Moses writes, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it." Now look at what he says in verse 6.

"And what nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you today?" Notice in verse six that we are to keep and do them. Why are we to keep and obey the words of God? He says, "For this is your wisdom and your understanding." You are different from other nations. They do not have His word or His law. This is your wisdom and your understanding. They will say that you are a great nation because you have wonderful, righteous, and godly laws. You are an understanding people.

Clearly, then, verse seven says, "And what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them?" How is God nigh unto us? We understand that God is omnipresent, but here in the context He is talking about God's law and God's word. God is nigh unto us because we have His law; we have His word.

Solomon: The Greatest Example of Losing Wisdom

What I want to do today is show you the greatest biblical example of someone who lost his wisdom. To say it another way, this is the greatest biblical example of someone who lost his mind. I am going to tell you about an individual you already know, but I will show you how it is possible to lose your wisdom and lose your mind. Turn in your Bibles to First Kings, chapter four. This individual, who had more wisdom than anyone alive at that time, was none other than King Solomon. Notice in First Kings, chapter four.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Kings 4:29-34; 1 Kings 3:3-12 (KJV)

> And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East country and all the wisdom of Egypt. So he was smarter. He knew more than any of those individuals, for he was wiser than all men. That's a wonderful statement: for he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezraite, and Heman, and Karkal, and Darda, and the sons of Mahal.
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> And his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is Lebanon, even the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. He spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping beings, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon from all kings of the earth which have heard of his wisdom. So God gave him wisdom, the Bible says, exceeding much.
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> Solomon asked for wisdom, and God gave it to him. And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David, his father, only sacrificed and burned incense in high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. A thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar. In Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night.
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> And God said, ask what I shall give you. And Solomon said, Thou hast shown unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth and in righteousness, and upright as a heart would be, and that thou hast kept him this great kindness, and that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king, and son of David, my father, and I am but a little child, and I know not how to go out and come in, and thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people that cannot

Solomon prayed, “Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: and who is able to judge this thy so great a people?” The speech

pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. God said unto him, “Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long by, neither hast thou asked riches for thyself, nor asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy words, and, lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, look, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.”

God also gave him all these other things that he had not asked for. When God asked Solomon what he would like from Him, basically this is what he said: “Lord, I don't have sense enough to come out of the rain. You have to give me wisdom.” The Bible says that God gave him exceeding much. He had wisdom beyond our understanding.

When the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with a hard question. She came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bore spices, very much gold, and precious stones. When she had come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart, and Solomon told her all her questions. There was not anything hid from the king which he told her not. When the Queen of Sheba had seen all of Solomon's wisdom, the house that he had built, the meat of his table, the sitting of his servants, the attendance of his ministers, their apparel, his cup-bearers, and his assent by which he went—

When the queen came up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. She said unto the king, “It was a true report that I heard in mine own land, of thy acts, and of thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it. And, behold, a half was not told me. Thy wisdom and prosperity exceeded the fame which I heard. Happier thy men, happier these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on the throne of Israel, because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore may he be keen to do judgment and justice.”

The queen said, “I had not believed the words until mine eyes had seen it. Behold, the half was not told me. Thy wisdom and thy prosperity exceeded the fame which I have heard.”

The first instance in the Bible where Solomon had to use that wisdom was when there were two harlots, each with a child. One of the harlots overlaid her child during the night, and the child died. She arose early the next morning, took her dead child, put it with the other harlot, and took the other harlot's living child and put it by her. Then she claimed that the living child was hers and that the dead child belonged to the other harlot.

They came to the king, and both harlots were claiming the living child. Solomon said, "Bring me a sword. What I am going to do is cut the child in half, give half to this one and half to the other." The real mother begged Solomon not to do that: "Let her have the child. Please don't kill that child." But the other woman said, "Nay, nay, nay, let it be neither mine nor thine, but have the child." Solomon said, "I don't know why I killed this child, this is his mother over here."

That was just an illustration of Solomon's wisdom. I can give you multiple illustrations of Solomon's wisdom. The very fact that he built the temple shows it. He understood everything that was to be done, and he fortunately made many of the things that went into that temple himself. However, the truth is this: he lost his wisdom, and he lost his mind.

Before I show it to you, I want you to turn one more time to 2 Chronicles, chapter 9, verses 22 and 23: "And King Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom that God had put into his heart." Wow. So God imparted wisdom.

You remember that a few months back I preached two messages, "Learning the Righteousness of God" and then "Losing the Righteousness of God." It is possible not only to lose the righteousness of God, but also to lose the wisdom that God has given you.

Now let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Kings, chapter 11. As you look at this, you will see that Solomon not only lost his wisdom; he lost his mind. There will be an answer as to how he lost his wisdom and his mind. First Kings 11:1 says, "But King Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh,

women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites."

Look at verse 2: "Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, You shall not go into them, neither shall they come into you. You're not to marry them, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon claimed to these in love, and he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned away his heart. When Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zithonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. He did evil in the sight of the Lord and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon, and likewise did he for all the strange wives which Bernean sins and sacrifice unto their gods."

And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, "Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant, my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake; but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son, that be Rehoboam. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom, but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the king's seed in Edom. And, of course, He stirred up other adversaries as well. Now, we know, confess, and say that Solomon was the wisest man on earth at that particular time.

The Consequences of Solomon's Folly

Is it wise to disobey God? Is it wise to provoke God? Is it wise to turn away from God? Is it wise to do that which God has absolutely

forbidden someone to do? It is not wise. You become foolish. You become a moron when you do so. You become insane because you are literally out of your mind.

In 2 Kings chapter 23, verse 13, notice what Josiah is doing: “And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom, or Moloch, the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.” Note that the Mount of Olives is now called the Mount of Corruption, or the Mount of Scandal.

John Trapp describes the hill before Jerusalem, Mount Olivet, or the Mount of Olives, as the Mount of Corruption or the Mount of Scandal. It stood in the very face of God's house, so that God could never have looked out of the sanctuary without seeing that vile hill of abominations. It was built across from the temple, which housed the presence of God. When God looked out, He saw the Mount of Corruption and all the false gods being worshipped—the gods for whom Solomon had made altars.

God was therefore greatly displeased with Solomon. Solomon greatly provoked God, and God took away his kingdom, raised up adversaries against him, and removed peace from the land. How in the world could someone like Solomon, who was so full of wisdom, lose that wisdom? How could Solomon do what he knew God had absolutely forbidden? The result was exactly what God had said would happen: they would turn away his heart, and his heart was turned away. Solomon is remembered not only for his great wisdom, but also for being a fool, for being a moron, for losing his wisdom.

Application: Use Truth or Lose It

Is it possible to lose your wisdom? Is it possible to lose your mind? The answer is absolutely yes. How do you lose it? Through disobedience, through rebellion against God and His Word.

I want to give you a truth that I have repeated over and over through the years. Turn in your Bibles to Mark chapter 4 and look at verses 24 and 25 momentarily. Here is the truth: If you do not use

the truth, you will lose the truth. Look at Mark 4, verse 24. In fact, let us read verse 23.

Our Lord said, "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." And he said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With what measure you need, it shall be measured to you. And to you that hear"—that is, obey and apply—"shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken, even that which he hath."

In other words, if you do not use the truth, you are going to lose the truth. You and I are not only human; we are fallen humans. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 1, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest seed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." How many times have you said, "It slipped my mind," or, "I forgot"? God said we should give the more earnest seed to His Word, lest at any time we should let it slip.

So here is the truth: if you do not use the truth, apply the truth, and make the truth your own, you will lose it. God is not going to leave His truth around to be hated, despised, misused, and abused. He is just not going to do that.

Conclusion and Call for Heavenly Wisdom

Solomon had all the wisdom, and you'll all sit through disobedience. So mark this down: if you do not use the truth, you will lose the truth. The second thing is this: since wisdom is the principal thing, as the Bible says in Proverbs 4:7, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with thy wisdom get understanding and knowledge." It is impossible to get wisdom, understanding, and knowledge apart from the grace and mercy of God and apart from God's Word. If you neglect studying, reading, meditating upon, and applying God's Word, you are not going to have wisdom, understanding, or knowledge. You are acting like a moron, acting foolish. Those who go against God and His Word are out of their minds. That is what the word means. They are not in their right mind; they are insane.

Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. But fools despise wisdom and instruction." Morons

despise wisdom and instruction. Those who do not have their right mind despise wisdom and instruction. If you do not want to lose the wisdom that God has placed in you, you must use it and supply it. He must thank God for it. If you want more wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, you have to continue to study and meditate. For the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

We do not need worldly wisdom, fleshly wisdom, or hellish wisdom. What we need is heavenly wisdom. The next two sermons will be a continuation of 1 Kings 11, titled “The Dangers of Old Age.” If you do not want to lose your wisdom and do not wish to endanger yourself in your later years, He must listen, because Solomon did this when he was old. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom. And with all thy getting, get understanding and knowledge.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word and your truth. We pray, Lord, that you would indeed give us wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. That which we do have and possess by your grace and mercy, enable us, Lord, to use it, apply it, and multiply it for your honor and your glory. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

CHAPTER 45

Let there be Unity

May 10, 2026

Introduction: The Need for Unity

The Lord has been very gracious to me in the last number of weeks. In fact, I have gotten several messages each week, and I wondered how in the world I was going to preach all of these messages. Just yesterday, the Lord put into my mind how we are to relate them. So I am going to start today with a message entitled “Let There Be Unity” from Psalm 133. This will be the first part of this message, and the second part, Lord willing, will be next week, and then we will be adding there too. It is not a series as such, but I think several of these are very related. This will lay the groundwork and the introduction for what I want to bring next week, Lord willing.

Psalm 133 is not a long psalm; it happens to be just three verses. David writes, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard that went down the skirts of his garment. As the dew of Hermon and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commended the blessing, even life for evermore.”

I have some friends, or had some friends, that both of them are now dead. They have been real workers and fighters for liberty, as well as for Christian principles. The wife always said this, and this was her little motto: "He who gets organized first wins," because oftentimes they were fighting the government.

The truth of the matter is this: I think it is not just who gets organized first; I think it is who gets unified first as well. It is possible to have union without unity. Although we may have union, that which is really missing may be that which is known as unity.

Consider two full-grown tomcats. If you tied their tails together and hung them over a clothesline, guess what those two tomcats would do? They would fight, claw, and bite each other until they were both dead, is what it amounts to. When they are tied together and hanging over the clothesline, there is union, but there is not unity. That is the difference between the two. And so that is basically, I think, where the church, and Christendom, is today: we have union, but we do not have unity. Unity requires not only union, but oneness of mind, thought, objectives, and goals as well. Most of the time, we do not really comprehend or understand real unity.

Historical Examples of Unity Among Pastors

Unity does not require us to agree on every little detail. There are differences among Christians, including differences in Christian growth and maturity, understanding, and personality. There have always been differences, and there always will be differences. But differences do not negate unity.

