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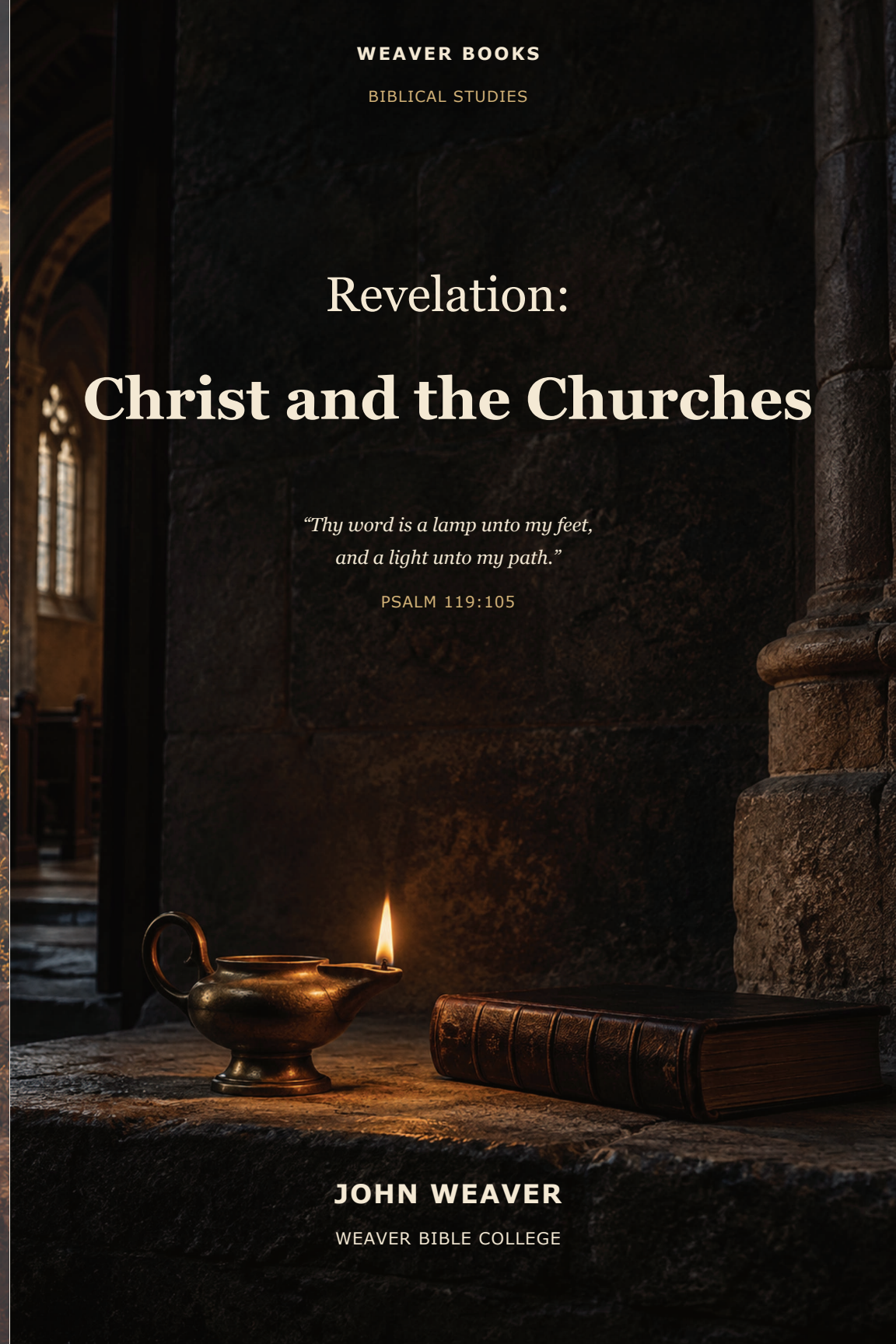
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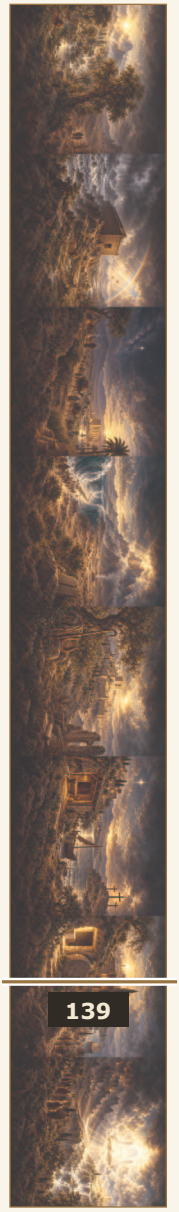
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



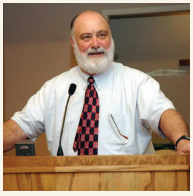
He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

REVELATION 2:7, EXCERPT

This Revelation-related collection brings together topical sermons on Christ, the calling of believers, the church's witness, and the responsibilities of love and obedience. John Weaver draws connections across Scripture rather than offering a continuous chapter-by-chapter commentary. The messages ask readers to consider how faithfulness to Christ is expressed in practical life.

“You need to stop and consider that everything that you do is ministry.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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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.

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CHAPTER 1

The Biblical Doctrine of Hatred

January 9, 2005

Introduction: A Time to Hate

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace."

It is certainly not my intention today to go down through all of these Scriptures, but if I started at verse 1 and worked my way down to verse 8, I could demonstrate that there are indeed proper times for each one of these things that Solomon, the wise man, mentions: a

time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build up—all of these things.

But I want to emphasize verse 8 today: "A time to love, and a time to hate. A time of war, and a time of peace." I am going to bring a message which I brought about twelve years ago, entitled "The Biblical Doctrine of Hatred." Some of you may remember the message, but I have been asked to deal with this subject again. Some of you, as well as other people who receive the CDs and DVDs on a regular basis, have raised numerous questions, and I want to try to answer and resolve those questions for each one of you.

When I first preached this message years ago, Harold Hardy, who is now with the Lord, carried copies of it around with him in cassette form.

He would hand those things out like candy. One day I asked him, "Harold, why in the world are you handing out a message like this to people you meet? Why don't you start with a message that is easier to receive and then work them into something like this?" I never will forget what he said: "I want to separate the wheat from the chaff right away. I don't want to waste my time, my money, or the cassettes on those who do not want all of God's Word."

I can assure you this message will indeed separate the wheat from the chaff. It will separate those who seriously desire the Word of God from those who do not. It will also make you realize that there are numerous passages in the Bible that have been ignored, overlooked, and untaught. The amazing thing is that when you hear a message like this, the immediate response is, "I've just never heard anything like that before." But just because you have never heard it before does not mean that it is not true. If it is in the Bible, it is true, because God's Word is truth.

If you look down in verse eight again, it says, "a time to love, and a time to hate." God says there is a time to love and a time to hate. How often have we been told that it is wrong to hate? From childhood, it has been instilled in us that hatred is wrong, wicked, and vile, and that we should never, under any circumstances, hate. Yet God says very clearly in Ecclesiastes 3 and verse 8, there is a time to hate.

If hatred is wicked and wrong in and of itself, how could God righteously tell us there is a time to hate? I want to make this distinction at the very beginning and as I progress in this message: unbiblical, unrighteous, and ungodly hatred is condemned over and over in the Bible. When I am talking about biblical hatred, I am not talking about all the ill will, vindictiveness, and wickedness that swells up in our hearts. The problem is that when we hear the word hatred, we normally think of the humanistic, self-centered, and ungodly type of hatred.

There is that tendency in every man by nature. That is why God, in Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 17, said, "Thou shalt not hate thy neighbor in thy heart." This self-centered, unbiblical, ungodly hatred is condemned in Scripture. That is why, in Matthew 5, verses 21 through 24, our Lord deals with it and says that he who hated his brother in his heart is already guilty of murder. There is a fallen, ungodly type of hatred as well.

Simply because there exists an unrighteous and unbiblical hatred does not negate the fact that there is a righteous and biblical hatred. You do not throw out doctrines simply because they are misused, abused, or misunderstood. You have heard the old expression: You do not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Simply because there is an abundance of adultery and fornication, you do not throw out marital sex, which God Himself says is honorable and all in the bed undefiled. You do not throw out the doctrine of baptism just because some individuals believe in baptismal regeneration. No. You teach the correct biblical doctrine and then, of course, apply it. You do not throw out the baby with the bathwater. What we have to do is shun the ungodly, unbiblical interpretations and keep the biblical doctrine. In like manner, there is a biblical doctrine of hatred, just as there is an unbiblical hatred.

Four Fallacies Examined

I want to challenge you this morning to examine four fallacies in light of the Word of God. I have already told you they are fallacies, which means they are untrue. These are four concepts that you have been taught all your life. Unless you are willing to think biblically, you are going to be upset with me even before I have time to explain

them. Here are the four fallacies: God loves everyone; God loves everyone equally; God hates the sin, but He loves the sinner; and God does not hate anyone. I want to take these four things and examine them in light of Scripture. Hopefully, before I finish today, you will understand that each of these four concepts is basically untrue when presented just on face value.

The Sovereign's Hatred

When the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 3:8, “There is a time to love, and a time to hate,” the Hebrew word for hate is sone, which accurately and literally translated means to hate. You cannot water it down, twist it, or pervert it and try to make it mean something else. The word simply means to hate. God says there is a time to hate.

In order to demonstrate the validity of this doctrine, that is, the biblical doctrine of hatred, I want to give you three points from the Word of God. First, the sovereign’s hatred; secondly, the saint’s hatred; and thirdly, the Savior’s hatred. Let us begin with the first point, the sovereign’s hatred. In one sense of the word, this point is the easiest of the entire message. Why am I saying it is the easiest of the entire message? Because there are so many Scriptures that will quickly and very clearly illustrate it. One of the very first things we are taught is that God loves everyone. My question is, how does that statement stack up against the Scriptures? Listen carefully: God does not love everyone, because the Scriptures teach us that there is at least one person God hated.

You say, where in the world do you find that in the Bible? Turn in your Bibles to Malachi chapter 1 and then to Romans chapter 9. Malachi is, of course, the last book in the Old Testament. Look carefully as I read from the book of Malachi, chapter 1, beginning with verses 2 and 3: “I have loved you, saith the Lord, yet you say, wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother, saith the Lord? Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.”

What did God just get out of His mouth? God says, “I loved you.” They said, “Wherein have you loved us?” God says, “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother, saith the Lord? Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.” And what is the proof that He hated Esau?

He laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Now, if you look at Romans chapter 9, the Apostle Paul is quoting from Malachi chapter 1. In Romans 9 and verse 13, he gives this statement: "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." When you look at Malachi 1, the word hatred, or hated, is the same Hebrew word, sone, that is translated in Ecclesiastes 3 and verse 8 when God says there is a time to hate. The Bible says, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." In Romans 9:13, of course, it is Greek, but the Greek word is miseo, which means to despise or to hate. God says, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Let me show you how difficult it is to extricate yourself from the problem I am presenting to you. Someone says, "Oh, but Brother Weaver, I can get out of that. All I have to do is interpret the word hate in Malachi 1 and Romans chapter 9 to mean to love less. All that means is that God loved Jacob; He just loved Esau less." If you interpret it that way, what have you done to the second concept that we have always been taught—that God loves everyone equally? You are not going to get yourself out of the problem by trying to interpret that word to mean love less. No, He said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

You cannot have it both ways. It is unethical, as well as certainly unbiblical, to take a word which literally means to hate and translate it, or interpret it, to mean love less. God said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." So there is at least one individual we know that God hates. You cannot say that God loves everybody, because Jacob was loved but Esau was hated.

I suppose one of the funniest incidents I have ever heard about happened in Kentucky. Two pastors had a radio program, one of those call-in programs where people asked Bible questions and they answered them. Every caller was answered by one of the pastors, who would say, "Hello, God loves everybody, and especially you. What is your question, please?"

He said, "Hello, God loves everybody. What is your question, please?" The man said, "My name is Esau. Does God love me?" All of a sudden, there was silence on the radio program. How can you answer that question if you are going to say that God loves

everybody, because God says, “I hated Esau”? Is it not reasonable to assume that if God hated one individual, there may be other individuals whom God hates as well?

You say, “What are you talking about?” Here is the problem that you and I have to deal with: we have been brainwashed and propagandized into believing that it is always wrong and wicked to hate.

If God hates, His hatred is a holy hatred; therefore, hatred is not sin in and of itself. If you say hatred is always wrong under every circumstance and in every situation, then you are charging God with being sinful. The Bible does teach us that God hates. I can assure you that God’s hatred is a holy, righteous hatred.

Now let me demonstrate this for you. Turn in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 6, and let us begin reading with verse 16. I am trying to establish from Scripture the principle that God does hate. I do not know how you could extricate yourself from this passage, but that is all right, too. Proverbs 6, verse 16: “These six things doth the Lord hate.”

“Yea, seven are an abomination to Him.” What is it that God hates? What is a stench in His nostrils? A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among the brethren.

Now note that, back in verse 16, these six things doth who hate? The Lord. It is all caps. That is the holy name of God, Yahweh. These six things doth Yahweh hate. The A7 are abomination to Him. So we know that God hates. This passage does not particularly say that God hates sinners, but it does tell us that God hates, and God hates certain things.

To undergird this principle, look at Jeremiah 44:4. Here God is referring once again to sin. “Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, O do not this abominable thing which I hate.” He is talking about sin, idolatry, and wickedness. God said, “I sent my prophets to you,” and they said, “O do not this abominable thing which God hates.” God does hate.

Zechariah 8:17 says, “And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor, and love no false oath, for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.” Notice that God says, “Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor.” Now we are talking about an unbiblical and ungodly hatred. God says, do not be consumed with an unbiblical and ungodly hatred, and love no false oath, for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.

God says there is a biblical hatred. What I am hating, says God, are those things that are unbiblical, ungodly, and unrighteous. Very obviously, God does hate, and He does hate sin.

One way preachers and other Christians have tried to explain away the biblical doctrine of hatred, especially these straightforward statements, is by saying, “The truth is, God loves a sinner, but He hates the sin.” That sounds pretty good: God loves a sinner, but He hates the sin.

Stop with me for a moment and think about that statement: God loves a sinner, but He hates the sin. How much sin exists apart from the sinner? Is our pride, arrogance, lying, fornication, murder, adultery, and theft simply floating somewhere in the universe? No. Do you realize it is impossible to have sin without sinners? If there were no sinners, there would not be any sin.

Sin does not exist in abstraction. It exists in the sinful heart of a man. So how can you take the statement, “God loves the sinner, but He hates the sin”? The truth is that there would be no sin without the sinner.

Now I am going to show you from the Bible that God not only hates sin, but God hates sinners. You say, “Wait a minute, Brother Weaver. How can you say that God hates sinners?” Because the Bible says so. “But I thought God loves sinners.” He does. “You cannot have it both ways.” Yes, I can, because the Bible teaches both truths. This is what you call an antinomy. An antinomy is a seeming contradiction. In reality, it is no contradiction at all; it only seems to be that way. The same Bible that teaches that God loves sinners also teaches that God hates sinners.