Our forefathers understood unity. In fact, if you were to study the American War for Independence, the war began prior to 1776, though we normally give the period as 1776 to 1783. You will find that many of those pastors worked together because they needed to work together; unity there was a necessity. You will find the same truth in the Second War for Independence, sometimes called the War of Northern Aggression and erroneously referred to as the Civil War. One of my favorite illustrations showed how the pastors and chaplains stood together and were unified, although they included Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists.

These pastors and chaplains who worked together were always happy and glad to see others prospering, even when they were not prospering. Today, however, when you try to get a group of preachers together, the first question usually asked is, “What am I going to get out of it?” Or, “What is my church going to benefit from it?” In other words, they are not interested in just helping for the kingdom’s sake, for the honor and glory of Christ’s sake, or for helping for the sake of others.

They want something out of it themselves. Well, that was not necessarily the way it was in those chaplains, because that which held them together was not only the Word of God, but also the doctrines of grace. So here is my illustration. Dr. William J. Hogue, who happened to be a Presbyterian, wrote of his visit to Fredericksburg in the spring of 1863 during the revival in the Barksdale, Mississippi, Brigade.

He says this: “The Reverend Dr. Burrus of the First Baptist Church, Richmond, was to have preached that night. But as he would remain some days, and I can only stay one day, he courteously insisted upon my preaching. And so we had a Presbyterian sermon introduced by Baptist services under the direction of a Methodist chaplain in an Episcopal church.”

So now you have heard about something strange, but all of these men believed the Word of God. There was a vast difference between the Episcopal Church back then and the Episcopal Church today.

General William J. Pendleton happened to be the head man over Lee’s artillery. He was also an Episcopalian pastor. General Leonidas Polk, who started the School of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, was also an Episcopalian pastor. These men simply worked together. Such camaraderie as existed back then is almost impossible today, not only because of the fractured nature of the church, but also because of the invincible ignorance of most preachers and Christians. It is astounding how we have depreciated in our understanding of biblical truths. Today pastors and Christians divide over eschatology, baptism, minor doctrinal issues, feelings, and emotions—or, “I just don’t like that, and I’m just not going to help it; I’m just not going to participate.” Most pastors today do not

understand biblical charity, nor do they understand illumination or enlightenment from the Word of God.

Unity Does Not Require Agreement on Every Detail

They certainly do not understand education in the Word of God, neither do they understand what I am going to share with you later, the stages in the Christian life as well. Here is another illustration from the War of Northern Aggression. It concerns a Presbyterian pastor, Dr. Beverly Tucker Lacy, who was also chaplain to Stonewall Jackson. Robert L. Dabney was a Presbyterian pastor as well, but Stonewall himself happened to be Presbyterian.

Dr. Beverly Tucker Lacy had preached, and some men were converted to Jesus Christ under his preaching. These men had been raised differently, and they believed that immersion was the proper way to be baptized. When it came time for their baptism, Dr. Lacy contacted a Baptist chaplain, Brother Webb, who eagerly and readily baptized those converts. I want to read to you what Brother Webb said to Dr. Beverly Tucker Lacy and the Presbyterian's response.

As Dr. Lacy brought those converts to Brother Webb, and Brother Webb finished baptizing them, he said, "Brother Lacy, you remind me of a hen setting on duck eggs. She carefully nurses the eggs until the little ducks appear and diligently watches over them and cares for them. But one day she goes near the water, and the whole brood of little ducks plunge in while she has to stand clucking on the bank."

Dr. Lacy replied, "Yes, Brother Webb. I cannot follow them in, but I go with them to the water's edge. I receive them with open arms when they come out, and I am ever ready to hail them as my spiritual children and to do all in my power to help them serve our common Master and to reach the home of our common Father above."

Brother Webb was teasing the Presbyterian, and the Presbyterian said, "You are right. I do not believe in immersion, but I count them my children, and I am going to do everything I can to help them and get them to our Heavenly Father above."

So let me repeat this truth that I made earlier: Unity does not require agreement on every detail.

It is true that we must agree on core doctrines. We cannot deny the inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Jesus Christ, or the work of the Holy Spirit. We have to agree on these main and basic issues. But according to the Word of God, there are actually four stages in the Christian's life, and in these four stages our understanding is different.

First, there is the understanding of what we would call a little babe. The Bible says in 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 1, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." When an individual is first converted, he is nothing more than a babe in Christ. How much understanding does a baby have? A newborn babe in Christ may understand that he is a sinner. He certainly understands that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh and that Jesus Christ is the only Savior, but that is about the extent of it.

In 1 John chapter 2, the Apostle John says, "I write unto you, little children." Then he says, "I write unto you, young men." Then he says, "I write unto you, fathers." So you have not only little babes, but also little children, young men, and fathers.

A little child has a much better understanding than a little baby, because that child is learning to listen and obey and knows what will happen when he disobeys. By the time you become a young man, you have more discretion, knowledge, and understanding. When you become a father, you are wise and full of wisdom as well.

It is important to grasp this simple fact: the understanding of a Christian is different in each of these stages. Therefore, you respond to that Christian according to the stage where you have him in life.

The problem is that we want everyone to see exactly what we see, understand exactly what we understand, and agree with us. If they do not see or understand what we do, immediately we want to call them ignorant or absolutely lost.

You Are Not the Standard of Truth

Christians may disagree on certain subjects and still be Christians. We may have unity—we may have union without unity, but we want to have union with unity as well. Let me give you several truths that I hope will help us.

Number one, listen carefully: You are not the standard by which spirituality and truth is judged. Just because you happen to know something from the Word of God, and maybe more than someone else, does not mean that you are the standard of truth. No, the Word of God itself is our standard.

We have no right, then, to demand that everyone agree with us and see what we see instantly and immediately. I can assure you that this is the cause of many conflicts between Christians, divisions, and loss of friendship as well. We simply think that everyone should agree with us. We think we are right, and therefore we demand that other people agree with us. No, you are not the standard of truth. The Word of God is the standard of truth.

God Must Give Illumination

It never dawns on us that we possibly could be wrong ourselves. Here is the second truth: If God does not give illumination, if God does not enlighten us, no one will ever understand anything. Remember these passages. Turn with me, first of all, to Proverbs chapter 2 and verse 6. It is a very plain and interesting verse. The Word of God says, "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. So the Lord has to give wisdom.

Now turn back to Job 39 and look at verses 13 through 17. Here is the question that is asked of Job. God is asking a question: "Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust." That is the ostrich. "And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them."

"She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear." Why would an ostrich leave her eggs in the dust, not knowing that someone may crush them or a wild beast may break them? Here is why: "Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding." The ostrich has been deprived of wisdom and understanding.

Job asked a similar question in Job 17: "For thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt them." What has God done? God has hidden their heart from understanding. The truth of the matter is this: unless God gives us understanding, we are never going to see.

Now, let me show you how crucial this is. In Luke 24, Jesus Christ is speaking to His own disciples: "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."

Even the disciples who walked with our Lord for three years, who saw His miracles and heard His teaching, had to have their understanding opened so they might understand the Scriptures. Many times our Lord, speaking to His own disciples, would ask, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" If the disciples of Jesus Christ—who lived, walked, and talked with Christ—had to have their understanding opened that they might understand the Scriptures, how much more do you and I need our understanding opened, our eyes opened, so that we can see truth? Unless God opens our eyes, we are not going to see truth.

Let me give you an illustration. When God saved me and called me to preach, I had a real hunger to know the Word of God. I put myself on a reading schedule: I read through the Old Testament every month and the New Testament every week. I did that over and over and over. I remember reading one day and seeing something, and it blessed me immeasurably.

I could not wait to show our pastor, who at that time had been preaching about thirty years. When I got to him, I said, “Brother, let me show you something.” I opened the Bible and read the scripture, expecting him to say, “Oh, wow.” Instead, he looked at me and said, “So.” I said, “You don’t see the implication here?” He replied, “Well, I’ve read the scripture before.”

It boggled my mind. Here I saw a truth that blessed my heart, and it was nothing to him. Later I understood that it was the illumination of the Holy Spirit that enabled me to see it, while he did not see it.

Yet he understood things that I did not understand. We have to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God. It is just that simple.

Here is the third thing: it is impossible for all our understanding to be alike and equal, not only because of the sovereignty of God in giving understanding and knowledge, but also because some make better use of the means God has ordained to learn truth. Some use those means more than others, and consequently they will know more than others.

Diligence in Learning Affects Understanding

Look in your Bibles at Mark chapter 4, verses 23 through 25. Our Lord said, "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." If God gives us hearing ears, we must hear. What does He want us to hear? In verse 24 He said, "Take heed what ye hear." That means we are responsible to make sure we are hearing the Word of God. In Luke 8:18 He said, "Take heed how ye hear." You cannot hear God's Word in a sleepy, clumsy, indolent way and expect to receive anything from it. You must pay close attention. But He says, "Take heed what ye hear."

Then He makes this statement: "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you." Here is the principle: to whatever measure you give in learning the Word of God, to that degree it will be measured back to you. Do not expect to read the Bible for ten minutes and receive four hours' worth of understanding. It does not work like that. Nor will studying the Bible for four hours give you eight hours of understanding. Whatever you measure in learning the truth, it will be measured to you.

"And unto you that hear shall more be given." If you have hearing ears, if you understand that truth, and if you apply that truth, God is going to give you more truth. For He said in verse 25, "For he that hath, to him shall more be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath." So if you really do not understand, you do not have it, and you are going to lose it anyhow.

You have to hear that there is a truth. In 2 Timothy, chapter 2 and verse 7, the Apostle Paul told Timothy, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." Notice that

understanding comes from God: “And the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” But God is not going to give understanding apart from consideration. “Consider what I say.” God holds us accountable and responsible to read, study, grasp, and apply. Understanding does not simply come flying into our ears from nowhere.

It is only common sense that the individual who gives a greater amount of time to reading, studying, meditating, thinking, and praying is going to end up with more understanding than someone who does not. If you know more than a Christian brother, then first and foremost it is your duty to be patient with him.

Duties of the Mature and Immature Christian

You did not grasp and understand everything that you now understand in a twenty-four-hour period. You did not go to bed dumb and wake up smart. You did not go to bed ignorant and wake up a PhD. It did not work like that. It took you time to get to where you are. Therefore, you have to be patient with him. Second, it is your duty, responsibility, and obligation to teach the one who is less knowledgeable than you are—the weaker brother. It is not your duty to ridicule, mock, insult, or ignore him. If you do, that is your sin. It is your duty to be patient, and it is your duty to teach him.

The younger, immature Christian also has a duty: to listen to the Word of God and to the teacher who is teaching him. Think of it like this. Those of us who have had children, especially when they grow older, try to save them from much hurt and anxiety in life. We give them counsel. Sometimes they listen, and sometimes they do not. Then they have to learn the hard way. Once they learn the hard way and begin hurting, they come back, and we can say, “I tried to tell you, but you would not listen.”

It is the same thing spiritually. The younger Christian has the duty and responsibility to hear the Word of God and listen to what is being taught. In 2 Timothy 2:24-25, our Lord says, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.” These verses speak of preachers, because First and Second Timothy and Titus are pastoral epistles; but if you are a Christian, you are also a servant of the Lord, so the same truth applies.

Not only must the servant be patient, but he must be "in meekness," not with a high, haughty, or arrogant attitude saying, "I know more than you; you better listen to me." Rather, he must be "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves."

An unsaved man, or a Christian who will not listen to truth, is someone who opposes himself. Why, then, should we be patient? Why should we instruct such people in meekness? The answer is, "If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." God must give repentance, open their understanding, and give them grace and mercy. Until He does, we must be patient and meek, continuing to instruct them.

This is our duty, our responsibility. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." He told Timothy, "That which you heard from me, among many witnesses"—Paul's preaching and teaching—"the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

It is not my responsibility to chase you down and cram truth down your throat. My responsibility is to teach. But your responsibility is to be faithful to attend the preaching and teaching so that you may learn. Faithful men, once they learn, will be able to teach others also.

The Challenge of Patience in Teaching

One of the hardest things for you and me to learn in all of this is patience, because we want folks to see what we see instantly. Many times we have to repeat the same truth over and over. You have heard that old adage, "Repetition aids learning." And that is true. The more you hear something, the easier it is to grasp.

I remember as a young preacher—I would preach 61 years this coming week. I would become upset if folks did not grasp everything that I preached in an hour. Then it dawned on me: you spent 40 hours preparing that message and want them to grasp it in one hour? I had the advantage. I was the one who did all the studying. I grasped it and understood it, and then expected them to get it in one

hour. Sometimes, therefore, we have to repeat the same truth over and over.

It is like that basic defensive handgun class. I begin by asking, “How many can count to five?” Everybody raises their hand. “How many can count to three?” Everybody raises their hand. When we get to it, they find out they cannot, because it is all muscle memory, and they simply mess up. It is the same thing with this truth. Sometimes it has to be repeated over and over and over.

So when we have a brother who does not grasp what we're trying to teach, we are often impatient. We want to throw up our head and hands, calling him an ignoramus, stupid, hard-headed, and all kinds of things, simply because he does not see what we see, instead of being patient. When we are teaching other people, we have to be patient.

That is the hardest part of it. I have taught everything from fourth grade through college. I remember the first time I taught fourth graders. I had been accustomed to teaching college and high school students, but now I had to teach a fourth-grade class. My little history book that year was about an inch thick. I looked at it and thought, "Oh, Lord, have mercy. What is going to happen? I am going to teach this in a month and have nothing left for the rest of the year." The first week I probably covered three chapters.

And so I gave a quiz, and every one of my students failed it. I had some very brilliant students; I really did. This was a Christian school. It dawned on me that it was not the students; it was the teacher. I was expecting fourth graders to grasp what high schoolers and college students could grasp, and they could not do it.

I had to stop, go back to the first chapter, and patiently and methodically say the same thing over and over until those little children got it. That little book did last me all year because it was such a slow pace. But the truth of the matter is that sometimes it is that way, even with adults.

With this background in mind, go back to Psalm 133. David writes, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went

down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." When he said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," the Hebrew word is yachad. It means unity, altogether, alike, unitedness. Basically, the word means to join, to unite, to be joined together, to be united. It does speak of unity.

The Anointing of Unity from Psalm 133

Here are two quotations. The first is from John Trapp, the old Puritan; the second is from Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Trapp writes: "This ointment"—that is, the one that went on the high priest—"this ointment was most rich, as made up of the choicest spices, which you will find in Exodus 30, and very fragrant, refreshing the senses, not of Aaron only, but all of them about him. So does Christian unity and amity, that fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22, far beyond that common friendship so highly extolled by Cicero and other heathens, and is therefore here fitly compared to that no such or non such odoriferous ointment." He is speaking of the ointment put upon the high priest. In other words, the heathen have no idea what he is talking about. Now here is a lengthy quotation by Spurgeon; listen to it.

In order that we may better behold brotherly unity, David gives us a resemblance, so that as in a glass we may perceive its blessedness. It has a sweet perfume about it, comparable to the precious ointment with which the first high priest was anointed at his ordination. It is a holy thing and so again is like the oil of consecration which was to be used only in the Lord's service. What a sacred thing must brotherly love be when it can be likened to an oil which must never be poured on any man but on the Lord's high priest alone.

It is a diffusive thing. Being poured on the head, the fragrant oil that flowed down upon Aaron's head and thence dropped upon his garments to the uttermost hem was anointed therewith, and even so doth brotherly love extend its benign power and bless all who are beneath its influence. Hearty concord brings a benediction upon all concerned; its goodness and pleasure are shared in and by the lowliest members of the household. Even the servants are better and

happier because of the lovely unity among the members of the family.

It has a special use about it. For as by the anointing oil Aaron was set apart for the special service of Jehovah, even so those who dwell in love are the better fitted to glorify God in his church. The Lord is not likely to use for his glory those who are devoid of love. They lack the anointing needful to make them priests unto the Lord.

That is a chief point of comparison. The oil did not remain confined to the place where it first fell, but flowed down the high priest's hair and bedewed his beard; even so brotherly love, descending from the head, distills and descends, anointing as it runs, and perfuming all it lights upon. That went down to the skirts of his garments. Once set in motion, it would not cease from flowing. It might seem as if it were better not to smear his garments with oil, but the sacred unction could not be restrained. It flowed over his holy robes. Even thus does brotherly love not only flow over the hearts upon that which it was first poured out, and descend to those who are of inferior part of the body of Christ, but it runs where it is not sought for, asking neither leave nor license to make its way.

Christian affection knows no limits of parish, nation, sect, or age. Is the man a believer in Christ? Then he is in the one body, and I must yield to him an abiding love. Is he one of the poorest, one of the least spiritual, one of the least lovable? Then he is as the skirts of the garment, and my heart's love must even fall upon him. Brotherly love comes from the head and falls to the feet. Its way is downward. Love for the brethren condescends to men of low estate.

It is not puffed up, but is lowly and meek. This is no small part of the excellence. Oil would not adorn if it did not flow down. Neither would brotherly love diffuse its blessing if it did not descend. Every church ought to hear what Spurgeon said on that, but we must take note of what the Scripture says about the blessings of the anointing.

Rebuke and Confrontation Are Necessary for Unity

Most of us can quote Psalm 23. When you get to verse 5, David said it like this: “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth

over.” So the anointing of unity has to be, and needs to be, even in the presence of our enemies. I am going to say it must be in the presence of our enemies.

If we are divided, we are easily defeated. It is much easier to deal with one than it is with a thousand. If I had fifteen men out there and I was the only one who opposed them, the fifteen men could probably take care of me, because I am only one. But if I had a thousand standing behind me, or a million behind me, the fifteen would soon dissipate.

Everyone knows the old strategy of divide and conquer, and this is basically where we are in the church today. Our enemies not only foster divisions, they take advantage of divisions, and thus we are easily defeated. Mark Psalm 141, because we will come back to it, or at least I will refer back to it. Notice verse 5. David said, “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.”

He says those who smite me, those who reprove me, it is going to be an excellent oil. And when they are in trouble, I am going to be praying for them as well.

Rebuke, admonitions, and confrontations are not disruptive to unity; they are absolutely necessary for unity. That which breaks unity is sin and rebellion. Those are the destroyers of unity. Therefore, we do not rebuke, confront, reprove, or admonish based upon something we dislike, something we happen not to agree with, or something we do not understand.

I am not talking about heresy, but simply about the things over which most folks divide. We have to remember that we are not the standard. The Word of God is the standard. All rebuke, confrontation, reproof, and exhortation must be based upon biblical doctrine.

We are commanded to rebuke one another. In Luke 17:3, our Lord says, "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." If our brother trespasses against us, we are to rebuke him; if he repents, we are to forgive him.

The word rebuke is interesting. We normally think of cussing somebody out, telling someone off, or giving them a piece of our mind. As someone said, that is why we do not have much left—we have given it all away. But rebuke is the Greek word epitimao. Epi is a preposition meaning upon; timao means to honor, to reverence, and to value.

It means to revere and to venerate. If I have to come to Steve and rebuke him, the Word of God is saying that I am actually honoring him. I am venerating him and loving him because I believe he is worthy and worth something to be corrected and rebuked. In other words, I am placing a value upon him. I am not tearing him down or trying to destroy him; I am trying to build him up and show him that some things in his life are wrong. They need to be changed, and here is the way to change them: here is what the Word of God says. The word timao means to place value upon while we are rebuking or censoring.

This is why it would be an excellent oil and why it would not break his head: it is done in honor, in love, and the way it should be done. When rebuke is accomplished in love and in the biblical framework, it demonstrates that we value our brother enough and honor him enough to want to see him right with the Lord and walking pleasing unto the Lord. We count him worthy of that correction.

God will never use you to give out rebukes unless you are willing to receive them yourselves. I have just talked about rebuking Steve. But what if Steve has to rebuke me?

The Bible does say, "Rebuke not an elder," but in treating him as a father. Yet I am still a sinner. I sin and mess up from time to time. If I happen to do so in the presence of Steve, Steve would have every right in the world to say, "Now pastor, listen to me. That's not the right attitude, or you should not have said that, or you should not act that way." He would have the right to do that because I may be a pastor, but I am also a brother in Christ.

If he is going to value me, he is going to confront me and rebuke me. You would not shake your finger in your father's face and cuss him out. Neither would he shake his finger in my face, and I certainly would not shake my finger in his face. But this is what rebuke is all

about. If you are not willing to take rebukes, to be admonished, or to be reproved, God is never going to use you to give out any, because you are unwilling yourself.

Now, follow me with some Scriptures. Turn to 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 2. Remember, this is a pastoral epistle. Paul is writing to Timothy, who is the pastor. In 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 2, look what the Apostle Paul tells Timothy.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." What is longsuffering? It is extended patience. If I go to confront Steve, if I go to rebuke Steve, I do not say, "I don't like the way you comb your hair. You ought to part it on the other side." That is not a biblical rebuke; that is stupid. Or I could say, "I know you ought not to wear that black sweater. You ought to wear a blue sweater." I do not have any authority to tell you what color sweater to wear. You wear whatever color you like. But if I come to straighten you out, or to straighten Steve out, I had better come with doctrine.

Here's what the Word of God says. Here's where you're wrong. Here's where the Word of God says that you're to act and how to act and how to change your life. We can't just come up to somebody and say, “Well, I don't like what you're doing.” That's neither here nor there, whether you like it or not. It may be none of your business what I'm doing. But I'm just saying, if we're going to confront each other, it needs to be with doctrine.

Titus 2:15 says, “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.” That's how it is as a preacher. He said, “Rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.” The responsibility is to speak, exhort, and rebuke with all authority, not merely to express personal displeasure or preference.

In 1 Timothy 5:20, he says, “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” There is a difference between a private sin and a public sin. So, to you, Steve, again, if Steve said something to me privately and it was a slam and a slander, I could look at him and say, “Steve, why would you say that? Why would you do that?” It is private; it is between Steve and myself. But if Steve stood up in a

congregation and publicly charged me with something of which I am not guilty, had no proof, and it was just his own accusation, I could rebuke him publicly. Why? Because that would be a public sin.