Look in your Bible to Psalm 7, verse 11. I will take you to the easy passages first. The Bible says that God judged the righteous and God

is angry with the wicked every day. You say, “The Bible does not say there that God hates sinners. It just says that God is angry with them every day.” That is true, but I am not through yet. I am showing you that there is never a moment when the anger of God does not burn hot against rebellious sinners. God is angry with the wicked every day. Sinners may have many feast days, but they never have any safe days because God’s anger is burning hot against them.

Now hold the book of Psalms; we are coming right back there. Go in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 32, verse 19: “And when the Lord saw it, He abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and his daughters.”

Here the Bible does not say that God hated sin. Here the Bible says that God hated sinners. He hated them because of the provoking of His sons and His daughters. So, very clearly, there are some individuals whom God hates, more and above that of Esau.

If that passage is not clear enough, go back in your Bible to Psalm 5, remembering that the word abhor is a very strong word for hatred. David says, “For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight. Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing or lying. The LORD will abhor the bloody and the deceitful man.”

How do you get yourself out of this dilemma? The Bible says very plainly, “Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.” It says that the Lord will abhor, or hate, the bloody and the deceitful man. Very obviously, then, there are some individuals whom God does indeed hate.

Look in your Bibles to Psalm 10, verse 3: “For the wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.” Why would God hate the covetous? If you look in Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5, you will find that covetousness is idolatry. Here the Bible says that the wicked boasted of his heart’s desire and blessed the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth, or hateth. Thus God hates the bloody and deceitful man, the workers of iniquity, and the covetous, who are idolaters.

Then turn to Proverbs 22, verse 14: “The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.” This

is the easiest point in this message, because there is a multitude of Scriptures that say God hates. Not only does He hate sin; He hates sinners. If God truly hates the covetous, the bloody and deceitful man, those who speak lying, and those who work iniquity, then there are multitudes hated by God, and not just Esau.

I am not going to ask you to turn there, but I am going to ask you to remember this. I used this passage last week. Do you remember Romans 1? In verses 24, 26, and 28, the Bible speaks of those people who did not like to retain God in their knowledge. They began to worship the creature more than the Creator and turned the glory of God into four-footed beasts and creeping things. The Bible says in verse 24, "Wherefore God gave them" up to a reprobate mind. In verse 26, God gave them up; in verse 28, God gave them over to do those things which are not convenient. My question is this: when the Bible says that God gave them up and God gave them over, does that sound like an act of love to you?

Think about that. Do you think you could convince all of those people who were drowned in the flood that God loved them? Can you imagine Noah in the ark floating on the water with thousands of people drowning and begging for help, while on the back of the ark he has a bumper sticker that says, "Smile, God loves you"? Could you honestly convince those people that God loved them? Do you believe you could honestly convince Pharaoh and the Egyptians that God loved them?

Look in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 11. I am not trying to be funny; I am trying to get the point across that when God judges and destroys, it is not an act of love. Look in Exodus 11:7 at what God specifically said, and remember this verse. In fact, let us begin reading with verse 5:

"And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even in the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill, and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more."

"But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast, that you may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." What is God saying? God is saying, "I am preserving my people, and I am destroying my enemies, that you may know that I put a difference between them." Do you think you could convince Pharaoh and the Egyptians that God loved them? Do you think you could convince the Assyrians and the Babylonians that God loved them? And when you try to tell me, "Brother Weaver, God loves everybody, and God loves everybody equally," would you try to argue and convince me that God loved Judas exactly as much as He loved the Apostle Paul? I do not believe so. Would you try to tell me that God loved Judas, Haman, and Herod, and other notorious sinners and wicked, rebellious men in the Bible, as much as He loved His people? Well, I think not. God does not love everybody, neither does God love everyone equally.

Moreover, it is incorrect and unbiblical to argue that God loves a sinner and hates a sin, because no sin would exist apart from the sinner. When you talk about the love of God, you always have to distinguish between three distinct types of God's love. There is God's love of complacency, God's love of benevolence, and God's special redemptive love. Let me explain those very quickly. When we talk about God's love of complacency, we are referring to the love and delight that God has in Himself and in the person of Christ, because God is absolutely perfect. He is totally and absolutely satisfied with Himself. He is absolutely satisfied with Jesus Christ.

Distinctions in God's Love

If I were to ask you whether you could change anything about yourself, what would you change? Some of us would say, "Man, I'd shed twenty pounds." Some would say, "I'd have a thick head of curly hair," or, "Man, I'd be better looking," or, "I'd have a better figure." Have you ever stopped to think, if God could change anything about Himself, what would He change? He would not change anything, because He is perfect. Therefore, there is that complacent love where He is satisfied and delights in Himself exactly as He is. Secondly, there is what is known as the love of benevolence. This is where we normally say that God loves everybody, in the sense that we are

talking about the love of benevolence. What is the love of benevolence? It is where God desires the overall good of mankind and its creatures.

Look in your Bibles first of all to Matthew 5, and then we are going to Psalm 104. If you pass Psalm 104 on the way to Matthew 5, hold it and go to Matthew chapter 5, verse 45. Here is what we call the love of benevolence. He says, “That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for he that is the Father who is in heaven maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.”

Does not God provide for the unjust and the wicked? Yes. Does not God give them his blessings? Yes, he does so on a daily basis.

Look in your Bible at Psalm 104, verses 27 and 28. Remember now, we are talking about the love of benevolence. He says this: “These wait all upon thee.”

“That thou mayest give them their meat in due season, that thou givest them they gather, thou openest thy hand, and they are filled with good.” That is God's benevolent love. How many sinners, as wicked as we have been and are, do you see going hungry in this country? Very few.

In Acts 14, verses 16 through 18, we see God's love of benevolence even toward the pagans and heathen. Paul and Barnabas had healed a man, and these heathen people were trying to sacrifice to them. Paul and Barnabas said, “No, you're not going to sacrifice to us. You're not going to worship us.” They preached that the people should turn from these vanities, that is, from these idols, unto the living God. “We also are men of like passions with you,” they said, and they preached unto them the God “who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all things that are therein; who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.” That is, they were idolaters. Nevertheless, “he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

What did he say? God provided for them even though they were pagan idolaters. Here is God's love of benevolence, even to the

pagans and heathen. God provides for saint and sinner alike, and all partake of His common blessings.

But when we speak of God's redemptive love, we are speaking of His special love, whereby He saves, redeems, reconciles, regenerates, and converts His people unto Himself. There is a vast difference between God's love of benevolence and God's redemptive love.

Let me give you an illustration. I could honestly say, “I love all the women in this room.” I could even expand that and say, “I love all the women in the world.” My expression of love for each woman would be wishing her well, desiring to help her, and being kind, gracious, and civil toward her. But that would be the extent of it.

If I say, “I love my wife,” you understand that the love I have for my wife is different from the love I have for all the women in this room and all the women in the world. I do not love anyone the way I love my wife. Why? Because she is special. I chose her. I delight in her.

No one can take her place. It is that simple. The love I have for her is a special kind of love, and you understand the distinction. It is the same way with the love of benevolence and the love of redemption. In one sense, God loves sinners because He provides for them. He gives them common, everyday blessings: sun, rain, air, wealth, and food. But God loves His people in a special way. He may give general blessings to the heathen, but He gives special love, special attention, and special blessings to His own. I take Jane out to dinner, but I do not take Jane out to dinner nearly as often as I take my wife out to dinner. I certainly do not love Jane the way I love my wife. You see, there is a distinction.

Now do you understand why, in Zechariah chapter 2 and verse 8, God said concerning His people, “He that toucheth thee toucheth the apple of my eye”? What was He saying about His people? “You are My delight. You are My special.”

Every man feels that way, not only about his wife, but about his own daughter. Harry is a kind, soft-spoken man, but if I went back there and started messing with Sarah, I bet he would be on me like a duck on a junebug. You just do not mess with a man’s daughter or a

man's wife. Why? There is that special bond, that special love. You understand that?

God says, "You are My people." That is why God said in Amos 3 and verse 2, "You only have I known of all the people of the earth." You are My special people. That is why, in Romans 9, verses 4 and 5, Paul lists the special blessings God gave His people. God did not give His law to the Assyrians or the Babylonians; He gave it to Israel. He did not give the sacrifices to the Egyptians; He gave them to Israel. He did not give the tabernacle of worship to some foreign group; He gave it to Israel. It is a fact of Scripture that God hates sinners. It is also a fact of Scripture that God loves sinners in the general benevolent way, and some in the special redemptive way. But there is another truth of Scripture, and that is this.

There is a sense in which God was angry and righteously wrathful, even against His own elect before their regeneration and conversion. Look in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 through 3: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Who are we talking about? We are talking about believers. God has regenerated them. God has saved them. "Wherein in time past," that is, before you were regenerated and converted, "ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Among whom also we all had our conversation, or conduct, in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, "and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." In other words, before we were regenerated and converted, there was a sense in which God was even angry and wrathful toward His own.

The Bible says in Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." What made the difference? Look back in Ephesians 2. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation, or conduct, in times past, in the lusts of our flesh,

fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

Here it is: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." "By grace are ye saved through faith; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Here is that special redemptive love. We can be thankful unto the sovereign God who, through Jesus Christ, even when we were children of wrath as others, loved us and brought us to Himself.

The Saint's Hatred

Secondly, very quickly, I want you to see the saint's hatred. How often have we been told that it is wrong to hate? How many of us have instructed our children that it is never, ever right to hate? We have been taught as Christians that we are to love at all times, regardless of the situation and regardless of the circumstances. But what does Scripture say? Once again, let me remind you: there is a difference between a biblical hatred and an unbiblical hatred.

When we are talking about biblical hatred, we are not talking about that wrath and anger which is in us by nature, which is sinful, wicked, and wrong, and manifests itself in hatred. That is not what we are talking about. When God says in Ecclesiastes 3:8, "There is a time to hate," that time to hate refers to a biblical hatred, not to an ungodly hatred. God is not encouraging anyone to a personal, vindictive, wrathful, ungodly, and unholy hatred.

Such hatred is condemned over and over in Scripture. God has forbidden such hatred, and all those who engage in it will certainly suffer the consequences. But the other side of the coin is equally true. Just as there is non-biblical hatred, there is indeed a biblical hatred. Do you realize that we cannot love God and be true to Him without, at the same time, hating everything that is contrary to God and His Word?

Now let us consider a comparative use of the word hate. In Luke 14:26, our Lord says, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and

his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Did you hear what our Lord said? If any man comes to Him and hates not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be His disciple.

Is our Lord telling us, first and foremost, that we must literally and physically hate our father and our mother to be His disciples? Is He telling us that we must really and truly hate our wife and our children? The answer is no. The answer is no. God is not telling us that we must literally hate our father and our mother. He said, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

He said, "Husbands, love your wives." Certainly, we are to love our children. God is not telling us to literally hate our father, mother, wife, and children. What is He saying? Comparatively speaking, your love to Me should be so great and so vast that, by comparison, the love you have for your wife, father, mother, and children would be hatred. That is comparatively speaking, and yet He used the word hate here.

Outside of this passage, there are specific Scriptures that admonish us as saints to hatred. But please remember: it is a holy hatred. Do you think that David, who has been called by God a man after God's own heart, would have a biblical attitude? I would think so. How about Solomon? How about the Apostle Paul? We certainly would not be wrong, and we could not err, if we adopted the attitudes of David, Solomon, and Paul. Here were godly individuals.

Look at Psalm 26, verses 4 and 5. David said, "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers," that is, those who play the hypocrite. "I have hated the congregation of the evildoers and will not sit with the wicked." David said, "I've hated the congregation of evildoers," and, "I will not sit with the wicked." Here is a holy hatred. David is not going to put up with those who are positively wicked, and he said, "I'm not going to be identified with him. I'm not going to sit with him. I'm not going to pretend like everything's hunky dory between us. It is not."

Psalm 31, verse 6: "I have hated them that regard lying vanities, but I trust in the Lord." What is David saying? Let me spell it out for you: I hate idolaters. I hate those who honor and worship lying

vanities, or those who worship idols. Psalm 97, verse 10, says, “Ye that love the Lord.”

What are the next two words? Hate evil. Ye that love the Lord hate evil. He preserved the souls of his saints. We are being admonished to hate. There should be a holy hatred of everything that is wicked, wrong, and vile, and contrary to the Word of God.

Look at Psalm 101, verse 3: I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave unto me. David said, “I’m not going to follow anyone who turns aside from your Word. I hate their work. I’m not going to sit with them. I’m not going to identify with them. I hate their work.”

Look in Proverbs 8 and verse 13. Every one of us wants to fear God, do we not? Have you ever wondered what the fear of God consisted of? Here are some things the Bible tells us: The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. What is the fear of the Lord?

It has a positive and a negative. It is not just that we love, reverence, and worship God. It is also that we hate everything contrary to God. That is what he said: “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Pride and arrogancy and the evil way and the froward mouth do I hate.” Scripture commands and admonishes the saints to hate. In Amos 5:15, God says, “Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.” So what are we admonished to do? We are admonished to hate the evil and love the good.

Now consider Psalm 139:21-22. David, the man after God’s own heart, wrote, “Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with them that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.” In the surrounding passage, David speaks of wicked men speaking against God wickedly: “They speak against thee wickedly: and thine enemies take thy name in vain.” Then he asks, “Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee?”

The enemies that we are to hate are God’s enemies. Someone says, “But Brother Weaver, in the Bible God admonishes us to love our enemies.” Yes, He does. We are to love our enemies, and we are to

hate God's enemies. There is an easy explanation for how we love our enemies. What is love? The Bible defines love as the fulfilling of the law. All that means is that we act biblically toward our enemies.

It does not mean that we have strong affections for them. It does not mean that we run up and embrace them, kiss them on the cheek, and hug them. No, it means that they may do wrong toward us, but we will do right toward them. We will do that which is biblical, even if they do not do that which is biblical toward us.

David said, "Do not I hate them that hate thee, O Lord. Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies." Note the very next request that David makes in this prayer.

Look in verse 23 and 24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my faults, and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." Can you imagine that? David had just said, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee?"

"Brother Weaver, when in the world are Christians in this country going to wake up? When are people going to wake up?" One of the reasons we are so pathetic and so apathetic in our Christian life, and one of the reasons we refuse to stand and fight against sin and wickedness, is because we do not have a holy hatred of sin. We do not understand what it is to have a holy hatred. We compromise, capitulate, and ignore sin because we do not have a holy hatred of sin. Our love affair with sin enables it to destroy us.

If we could say with David, "I hate that which is evil. I hate those that turn aside. I hate those that regard lying vanities," without being consumed with personal vindictiveness ourselves, then we could handle sin. But we have been taught that it is wrong to hate. So we do not even hate sin. We do not hate the devil. We do not hate wickedness. We do not hate those who hate Christ.