If it is a private sin, according to Matthew chapter 18, if your brother sins against you, you are to go to him privately. But if it is a public sin, then there is a public rebuke. This demonstrates that confronting each other, rebuking each other, reproving each other, and admonishing each other is not putting each other down. It is not a demonstration of hatred or anger. Our Lord said it in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 19. Are you listening? He said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” So, rebuking and being chastened is evidence of love.

Now, I want you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, to Romans chapter 15, and I want you to see what is needed and what is necessary for us to be able to confront each other, to rebuke each other. So you're going to find this Romans chapter 15 and let's begin reading there with verse 13. Romans 15 and verse 13. Paul says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

Requirements for Admonishing One Another

Now look, "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." What makes us able to admonish one another? Well, we are full of goodness, that is a heart of love. And he says, what next? Filled with all knowledge, that is a mind that knows the word of God. So he says, if you really have a heart that is loving, and if you have a mind that is knowing, then you're able also to admonish one another.

Now, just turn now, if you would, to the book of Colossians chapter 1. I want to show you the three things that are necessary to be mature in the Christian life. You will never be mature without these three things. And that's exactly what the Apostle Paul said. So look if you would in Colossians 1 and verse 28. The Apostle Paul says, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." So what is it going to take to make a mature Christian?

Well, first of all, preaching. Secondly, teaching. Hmm. Well, I'd say thirdly, teaching. I skipped the one that I wanted to really mention. That's warning. So it's going to take preaching, it's going to take warning, and it's going to take teaching. Now, what in the world is the word warning? That happens to be the Greek word noutheteo, and it literally means to warn, to admonish, to rebuke and to exhort. So literally what he says is this: "Whom we preach, exhorting, rebuking, reproving, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." So we cannot be a mature Christian without being confronted when we are wrong or when we are sinful or when we're just not right with our Lord. It's just that simple.

Now, so what it boils down to is this. Christian rebuke, biblical rebuke, is nothing more than a loving, kind, biblical rebuke, which is followed by biblical counsel and direction. I don't just come to Steve and say, "Steve, you are wrong. You are so wicked. You are so ungodly." I don't come to Steve and say that. I might come to say, "Steve, you're wrong and what you're doing is wicked."

Applications and Call to Endeavor for Unity

Here is how to correct that and bring your life into conformity with Jesus Christ. This is the direction you should be going and what you should be doing. In other words, I am not jumping on someone; I am trying lovingly and kindly to say, “This is what you need to stop doing. This is what you need to start doing.”

Proverbs 27, verse 9, says, “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.” Just as ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, the hearty counsel of a friend rejoices the heart as well.

Let me tie this together by making some applications. Each of us who has had children understands that we do not rebuke, correct, reprove, and chasten our children because we hate them. We do so because we love them. Biblical rebuke, reproof, exhortation, and confrontation are based on a heart of love and understanding.

It is possible to have union without unity. However, unity in union is the blessing of being in Jesus Christ, which, Lord willing, we

are going to see next Sunday. We must take into consideration the four stages of the Christian life when rebuking, reproving, and confronting one another. What good would it do for a mother or grandmother to look at a month-old baby lying in the crib and start yelling and screaming? The baby would not understand a word and would probably be frightened to no end. You do not scream at a baby; all that will do is upset the child. It is insane to think that is how you will get through to a brother in Christ.

A little child can be spoken to more directly and told the consequences of disobedience, but you still do not holler and scream because he will not understand and will be frightened. You can deal with a young man with more discretion and straightforwardness. When you come to an old man, a father in the faith, or a mother in Israel, you can speak directly and plainly because they know, hear, and understand. You have to deal with people according to the stage they are in in their Christian life.

I cannot take my college courses and teach them to my fourth graders. I have to take a fourth-grade course to teach to my fourth graders. So we have to learn to deal with each other where we are in our Christian life.

In Ephesians 4 and verse 3, we are commanded, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The Greek word for endeavouring is one of my favorite words. It is spoudazo, and it literally means to endeavor, to be diligent in, to exert yourself in, and to give all effort and diligence unto. You are to work at keeping Christian unity. Fear not to let anything disrupt it or destroy it.

The word keep is the Greek word tēreō, and it literally means to attend to carefully, to guard, to keep, and to protect. We should be ready and willing to fight against anything and everything that is going to corrupt or destroy Christian unity. God tells us that if we want unity, we are really going to have to fight to keep it. Because our flesh is contrary to God and contrary to His Word, we have to fight to bring our lives and the lives of others, to the best of our ability, into conformity to the Word of God.

So you can have union with unity. But we need unity. If we are ever going to conquer for the Lord Jesus Christ, look at where the

church is today—how divided and fractured we are. It is astounding to me that we are able to exist only by the grace of God. We need biblical unity based upon biblical union, which I am going to share with you next week.

Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee and ask that You would teach us about unity, give us unity, and help us to fight for it and keep it. Help us to be one in Thee and press forward in the kingdom of God for Your honor and Your glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 46

Your Attitude Reveals Your Estimate of Yourself and God

August 11, 2025

Jacob, praying in Genesis 32:10, says, “I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant. For with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.”

Introduction: The World's Self-Esteem vs. Biblical Humility

There are all kinds of programs on the market today that teach what is known as self-worth, self-esteem, self-improvement, and a good self-image. The trend is to magnify and enlarge our self-consciousness until we consider ourselves worthy individuals who should be extremely proud of ourselves. If you follow most of those trends, you would become not only extremely proud, but proud to the point of defiance. If anyone then spoke ill of your self-improvement, self-image, or self-worth, you would be almost ready to fight instantly.

Now, I do understand and know that we are creatures of God and are made in His image. Humanly speaking, our worth is from the hands of our Maker. We have no worth in and of ourselves. Thus, to think anything else is nothing more than pride. The Bible says in Psalm 100:3, “Know ye that the Lord, He is God. It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”

Pride, of course, is an abomination to God. It also destroys our character and produces strife and wrath. Everyone can quote Proverbs 16:18: “Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” But there are other verses. Proverbs 16:5 says, “Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.”

“And though hand be joined in hand, he shall not be unpunished.” Proverbs 16:19 says, “Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.” Proverbs 21:4 says, “A high look and a proud heart and the plowing of the wicked is sin.” Proverbs 21:24 says, “Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.” Proverbs 28:25 says, “He that is proud of heart stirreth up strife, but he that putteth his trust in the Lord shall be made fat.”

I have often quoted Genesis chapter 32 and verse 10, and it has always made an impression upon me. In the last week or two, I have been reading back through Genesis, and I was looking forward to getting to Genesis chapter 32, for I knew what was in that chapter. When I read it, verse 10 literally jumped out and grabbed me and would not allow me to leave it.

I have preached three sermons dealing with humility. Although humility will be involved in today's message, it is not quite just that subject. I preached one message on humility and obedience, another on humility and revival, and a third simply on biblical humility. In our text, Genesis 32:10, we have humility illustrated in attitude and actions.

The Inseparability of Our View of God and Self

It is impossible to be humble and proud at the same time. Likewise, it is impossible to see yourself as you should in a biblical manner

without seeing God as who He is. The reverse is also true: it is impossible to have a biblical view of God and see God as who He is without having a biblical view of yourself.

You remember Isaiah chapter 6: “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up and His train filled the temple.” Isaiah also saw the seraphim. They had six wings: with twain they covered their eyes, with twain they covered their feet, and with twain they did fly. They ceased not saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts.” What did Isaiah say? “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts.”

When you have a biblical view of God, you're inevitably going to have a biblical view of yourself. If you have a biblical view of yourself, you're inevitably going to have a biblical view of God. A true theological and biblical view of God will inevitably give you a true theological and biblical view of yourself. This is why I said that it is your attitude that is going to demonstrate and manifest your estimate of yourself and your estimate of God as well.

In the context of Genesis chapter 32, Jacob is heading home after twenty years. He served Laban fourteen years for his two wives, Leah and Rachel. Then he served Laban an additional six years for the cattle that God had given him. He was also wrongly treated by Laban during that time. In Genesis 31:7, Jacob says to his two wives, “And your father hath deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God suffered him not to hurt me.” When Laban said the ringstraked cattle would be Jacob's, he changed it to the spotted. Ten times he changed his wages. In Genesis 31:41, Jacob tells Laban, “Thus have I been twenty years in thy house. I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters and six years for thy cattle, and thou hast changed my wages ten times.” So notice Jacob has now been wrongly treated.

Jacob's Distress and Prayer in Genesis 32

God had appeared to Jacob and told him to return home. When Jacob reaches Genesis chapter 32, he knows that he is going to face Esau, and he hears that Esau is coming with four hundred men. We see his normal reaction in Genesis 32:7: “Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. And he divided the people that was with him

and the flocks into two herds, and the camels into two bands, and said, If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape."

The Bible says he was greatly afraid and distressed. We certainly understand fear, but note the word distressed. The Hebrew word is yatsar, and it literally means not only to be distressed, but also to be in straits. In our language, Jacob is in a tight spot, a dangerous spot, between a rock and a hard place. In other words, it will be difficult for Jacob to get out of the position that he is in.

Jacob then goes to prayer over this situation. In verse 9, Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee." Here we begin to see Jacob's estimate of God and his estimate of himself. Pay close attention to verse 9: Jacob addresses God as the God of his ancestors. Jacob discerns himself as so completely unworthy in this passage that he does not even say that God is his God, although all the covenantal blessings were descended upon Jacob through Abraham and Isaac. He is pleading the covenantal relationship that he is in, which God initiated between Abraham, then Isaac, and now him. The covenantal relationship began with Abraham, went to Isaac, and now reached Jacob; therefore Jacob appealed to what God Himself had initiated. He was relying upon covenantal blessings God had given to Abraham and Isaac.

Moreover, he says, "Thou saidst unto me, Lord, Return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee." He is also claiming the promise of God, in light of Esau's coming to him with four hundred men. The promise is connected to God's command that Jacob return to his country and kindred and to God's declaration that He would deal well with him. We may also rely upon covenantal blessings. Hebrews 13:20 says, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Note the everlasting covenant. What in the world is God going to do for us, in us, and through the Lord Jesus Christ?

He says in verse 21, "Make you perfect, mature, or complete in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well

pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Ask yourself these questions: Do you have a desire to be holy? Do you have a desire to be obedient, submissive, and godly? Do you have a desire to worship and honor God? Do you have a desire actually to please God? All of these desires are biblical, and they come to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is absolutely necessary, then, when you and I go to prayer, like Jacob, that we plead the covenant. But our covenant is that eternal covenant God has made with His Son, the Lord Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit. Through the Lord Jesus and through that covenant, He works in us everything that is well-pleasing in His sight.

Here is the question: If we come to God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, pleading the covenant and asking for the blessings of God in our lives, what should be our attitude? Should we come to God in prayer with an attitude of pride? “Well, I am a child of God.” Should we come with an attitude of obligation? “God, You owe me.” Should we come with an attitude of demand?

Here is a simple principle that is enunciated very clearly in Genesis chapter 32: God does not owe you anything. God does not owe me anything. God does not owe anyone anything but justice, and I can assure you that we do not want that at all.

Now, back in the book of Genesis, after Jacob had said, “I'm not worthy of the least of thy mercies,” he meets Esau. Esau asks him about his family, and Jacob has tried to please him with all kinds of cattle that he sent as a present. In Genesis chapter 33, verse 5, Esau sees his wives and children and says to Jacob, “Who are those with thee?” Jacob answers, “The children which God hath graciously given to thy servant.”

In verse 8, Esau asks, “What meanest thou by all this drove which I met?” Jacob replies, “These are to find grace in thy sight, my lord.” Esau says, “I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast to thyself.” Jacob answers, “Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.”

"Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee, because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." And he urged him, and he took it.

The word graciously is the Hebrew word chanan, meaning to show favor, to be gracious, kind, and merciful. Jacob is saying to Esau, "My family, my children, my grandchildren—everything I have—is by the grace of God. He was merciful to me and gave me these children." Urging Esau to take the blessing of all those cattle, he says, "God has graciously given them to me."

All his possessions, everything he had, was not by merit or desert. Jacob worked for it—he worked like a dog—but he was saying, "God gave me everything that I am and everything that I have." Think about this: God does not owe us life. He does not owe us breath.

He does not owe us a home. He does not owe us happiness. He does not owe us success. He does not owe us provision. He does not owe us a family. He does not owe us even friends. It is impossible to bring God into obligation to us.

Romans 11:33–36 says: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counselor, or who hath instructed God? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen."

Do you realize it is impossible for you to first give to God? It was God who gave you life. It was God who loved you from eternity. Everything that you have, everything that I have, is from God Himself. It is the gift of God, and God has given it to us in grace and in mercy.

Jacob's Confession of Unworthiness

In Genesis 32:10, Jacob says, "I'm not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant." Jacob has pleaded the covenant that God had made with Abraham and Isaac and which had descended upon him. Note what he says in verse 10: "I am not worthy."

The Hebrew word for worthy is katon, and it literally means to be small and insignificant. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Anytime you see the Roman numerals LXX, which stands for 70, it is because the word Septuagint means 70, because it was translated by 70 scholars in Alexandria. Even our Lord and the disciples quoted from the Septuagint.

The word worthy in the Septuagint is the Greek word hikanos. It means one that is not sufficient, one that is not fit, one that is not meet, and one that is not suitable. Literally, Jacob is saying, “I'm not suitable. I'm not meet. I'm not fit for the least of thy mercies.” Not the least one.

Lamentations 3, verses 22 and 23, 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 only thing that keeps us from being consumed is the mercies and compassions of God, which are new every morning.

In Genesis 32, Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee." Then he said, "I'm not worthy. I'm not meet. I'm not fit. I'm not sufficient of the least of all thy mercies and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant. For with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." He continued, "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me and the mother with the children."

Jacob deemed himself unfit even for life, health, or anything. He said, "I'm not meet for the least of thy mercies." This has basically been the attitude of godly men down through biblical history. In Genesis 18, Abraham, speaking to God about Lot, Sodom, and Gomorrah, said, "Behold now, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." That was Abraham's estimate of himself: "I'm dust and ashes."

David said in Psalm 22, "I am a worm and no man." When Saul was chasing David, David likened himself to a flea and to a

partridge: "Why are you chasing a flea? Why are you chasing a partridge? I'm not worth anything."

Biblical Examples of Humble Self-Estimation

Agur said in Proverbs 30, "Surely I am more brutish than any man and have not the understanding of a man." He said, "I'm like a dumb animal. I don't have any understanding." And when Peter saw the Lord in Luke 5, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

The word sinful is from the Greek word hamartolos, which literally means a sinner, a wicked man, a sinful man, one who is preeminently sinful. So Peter said, “Lord, depart from me. I am so wicked. I do not even deserve Your presence.”

When you think about Abraham—“dust and ashes”; David—“I’m a worm”; Agur—“I’m more brutish than any man”; and Peter—“I’m a sinful man”—and compare men with attitudes like these with the attitude of the Pharisees, remember our Lord’s words in Luke 18: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess.”

“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Our Lord says, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Notice the Pharisee: “I thank thee, Lord. I’m not as other men.” In other words, “I am worthy of anything and everything because I’m not an extortioner, unjust, or an adulterer. I’m not like this publican. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess.”

Jacob, David, Abraham, and Peter were not merely debasing or belittling themselves, and they were not pretending. They recognized their insignificance, their low estate, and their position before a holy,

majestic, and sovereign God. They simply recognized this one truth: God does not owe us anything, and I do not deserve anything.

That's what they were recognizing. So let this sink into your hearts today. I want you to think about this. If you believe that God owes you, if you believe that God is indebted to you, if you believe that you deserve to be treated better than you are, then you've never seen yourself as a lost, miserable, depraved, and wicked sinner. You have no idea of your depravity and of God's infinite holiness. In other words, if you believe that God really owes you something, you're lost. You're unsaved. You are not a Christian. You have never, ever seen yourself.

Grace vs. Works: God Owes Us Nothing

Deserts and obligations are based upon debt and works. Consider Paul's argument in Romans chapter 11: "I say then, Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Know ye not what the scripture saith of Elijah, how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets and digged down thine altars, and I am left alone and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Now watch carefully: "And if by grace, then it is no more of works. Otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace. Otherwise work is no more work." That's what he's saying. You cannot combine works and grace. If you believe that God owes you something, it means that you have performed some type of work for God and He therefore is obligated to pay you, which is impossible. The Apostle Paul said you are what you are and you have what you have only by the grace of God. It is that simple.

If God owes you, it has to be based upon works and merit. He does not owe you anything. And yet what God does is He sustains us, nourishes us, takes care of us, and protects us all through His grace, mercy, and compassion. None of us deserve the least of this. Do you

realize that the best and the greatest—and I will even say the godliest—of men do not deserve one thing from God?

When you stop and think about this, how many sins do you have to commit before you're a sinner? One. How many sins do you have to commit before you're condemned? One. How many sins do you have to commit before you have consigned yourself to hell? One. You and I have not just committed one sin. In fact, the scripture says if we've broken one part of the law, we're guilty of all. We've committed thousands and possibly even millions of sins in our lifetime. And if we got what we deserved, I don't think we would want it.

But what has God done? He has graciously taken care of us and supplied our needs over and over and over.

Look at the context of Genesis chapter 32. Verse 10 says, "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant. For with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." Then Jacob asks, "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude."

Why does he say, "I'm not worthy of the least of thy mercies"? Because he is about to ask God for a tremendous mercy: His divine and sovereign protection from Esau. He is afraid that Esau will kill him, his wives, and his children. He acknowledges, "Lord, I don't deserve anything," yet asks again for God's protection. He is relying not only upon the covenant, but also upon the specific promise that God gave him: "Return, and I will make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." Thus he acknowledges his unworthiness even in asking for God's protection.

So self-denial and self-abasement should become us in all of our addresses to the throne of grace. Jacob speaks of mercies in the plural; there are abundant mercies. God had shown him a multitude of mercies. Jacob is basically saying, "I'm not worthy of the least of

my mercies, much less now am I worthy of this great favor that I'm asking You to protect me from Esau."

Two truths must be held side by side: only the Lord Jesus Christ makes us worthy, and in ourselves we are completely and totally unworthy. Jesus Christ alone is worthy; Jesus Christ alone makes us worthy. If we come to God in and of ourselves, we are completely, totally, and absolutely unworthy. Our worthiness is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ, because there is absolutely nothing we can do in ourselves that will make us worthy in the sight of God.

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 7:1-10 (KJV)

I realize that there are many Christians who perform what you and I would call good works and good deeds. But you know what the Bible says? Isaiah 26 in verse 12 says, "Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us, for Thou hast wrought all our works in us." So any good thing that comes out of us, any good thing that comes through us, is only because of the grace of God that has been worked in us and the mercy and the blessing of God.

I want to show you a good illustration of what I just said in the New Testament. I love this passage. I've preached on it many times. This is the centurion. In Luke chapter 7, beginning with verse 1:

The Centurion's Faith and Unworthiness

"Now when He had ended all of His sayings in the audience of the people, He entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant who was dear unto him was sick and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto Him the elders of the Jews, beseeching Him that He would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly, saying that he, that is the centurion, was worthy for whom He should do this. For he loveth our nation and has built us a synagogue.

Then Jesus went with them, and when He was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying unto Him, Lord, trouble not Thyself, for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof. Wherefore neither thought I

> myself worthy to come unto Thee, but say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers. And I say unto one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh. And to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.
>
> When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned Him about, and said unto the people that followed Him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent returning to the house found the servant whole that had been sick."

Notice something in verse 4. When those Jews came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly, saying that the centurion was worthy for whom this miracle should be accomplished. What did they base the centurion's worthiness upon? What did they base their attitude and estimate of him upon? Verse 5: "For he loveth our nation, and he built us a synagogue."

In verse 4, when they said he was worthy, the Greek word is axios, which means worthy, befitting, congruous, corresponding unto, or something that is merited. They were saying, "He loves our nation. He has built a synagogue, and therefore that merits this miracle that should be done for his servant." He deserves it.

However, in verse 6, when Jesus was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying, "Lord, trouble not Thyself, for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee, but say the word, and my servant shall be healed." The word worthy in verses 6 and 7 is completely different from that used in verse 4.

When Jacob said in Genesis 32:10, "I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies," that is exactly the same word used in verses 6 and 7: "I am not meet. I am not fit. I do not deserve this." On the one hand, the Jews said he was worthy because he loved their nation and had built them a synagogue. In other words, he merited this. But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy. I am not even worthy for You to enter under the roof of my house, much less do this for me."

Here is the attitude he had when he came to our Lord: "I am not meet. I am not fit. I am not sufficient. Lord, I do not even deserve

You to come under my roof, much less do this miracle that I am asking You to do." So here is the truth.

What others think and say of us is not nearly as important as what we think and know of ourselves. One sin is sufficient to make us sinners. One sin is sufficient to make us unworthy. If we really had a correct biblical view of ourselves, our sin, and our depravity, we would be willing to physically fight the Apostle Paul for the position of chief of sinners. Paul said he was chief, but if we really understood our sin, we would say, "No, Paul, you're so far behind us. We're number one. We're the chief of sinners." If we have the correct biblical view of sin and our sinfulness, we are not going to say that God owes us anything, that we deserve anything, or that God is obligated to us. If we have the correct estimate of ourselves, we will see that everything we are and everything we have is only by the grace and mercy of God.

Before I leave Luke 7, let me say there is another biblical principle here that we need to understand. The Jews said in verse 4, "He is worthy." Then, in verses 6 and 7, he says, "I am not worthy." Proverbs 27:2 says, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." If someone is going to speak of your holiness, godliness, or obedience, let it be a stranger, someone else. If you have to tell me how humble you are, you are not. If you have to tell me how holy you are, you are not.

In other words, it is our attitude and our actions that demonstrate the truth of our lives. Others see that, and they are the ones who acknowledge and confess it. It is one thing for others to see and admire the grace and mercy of God in our lives. It is quite another thing for us to boast, blow ourselves up with pride, and say, "Well, let me tell you what I have done." Then we begin to extol ourselves and heap praises upon ourselves.