Billy Sunday, a Presbyterian evangelist, once said that he would fight sin as long as he could with all that he had. He continued, "As long as I have fists, I will hit it. As long as I have feet, I will kick it. As long as I have teeth, I'll bite it. And when I am fistless and footless and toothless, by God's grace, I'll gum it to death."

If we adopted Billy Sunday's attitude—and, I might add, the scriptural biblical attitude—we would not tolerate evil in any sphere:

personal, familial, ecclesiastical, or civil. We have corrupt government, churches, families, and individuals because we do not hate sin. We think somehow that we have to tolerate it and go along with it. We have never been taught there is a biblical attitude of hatred: a holy, righteous hatred against those who are against God and against everything that is against God.

So we have seen the Sovereign's hatred: God does hate. We have seen the saint's hatred. And very quickly, one final point: the Savior's hatred.

The Savior's Hatred

Unhappily, most professing Christians have a warped view of Christ, even as they have a warped view of the Father. The average Christian, and sadly, the average preacher, erroneously views Christ as a soft, sweet, sentimental, anemic, and effeminate Savior—one who only loves, is never angry, never exhibits wrath, and would never harm a fly. The truth is, those who hold that view have never read the totality of Scripture. Or, if they have read it, they have a real problem believing it. Obviously, they do not know Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Do you remember that passage in Psalm 69 and verse 9? You do not have to turn there. The passage said, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." In John chapter 2, our Lord took that passage and applied it to Himself. What is the word zeal there? It is that hot, fuming jealousy. The zeal of His house had heated Him up, and what did our Lord do? He made Himself a scourge of small cords, went through the temple, beat the devil out of some of those people, drove them out of the temple, and overturned the money changers' tables. What was that?

That was an act of hatred. He hated those people. He hated what they were doing to the temple, how they were dishonoring the Father, and how they were misusing and abusing the law. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

Now, let me very quickly give you three truths about Christ and make the applications. Two of these truths most people are willing to confess and acknowledge; the third truth most people do not want to

acknowledge. First of all, Christ is the Originator. The Bible says in John 1, verses 1–3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

All things were made by Him. Without Him was not anything made that was made. In Colossians 1:16, He holds everything, and by Him all things consist and have their being. Jesus Christ is the Originator. He originated all things. He is the Creator God.

Secondly, Jesus Christ is the Mediator. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 2:5, “There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” You will never get to God except through Jesus Christ. That is it. You are not going to get there through Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, or all these other isms. The only way you can get to God the Father is through Jesus Christ. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” So Jesus Christ is the Originator, and Jesus Christ is the Mediator.

And here is the third one: Jesus Christ is the Terminator. Move over, Arnold Schwarzenegger. That office has already been filled.

Jesus Christ is the Terminator. Does Christ hate? The answer is yes. Look in your Bibles at Revelation, chapter 2, verse 6. He is talking here to the church at Ephesus. Remember, Christ is the One standing among the candlesticks in Revelation, chapter 1. He says, “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” Does it surprise you that Jesus Christ hates? He does. He said so.

Look at verse 15 of the same chapter: “So thou hast also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.” Look in Revelation, chapter 3, verse 19. This will take just a little explaining: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent.” Now wait a minute. What if you are never rebuked and never chastened? What does that mean? You are not loved. Well, if you are not loved, you are what? Hated. You remember that passage in Genesis 29, where Jacob served for Rachel?

What did old Laban do? He deceived Jacob. He had Leah there with her face covered, and Jacob married Leah. When Jacob found out that he had Leah, he was angry. Laban said to Jacob, “Fulfill her

week. You take care of her for this week, and at the end of the week I am going to give you Rachel. You can serve me another seven years."

The Bible says in Genesis 29:30, "And Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah." He probably had some feelings for Leah, but he loved Rachel. The next verse says, "Now when God saw that Leah was hated, and Rachel was loved, he opened Leah's womb, and closed Rachel." Jacob could have said, "I just love Leah less than Rachel." No, God said, "You hate her." You hate her. "As many as I love, I chasten." If you do not love, you hate. Who does Christ love? Only those whom He rebukes and only those whom He chastens.

Look in your Bibles at John 17, the high priestly prayer. In verse 9 our Lord is praying for His own: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." He said, "I pray for My own. I do not pray for the world. I pray for them which thou didst give Me, for they are Thine." Christ did not even think enough of some people to pray for them. That is what He said: "I pray not for the world. I pray for Mine own."

Look at Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Every man ought to be able to quote this verse. It was sacrificial love, and it was exclusive love. He loved the church; He gave Himself for the church. Verse 32 says, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Christ did not love the harlot. He loved the church. He loved His elect. He loved His people. Whoever they are, wherever they are, He loved them.

There are things that boggle my mind. Alice and I have talked about them. I have known men who ran out on their wives innumerable times, yet, when pinned down, said, "But I love my wife." How can that be true? If you love her, really and truly, you will keep your oath and covenant and demonstrate it by loving her and her only.

The point is this: Christ loved the church. Look in your Bibles at Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." What did Christ purchase with His own blood? The church—His own.

Whoever they are, He purchased them. Do you not remember what He told those people in Matthew chapter 7?

He said, “Many will come to me in that day and say, Lord, Lord, have we not cast out demons in thy name? Have we not prophesied in thy name? Have we not done many wonderful works in thy name? Then will I profess unto them, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. I never knew you.”

In 2 Thessalonians 1:7, he says that those who are troubled should rest with us when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. What is he going to do when he comes back in flaming fire? He will be “taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and be admired in all them that believe.” What will he do when he comes back? He will come back in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you try to tell me that this is an act of love, I do not want him to love me that way. There is a difference between God's redemptive love, God's love of benevolence, and God's complacent love. Destruction and devastation are not acts of love in the Scripture. They are indeed acts of hatred.

The Bible says in John 5:22, “For the Father judges no man, but he hath committed all judgment to the Son.” Jesus Christ is the Terminator. What will he do when he returns? He will terminate those who do not obey him—those who hate the gospel and hate the Word of God. Yes, there is a biblical doctrine of hatred.

Applications

For the first application, turn to Psalm 73. Since we have been talking about the sovereign's hatred, the saint's hatred, and the Savior's hatred, and since we have been talking about Jesus Christ as the Terminator, I want to point out a truth concerning eternal punishment. Help me do a little supposing. For an instant, let's suppose.

There are no fires in the lake of fire. Let us suppose there is no pain, no agony, and nothing like that. I want to show you from Scripture that if eternal punishment consisted of only one thing, that alone would make it horrendous.

In Psalm 73, Asaph is having a problem. He sees the prosperity of the wicked, yet he himself is suffering. He says, "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." Pride compasseth them about as a chain. Violence covered them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than their heart can wish. They are corrupt. They speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.

Yet look at their attitude: "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?" Asaph says, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." Here is his predicament: "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." He has been trying to do what is right, yet he is suffering, while these wicked reprobates have everything they want and more, and are not suffering. "For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." If he speaks this way, he will offend against the generation of God's people.

When he thought to know this contradiction, it was too painful for him, until he went into the sanctuary of God; then understood he their end. There he understood what was going to happen. God had set the wicked in slippery places and cast them down into destruction. "How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors." As a dream when one awakens, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise or hate their image.

Suppose there were no fires in the lake of fire, no agony, pain, or torment. Suppose you were simply set apart somewhere and every second throughout eternity received a fresh baptism of the eternal hatred of the eternal God. To be eternally hated of God would be hell in itself. No hope. God is a holy God, and He has a holy hatred. The second application is this, and it is another admonition.

Please do not confuse our fleshly evil and ungodly hatred, which is condemned in Galatians 5:20 as the work of the flesh, with a biblical righteous hatred. Biblical hatred is always in agreement with the Scriptures; it agrees with the attitude and disposition of our Heavenly Father.

Our failure in Christian duty is based upon our failure to understand, comprehend, and apply biblical doctrine. Duty is based upon doctrine. How can you do your duty if you do not know what your duty is? How can you do your duty if you do not understand why you are to do it? How can you and I have a holy hatred of sin and wickedness if we do not understand that there is a biblical doctrine of hatred? How can we learn to hate aright if we do not believe aright? We must know our doctrine. The reason we are so complacent, apathetic, and pathetic as Christians is that we do not know our duty, and we do not know our duty because we do not know our doctrine.

I hope that in this message you not only learned the distinction between biblical and unbiblical hatred, but that you also stand amazed at the marvelous, miraculous, and wonderful grace of God in reaching out to His enemies. Even when we hated, despised, and ignored Him—even in our sins and rebellion, when we were weak and without strength—God commended His love toward us: while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Even when we were in rebellion against God, God sent His Son. What overpowering love, and what graciousness and generosity in the heart of the Father! The Father could have rightly and justly left us to ourselves, but He did not.

The holy hatred, wrath, and anger of God were not simply put behind His back while He pretended not to be angry and chose to overlook our sin. God was righteously angry and wrathful, and He had a holy hatred. The only reason we escaped was that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as our substitute. Christ died in our place, and that righteous, holy hatred and wrath and anger were poured out upon Him. God struck Christ instead of striking us.

God's holy hatred of sin and wickedness was not swept under the carpet. It was brought out in the open when Jesus Christ was made a propitiation for our sins. What a magnificent, marvelous, wonderful,

gracious God, who says, "Instead of striking those who deserve it, I'll strike My Son who does not deserve it, that you may go free in Him." There is a biblical doctrine of hatred.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us. Lord, we confess to Thee our apathy, not having a holy hatred of sin and wickedness and ungodliness; for not taking a stand or fighting as we could have and should have in so many instances. But Lord, deliver us from our fleshly, ungodly, vindictive hatred in and of ourselves, and give us a holy, godly hatred, that we might hate those things Thou dost hate and love those which Thou dost love. Make us holy, godly, and obedient. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

The LORD Thinking of You

Part Two

January 7, 2007

Review of Part 1: Thinking Upon the Lord

Psalm 40. And of course, we're going to take a few moments and review last week's message since this is going to be actually part two from last week. I tell you what, if you would just go ahead and turn in your Bibles, not just to Psalm 40, but to Malachi chapter three. Malachi chapter three was the text that we used last week. And I want to just simply read that text by way of review. Because last week I brought the message, Thinking of the Lord. And I asked, did you ever think of the Lord? And if you did so, how often did you think of the Lord? And of course, what were your thoughts concerning the Lord? And the Bible in Malachi chapter 3, looking in verse 16, the Bible says this, Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." If you will remember, I gave you the context in Malachi chapter 3 and told you it was a context of judgment. And I asked what in the world were the saints of God to do in a time of persecution, in a time of oppression and tyranny and suffering? And the answer is in verse 16, and they that feared the Lord, they did two things.

Number one, they spake often one to another. And I pointed out that was only exhortation and encouragement and counsel, seeking counsel and giving counsel. But then they also thought upon his name. And I pointed out the fact the thinking upon the name of the Lord was more than just simply thinking that His name would be Yahweh or Jehovah, but it meant thinking about Him as a person, His attributes, everything about Him. And then, of course, I showed you how the Lord hearkened, He heard, a book of remembrance was brought before Him, and He said, They're going to be Mine, and I showed you how the Lord gave all these assurances to those who think upon His name. So we were dealing last week basically with thinking upon the Lord.

Introduction to Psalm 40: The Lord Thinking of Us

Psalm 40 presents David's testimony of the Lord's deliverance and his declaration of God's wonderful works and thoughts. David said, "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."

"And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee. If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."

Since last week dealt with thinking about the Lord and meditating upon Him and His Word, let me ask another question: Have you

ever wondered whether or not the Lord thinks about you? Think for a moment of the billions of people who have lived, who are living, and who shall live. In light of those billions and billions of people, does the Lord think about me personally? Who am I, and what am I, and how is it that God could single me out of billions and think about me personally? Is it not an absolutely awesome, marvelous, and wonderful truth to even begin to conceive in your mind that the Lord thinks about you personally and individually?

God's Condescension and Personhood

Here is a general truth that shows the condescension and grace of God. Psalm 113 asks, "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!" Note that question: Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high—in other words, He is the sovereign, omnipotent God—who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in earth?

Think for a moment of the humility and condescension involved in the Lord thinking upon us. Can you conceive in your mind that the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, immutable, everlasting God would humble Himself and think about you? This is a marvelous truth of Scripture: God does not merely think of His people as a whole. He does not think of us only collectively. He probably does so in one sense of the word, but He also thinks of us individually as well.

When we think of God, it is difficult for us to think of Him thinking of us. Scripture says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." When you think of that verse, you have to come to the realization that God is incorporeal. By that, I mean this: God does not have a body the way you and I have a body. But simply because God does not have a body does not mean that God is not a person. We tend to think that if an individual, or if one has no body, he cannot be a real person. We tend to think you have to have a body to be a real person. Well, if you think that, let me ask you a question.

What will you be after you die? Do you realize that your body is nothing more than a shell? It's a house. And when that house or that

shell drops off, do you cease to exist? The answer is no. The Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians, talks about if our house, our bodily house, is dissolved, we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. So the real person lives inside of your body. In other words, the body is not the person. You can be a person without having a body, because the Bible says the spirit goes back to God who gave it. Our bodies, then, are merely our houses, our shells that house the real person. One does not need a body to be a person.

When you look through the Bible, you will find that the essence of personality is self-consciousness and self-determination. As you read through the Bible, you will find that both of these are ascribed to God over and over in a multitude of Scriptures. God has self-consciousness, and He is self-determined. Moreover, the Bible attributes personality to God. For instance, God is presented as having intellect in Genesis 18, Exodus 3, and Acts 15. He is presented as having sensibility in Genesis 6, Psalm 103, and John 13, and volition, or willing, in Genesis 3, Psalm 115, and John 6. Moreover, as you read the Bible, you find that God speaks, God hears, God loves, God hates, God is a jealous God, and God is compassionate. All of these are attributes of personality. So God is a person.

The very idea of personhood is attributed to God when you understand that God walked with Adam in the cool of the day and fellowshiped with him. God is a person. And that means this: God thinks. Psalm 33:11 says, “The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.” God thinks because He has thoughts in His heart.

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.” God has thoughts.

Jeremiah 23:20 says, “The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.” Notice what he says: the anger of the Lord shall not return until He has executed, until He has performed the thoughts of His heart.

All I am trying to show you right now is that God thinks. Turn back in your Bibles to Psalm 40, and let me give you a brief overview of this psalm. Psalm 40 is easily divided. The first three verses contain a personal thanksgiving, followed by a general declaration of God's goodness to His saints in verses 4 and 5. Then, in verses 6 through 10, there is a vow of dedication to the Lord's will. Finally, in verses 11 through 17, there is a prayer for deliverance from pressing trouble and for the overthrow of one's enemies.

There is something special about Psalm 40. You not only have David in view, but also the greater David, the Lord Jesus Christ. When you come to the New Testament, you find that verses 6 through 10 of this psalm are applied directly to Jesus Christ. They are quoted in the New Testament and applied directly to Him.