In doing so, we are stealing God's honor and God's glory. There is another passage that is important in light of this, in Mark chapter 7, beginning with verse 25: "For a certain woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard of Him and came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by nation, and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled. For

it is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto Him, Yea, Lord, yet the dogs eat under the table the children's crumbs. And He said unto her, For this saying, go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out of her daughter and laid upon the bed."

Notice her attitude. She was a Greek, a Syrophoenician, and not an Israelite. Basically, she did not have any claim upon Jesus Christ. Our Lord even told her that she was an outsider. He not only told her she was an outsider; He called her a dog. I know the Greek word happens to be kunarion, which means little dog. Yet when He called her a dog, her attitude was, "Truth, Lord. Yet the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the children under the table."

What was she saying? "I'm willing to be Your little dog. I'm willing to take any crumb You throw me. I know I'm not worthy. I don't deserve anything. But I'll eat all the crumbs that You drop." That was her attitude. She, like Jacob, was confessing her unworthiness. She said, "I'll take the crumbs. If that's all You've got for me, Lord, I'll take that." Isn't that amazing?

Our Lord said concerning this woman in the book of Matthew, "O daughter, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And the Bible said her daughter was healed from that very hour.

I want you to go back to Genesis 32, because I want to make some applications. Take note of Jacob's prayer. Verse 9: "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee. I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies or of all the truth which Thou hast shown unto Thy servant. For with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me and the mother with the children."

Applications: Prayer, Fear, and Facing Problems

Notice how short Jacob's prayer was. He was not praying all over the world or for everybody in the world. His prayer was very short and

very pointed. Moreover, he was extremely earnest. His appeal was made to God on the basis of a standing covenantal relation that he had through Abraham and Isaac. In other words, it was like when you and I come to God the Father and plead that eternal covenant of grace which we have in Jesus Christ.

He also pleaded a special promise that God gave him of a safe return. This was a most humble and affecting confession of unworthiness. It breathed an earnest desire for deliverance from impending danger. It was the prayer of a loving husband, a loving father, and someone who wanted to see the glory of God and the will of God accomplished in his life.

We Cannot Run from Our Problems

Jacob confessed, "I don't deserve the least of these Thy mercies." He also freely confessed his fear of Esau and asked God for protection: "Lord, deliver me from Esau, for I fear him." We should not be shy in telling God our fears. First, He already knows them. Second, He is the only one who can correct them in our lives. He has told us many times in the Bible, "Fear not." The Bible says that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). Yet by nature we fear certain things. We must say, "Lord, I'm fearful in this area. Please help me. Please deliver me." God already knows our fears, so we need to confess them and seek His aid.

We must learn that we cannot run from our problems. Problems must be resolved; they do not go away. If you try to run from your problem, you may escape it temporarily, but you will meet it farther down the road with increased magnitude and intensity.

The problem appears in Genesis 27:41. Esau was planning to murder Jacob because Jacob had stolen the blessing: "And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him. And Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my brother are at hand. Then will I slay my brother Jacob." Jacob had deceived Isaac his father and obtained the blessing. In reality, the blessing went with the birthright, and Esau had despised his birthright and already sold it to Jacob for a mess of pottage. Jacob

knew that Esau would never give him that blessing willingly. Yes, he did deceive him.

This could probably have been resolved one-on-one, face-to-face, perhaps with Isaac and Rebekah present, because both of them were well. But Jacob decided to run. What could have been resolved one-on-one was now 400 to 1. Rebekah heard Esau's words and sent for Jacob. Genesis 27:42 says, "And these words of Esau, her elder son, were told to Rebekah. And she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, proposing to kill thee.

"Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, and flee thou to Laban, my brother in Haran, and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away. Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee and he forget that which thou hast done to him. Then will I send and fetch thee from thence. Why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?" So she told him to go for a few days. Do you remember how long those few days were? Twenty years. She never saw Jacob again.

In Genesis 35:27, we read: "And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arba, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned." Isaac was alive when Jacob came back. "And the days of Isaac were a hundred and fourscore years. And Isaac gave up the ghost and died and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him." Esau and Jacob did indeed bury Isaac.

In Genesis 49, Jacob is about to die and is blessing his sons: "And he charged them and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife. And there I buried Leah." What? We know Jacob was there to help bury Isaac, but not Rebekah.

So this “few days” happened to be twenty years, and she never saw Jacob again—not alive. We have to learn to face our problems. When we run from them, they increase in magnitude and intensity. Problems will not disappear. They must be resolved in a biblical manner.

The Fruit of Humility: Gratitude and Obedience

So the truly humble soul will evidence itself with an attitude of unworthiness, an attitude acknowledging God's graciousness, God's mercy, and God's favor. But that's not all. God says in Jeremiah 44:10, "They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared nor walked in My law nor in My statutes that I set before you and before your fathers." A truly humbled heart will have an attitude and disposition of unworthiness and will seek to obey simply because such a heart realizes it can never be worthy. It will seek to obey out of a heart of love and gratitude for the gracious favor and mercies of God.

If we realize how unworthy we are and that we do not deserve anything, it will enable us to be grateful, thankful, and appreciative for anything and everything. It is just like that Syrophoenician woman: "Lord, I'll take the crumbs. I'll be happy with the crumbs, because I don't even deserve the crumbs." Your attitude reveals your estimate of yourself and your estimate of God. If you count yourself worthy, then you count God as unworthy. If you count yourself unworthy, then you will count God as worthy. He will deserve all the honor, all the glory, and all praise. What did Jacob pray? "I am not worthy of the least of Thy mercies and of all Thy truth which Thou hast shown unto Thy servant." That is the kind of attitude that God blesses and honors, because it is a truthful, biblical attitude that will enable us to see the greatness, majesty, sovereignty, and mercy of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we pray to Thee. We thank You for Your word and Your truth, and we ask, Lord, that You would indeed help us to see ourselves. Help us to see the greatness of Thyself and all the mercies and kindnesses that You have bestowed upon us that we do not deserve. We do not deserve life or health or family or friends, success, or possessions. We do not deserve

anything, Lord, in and of ourselves. But we are thankful, Father, that we have been made worthy through the Lord Jesus Christ and adopted into Thy family. Lord, help us to give Thee all praise and honor and glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 47

These Things

August 15, 2025

Introduction: The Significance of 'These Things'

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and of our Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was

purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them and be established in the present truth."

The title comes from the three times in this passage that the words "these things" appear. I was blown away by these two little words. I encourage you to search for them on the internet, in an online Bible, or in Strong's Concordance. You will be astounded at how many times they appear, and at the thoughts and emphasis laid upon them. "These things" may refer to events, situations, blessings, curses, and any providential happening.

Let me give you a couple of illustrations. First of all, in Genesis chapter 15 and verse 1, the scripture says, "After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." So "after these things" requires looking back to Genesis chapter 14. You will find in Genesis chapter 14 that Abraham rescued Lot and all the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. At the same time, there was the blessing of Melchizedek upon Abraham. So it was after these things. Then in Genesis chapter 22 and verse 1, "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt," or test, "Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am." When it says, "and it came to pass after these things," in Genesis chapter 22 and verse 1, it refers back to Genesis chapter 21, which covers the birth of Isaac, the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael, and at the same time the covenant that was made between Abraham and Abimelech.

So "these things" can also refer to different sins. For instance, in Leviticus 5 and verse 17, God said, "And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity." You will have the same truth found in Leviticus 18 and verse 24, when God says, "Defile not yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you."

So "these things" can refer to many things. In fact, it also refers to God's judgments and God's chastisement that He sends for reformation and, of course, for discipline. For instance, in Leviticus chapter 26 and verse 23, He says, "And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me." So those "things" there would speak about His chastisement and His judgments as well.

Now when you get into the New Testament, you will find that the term "these things" not only refers to that which Christ taught, but also to that which Christ did—a reference to His miracles. For instance, in Luke 13 and verse 17, "And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things

So notice “these things.” In Luke 14:6, “And they could not answer him again to these things.” It refers to His teachings, the words that He spoke. In verse 15, “And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” When he heard these things, that would be the teaching of Christ. Finally, in Luke 20:8, “And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.” In that context, it is certainly referring to the miracles that He performed.

When you stop and think about the words “these things,” we use them often, just as the Bible does, to refer to a multitude of different things. Probably every husband at one time or another has been asked by his wife, “Would you please stop by the store and pick up these things for me?” The husband usually does that. You have heard people say, “Well, you need these things in your survival gear.” Oftentimes I have said to people, “If you’re going to come to our class and learn how to shoot, then you need to bring these things,” and I will list what they need to bring. We talk about people who are in ill health and say, “The reason he’s in ill health is because he did not do these things to preserve and protect his health.”

The Salutation and Foundational Truths (2 Peter 1:1-4)

We use that term very often, and I could also say it biblically, because you cannot really grow as a Christian until these things be in you that God speaks about. So many times we use the term “these things” in a very general sense. But in 2 Peter 1, “these things” are used very specifically: here are qualities and characteristics that must be in the life of every genuine child of God. This list is very specific.

In 2 Peter 1, verses 1 and 2, first of all, we see the salutation: “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ.” That is the salutation. In verses 3 and 4, the Apostle Peter gives us four very important truths.

“According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Now, first of all, notice what God says here.

There is absolutely no excuse for sorry, unholy, ungodly, and disobedient living. No excuse. How can I say there is no excuse? Look in verse 3: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” There is no excuse because God has given us everything we need, and He has given it to us by His divine power.

Here is the second truth: the reason that most Christians are not living holy, godly, obedient lives, and will not live holy, godly, obedient lives, is their ignorance and the sin of lack of study. Look at verse 3 again: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” God has given us all things through the knowledge of Him. In our ignorance, we really do not know God as we should. We have not learned Him as we should.

When we know God as we should, we will know ourselves as we should. We will see our absolute dependence upon Him.

Here is the third truth: we are given exceeding great and precious promises. “That by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” His promises, received, believed, and obeyed, make us holy as He is holy. They enable us to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Our problems stem from our ignorance of God’s person, God’s power, God’s position, and God’s promises.

Knowledge and the application of that knowledge in those areas would change our lives.

Fourthly, look back to verse 3: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." God has called us to glory and to virtue. That means that we are not to live static lives. We are not to live neutral lives. We are not to live stunted lives. We are to grow, and we are to grow in grace and in knowledge. I am going to make a statement, and I am going to show it to you from the Bible: if you are not growing in knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are not growing in grace.

For instance, consider this passage. Colossians 1:10 says, "that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." You will not be fruitful in every good work unless you are increasing in the knowledge of God, and you will not walk pleasing to Him unless you are increasing in the knowledge of God.

In 2 Peter 1:2, we read, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." How is grace and peace multiplied to us? It is through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ our Lord. Then 2 Peter 3:18 says, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

Now, notice the little word "and." It is the little Greek word kai, which is translated many times in our Bibles as "even." Thus verse 18 may be read, "But grow in grace, even in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." So you are not growing in grace unless you

are growing in knowledge. With these truths in mind, go back now to 2 Peter, chapter 1 and verse 5.