You have, then, what is known as prophetic telescoping in this passage. David is in view, but you look beyond David and see the greater David, the Lord Jesus Christ. In verses 1 through 3, David has been suffering from some very sore sickness or devastation. He says, "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

David is saying, "Look, I have gone through something extremely sore, devastating, and hurtful, but God delivered me." In verse 4, David also praises the Lord and makes an announcement concerning all who trust in Him: "Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies." But in verse 5, David gives us our first glimpse into the thoughts of God: "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward."

The Plenteous Thoughts of God

The Thoughts of God Are Plenteous

They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

The thoughts of God are plenteous. Verse 5 seems to indicate that although God created, provided, and redeemed for His own pleasure and will, He did so with us in mind. Revelation 4:11 tells us exactly why God created, why God redeemed, and why God provided: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” God created because He chose to create, because it pleased Him to do so. God redeemed because it pleased Him to do so. God provided because it pleased Him to do so. Yet although the Bible teaches that God created, provided, and redeemed for His own pleasure, He did so not only for His pleasure, but with us in mind.

When David talks about the works of God, he is talking primarily about creation, redemption, and providence. If we would consider God's providence, we would understand what David meant when he spoke of the wonderful works of God and the thoughts which are us-ward that cannot be numbered. Acts 14:17, referring to God's providence, says, “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

Stop and think how the providence of God, through all these years and for all the people who have lived, are living, and shall live, has given sunshine, rain, food, joy, and gladness. These are a multitude of providences. God has not only provided; He has protected, preserved, sustained, and blessed in innumerable ways.

When you think about redemption, His work in redemption would include the everlasting covenant, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the redemption by Jesus Christ, Christ's resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, regeneration, conversion, the perseverance of the saints, and the preservation of the saints from evil and wickedness. It would include translating us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His own dear Son, and it would include our ultimate glorification as well. All of these are works of God that display His marvelous grace and mercy, and they shall be the wonder of saints throughout eternity. Just think of providence; just think of redemption. When God ordained redemption in eternity past, He had His saints in mind. He thought of us.

You say, how can you say that? Hold Psalm 40, but look in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 9. We were in God's mind. God was thinking of us, not collectively, but individually. Paul writes to Timothy, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Now, we are talking about the power of God. Look what the power of God has done: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus." When did He do it? Before the world began.

So when God ordained redemption, salvation, and grace before the world began, He had us in mind individually—those who would be His elect and His saints. Isn't that amazing? Ephesians 1:4 says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." God chose us. Collectively? No. Individually. He chose us in Christ. When? Before the foundation of the world. What does that mean? It means that God was thinking about us individually.

Paul writes in Titus 1:1–2, “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”

May I ask a simple question? To whom did God promise eternal life before the world began? It couldn't have been Christ the mediator because He's God. He's already the eternal God. He promised it to us who were in Jesus Christ. And He promises us before the world began.

Now look again at Psalm 40:5. I am trying to show you that the thoughts of God toward us are plenteous. David said it like this: “Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.”

David is saying that God's thoughts which are toward us—that is, the decrees, purposes, counsels, intentions, and thoughts of God—although they are mentioned last, actually precede His works, because they are the springboard of His works. God's thoughts were not revealed until time and history, although they were in eternity. Likewise, we discover only in time and history that we were in His thoughts before the foundation of the world.

Jeremiah 31:3 says, “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” Just to show you what I am emphasizing: we were in the mind of God before the foundation of the world, although it was revealed to us in time and history. If God has loved His people with an everlasting love, He had to love us in eternity past, because God is the eternal God. By the way, since God's love has no beginning, it can have no ending. He says, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” He loved us in eternity past; therefore, with lovingkindness He drew us. In other words, He called us to Himself in regeneration and conversion in time and history because He loved us in eternity past. What God is saying is, “I thought of you in times past.”

I think of you now. David further explains the plentiness of God's thoughts. He states that they are so multitudinous that they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee. What does that mean? Literally, there is none who can order them up unto God. There is no power in man that can do it, and no one who can count these thoughts. Hence, David says, if he would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

I want you to think about this: God's thoughts to us-ward are more than can be numbered. Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 139, and mark this passage because we will come back to it shortly. Specifically, I want to read verses 17 and 18.

Psalm 139, verse 17: “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.” Would anyone in this room like to undertake to count the grains of sand in the world? I will limit it: go count the grains of sand in the Sahara Desert. David said that if he tried to number or count

the thoughts of God, they would be more than the grains of sand. So God's thoughts are plenteous thoughts.

Let me give you a quote from Charles Haddon Spurgeon, known as the Prince of Preachers, on this verse. Spurgeon said, “The divine thoughts march with the divine acts, for it is not according the wisdom of God to act without deliberation and counsel. All the divine thoughts are good and gracious toward his elect. God's thoughts of love are very many, very wonderful and very practical.”

Muse on them, dear reader. No sweeter subject ever occupied your mind. God's thoughts of you are many. Let not your thoughts of Him be few. So, first of all, God's thoughts of us are plenteous.

Secondly, look in your Bibles to Psalm 92 and verse 5.

The Profundity of God's Thoughts

The Thoughts of God Are Profound

The thoughts of God are profound. They are not only plenteous, but profound. The psalmist exclaims, “O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.” The psalmist repeats, “Thy thoughts are very deep.” Do you realize that many times we do not think upon the Lord? Sometimes, when we do, our thoughts are few and flippant. But it is not so with God. His thoughts are profound. The Hebrew word for “deep” is amach, which literally means deep or profound.

Let me show you how deep or profound God's thoughts are. We are talking about the profundity of the thoughts of God. Romans 11:33 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 counsellor?” What is the answer? No one. No one. It is impossible to know the depth of the thoughts of God or to scale the mountain of God's wisdom and God's knowledge.

In light of that, Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “The Lord's plans are as marvelous as his acts. His designs are as profound as His doings are vast. Creation is immeasurable, and the wisdom displayed in it is unsearchable. Some men think, but cannot work,

and others are mere drudges working without thought. In the eternal, the conception and the execution go together. Providence is inexhaustible, and the divine decrees which originate it are inscrutable. Redemption is grand beyond conception, and the thoughts of love which planned it are infinite. Man is superficial. God is inscrutable. Man is shallow. God is deep. Dive as we may, we shall never fathom the mysterious plan, or exhaust the boundless wisdom of all the comprehending mind of God. We stand by the fathomless sea of divine wisdom and explain with holy awe, O the depth."

The reason I quote him is that I cannot say it any plainer. Once you begin to look into the mind of God, that is what you will have to say: O the depth.

If you want to see, know, and understand the profound thoughts of God, I can show you a place where you may begin to scratch the surface. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 2, verses 5 through 10. Paul writes to the Corinthian believers: "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

Paul tells the Corinthian believers that he wants their faith to stand, not in man, but in the power of God. He says, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world." The wisdom of this world includes humanism, intellectualism, cultism, and all kinds of isms and schisms. It is not the wisdom of the princes of this world.

That would include the CFR, the trilateral, the Bilderbergers, and the elite. No; he said, "Nor of the princes of this world, that come to

nought." May I ask you, according to the Word of God, what is man's new world order going to come to? Nothing. Naught. Zero. Zilch.

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." God ordained this before the world, and we were included in it. "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." All the politicians, all the elect, all the elite back then, and all the rulers of this world knew nothing of God's plan and ordination. Had they known it, they would not have helped fulfill it.

They were that rebellious, they were that wicked. But they did it without knowing. I can assure you, if the civil rulers and the civil leaders in the elite back in Christ's day did not know the wisdom of God then, our leaders today still do not know it either, because they act contrary to it all the time.

As it is written in verse 9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." In other words, natural man can never conceive of, think of, or hear of, or see this wisdom in and of himself. In verse 10, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

May I ask you, have you ever heard of the inspiration of the Bible? Who inspired this book? God, the Holy Spirit. Where do we begin to see the deep things of God? In this book. It is only as we spoke of earlier, and we prayed about, as God illumines our mind, as God enlightens us, that we begin to see the deep things of God. So the thoughts of God are plenteous and the thoughts of God are profound. And if you will turn in your Bibles back to Psalm 139, I want to show you a third point, and that is the thoughts of God are precious.

The Thoughts of God Are Precious

Psalm 139:17–18 says, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee." David explains how precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O

God! How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! What an amazing exclamation: how precious are thy thoughts unto me.

The word precious in Hebrew is yaqar, which means to be esteemed, to be prized, to be valued, to be precious, and to be costly. David is saying that the omniscience of God, God's all-knowing, and God's condescension to think upon us should never frighten us on the one hand. On the other hand, it should be something that we value and prize very much, because God's thoughts are precious.

I cannot help but think of that passage in 1 Samuel chapter 3 and verse 1. I will quote it for you in just a moment. During that particular time, there was apostasy in Israel. God's worship, God's way, God's will, and God's word were basically unheard of. Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, and they were corrupt. They were wicked. They were vile. In fact, God called them sons of Belial, sons of the devil. But the Lord said He would raise him up a faithful priest. That was when Hannah brought little Samuel there. The Bible says, “And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days.”

There was no open vision. There was no open preaching or public teaching. The word of the Lord was precious in those days. Have you ever stopped to think that God's thoughts are revealed in His Word? As His thoughts are precious, His Word should be precious.

Let me go a step further. Do you remember that Scripture tells us that God's Word is the written Word? "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" (2 Timothy 3:16–17). So we find that the Bible is the written Word of God. It is God-breathed; it is God-exhaled.

But may I remind you that Jesus Christ is the living Word of God? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then, in John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Just as the thoughts of God are precious, the Word of God is precious. That means the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is the living Word, is precious as well.

Let me show you two passages, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. Look in your Bibles, if you would, to Isaiah 28, and then to 1 Peter chapter 2. In Isaiah 28, verse 16, we are going to find out what the Lord thinks of Christ. What does God say? Here is what the sovereign God of the universe says: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God. Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."

I wonder who God has in mind when He says that? If you will look in 1 Peter 2, beginning there in verse 4, I think you will find out very quickly. In fact, let us begin reading with verse 3, because there you have Him identified: "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." So Jesus Christ is precious.

But then he goes further: “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.” Isn’t that amazing? As God’s thoughts are precious, His Word is precious, His Son is precious, and we who are in Him would therefore be counted precious. Scripture says in Psalm 116, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” So God’s thoughts are plenteous, God’s thoughts are profound, and God’s thoughts are precious.

Listen to what Spurgeon said one last time, quoting Spurgeon. Concerning David, on Psalm 139, verse 17, he says, “He is not alarmed at the fact that God knows all about him.” There are some wicked who should be alarmed that God knows all about them. But concerning David, he is not alarmed; on the contrary, he is comforted and even feels himself to be enriched as with a casket of precious jewels. That God should think upon him is the believer’s treasure and pleasure.

He cries, “How costly, how valuable are thy thoughts, how dear to me is thy perpetual attention.” He thinks upon God’s thoughts with delight. The more of them, the better is he pleased. It is a joy worth

worlds that the Lord should think upon us who are so poor and needy. It is a joy which fills our whole nature to think upon God, returning love for love, thought for thought, after our poor fashion. Isn't that amazing? David was not alarmed that God thought about him. He thought that God's thoughts were precious, valuable, and much to be desired. So when you and I think about God's thoughts, we have to think that His thoughts are revealed in Scripture.

Jesus Christ is the living Word. We must value God's thoughts, God's Word, and God's Christ, for Scripture declares them to be precious. God's thoughts, God's Word, and God's Christ are precious to the believer.

The Thoughts of God Are Peaceful

Fourthly, very quickly, the thoughts of God are peaceful. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." I want you to see how important this is. The thoughts of God are peaceful. Look what God says to His people in Jeremiah 29, verse 11. I love this passage, and I will tell you why: God says, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord.

But going back to verse 11, God says, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." God's thoughts toward His people are thoughts of peace. I don't know if you've ever read through the book of Nehemiah. If you haven't, you should. In Nehemiah chapter 5 and verse 19, Nehemiah prays, "Think upon me, my God, for good." Listen to what he said: "Think upon me, my God, for good."

If you are unhappy with the thought that God's thoughts for His people are peaceful thoughts, consider the opposite for a moment: the thoughts of God toward His enemies. For instance, Psalm 7:11 says, "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked

every day." How about Proverbs 15:26? "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." Or the words of the pure are pleasant words. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. If the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, how much more are the wicked an abomination to the Lord?

If God is angry with the wicked every day, what does that mean? It means God despises him. It means God hates him. You say, "Oh, come on, Brother Weaver. God doesn't hate." Oh, yes, He does. In fact, look in your Bible to Psalm 5. Some of you will remember, I hope, that years ago I preached a message on the biblical doctrine of hatred. Look at verses 4 and 5, to show from Scripture that God does hate: "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

Had you rather have God have peaceful thoughts toward you or unpeaceful thoughts? Consider Jeremiah 29:11: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, the thoughts of peace, to give you an expected end." An expected end is a desirable end, one for which they will have hoped, wished, prayed, and wanted. It would be an end of their troubles, an end of persecution, an end of suffering, and an end that would bring them into all things they could enjoy.

I prefer this expected end that the Apostle Paul writes about in Romans 8:29–31. Remember what God said: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, the thoughts of peace, to give you an expected end." Romans 8:29 says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

What in the world are we talking about? Those whom He predestinated, what does the Bible say? He also called them. Whom He called, He justified. Whom He justified, He is going to glorify. What is the expected end of the saints of God? Glorification. Perfection. If God be for us, who can be against us? In other words, if

the power of God has never failed and never shall fail, what can we expect? God will perfect that which is ordained toward us; He will glorify us. He will give us an expected end, the end which we may expect based upon Scripture.

The thoughts of God are plenteous, profound, precious, and peaceful. One last point: the thoughts of God are personal. All of that has been shown to bring us to this verse. David said in Psalm 40:17, "But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

The Thoughts of God Are Personal

"Thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God." Can you fathom that verse? David said, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me." How is it that the omniscient, all-knowing God, whose mind is so vast and great that we cannot conceive even one particle of it, is nevertheless able, in His omniscience, omnipotence, greatness, and vastness, to think upon us personally—not merely collectively, but personally?

David may have been a king, but he was also a sinner, in a multitude of troubles, and sick many times. He could rightly confess, "I am poor and needy." The word needy is translated elsewhere in the Bible as beggar. David said, "I'm a poor beggar. Yet the Lord thinketh upon me." What are your problems? What are my problems? What are your desires? What are my desires? What are your needs? What are my needs? What do we want? The Lord thinks about those things. He thinks about us individually.

David said, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me." Then he says, "Thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God." Since You are thinking about my miserable state and it occupies Your heart, You who are meditating upon me, please help me soon. You know I need help. Make no tarrying, my deliverer—in other words, make haste to help me. Do it now, God. Please, do it now. You're thinking about me; do it now while You're thinking about me.

How many of you have said, "I have to do it now while I'm thinking about it, because if I stop thinking about it, I'll forget it"? Thank God He is not like that. God can constantly and continually

think about us and our needs individually. It overwhelms me to think that God would condescend to think about me. Who am I? What am I, that the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, immutable, everlasting God of the universe should spend a moment thinking about me? Yet He has thought about us from eternity, shall think about us throughout all eternity, and never stops thinking about us.