The Command to Add to Faith (2 Peter 1:5)

“Now we're going to start out on ‘these things.’ Look what he says: ‘And besides this’—that is, besides what he's just mentioned in the first four verses—‘besides this, give all diligence to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge.’ When he said ‘besides this,’ what he is saying is ‘in addition to.’ In addition to understanding what he gave you in the first four verses, you must add something in your life.

The Greek word for “add” is epichoregeo, and it literally means to bring into beside, or to bring into with, or to contribute to, or to add to something. So, in other words, you have to add, contribute, and bring into this. This addition is not suggested. It is not something that you and I can be lax about. It is not something we can ignore, and it is not something in which we can be uninterested. If you look at verse 5 again, he says, “And besides this, giving all diligence.”

The word “diligence” is spoude, and it means literally with haste, in earnestness, in diligence, that which you are really striving after. So you are to give all diligence, strive after, and be earnest in adding these things to your life.

First of all, we are bidden to add to our faith. Look at it again in verse 5: “And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith.” The word for “faith” is the Greek word pistis, which refers to faith in God, faith in His word, and faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must first believe that he is, and”—here is the second thing—“that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him.” It is impossible to please God without faith, because in faith we believe that God is, and we believe that He is a rewarder of those

That diligently seek Him.

Now here is the truth that I want you to grasp immediately from verse 5. When he says, "And besides this, giving all diligence to add to your faith," listen carefully: saving faith, or salvation, is not the end. It is not the culmination. It is the beginning. It is the beginning

of life. God does not save us just so that we may be freed from the penalty of sin. He also saves us from the power of sin, according to Romans chapter 6. In 1 John chapter 2 and verse 1, He said, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." But He also saves us ultimately, finally, from the very presence of sin. So obviously, faith is simply the beginning. You remember that passage in Matthew 1 and verse 21?

Gabriel said to Mary—or actually to Joseph in this instance—"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." So salvation primarily is from sins. Someone asked, "Well, do you want to be saved from hell?" Let me just tell you this: being saved from hell is a byproduct of being saved from your sins. It is sins which send individuals to torment and judgment and hell. So when God saves us, He saves us from our sins, not only from the penalty, but from the power, and ultimately from the presence as well.

Now look what he said again in verse 5. He said, "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge."

The Seven Graces: Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience

What he is telling us here is that all of these things he is going to be listing in verses 5 through 7 must be added to our faith. If we have saving faith, if we are genuinely the children of God, these things in some degree should be in our lives. So the very first thing he mentions there is virtue. What is virtue? Obviously, virtue may mean different things to different people, and it is certainly going to mean different things to the unsaved than it does to the saved.

When we talk about a virtuous individual, we think of someone who is pure, holy, and right, someone who tries to do that which is right. The Greek word for virtue is arete, and it means literally a virtuous course of conduct, a virtuous course of thought and feeling. It means moral goodness and moral excellence, including modesty and purity. Years ago, when I tried to tell you that different people have different perceptions of virtue, I was talking to a fellow who was a drunkard. He was a known drunkard.

That does not mean he was drunk all of the time, but he usually got drunk several times a month—that is for sure. I mean, dog drunk. This time, he had gotten drunk, gotten over it, and wanted to tell me that he was through with all of his drunkenness. So I went to visit him. Of course, he was high on the pedestal.

He was through with drinking and being drunk. He told me, "You know, I know a man that had a good job, making money hand over fist, giving to the church. He started drinking and got drunk, and he lost everything."

I tried to keep the conversation going. I asked him, "What kind of job did he have?" He answered, "Well, he was a pool shark down at the pool hall, where he made all his money gambling." Giving to the church—it was a good job. He was a virtuous man, according to this fellow, although he was a drunkard and a gambler. So this is what I mean: no, no, no.

The word arete refers to that which is of moral excellence and moral goodness. When we think of virtue, we cannot help but think of Proverbs chapter 31 and verse 10: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." A virtuous woman is described in Proverbs chapter 31. We do not only need virtuous women; we need virtuous men as well.

Let me put it to you like this: virtuous minds produce virtuous bodies, and virtuous minds and virtuous bodies produce virtuous actions and conduct. This is why He lists virtue first. Those who have been saved by the grace of God should desire to live a pure, holy, and godly life.

Now note the second thing He said: you are to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue you are to add knowledge. The word "knowledge" is from the Greek word gnosis. It refers to knowledge and understanding, especially in those things that are lawful and right for the child of God. In other words, we must know God's precepts, principles, and promises. At the same time, we must know that which is unlawful, wicked, and wrong.

Job 28:28 says, "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." What is it to depart from evil? It is understanding. What is the fear

of the Lord? That is wisdom. Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

Job 28:28 says, "to depart from evil is understanding." Is departing from evil understanding, or is knowledge of the holy understanding? It is both. When you have a knowledge of the holy, and of that which is right, just, and lawful, you will depart from that which is evil, unlawful, unjust, and unholy. Clearly, God is putting this together for us. Proverbs 18:15 says, "The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge."

What kind of knowledge are we seeking? We are not seeking knowledge of the world. We are seeking biblical knowledge, knowledge of God and His Word. Proverbs 19:2 says, "Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth." God said it is not good to be without knowledge.

Since the Word of God demands that we depart from evil, how can we depart from it if we do not know what it is? How can we depart from it if we do not recognize that which is sinful, evil, and wrong? How can we cling to that which is good and holy if we do not know that which is good and holy? When we are told to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, that knowledge is knowledge of that which is right and wrong, that which God commands and that which God forbids, and that which is lawful and unlawful for the child of God.

You should be constantly, consistently, and continually reading your Bible over and over in order that you might see the principles and precepts of the Word of God and learn to distinguish between that which is right and wrong, holy and unholy, lawful and unlawful. You must read it constantly. If you really want to learn the Bible, you have to study the Bible yourself.

You can say, “Wait a minute, Brother Weaver, you went to college and had the Bible taught to you there.” That is true. But let me tell you something about Bible school or Bible college. In Bible school, you may learn about the Bible, but the only way you can learn the Bible is to study it for yourself. Just because you know something

about the Bible does not mean that you know the Bible. To know the Bible, you have to read it and reread it until you know it.

If you really want to learn, pick a book of the Bible. Choose a small book, such as Galatians, with six chapters; Philippians, with four; or Ephesians, with six. Read that book all the way through every day for thirty days.

Three things are going to happen. First, the next time you pick up your Bible and open it, it will usually open to that book. You have been doing it for thirty days. Second, you will begin to see the theme and purpose of the book. You will understand the author, the recipients, and the problems contained in that book concerning the people to whom it was written.

Third, and more importantly, if you pay attention to the chapters and verses as you read, you will memorize Scripture without trying to memorize Scripture. Read something thirty times and pay attention to it, and you are going to retain it. Much of the Scripture I am able to quote came simply from reading, rereading, and rereading. I did not sit down intending to memorize a passage; I read it over and over, and it stayed with me. Take a small book, and read the Scripture over and over.

Notice that back in verse 5 he said, “You add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge.” Now watch verse 6: “And to knowledge you are to add temperance.” What is temperance? Usually, we think of moderation. However, temperance means more than moderation. The Greek word is egkrateia; it literally means self-control. You have to have self-control in your eating and drinking, but also in other areas. Without self-control, you will end up killing yourself.

Years ago, I had a friend who loved to eat. He was an extreme diabetic, but he would not watch what he ate. I told him one day, "If you do not control your appetite, you're going to lose a limb." Sure enough, part of his leg was amputated. Alice and I took care of him, his wife, and his grandchild while he was recovering, and they stayed in our home.

He kept on eating. I told him, "Look, brother, if you do not control your appetite, you're going to die. That's all there is to it. You're going to kill yourself." I never will forget what he told me: "Preacher,

I just love to eat so much. And I just as soon go ahead and die and be happy eating." And that's exactly what happened. He ate himself to death. He ate those things which he should not have eaten. He didn't have any self-control.

But this self-control does not simply refer to eating and drinking. How about controlling your passions, your lusts, your desires, your thoughts, and your conduct?

The Apostle Paul uses this word temperance in 1 Corinthians 9 and verse 25: "And every man that striveth for mastery"—he's talking about athletes—"is temperate in all things." They do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we do it to obtain an incorruptible crown.

If you want to run a two-mile race, I can tell you what not to do. Thirty minutes before you run, especially in the heat, don't eat a hamburger and drink a milkshake. It is just not going to work.

I can assure you of that. This is what he's saying: He that is running a race is going to be temperate. He's going to have self-control in every area. The Apostle Paul is telling us we are going to have to be temperate in our lives. We're going to have to control ourselves. It is impossible to serve without temperance. It is impossible to serve without self-control.

Can you imagine a soldier in the army without self-control? He's not going to stay in the army long because he's going to be court-martialed and kicked out. What about someone who was hired for a job? If there's no self-control, if there's no temperance, he's going to lose that job.

Did you know that temperance is demanded of pastors and of aged men? Paul wrote to Titus in Titus chapter 1 and verse 8, talking about a pastor. He said, “He must be a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.” Temperate—be able to control himself. And Titus 2 verses 1 and 2, he said, “But speak thou

Paul says, “Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine,” indicating that what follows is sound doctrine. He then teaches that aged men—older men—are to be “sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.” Thus aged men are to be temperate and to have self-control. Usually, if a man lives long enough to have

self-control, it means he has learned early in life that it does not pay to lose self-control. Although God demands that temperance be found in pastors and aged men, this does not mean that those who are young, middle-aged, or not pastors may be intemperate. Temperance should be especially evident in the life of a pastor and in the life of an aged man, but it is still required of every Christian.

That is why Peter says we are to add temperance to our faith. In verse 6, "to knowledge you add temperance; and to temperance you add patience." The fourth thing we are to add is patience. This is the point at which most of us fail. We understand part of the meaning of patience, but we do not understand all of it. Patience not only concerns freedom from impatience; it also concerns how we deal with those who are inconsistent and those who are moody. If you are patient, you are steadfast and consistent, and it does not really matter what is happening. You are going to hold to patience.

The Greek word is hupomone, meaning literally steadfastness, constancy, and endurance. It describes a characteristic of an individual who will not be swerved. Regardless of the trial and regardless of his suffering, he will not be deterred or turned away from his purpose. Now consider a good illustration in 1 Peter 2:20. The Word of God asks this question: "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

Let us suppose that Steve does something really unbiblical, really wrong—really bad. I go to him, jump all over him, and do what the world says: rip him up one side and down the other. He stands there, takes it, and drops his head. He knows he has done wrong, and he took it like a man.

But suppose I hear that Steve has done something when he really has not done it. I go to him, jump on him, and rip him up one side and down the other. He drops his head and takes it graciously. Then he thinks, "Well, I'm innocent. I didn't do that. But I've done so many other things in my life. I probably deserve that one way or the other." And he took it patiently. This is what he is talking about. You remember that passage in Matthew 5 when our Lord said, "Blessed are you when men speak evil of you falsely for my name's sake."

A patient man is someone who will endure any trial and any suffering patiently. He will hold steadfast to his purpose. He will not quit, give in, give up, or give out; he will simply stay faithful. That is what he is talking about: patient, steadfast patience, enduring patience, persevering patience, inflicted upon us when we do good and have not done evil. He says this is acceptable with God. So we do not give up, give in, or give out.

The Seven Graces: Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, Charity

Now go back in your Bibles to 2 Peter chapter 1. Look at what he says again in verse 7—after patience, verse 6 says—and after patience, we are to add godliness. Does that strike you? Did you think that when you were saved, you were a godly person? That may be true to one extent and in one sense of the word, but we are to add godliness. The Greek word is eusebeia. One of the early church fathers was named Eusebius, which simply means “godly.” The word godliness here refers to reverence, respect, and piety toward God.

It implies that we are like Him, obedient to Him, pleasing unto Him, and that our lives are being brought into conformity to His Word. If I looked at Steve and said he is a godly man, or at Diane or Lorraine and said she is a godly woman, that means someone is living biblically and obediently toward God.

He says you are to add godliness. He said in Ephesians 4, "But ye have not so learned Christ." In other words, you have to learn Christ. You have to learn godliness.

Sixthly, he says in verse 7, "and to godliness you add brotherly kindness." Brotherly kindness. You may not remember the Greek word for brotherly kindness, but when I tell you what it is, you will certainly remember. The Greek word is Philadelphia. Philos is the noun for love. Adelphos is the word for brother. Philadelphia means brotherly love, or the love of the brethren. So Philadelphia is known as the city of brotherly love. However, there is not very much brotherly love in that city. Brotherly love is the love that Christians cherish for each other as believers in the family of God. We are to add brotherly love.

Let me give you another illustration. Suppose I heard that a brother had done something wrong, and I went to him and ripped him up one side and down the other, explaining patience. But if he had done something wrong and really deserved a rebuke and correction, instead of telling him how the cow ate the cabbage, I could go to him and say, "Brother, there are some things that we need to get straight. I need to talk to you, and I am telling you this out of a heart of love and a broken heart. I need to find out if this is true. If it is true, we need to correct it. If it is not true, I need to go back and correct someone who told me this."

Would that be brotherly love, rather than my simply ripping him up one side and down the other? I would be talking to him, as the Bible says, "you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted." Brotherly love means that we are actually caring for each other and loving each other. The Bible says in Hebrews 13, verse 1, "Let brotherly love continue."

Look in 1 John, chapter 2, beginning with verse 8, and notice what the Bible says about brotherly love through verse 11: “Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.” Verse 9 says, “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.”

What did God just tell us? If we love the brethren, that is a sign that there is grace in our lives. If we hate our brother, then we are in darkness, and there is no light in us. Turn to 1 John chapter 4 and look at verses 20 and 21: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” If a man says he loves God and hates his brother, he is a liar. He does not love God.

First John 2 and verse 4 tells us the same thing: “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” Here is a commandment: if we love God, we love our brothers also.

Notice brotherly love. Go back to 2 Peter chapter 1 and look at verse 7. He says, “and to godliness you're to add brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness you are to add charity.” Charity is another word for love. The great love chapter in the Bible is 1 Corinthians chapter 13, the chapter on love. Brotherly kindness, or brotherly love, and charity are closely related, but there is a difference. God tells us to add charity, not just brotherly kindness. There must therefore be a difference. When he talks about charity, he is using the Greek word agape, which is love.

You have to understand that there are other words for love as well. Phileo is “I love.” That is where we get the English word “phileo” and “family.” Then there is another Greek word that is not used in the Greek New Testament, but is in the Greek: eros. That is where we get our English word “erotic.” What is the difference?

Agape love is the kind of love that God has. When you read John 3:16, “For God so loved the world,” literally, “for God so agaped the world,” so to speak. Agape love is the love that gives and continues to give even when it is spurned. Phileo love is the love that gives and receives. I love Alice: I am giving love, but I want Alice to love me back. I want to receive love. So that is fellow love, that is family love. Eros is that which takes; it is more or less than love, but it is not concerned about giving, only taking.

Here is what God is saying in this passage: we are to add biblical love to our lives. Each one of us was unsaved at one point in our lives. We did things we should not have done, said things we should not have said, and acted as we should not have acted. Yet God loved us from eternity. That is what He said in Jeremiah 31:3: “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee,” or, “with cords of love.”

What if, during our rebellion against God and our sins against Him, while indulging ourselves in the flesh and doing everything God has forbidden, He had said, “He is not responding to my love, so

I will cut him loose and let him go; he can have his own way, die, and pay for his own sins"? God loved us, and even when we were in rebellion against Him, He continued to love us. That is why Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He is telling us to add this type of love to our lives.

Now these are seven graces, seven characteristics, seven wonderful attitudes or dispositions, that will be added to our life. Consider the application of this passage. Beginning in verse 8, Peter says, "For if these things be in you"—meaning the seven things—"add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

The Promise and Warning (2 Peter 1:8-9)

"For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here is the promise: if these seven things are in you and abound, they will make you neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The words "make you" come from the Greek word kathistemi. The emphasis is on what these graces produce.

They will set you in place, constitute you, render you, and conduct you to a right end. If these seven things are in you, they will make you, set you on the right course, keep you on the right course, and conduct you to the right end.

Notice what else he said: you will not be barren. Argos is the Greek word. It means you will not be lazy, indolent, slothful, or shunning labor. You will not be looking for leisure; you will be a worker. These things will make you a worker because you have to give diligence to make them in addition to your faith.

You remember what our Lord said in Luke chapter 10 and verse 2? "Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into the harvest." God is looking for

laborers. He is not looking for someone to lie back on the couch. What did He say? "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." No, He is looking for workers.

If these things are in you and abound, they are going to make you a worker. You will not be slothful or indolent, because these things call for diligence in and of themselves. You will not be barren, and you will not be unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word "unfruitful" is akarpos, meaning without fruit, or being unproductive. He said you are not going to be unproductive; you are going to be productive. "These things being in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

What is eternal life? Our Lord tells us in John 17 verse 3, in His high priestly prayer: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." These seven things in our lives will enable us to enjoy the intimate personal relationship with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, we are now enjoying eternal life in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it will culminate in eternity. The second thing he gives us here is a serious warning. Not only does he give us a blessed promise, but also a serious warning. He said in verse 9, "But he that lacketh these things"—that is, those seven things—"he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

The word "blind" is tuphlos, which means he is blind mentally, intellectually, as well as spiritually. Then he says he cannot see afar off. Muopazo is the word. It means he sees that which is just up close dimly; he does not see it clearly. All he can see is that little bit which is near, but there is more to this word. It implies that he is shutting his eyes to the light. In other words, he is blinking and winking. He does not see because he does not want to see. I have known people like that. They do not want the truth. As one man said, most people at one time in their life stumble over truth, and when they do, they get up, dust themselves off, keep walking, and never even look at that over which they stumbled.

These people are nearsighted and can behold only that which is really up close. They do not see the big picture. Albert Barnes says, "The meaning here is that he is like one who has an indistinct vision; one who can see only the objects that are near him, but who has no correct apprehension of objects that are far remote. He sees but a little way into the true nature and design of the gospel."

He does not take those large and clear views which would enable him to comprehend the whole system at a glance. The result of this nearsightedness is found in verse 9: "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off," and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Albert Barnes says, "He does not remember the obligation which grows out of the fact that a system has been devised to purify the heart, and that he has been so far brought under the power of that system as to have his sins forgiven. If he had any just view of that, he would see that he was under obligation to make as high attainments as possible, and to cultivate to the utmost extent these Christian graces." Which is true. But John Calvin said it more distinctly: "But Peter takes this for granted, that they who were still rolling in the filth of the flesh had forgotten their own purgation; for the blood of Christ has not become a washing bath to us, that it may be fouled by our filth. He therefore calls them 'old sins,' by which he means that our life ought to be otherwise formed, because we have been cleansed from our sins. Not that anyone can be pure from every sin while he lives in this world, or that the cleansing we obtained through Christ consists of pardon only, but that we ought to differ from the unbelieving, as God has separated us unto himself. Though then we daily sin, and God daily forgives us, and the blood of Christ cleanses us from our sins, yet sin ought not to rule over us or in us, but the sanctification of the Holy Spirit ought to prevail in us, as Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 11."

The Advantages and Applications (2 Peter 1:10-11)

The man who does not have these things is nearsighted. He has forgotten the truth of salvation and what it means to be saved. He who does not have these things in him is in trouble. Now notice two advantages of having these graces in our lives. Verse 10 says,

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." Notice the words, "these things." If you do these things, you shall never fall. Now notice the next verse, verse 11.

"For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." First, he says that if these things abide in us, we are willing to make our calling and election sure—that is, to examine our lives in light of the Word of God. These things grant us success in our Christian walk, and if we have them in our lives, he says we will never fall. The word "fall" means to stumble or to offend. There is an advantage to having these things in our lives.

Secondly, and more importantly, an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The word "abundantly" is the Greek word plousios, and it literally means richly. It means abundantly; it means spectacularly. If these things are in our lives, when it comes time to enter into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, He will roll out the red carpet for us. He says it will be abundantly and richly granted unto us. These things should be desired in our lives.

What God does for us, He does in us and through us by His grace. We must seek Him and seek His grace to grow as He demands. One of the things over which most professing Christians stumble is the doctrine of assurance. Many say, "I just have no assurance that I am a child of God." A growing Christian always has evidence that he is a child of God, because when we see things in us that are not in us by nature, they must be the hand of God, the work of God, and the grace of God.

By nature, we do not desire to be holy. By nature, we do not desire to be pure, nor do we desire knowledge of that which is right and wrong. By nature, we neither deserve nor desire any of these things. By nature, all we want is sin.

Our own will, our own way, that which pleases us. But if we see these things in our lives, then we have confidence. A growing Christian has no problem with assurance.

In 1 John 3:19–22 we read: "And hereby we do know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

If our heart condemns us—if we do not have these things, if we know we are not living or walking right, and if we know we are disobedient—we cannot have confidence toward God. Our heart condemns us, and God is greater than our hearts, and He knows us. But if our heart condemn us not, then we have confidence toward God because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. A clear conscience, an obedient life, a humble and loving disposition, and growth in grace are clear evidences of the grace of God in one's life.

Therefore, we must seek to develop these graces, characteristics, and attributes that Peter speaks of in our lives, for he said, "If we do these things, we shall never fall." It is not our work, but it is our responsibility and obligation to seek God and develop these things in our lives by His Word, by His grace, and for His honor and glory. If you do these things, you shall never fall. If you want to be a successful Christian, make sure these seven attributes are in your life.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word and your truth. Lord, how desperately we need these things in our lives. How desperately we need to be taught your word, to learn who thou art and who we are, and how dependent we are upon thee. I pray, Father, that thou would make us holy and godly. May we develop these attributes, these graces, and these characteristics in our lives. Give us, Lord, thy mercy, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Source Notes

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Chapter 27: Learning The Difference Between Truth And Error
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Chapter 28: Mind Control Equals Death
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Chapter 30: Which Way Are You Inclined?
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JW01596 | 2021-01-19 | YouTube

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