Applications: Humility and Meditation

He thinks about us personally. Has it really ever entered into your mind that the Lord is genuinely concerned about you personally? He knows the grandchildren you want, your desire to be holy, your desire to learn, and everything about you. He knows your desire to be healed, to live a long and healthy life, and the opportunities that you have. It is overwhelming to stop and consider that the Lord thinks about every one of us individually and personally.

In light of Psalm 40:17, here is another truth: the less we think of ourselves, the more God thinks of us. Did David say, “O God, I am a mighty king. I am a powerful warrior. Look what I have done”? No. David said, “I am poor and needy.” What he had done did not count; who he was did not matter. He was humbling himself before God. What did our Lord say in Luke 14:11? “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Do you realize that, as wicked and ungodly as King Ahab was, when Elijah pronounced God's judgment against him, Ahab humbled himself and went softly before the Lord? In 1 Kings 21:29, God said, “I am going to kill him, but not yet. I am going to spare him a little while.” Why? Because he humbled himself.

The less highly we think of ourselves, the more highly God will think of us. The less we trust in ourselves, the more we will trust in God and trust Him for deliverance. David said, “I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.” Many times we forget the poor and needy, but God does not. The comfort of every poor and needy individual, especially the saints, is that God thinks about him.

Since God thinks of you, what do you think of Him? As Spurgeon said, “Since his thoughts toward us are plenty, let not our thoughts of Him be few.” May God help us to think upon Him and thank Him for thinking upon us. Let us pray.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us. Your word is so full, rich, and such a blessing. May we count it as precious, for Thy thoughts are precious and Thy Son is precious. Give us a thankful heart and a meditating heart, one that will please Thee and honor Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

A Door of Hope

March 15, 2007

Introduction: The Promise of a Door of Hope

In Hosea 2:15, God says, “And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope. And she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.”

Notice what God is promising to Israel. He is promising her a door of hope. Through this door of hope, she shall sing there as in her days of youth and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. The valley of Achor would become a door of hope, and through that door she would enter into singing and restoration.

The Need for Hope in a Decaying Nation

When you begin to think about hope, everyone needs hope. Those who are sick need hope, and those who are discouraged need hope. Hunters need hope, and fishermen need hope; that is what keeps them going back. They hope they are going to catch the big one or

shoot the big buck. There is an old saying that hope springs eternal in the breast.

When we look around and see what is going on today, we very definitely need some hope. Everyone who has any grasp of the situation in our land today—anyone who views the depravity, the wickedness, and the vileness of our nation—asks, “What in the world is going to happen?” Intuitively, each of us understands that we cannot keep going as we are in this country.

We live in a day where forty million babies have been aborted and murdered. We live in a day where the divorce rate is fifty percent, even among professing Christians. We live in a day where socialism, Marxism, and communism abound, and where sodomy is not only approved and condoned, but legalized. We have a judicial system that is out of control. We have a Congress that is corrupt and does not care for the people or the Constitution.

We have an executive branch that does basically as it pleases. We're living in a day when God is denied, when His law is trampled underfoot, when righteousness and justice are mocked, and Christians are despised and persecuted. We live in a day when, seemingly, it is almost impossible to stop the onslaught of the New World Order. How do we escape? What is our hope?

The truth is, God has called us as Christians to exercise dominion, and we failed. In Genesis chapter one, when God created Adam and Eve, He gave them dominion over everything. He repeated that promise and command to Noah in Genesis chapter 9. It is then repeated again in Psalm 8. When you get to Matthew 28, the Great Commission is part and parcel of the command to exercise dominion.

The Failure of Christians to Exercise Dominion

Do you realize the word dominion, just the word dominion itself, occurs 62 times in our Bibles? That does not count variations of the word. There are some people who deny that we've been called to exercise dominion, but you've got to believe something about the doctrine because the very word occurs 62 times in the Bible. Moreover, the Bible tells us in Luke chapter 19, verse 13, our Lord

said, "Occupy till I come." The word occupy literally means to do business, to keep doing trade. Whatever the word occupy means, it does not mean to sit idly by and do nothing.

When you look around and ask, "Have we failed in this country as Christians?" the answer is yes. Even our Lord told us that we're to be the salt of the earth. One of the attributes of salt is that it preserves. What have we preserved? The answer is basically nothing. You look around at Christians, and I'm talking about professing Christians. I know not everybody who professes is a possessor; I understand that. But do you realize that most Christians as a whole are divisive, vindictive, uncooperative, and unwilling to be involved in anything unless they have control over it?

Most preachers are like that, too. As long as they can be in charge, they're willing to do it. But if they can't run it, and if it can't be done according to what they want, then they're not going to have any part of it. You said, "But brother, we got the Patriots in this country." Well, let me tell you, many of the so-called Patriots are even worse.

Because if you do not follow their plan, thoughts, and ideas, then you are either labeled as an enemy or double agent. The patriot community is just as fractured and divided as Christianity. Many people sit back and say, "Well, Pastor, the Lord told us that in the last days evil men would wax worse and worse, and there is nothing we can do about it. So we might as well just sit back and wait for the Lord's return."

That is a wonderful thought, but I have several questions. Do we sit back the way those five foolish virgins did in Matthew 25 and verse 8, with our lamps going out? Do we sit back the way that unjust steward did in Luke 12 and verse 45, who began to be drunk and disobedient and beat those around him? Do we sit back the way that rich, foolish farmer did in Luke chapter 12, who accumulated everything and then died without ever enjoying it?

The Bible tells us to wait upon the Lord, and there is a biblical doctrine of waiting on the Lord. But when the Bible tells us to wait upon the Lord, it does not mean to sit back and do absolutely nothing. The Bible tells us that God has given us a door of hope. You say, "I know what that door of hope is, Brother Weaver. The door of

hope is the return of our Lord." I believe in the personal, visible, bodily return of Jesus Christ. I believe He is coming back personally, literally, and visibly.

But here is my question: Must we wait until He returns before things can be straightened out in any degree at all? I understand, folks, and I can show you the Scripture, where when our Lord returns, He will right everything perfectly. The Bible tells us in 1 John 3 and verse 2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." I know that Jesus Christ is the perfect answer, and I know that when He returns, He will straighten out everything perfectly and completely. But what about right now in time and in history? Do we have to wait until our Lord returns before there is any remediation or restoration? The answer is no. In Hosea 2:15, our Lord says, "I will give her"—and He is talking about Israel—"I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope."

The Valley of Achor as Judgment

"And she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt." In other words, He is going to restore to His people their joy, their happiness, their blessings, and their dominion. So God has promised a door of hope. What is a door of hope? A door of hope is a door of restoration and a door of blessings. It is the entrance into the will and the blessing of God. But note particularly that He said He was going to give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope. If you understand what the door of hope is, you have to understand what the valley of Achor is, because it was the valley of Achor that was given as a door of hope.

In Isaiah 65, beginning with verse 9, God says, "And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me."

Isaiah 65 also speaks to those who forsake the Lord and forget His holy mountain. They prepare a table for that troop and furnish the drink offering unto that number. Therefore, God says, He will number them to the sword, and they shall bow down to the slaughter. When He called, they did not answer; when He spoke, they did not hear. They did evil before His eyes and chose that wherein He delighted not. His servants shall eat, drink, rejoice, and sing for joy of heart, but those who forsake Him shall be hungry, thirsty, ashamed, and crying for sorrow of heart. They shall howl for vexation of spirit, and leave their name for a curse unto His chosen. The Lord God shall slay them and call His servants by another name.

There are several things to notice in Isaiah 65. First of all, in verse 9, God says there is an elect; there is a remnant. He says, "I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains; and mine elect shall inherit it." Let me tell you something, folks: I do not care how perverse, wicked, or corrupt professing Christendom becomes. God still has His seed. He still has His chosen, His elect, and they are going to be His. I do not care how many apostatize. He has His people, period.

Notice also, in verse 10, that Achor is a fat pasture in which herds lie down. God says that Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for His people that have sought Him.

I was raised on a farm, and I still live on a farm. I have cattle, and I can tell you one thing about cattle: they do not lie down until they are full. Once you see them lying down, you know they are full. Here is this fat pasture in which folks are going to lie down. Sharon and Achor are promised blessings to whom? To His people who have sought Him. Then, in verses 11 through 15, those who do not seek the Lord are going to be destroyed and judged. That is why He says, "But ye are they that forsake the Lord," and goes on to say that He will slay them because of their wickedness.

So here in Isaiah 65 we have a mention of this valley of Achor. Do you remember the passage in the Song of Solomon, chapter 2 and verse 1, where Christ is called the Rose of Sharon and also the Lily of the Valleys? Have you ever wondered what Christ has to do with valleys? Have you ever thought about what valleys represent as you

read through the Word of God? It is true that Jesus Christ is Lord of the valleys, just as He is Lord of the mountains.

But let me tell you something: when you read about a valley in the Bible, you are reading about judgment. In Joel, chapter 3, and verse 14, we read, “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.” Usually, when preachers preach this text, they are talking about people who are undecided for Christ and need to make their decision immediately to come to Christ. But verse 14 has nothing to do with conversion, and it has nothing to do with individuals making decisions for Christ. If you read it in context, it has everything to do with judgment. Look in verse 13.

What does God say? “Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision.” The word for “decision” there is actually a sharp, threshing instrument, which can be used to slay. “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision,” or judgment.

“The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.” When he speaks of multitudes in the valley of decision, he is speaking of multitudes about to be judged and destroyed by the power of God.

Now you know something about a valley. God says, “I've given you the valley of Achor for a door of hope.” You must find out what this valley of Achor is. In 1 Chronicles chapter 2, verse 7, he names the sons of Carmi: “And the sons of Carmi; Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accursed.” The word Achar or Achor is the same as Achan. Thus, the valley of Achor is the valley of Achan. Achan is called the troubler of Israel because he transgressed in the thing accursed.

To understand the background, go to Joshua chapter 6, especially verses 17 and 18. The children of Israel had come to Jericho, and

everything in Jericho was cursed. The only ones to escape were Rahab and her family. God said that, as His people destroyed Jericho, they were to touch nothing and take nothing for themselves. Everything was dedicated to judgment. Joshua 6:17 says, "And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it."

"But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord." Nothing was to be touched. Anything of value was to go to the Lord; everything else was to be destroyed.

"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing." It was the children of Israel who committed a trespass, but it was Achan who did it. One man and his sin brought destruction upon the nation: "For Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel."

Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Beth-el, and said, "Go up and view the country." The men returned and said, "Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few." About three thousand went up, but "they fled before the men of Ai." The men of Ai smote about thirty and six men, chasing them from before the gate unto Shebarim and smiting them in the going down. "Wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water."

Joshua rent his clothes and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide, "he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads." Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!"

"For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

"And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you."

The tribes were taken, and one tribe was selected. The families were taken, and one family was selected, the family of Carmi. When Achan came in front, Achan was taken. Joshua said, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me."

"And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."

Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. "And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day."

When Achan had stolen and hidden all of this under his tent, without anyone else knowing, the men came to Joshua and said, "Look, we have spied out Ai. It is a small city. Do not make all of God's men go up there and work. We do not need everybody. Just send a couple thousand of us. We can take care of them very easily." So Joshua sent three thousand up there. They were defeated, fled before the men of Ai, and thirty-six Israelite soldiers were killed.

It is bad when you are defeated. It is worse when your men are slaughtered. But the defeat of Israel was not the bad part. The loss of the thirty-six lives was not the worst part either. If you look back in your Bibles to Joshua chapter 7, verse 12, it says, "Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed." And look what God says: "Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you." God said, "Joshua, you have lost it. I am not going to be with you anymore. You are doomed to certain failure unless you deal with this thing right now."

The valley of Achor was the doorway. It was the entrance to Canaan. Right as they were getting ready to go into the Promised Land, the door was slammed in their face. If they could not defeat even a little tiny town, what hope did they have of defeating all the enemies of the land? How could they continue? How could they proceed? How could they conquer? How could they exercise dominion? How could they go forward? God said, "I will tell you the answer. Sin must be dealt with. It must be judged. It must be dealt with openly, honestly, and biblically."

When God says in Hosea 2:15, "Behold, I give you the valley of Achor for a door of hope," what is God saying? He is saying, "I am giving you judgment for a door of hope." Jericho was just the beginning of the wars of Canaan, and putting away the accursed thing gave them hope that God now would be with them, that God would give them victory, that God would enable them to exercise dominion, and that God would return to them in mercy since they have

Salvation and Judgment Are Inseparable

Now turned to Him in obedience, it is a beginning of restoration. What is the door of hope? The door of hope is when we honestly deal with our sins before God. Let me point something out. Do you realize that the sin that genuinely troubles you is not the sin that is going to overthrow you? The sin that is going to overthrow you is the one you commit and are never bothered by. If you are troubled over it, then there is hope for you. Do you realize it is one of the greatest mercies of God that He exposes our sins?

We talk about how embarrassed and humiliated we are—not merely that we did something, but that we got caught. Let me tell you something: the greatest mercy God can give us is when He points out our sins, exposes them, and even makes them public if necessary.

Do you remember old Nathan the prophet, who went to David after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had Uriah, her husband, killed? Nathan told David the story about the rich man who had all that he possessed and the poor man who had one little sheep. The rich man spared to take of his own flock, and he took this one little sheep from the poor man's hand. David's sense of justice was aroused, and he said, "The man that hath done this thing shall restore fourfold, and he shall surely die." And old Nathan said, "Thou art the man."

When you read 2 Samuel 12 and verse 1, it says, "And the Lord sent Nathan unto David." David had taken pains to cover up his sin. He tried to get Uriah to sleep with his wife, but Uriah would not. He made him drunk, but he still would not cooperate. So David had him killed. He thought he had everything covered. No one knew except perhaps Joab. But the Lord knew, and the Lord sent Nathan to David.

One of the greatest mercies God can have upon us is when He exposes our sin. Let me tell you this: I believe this is one of the greatest problems we have in our families and in raising our children. Each of us loves our children; we would die for them. But when our children do wrong, they have to learn a principle, and the principle is this:

He who sins must suffer. You know what we do when our children get in trouble? We quickly run to bail them out. But our children have to learn that there are consequences to everything they do. Sometimes, when your child is thrown in jail, it might be wise to let him stay overnight. Let him reap what he has sown. Let him find out what it is like to be thrown into a cell with drunks who stink and vomit everywhere. Do not buy him off.

If he has to pay a fine, let him work it out and pay for it himself. Do not try to keep him from suffering. Here is the problem: we are horrified at judgment. How many in this room really, truly want to suffer? None of us. When we think of judgment, especially God's judgment, we cringe. We do not want that.

What would be your response if God brought down this economy tomorrow—and He could do it overnight? Federal Reserve notes are worth nothing as it is; they have no value. What would be your response if you awoke one morning and found that some virus had gotten loose in the White House and killed 398 congressmen—at least we have one or two there who need to live? What if half the cities in this country were burned to the ground? Would you say, “That is a catastrophe. What a horrible thing”? Is it? What did God say? “I’ve given you the valley of Achor for a door of hope.”

You know what happened to Achan and his family? They were put to death. We understand Achan being put to death, but his family? Evidently, they were complicit with him; they knew about it. You must remember that his family was responsible for the death of thirty-six soldiers. It was judgment, God’s righteous judgment upon Achan and his family, that brought deliverance and blessing to the rest of the nation.

It was judgment, God’s righteous judgment, that destroyed the old world but saved Noah and his family alive. It was judgment, God’s righteous judgment, that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and spared Lot. It was judgment, God’s righteous judgment, that destroyed the enemies of Canaan and repeatedly delivered His people. It was judgment, God’s righteous judgment, that destroyed Babylon and Assyria and delivered His people again.

What we have forgotten is that destruction, judgment, and deliverance go together. They are two sides of one coin. You cannot have salvation without judgment. Salvation and judgment go together. Whenever God judges His enemies, He always delivers His people; whenever God delivers His people, He always judges His enemies. You cannot have salvation without judgment. You may say, "I have salvation in Christ." Then think for a moment about the salvation God has provided in Romans chapter 3, beginning at verse 24.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." So we are talking about Jesus Christ. Verse 25 says, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Now, let us stop there. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation." You say, "Brother Weaver, I cannot even say that word, and I certainly do not know what it means."

You need to learn, because it occurs over and over in Scripture, at least a couple of other times. Propitiation means to placate, to appease, to satisfy. The Bible says that God set forth Christ "to placate, to appease, to satisfy through faith in his blood." What in the world are we talking about? God was angry with us because we were sinners, wicked, and rebellious. We deserved death, judgment, hell—everything that God could throw upon us. But Jesus Christ stepped in and said, "I will be the substitute. I will be their representative."

Jesus Christ came in perfect obedience to the law and worked out a perfect righteousness. Then He came in our place. The wrath and anger of God that should have fallen upon us fell upon Him. In His obedience and death, He placated and satisfied the holiness and righteousness of God. The only salvation we have in Jesus Christ is salvation through judgment. You cannot have salvation without judgment.

You say, "But, Brother Weaver, I do not like to talk about judgment. I get scared. All I know is just pray for the Lord's return." Turn in your Bibles to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. I do not want you to get pietistic, because when you start praying for the Lord's return,

I want to show you exactly what you are praying for. Look at verse 7: “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” Notice what he said: when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God.”

You cannot even pray for the Lord's return without praying for judgment. Salvation and judgment go together. What is the door of hope? The door of hope is the door of judgment, God's righteous judgment. Psalm 9:16 tells us, "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." Psalm 37:28 declares, "For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off." For the Lord loveth judgment—that is, he loveth justice.

Just read the book of Ezekiel. You will find the phrase, "And they shall know that I am the Lord," seventy-three times. Each time it occurs in the context of judgment. Seventy-three times, God said, "They shall know that I am the Lord." We may not get the wicked to listen to our voice as we preach the gospel, but they will hear when God sends judgment.

That does not mean they are going to be converted, but at least it will get their attention. God may send judgment along with converting grace; He does not have to. He may just send judgment. But if God sends judgment without converting grace, all men will do is know that it is God's judgment, and yet they will curse Him for it.

Look in Revelation 9, beginning in verse 20: "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."

Here are people who were judged grievously, and yet they repented not. If God sends judgment without converting grace, all you have is destruction. How can we turn this country around? The truth of the matter is, we cannot. But God can. God does not have to send an atomic bomb, use a militia, or use an armed force. All God has to do is send a few germs around—a little bacteria.

Has anybody ever heard of that flesh-eating virus? You can get it if you have a paper cut. Can you imagine? All God has to do is send an angel. I sure do not want an angel to get mad at me. One angel in one night, with one stroke, killed 185,000 Syrian soldiers. Can you imagine what a whole platoon of them could do? I am simply pointing out the fact: judgment is a door of hope.

God has given us the valley of Achor for a door of hope. He is talking about judgment, and if you believe that God is somehow going to overlook and excuse the wickedness of this country, you are mistaken. What is our responsibility?

Applications: How We Must Respond

First, we must be children of faith. We know that God is absolutely and totally sovereign. He is in control. Therefore, we cannot give in, give up, or give out. We cannot yield to discouragement, depression, or despair. Why should we? We are His children. He is on the throne; He is in control. We must believe that He does all things well, and that whatever He does, He does for our good and for His glory.

We can never, ever be discouraged. Who was it—the General? Was it Chesty Puller? They said, "General, the enemy is in front of us and behind us and on each side." General Puller said, "Good, they cannot get away from us now." Why should we be discouraged with God on the throne? If you do not know that God is sovereign, you had better wake up. The one thing that will keep a child of God going is knowing that God is in absolute control.

Secondly, we must understand and believe that God does listen, and that God does and will judge the wicked in time and in history. Proverbs 11:31 says, "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner."

Will we be rewarded in glory? Yes. Are there eternal rewards? Yes. I do not deny that; I am thankful for it. But do we have to wait until we get to glory before we have any of the blessings of God? No. Read Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28, or any other passage in the Bible. God has always promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

"Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth." God is not going to be any man's debtor. You honor God, He's going to honor you. How many of you have already been blessed? Look, you've got your health. You've got a family. You've got finances. You've got friends. You've got a ministry. Look at all the blessings that God has given us. Now, look at the rest of the verse: "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth," and then, "much more the wicked and the sinner." If God rewards His people on the earth in time and in history, how much more will He give the wicked what they deserve? God says He will reward them as well.

You know what the Bible says in Job 19, verse 29? "Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment."

All the temporal judgments on earth in time and in history point to the one great and final judgment. "Be ye afraid of the sword"—why?—"for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword"—why?—"that ye may know there is a judgment."

I get to thinking of all these rich, powerful reprobates who think they're running the world and that everybody has to jump at their command. They're anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Bible, and anti-Christian. They're against anything that is righteous and holy and godly. Will God judge them? The answer is yes. Will God judge them in time and history? Yes, as well as eternity. Do you think God is embarrassed to judge them? Do you think God is reticent? Look at Deuteronomy chapter 7, beginning at verse 9: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face."

The Third Application

God is not embarrassed to judge the wicked, nor is He slack. We must be children of faith, but we must also understand that God judges the wicked in time and in history. Turn in your Bibles to Luke 18, because here is the third application. If we understand that we must be children of faith, and that God does indeed judge the wicked in time and history, then we, as God's children, must learn to pray for God's judgment in time and in history. What? Yes, look in Luke 18.

Verse 1 says: "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." So he broke both tables, the first and the second table, of the Ten Commandments. He 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."

Here is the picture: an unjust judge, like thousands in this country, fearing not God, neither regarding man. This little widow woman kept saying, "Avenge me of mine adversary." At first he refused, but she kept coming. Finally, the judge said, "I will avenge her, lest she weary me with her continual coming."

Now see the application our Lord made. I did not make this; He did. In verse 6: "And the 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." Do you think God is like that unjust judge? Do you think God cares nothing for justice and righteousness? No. God is more interested in justice and righteousness than we are. He said, "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" How many of us have cried for God to execute justice? How many have asked God to send His judgment?

You need to read the imprecatory prayers in the Bible. Psalm 59 is a wonderful one, Psalm 58 is another, and Psalm 68 is another. Let

me give you an example of what David prayed. Here is an imprecatory prayer. Psalm 68, verse 1: “Let God arise.”

Repentance and Holy Living

“Let God arise. Let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.” What is he praying for? The destruction and overthrow of the wicked. This is an imprecatory prayer. We must learn to pray, “Lord God, send Your justice. Send Your judgment. God, do something. We’re so tired of what’s going on. We’re so helpless. Lord, do something.” That is what those imprecatory prayers are for.

Fourthly, we must learn to repent of our sins and live holy, godly lives. If you were to read Hebrews 12 and 1 Corinthians 11, especially verses 31 through 32, you would find that God does chastise His own. He said He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” If you are a child of God and you sin, God is going to chastise you.

That is all there is to it. You may obey by listening to His Word, or you may obey by listening to His Word and His rod. Micah 6:9 says, “Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.” I told some of the men today at dinner about my youngest grandson, now fifteen. When he was about seven or eight, I asked him to do something, and he looked at me and said, “Papa, I don’t want to do it.”

I said, “I respect that. Therefore, I’ll give you a choice. You may either do it, or you may get a whipping and then do it.” He looked at me and said, “Pop, I think I’ll just do it.” I said, “I think you’re a wise son.” The wise son simply listens. You know what the Bible says? In 1 Peter 4:17, you can quote it, I’m sure.

Judgment Is a Door of Hope

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." What will praying for God's judgment and God's justice do? If

you honestly and genuinely pray for God's judgment, two things will happen. First, it will make you more diligent to warn the wicked because you know that judgment is coming. Second, it will make you live more holy and godly because you understand that God is no respecter of persons. If you mess up, God can clean your plow just as He can clean everybody else's plow. Therefore, we need to learn to live holy, godly lives.

Fifthly, we need to learn that judgment is a door of hope. Judgment is not our enemy; judgment is our friend. You do not have to be afraid of your friend. No one loves to suffer, but let me ask you a question: If you had cancer, knew you had cancer, and there were a doctor who could cut it out and save your life, would you not willingly undergo that surgery, as much as you despised its pain and experience, in order to save your life? Surely you would. You would have that cancer cut out in a heartbeat.

Biblical Examples of Judgment Bringing Deliverance

We have got to understand that our government is not going to save us. As much as I respect our Constitution, the Constitution is not going to save us. We cannot save ourselves. The truth is, if God does not save us, we are not going to be saved. And if God does not, in His righteous judgment, straighten this nation out, we will never be straightened out.

Everybody knows the story of how God sent Moses down to Egypt, to Pharaoh, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go." You remember what Pharaoh said? "I know not the Lord."

"Neither will I let Israel go." I don't recognize your God, Moses. I don't recognize your authority, and I'm not about to obey him or you. Even the elders of the children of Israel went in and said, "Let us go, that we may serve the Lord." You know what Pharaoh said? "Ye are idle, ye are idle. Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle."

"Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people. But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord. Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks. And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task."

"And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh." Moses and Aaron had already tried to get Pharaoh to let them go. No, he said. "And they said unto them, The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us. And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all."

Pharaoh said, "I don't know you, and I don't know the Lord, and I'm not about to let them go." The elders came and said, "Let us go." "No, you're not going to go. And you're going to make the same brick, but you're going to make it without straw, and if you don't, you're going to be beaten." Finally, those elders saw Moses and Aaron and said, "The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred." You said you were to deliver.

The people told Moses, “All you've done is made things worse. You put a sword in their hand to slay us.” Moses fell down and said, “God, why did you even send me? You haven't delivered your people. Why am I here?”

Now look what happened. God had Moses and Aaron helpless. He had the elders helpless and the people helpless. Then the Lord said unto Moses, “Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.” God said, “When I get through with him, he'll be more than willing to let them go.”

But notice what had to happen. Moses, Aaron, the elders, and the people had to come to an end of themselves. They had to learn that they could not. That does not mean we do not fulfill our responsibilities. We must learn to be obedient and faithful regardless of the circumstances. I am not to look at what is going on in Washington and become scared and upset. I am not to look at what is going on somewhere else and get all bent out of shape. My eyes are upon the Lord and upon His Word.

He said, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord.” He also said, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” He did not say if the wicked would do it; He said that His people would do it.

There is no reason for anybody to be discouraged when God is on the throne, and no reason for any child of God to be afraid of judgment. Judgment is a door of hope. God can do for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. Our responsibility is to cry unto the Lord, saying, “Avenge your own elect. Avenge your people, O God. Give justice. Give justice.”

There is a song whose chorus says, “I want to see Israel marching. I want to hear that battle call. I want to see Israel marching, I want to see old Babylon fall.” I want to see it fall, and it shall fall. For only the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ is going to endure forever. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

God said, “I've given you a door of hope.” That door of hope is judgment.

The psalmist says in Psalm 44, “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.” In other words, we have heard about all of your miracles. We have heard about all of your deliverances. “How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.”

We have heard with our ears. Our fathers have told us; we know what God did. We know the mighty deliverance that He gave in times past. We have heard it over and over and over. We repeated it. And we have heard it repeated. We know that. But in verse 4, here is what the psalmist says: “Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.”

"Do it again, O Lord. Do it again. You're the sovereign God of miracles and power we've heard about all our lives. You're still God on the throne. Lord, command Thou deliverances for Jacob. Do it again!" God can do it again. Our hope is in Him, His mercy, His grace, and His judgment.

Conclusion and Prayer

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, speak to us. Help us understand the simple principle that You have given us the valley of Achor for a door of hope. As individuals, families, churches, and even a nation, we must deal honestly and openly with our sins. We must repent, turn to Thee, and seek Thy mercy and Thy forgiveness. Give us, Lord, Thy justice and judgment, for in that we shall find deliverance by Your grace. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Lord, Teach Us To Fight

February 10, 2008

Introduction and Context of Psalm 18

Psalm 18, verse 34, is where we begin today. In fact, let us begin reading with verse 29 to put it in context. I preached on verses 29 through 33 last week, but let me read them again:

“For by thee have I run through a troop, and by my God have I leaped over a wall. As for God, His way is perfect. The word of the Lord is tried. He's a buckler to all those that trust in Him. For who has God saved the Lord? Who is a rock save our God? It is God that girdeth me with strength and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet. He set me upon my high places.”

Now verse 34: “He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken in mine arms.” The message today is based upon verse 34: “Lord, Teach Us To Fight.”

Let us quickly review where we have been in Psalm 18 so that we can tie the entire psalm together. We began with verse 1 and saw David's determination to love the Lord: “I will love thee, O Lord.” Scripture shows that love is comprised of attitude, affection, and

action. Those three things are the irreducible minimum. If you have the biblical attitude, you will have biblical affection; and if you have biblical affection, you will always have biblical action.

Then we saw the reasons David gave for saying, “I will love the Lord,” beginning with his response: “I will love you, Lord, my strength.” The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength and whom I trust, my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. We considered those names of God and what they implied.

Then we looked at David's distress in verses 4 through 6, including verse 3, which literally made him cry out to God. In verses 7 through 19, we saw David's Deliverer: God Himself, who sovereignly, graciously, and mercifully delivered David. Finally, we looked at David's deportment. In Psalm 18:20 he said, “The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.”

We came down then to that last passage in verse 29. We looked at David's defense, where he says it is God who enabled him to run through a troop. That is a literal troop of men. God enabled him to run through the troop, to leap over a wall, to scale the walls and conquer. Then he said it is God who girdeth me with strength. That is, God is buckling on the war harness for David, and it is God who makes his feet like hinds' feet. He does not slip, not even in high, dangerous places. And so God is indeed his buckler.

Now we come to verse 34, where David says, "he teaches my hands to war so that a bow of steel is broken in my arms." David was indeed a mighty warrior. The Bible tells us in 1 Samuel, chapter 18, verse 7: "Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands." David was quite a warrior.

Remember that David, as a boy, was a shepherd. He certainly had to protect his father's sheep. The Bible tells us that during that time he slew a lion and a bear. It takes quite a fearless young man to do something like that. Later, when he went to visit his brothers and see how they were doing in the war, he challenged Goliath, and Goliath challenged him. You know the story: he took a sling and a rock and slew Goliath of Gath. Goliath was a giant by anyone's standard of

measurement, that is for sure. Moreover, when it came to war, David was a tactical genius. He was fearless, brave, and courageous.

He knew how to conduct himself. Now, the question that has to be asked is this: How did a shepherd boy learn all these skills? Where did a shepherd boy acquire all of this knowledge? David answers that for us in verse 34 when he says, "He," that is God, "teacheth my hands to war." Now watch verse 32: "It is God that girdeth me with strength." Verse 33: "He," God, "maketh my feet like hinds' feet." And now verse 34: "He," God, "teacheth my hands to war so that a bow of steel is broken in mine arms." So it was God, then, who taught David how to make war. We must admit that David had the greatest teacher in the universe. The Bible tells us in the book of Job, chapter 36 and verse 22, this statement: "Behold, God, exalted by his power, who teacheth like him?"

I want to tell you, you might forget my sermons, but the ones that God teaches you, you will never forget. You will learn. Who teacheth like God?

War and Fighting Are Not Inherently Evil

There are a number of truths that we can learn from verse 34. Notice verse 34: David says, "He teacheth my hands to war so that a bow of steel is broken in my arm." First of all, note that war and fighting are not inherently evil. War and fighting are not inherently evil. By inherent, I mean they are not evil in and of themselves. God taught David's hand to war. In war, fighting is a necessity. We know that God is not evil. Neither does God tempt men to do that which is evil. The Bible says in the book of James, chapter 1 and 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." God is not going to teach any man to do that which is wicked and wrong in and of itself. Simply because war exists does not mean that all war is evil.

There is such a thing as a just war, a biblical war, and a godly war, and those wars are not evil. Fighting to defend oneself or fighting to offend another is not evil and cannot be evil. I realize that a number of people condemn all war outright. There are even supposedly Christian people who say that all war is wicked and evil. But that is not true. In fact, they cry simply, "War is not the answer." Let me tell

you very plainly: I grant you that war is not always the answer, but sometimes it is indeed the answer.

Is a war of self-defense unlawful, unbiblical, and unjust? The answer is no. Each person, each family, each church, and each nation has the biblical right of self-defense. Whenever we are attacked, we must respond in kind.

By that I mean this: when King Ahab attacked Elijah and said to Elijah, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” Elijah did not pick up a sword and cut off King Ahab’s neck. What had Ahab done? He had attacked Elijah with words. How did Elijah defend himself? With words. He said, “It’s not me, you wicked reprobate. It’s you and your filthy wife. You’re the ones who messed up Israel. It’s not me. You’re the troubles of Israel.” When we are attacked with words, we can defend ourselves with words. If we are attacked legally, we can defend ourselves legally.

But if folks are shooting at us, we respond in kind. We do not say, “Whoa, whoa, stop your shooting while I just try to reason with you or file some papers down at the local courthouse.” No, if they are shooting, you shoot back.

Remember the sixth commandment: “Thou shalt not kill.” The sixth commandment teaches us and gives us the right of self-defense. Every negative has a positive, and every positive has a negative. “Thou shalt not kill” has the policy, “Thou shalt preserve life.” That means you must preserve your life and the lives of others. Therefore, each of us has a biblical responsibility to preserve our life.

Self-defense is obligatory based upon the sixth commandment. Defensive wars, therefore, are not unbiblical, nor are they unjust. Moreover, we have a responsibility not only to defend our lives, but the lives of innocent people. Let me show you. Hold Psalm 18, but turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 22, beginning with verse 23.

"If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed to a husband and a man find her in the city and lie with her. Then you shall bring them both out of the gate of that city and you shall stone them with stones that they die. The damsel because she cried not being in the city and the man because he is humble as neighbors wife. So thou shalt put away

evil from among you. But the man find him a trough damsel in the field and the man force her and lie with her. Then the man only that lay with her shall die. But in the damsel thou shalt do nothing. There is in the damsel no sin worthy of death. For as when a man riseth against his neighbor, enslave him, even so it is in this matter. For he found her in the field, and the damsel cried, and there was none to save her."

Isn't it interesting that God says if a woman is attacked in the city and she cries not, then the man that attacked her and the woman are to be taken out and stoned? If a young woman is attacked out in the field, the man only is to be put to death. Why? The Bible gives us the answer. If a woman in the city is being attacked and cried not out, what does that mean? That means she was evidently consenting to the sin and consenting to the crime. Therefore, since she was consenting, she too was worthy of death. The young woman out in the field could have cried, but no one would have heard her. Therefore, she is not to be put to death; only the man who attacked her.

What is the implication of that? That means if a woman is in the city and she is being attacked and cries out, anyone who hears her has the duty, responsibility, and obligation to save her. Self-defense is obligatory. It is not only obligatory on our behalf; it is also obligatory upon us to help preserve the life of innocent individuals.

I have just pointed out how wars of self-defense are not unbiblical. If we were attacked by Cuba, we would have the right as a nation to defend ourselves. If we were attacked by China, we would have the right to defend ourselves. That is understandable.

But let me point out another truth that most people never really grasp: not all offensive wars are unbiblical, ungodly, and unjust. It is easy for us to say that if we are attacked, we have the right of self-defense, but we do not want to start anything. Yet there were times in the Bible when God and God's people started a war, and they were right in starting it. Indeed, it was God who ordered and ordained these offensive wars.

Look in your Bibles to a couple of illustrations. The first is Numbers chapter 31. Look at Numbers 31, beginning with verse 1.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites. Afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian."

Then directions are given concerning what is to take place. Notice again: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites." Moses told the people to arm themselves, go out, attack the Midianites, and destroy them.

Very obviously, God was directing an offensive war. It is true that the Midianites had troubled Israel and had made them sin back in Numbers 21, but a long period of time had elapsed between chapters 21 and 31. Therefore, this was not a defensive war; it was an offensive war. Look also in Deuteronomy 25, beginning with verse 17.

The Bible says, “Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way when you were come forth out of Egypt.” It then explains how Amalek met Israel on the way, smote those who were feeble and behind, when they were faint and weary, and feared not God. Look at verse 19: “Therefore it shall be when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for it inheritances possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. Thou shalt not forget it.”

God says that after Israel enters the land, they are to make war against Amalek and never forget it. How long did the children of Israel wander in the wilderness? Forty years? This does not sound like a defensive war to me. This is an offensive war forty years after the fact.

Look in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 15. This is an excellent illustration of offensive war. Everyone knows how the children of Israel went down into Egypt and were there for four hundred years. But look what God tells Abram. “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 afterwards shall they come out with great substance."

"And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, and 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." God told Abram that his people would go into Egypt for four hundred years, and that He would judge the nation when He brought them out. But He would do more than that: He would put a sword in their hand and tell them to kill the Amorites, because their iniquity was not yet full. God waited four hundred years. When the cup of their iniquity was full, He told His people, "Go in and slay every one of them. Kill them all."

That was certainly not a defensive war; it was an offensive war. Someone asked me a question like this this week: "I don't see how God could just send His people in to dispossess someone else, take their land from them, and take their homes from them." First of all, the land was not theirs; it belongs to God.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein." If you owned rental properties, and families in your rental houses would not pay you—not just for one month, but consistently and constantly, failing to pay for six months—would you allow them to stay in your rental properties? Would you have the right to kick them out because they did not give you your rent? Would you?

Of course you would. But I have news for you, folks: even the heathen owe God. They owe Him glory, praise, worship, and tithes. When they refuse to pay, God has an absolute right to dispossess them and put someone else in there who will give Him His rent. That is exactly what He did to those nations.

You see, not all war is wrong. Defensive wars are just, and some offensive wars are just and right as well. All the wars of Canaan were offensive wars. When the children of Israel entered Canaan, they took their swords and dispossessed all those people, taking their land and homes. They were on the attack; they were not defending.

God Is a Warrior

If you take the attitude, as some people do, "All war is wrong. Period," then you have very serious theological problems. Why? Because God not only uses war; the truth is that God Himself is a warrior. Look in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 15. Notice, please, verse 3. Exodus 15, verse 3. Look what the Bible says.

Someone says, "All war is wrong. All fighting is wrong." Well, how do you explain this verse? "The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is His name." The Lord is a man of war. If all war is wrong, if all fighting is wrong, how can He who is the sinless Sovereign of the universe be a man of war?

We have seen that God is a God of war. We have seen that God has said He is going to have war with Amalek from generation to generation. Exodus 17:16 says, "For he said, Because the Lord has sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." The Lord is a man of war, and God said, "I'm going to be fighting from generation to generation against Amalek."

Isaiah 42:13 says, "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man. He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war. He shall cry, yea, roar! He shall prevail against His enemies." This is talking about God. If you think all war is wrong and fighting is wrong, then you have serious theological problems, because God is a man of war and God fights. God attacks His enemies. Neither war nor warriors are evil in and of themselves. The calling of a warrior is a holy calling if the warrior fights for God and in accordance with God's law.

God does not raise up antinomian warriors. He does not raise up warriors against His law, but He does raise up warriors who fight according to His law. Those who fight must fight according to His Word. Again, if someone says, "All war and all warriors and all fighting are wrong," that position creates very serious theological problems. If you are going to take that position, you have very serious theological problems. Why?

Revelation 6:1–2 says, "And I saw when the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, opened one of the seals, and I heard as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold,

a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."

This is none other than Christ himself. The Bible is consistent. If we look in Revelation chapter 19 and verse 11, we find the identification of the man sitting on the white horse who goes forth conquering and to conquer: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True," that is Christ, "and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."

What does our Lord do? He makes war. He is a fighter, a warrior, and a conqueror. The first thing we learn from David's statement, "It is God who teaches me to war," is that war and fighting are not inherently evil.

The second thing we learn from Psalm 18:34 is that it is just right and good to teach the martial arts to others, especially our children. Notice what David said: "It is God who teacheth my hands to war." David makes the point plainly: God teaches His people to fight, and it is right and good for us to teach others, particularly our children, the martial arts.

It Is Right to Teach Martial Arts to Others

To validate this point, I need only ask one question: Are we to emulate our Heavenly Father? The answer is yes. What did our Heavenly Father do? Our heavenly Father taught one of His children, David, the art of war. David said, "He teacheth my hands to war." If we are to emulate our Heavenly Father, then we must recognize the goodness of teaching our children to fight.

The Hebrew word for "teacheth" is Lamad, which means to instruct, to teach diligently, expertly, and skillfully, and to be trained. Thus, David is saying in Psalm 18:34 that God expertly and skillfully trained him in war. If God can teach His child to fight, can we not teach our children to fight?

God's instruction of David was thorough. In Psalm 144:1, David says, "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, who teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight." Notice the thoroughness of that instruction. It was not only God who taught David to fight; He taught

David to use every member of his body in fighting. David specifically says, “He teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight.”

There is even a proper use of fingers in fighting. The truth is that we need to teach our children the biblical and proper use of force. Our children need to know how to safely handle weapons and how to defend themselves, their families, and their neighbors. There is nothing wrong with learning to fight. We need to teach our children the proper use of force. If we do not teach them the proper use of force, the TV, the movies, and the video games will teach them the improper use of force.

When I say that there is nothing wrong with fighting and learning to fight, I certainly am not endorsing the Eastern religions and their meditative techniques. Yet the purely physical acts of judo, karate, and other martial arts are not evil in and of themselves. The physical fighting skills are not wrong. The pagan and the heathen religions may be wrong, but the ability to fight is not wrong.

What did the Apostle Paul say in 1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 8? “For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable in all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” Bodily exercise profiteth little. It may only profit little, but it profits some. So there is nothing wrong with learning to fight.

Calvin rightly points out that all the skillfulness and art in training men for war, the use of armor, the marshalling of armies, the forming of sieges, and all other military tactics are all from God.

Do you know one of the reasons why God allowed some of Israel’s enemies to remain in the land? Israel did not slay all of their enemies, nor did they drive them all out. Some lived amongst them in the land. One of the reasons why God allowed some to stay in the land is spelled out in the Book of Judges, chapter 3. Let us begin reading there with verse 1: Judges, chapter 3, verse 1.

"Now these are the nations which the Lord left to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan." There were some who were not involved in the war. Time had elapsed, and they had never taken part in any of the fighting. Watch verse 2: "Only that the generations of the children of Israel

might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof."

God said, "I'm going to leave a few enemies in the land so that your children and your children's children, who never knew anything about fighting a war, may learn how to fight—to learn the art of war, to keep you on your toes, to keep your powder dry." That's what He is saying.

Now let me ask you a question. If God places a premium on training in the art of war, and on the ability to fight, why do we think so little concerning it? Why are we so reticent about learning to fight and defend ourselves? I can ask another question: Why do most professing Christians somehow think that weapons and weaponry are evil in and of themselves?

“Oh, I’d never touch a rifle. Oh, I’d never touch a pistol. Oh, don’t bring that sword in my house.” Why do we think that something inanimate is evil? Evil is not in weaponry. I don’t care what kind of weapon you’re talking about. Evil is in the hearts of men. An AR-15, an AK-47, and a .50 caliber rifle are only tools, just like a hoe and a shovel. They are not evil in and of themselves. It is how you use the tool that makes it either good or evil. The evil does not come from the tool, but from the man using it out of his evil, wicked heart. There is no weapon evil in and of itself, period.

God said that He let these enemies remain in the land so that His people might learn to fight. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said of verse 34, when David said, “It is God who taught me”: “Martial powers and skill in the use of weapons are gratefully acknowledged to be the result of divine teaching. No sacrifice is offered at the shrine of self in praise of natural dexterity or acquired skillfulness. But regarding all warlike powers as a gift of heavenly favor, thankfulness is presented to the giver. The Holy Spirit is the great drillmaster of heavenly soldiers.” God is the great drillmaster and teacher. What is David doing in Psalm 18:34? He says, “It is God who teaches my hands to war, so much so that a bow of steel is broken in my arms.” In other words, God has given me my skills and abilities, and to Him go all the praise, honor, and glory.

Now, consider the difference between David and a pagan. It is said of Sesostris, king of Egypt, that whenever he conquered a country, he set up pillars engraved with these words: “This country I got by my own strength and power.” David said, “It is God who teaches my hands to war. It’s God who girds me with strength. It’s God who makes my feet like hinds’ feet. It’s God who’s given me this ability.” David humbly bows to his divine teacher.

We have seen, first, that war and fighting are not inherently evil. Second, it is right, just, holy, and good to teach others the martial arts, especially our children.

God Sanctifies War by Using and Empowering His People

Thirdly, I want to point out that God sanctifies war not only by using it himself, but also by enabling and empowering his people in war. Let me ask you a question. Don't answer out loud, but just think about this. How did God deliver the children of Israel from Egypt? What was the means that he used? I want you to look back in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy chapter 4, and let me give you the answer from the scripture. What means did God use to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt? Look in Deuteronomy 4 and verse 34. Deuteronomy 4, verse 34. Notice Scripture says, "Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand and a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes." What did God use to deliver the children of Israel? War. He made war upon the false gods of Egypt.

He made war upon Pharaoh and his army. He destroyed them. And God said, "I used war."

Now, let's ask a question. Does God use war? The answer is most definitely yes. He uses war to destroy his enemies and to deliver his people. Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Chronicles chapter 5 and verse 22. 1 Chronicles chapter 5 verse 22. 1 Chronicles 5. Notice verse 22.

Here is a passage that is amazing. 1 Chronicles 5 verse 22. Are you there? Here it is. "For there fell down many slain because the war was of God." What? There fell down many slain because the war was of God. Does God use war? Well, of course he does. He did when he delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt. He used it here in 1 Chronicles. He used it innumerable times.

Let me ask you a question. How many wars did God initiate? How many wars did God commence? How many wars did God begin? You say, “Well, I don't know the exact number.” No, neither do I. But I do want you to look in the book of Numbers, chapter 21 and verse 14. Although I do not know the exact number of how many wars God commenced, initiated, and began, I can tell you that there was a multitude of wars, so much so that there was a book concerning the wars. Notice what the Bible says: “Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord what it is in Red Sea and in the books of Arnon.” Notice, “Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord.” Wars is plural, and there was enough for a book.

Does God use war? The answer is yes. God not only sanctifies war by using Himself, but He also enables and empowers His people in war. I am sure that you are well aware of how God empowered His people on numerous occasions. But think specifically of the promise that God gave Joshua in Joshua 1:9: “Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest.”

What was Joshua about to do? He was about to lead the people into Canaan land and fight against the enemies of God. Do you remember that passage in Joshua chapter 5, verses 13 through 15, when Joshua saw a man standing with a sword drawn? Of course, that man was none other than our Lord Himself. When Joshua saw Him standing with a sword drawn, he asked Him, “Art thou for us or for our adversaries?” Do you remember the answer? The man said, “Neither, but as captain of the Lord’s host am I now come. Take off my shoes. The ground whereon thou standest is holy ground.” And there stood our Lord with a sword, saying, “I have come as captain of the host of the Lord.” I want you to look in the book of Joshua, chapter 14.

Joshua 14 shows how God empowers and strengthens His people during a time of war. You will remember that Joshua and Caleb were the two men who brought back the good report when they went to check out Canaan land. All the others brought back an evil report, and all those other evil men died. Caleb and Joshua were the men who would go in. Look at what Caleb said, beginning with verse 10: "And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty-five years, ever since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. And now, lo, I am this day eighty-five years old, and as yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me, as my strength was then, even so is my strength now for war. Both to go out and to come in."

I have news for you: I would not have wanted to have fought that eighty-five-year-old man. Caleb said, "I am just as strong and as able to fight now at eighty-five as I was at forty." Why? Because God enabled him. God empowered him. Caleb was not merely speaking of surviving to that age; he was saying that his strength for war remained, both to go out and to come in. The Lord had kept him alive, and the Lord had preserved his strength.

Look in Judges, chapter 3, verse 10. This is said of Othniel, Caleb's nephew: "And the spirit of the Lord came upon him." Notice that God is sanctifying war by using, enabling, and empowering His people. "And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him at his Othniel, and he judged Israel and went out to war. And the Lord delivered Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, into his hand, and his hand prevailed against Cushan-rishathaim." The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and what did he do? He went out to war. When the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, he went out to war, and when he went out to war, God delivered the enemies into his hand.

I could multiply illustrations, but turn to Hebrews 11, the chapter of faith. Everyone loves this passage. We are talking about men of faith, but let me show you something we often overlook concerning these men of faith. Let us begin reading with verse 32: "And what shall I more say?"

War in a Fallen World

The time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. What were these men of faith doing? They were fighting. They were making war.

And what was God doing? God was enabling and empowering them. The author of Hebrews said, "Time would fail me to tell how God blessed and helped these men." God does indeed sanctify war by using it and by enabling and empowering His people in times of war.

Here is my fourth point: When David said, "God teacheth my hands to war, so much so that a bow of steel is broken in my arms," the fourth thing is this: War is a fact and reality of life in a fallen, sinful world.

War Is a Reality in a Fallen World

There is no escaping this simple fact. Scripture declares in Ecclesiastes 3:8, "A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace." There is going to be a time of war. Do you know what our Lord said in Matthew 24:6? "You shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."

What is the Lord saying? As long as you are around, there are going to be wars. Do not get upset about it. It is a fact of life, a simple reality. Men are sinful and depraved; therefore, there are going to be wars and rebellions.

Now, if we know, based upon our Lord's own words, that there are going to be wars and rebellions, would it not be advisable—would it not be common sense as well as scriptural sense—to prepare and be able to defend ourselves, to know how to fight? Would it not be absolutely foolish and senseless to sit around and simply hope that nothing ever happens to us? "Oh, we know it is out there, but it is never, ever going to touch me."

That's the height of stupidity. If we know what's out there, we need to be prepared ourselves, and I've got news for you folks: inevitably, it's going to touch us. It'll touch our families, our church, and our nation. Our Lord has declared the reality of war. Shall we sit back and abdicate our responsibility? We must know how to fight, whether or not we ever need to fight. Listen, I pray that I will never have to fight.

But I'll tell you this: I had rather know how to fight and never need it or use it than to need it and not have the ability to fight. I don't want to be backed into a corner. I'm not interested in hurting anyone. I have no desire to hurt anybody. I don't care who it is. But I'm not interested in anyone hurting me either, or hurting my family. By the grace and power of God, I'd rather know how to fight and never need it than to be backed into a corner and wish I knew what to do.

Let me show you something. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 51. I want you to see what God said concerning His people. Then let me ask you a question based upon this verse. Find Jeremiah 51. I want everyone to see this. Now look in verse—let's read verse 19; that's not the verse, but I'm going to read this first.

"The portion of Jacob is not like them"; that is, we are not like the wicked. "For he," God, "is the former of all things, and Israel is the rod of his inheritance. The Lord opposes his name." Look at what God says concerning His people: "Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war. For with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms. With thee will I break in pieces the horse and the rider, and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and the rider. With thee also will I break in pieces the man and the woman, and with thee will I break in pieces old and young, and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid. I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd of his flock," and He goes on down the line. Notice what He says in verse 20 to His people: "Thou art my battle axe and my weapons of war." Here is my question: What kind of battle axe are you?

I am not talking about my mother-in-law. She said it was smart that I did not talk about her like that. What kind of battle axe are

you? What kind of weapon of war? What kind of ability do you have to fight or defend yourself or your family? God said, "They are my battle axe. They are my weapons of war. And with you, I am going to subdue kingdoms. I am going to do this. I am going to do that." What kind of battle axe are you? What kind of weapon of war are you?

Most Christians, when it comes to war, fighting, or self-defense, fall into one of two errors. We either deny the means, or we deny the power that makes the means effectual. Denial of the means is the denial of the fact and reality that we need to know how to shoot, how to fight, and how to defend ourselves.

God has given us the responsibility to defend our personal lives, our families, our church, and our neighbors. Yet most Christians are not interested in learning how to fight, shoot, or do anything. They say, "I am trusting in the Lord to protect me." For all practical purposes, they are practicing pacifists. Although they may deny it intellectually, they say they are trusting God to defend them, but they will not lift a finger to defend themselves.

That is a denial of the means. God has given us a scriptural right and common sense. On the other hand, there are other Christians and other people who are more than willing to use the means that God has ordained. Yet what they do is trust in the means instead of the God who makes those means effectual. Do you realize that no weapon is sufficient without divine influence and protection?

I've told you this before and I will tell you again. You could have two shotguns in each corner of your bedroom. You could have an AR-15 laying on your dresser drawer, and you can have .357 Magnums under your pillar. If somebody breaks in on you, if God does not awaken you in time or enable you to shoot straight, none of those weapons are going to help you at all. You understand that?

What we have forgotten is this: the proverb in Proverbs 21, verse 31, when the Bible says, “The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord.” If God doesn't protect us, we're not protected. We have forgotten. Yes, it is true that Israel of old fought with their weapons. They did actually fight. They used their weapons. But it was not their weapons that delivered them. It was God who delivered them, for God fought for them.

Let me give you just three very quick passages. In Deuteronomy chapter 3, verse 22, God tells His people concerning their enemies, "You shall not fear them." Why? "For the Lord your God, He shall fight for you." For the Lord your God, He shall fight for you. In Deuteronomy 20, verse 4, God says it like this: "For the Lord your God is He that goeth with you to fight for you against your enemies to save you."

Did Israel use their weapons? Yes. Who went with them? God. Who fought for them? God. Who empowered them? Who enabled them? God.

Psalm 44 puts these two things together. The psalmist said, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days and times of old." We heard about all those miracles that You did. "How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantest them," that is, Israel, "and how thou didst afflict the people," that is, the enemies, "and cast them out. For they," Israel, "got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own right arm save them, but thy right hand and thine arm in the light of thy countenance, because thou hast a favor unto them. Thou art my king, O God, command deliverances for Jacob."

Did Israel fight? Yes. Was it their sword, their bow, and their arrow that delivered them? No. It was God. God made those weapons effectual. God used those means to deliver His people and destroy His enemies.

The psalmist says, "My king, O God, command deliverances for Jacob." In other words, "God, You used to deliver us. You used to empower us. Lord, please do it again." Then he says, "Through thee we will push down our enemies. Through thy name we will tread them under that rise up against us."

"For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long and praise thy name forever." I could say, I will not trust in my AK-47, my AR-15. I will not trust in my tank or my jet. For thou art he that saved us. And

God will boast in thee all the day long. In other words, it is God who makes those weapons effectual.

We must not separate what God has joined together. God has joined together the use of means and His blessing and power upon those means, making them effectual. If you trust in the means alone, you are wrong. If you trust in God without the means, you are still wrong. You must use the means that God has ordained and seek His blessing and power upon them. One last point—the fifth one, very quickly.

No Permanent Peace Until the Prince of Peace Returns

No Permanent Peace Until Christ Returns

There will not be any permanent peace until the Prince of Peace returns. There may be times of temporary peace, but no permanent peace. God does, at times, give temporary peace. He did so for Jehoshaphat. In 2 Chronicles 17:10, the Bible says, “And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that no man made war against Jehoshaphat.”

God also gave temporary peace to Solomon. In 1 Kings 4:24 we read, “For he,” Solomon, “had dominion over all the region on this side of the river, from Tiphsah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side of the river, and he had peace on all sides round about him.” God marvelously and miraculously gave him peace. There is a principle, found in Proverbs 16:7: “When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

Yes, God can give temporary peace. Psalm 46:9 says, “He,” God, “maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth. He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear and thunder. He burneth the chariot in the fire.” God has given us some temporary peace in this land and in our time. But there has been nothing but constant war for the last hundred years, in some parts of the world—constant, consistent war.

This is the fifth and final point: there will not be any peace, any permanent peace, until the Prince of Peace returns. Micah 4:3 says, “And he,” that is Christ, “shall judge among many people and rebuke

strong nations afar off, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

When our Lord returns, you may safely beat your weapons into plowshares. But before He returns and fully, completely, and totally establishes His Kingdom, if you beat your weapons into plowshares, you will be plowing for those who did not. Until our Lord returns, we must expect wars and rebellions.

In this day and time in our country, with all the confusion, anarchy, and chaos that is going on and will probably continue, you better know how to fight and how to defend yourself and your family. We may never be the warrior that David was, and that is fine, because God does not call everyone to be a warrior like David. He does, however, call each one of us to fulfill our responsibility and obligation to be fully prepared in every area of our life. We do not have to be a David. I could probably never be a David; I am too old to be a David.

But that does not mean I cannot be prepared to the best of my ability to be used by God—to defend myself, my family, our church, and our country if need be. I like that old saying: "Don't mess with an old man. Because he can't fight and he'll just shoot you and get it over with." That is just about the truth.

Applications: Recovering Martial Spirit and Spiritual Warfare

But let me tell you something. I have two implications, and I want you to listen carefully. Here is the first one: One of our greatest weaknesses as the people of God is that we have lost all of our martial spirit. There was a song you used to hear all the time: "Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before." But we have lost all of our martial spirit.

Our men, both young and old, have been feminized, sanitized, and neutralized. In this day and time, most Christian men will not stand for anything; therefore, they will fall for everything. We will not resist temptation, sin, and corruption in our personal lives, our

family lives, our ecclesiastical lives, or even our national life. We are not only afraid to fight; we do not even know how to fight. And the scariest thing is, we have lost our will to fight. Certainly, without endorsing him or his values, Arnold Schwarzenegger said, “We’ve become a nation of girly men.” That is the absolute truth.

Happily, our young people are willing to fight, but they are willing to fight the wrong people and for the wrong reason. They really do not know how to fight biblically or scripturally. What they fight are their parents and their teachers. Think about this: Taylor Caldwell said, “The strongest sign of the decay of a nation is the feminization of the men and the masculinization of the women.” We need to pray that God would give us men like Robert E.

Second Application

Lee and Stonewall Jackson combined godliness with a martial spirit.

The principles of warfare apply to both physical and spiritual warfare. I am afraid that those who do not know how to fight physically may not understand how to fight spiritually, since attitude and action are correlated. If we are unwilling to fight physically to defend ourselves and others, will we not be unwilling to fight spiritually to defend ourselves?

A man who quickly and readily gives in to the wicked and corrupt demands of evil men probably lacks the courage and determination to resist temptation, wickedness, and sin in his personal life. The principles of self-defense apply physically, but they also apply spiritually. Remember what the Apostle Paul said about Satan: “For we're not ignorant of his devices, we're not ignorant of his tactics.”

But the truth is, most people are. If we are unwilling to fight physically, in all probability we will be unable to fight spiritually. So our prayer should be like David's: “Lord, teach us to fight.” As You taught David, teach us physically, yes, but spiritually as well, so that a bow of steel is broken in our arms. In other words, give us the power and ability to withstand the greatest temptations and corruptions, personally, physically, and spiritually.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would indeed teach us as You taught David. Give us once again, Lord, a biblical

attitude, that we might have a biblical action. Teach us the importance of learning to fight in every area of life. Make us holy. Make us godly. May we learn to fight only upon Your terms, in accordance with Your law, that we may be scriptural and honoring unto Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

What is Coming to Christ

August 3, 2008

Coming to Christ

SCRIPTURE READING - John 5:32-40; John 6:43-45 (KJV)

"There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.

"Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of

> God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"
>
> "Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

Introduction: The Importance of Coming to Christ

One of the most important subjects in the Word of God is coming to Christ. The truth remains, however, that many, even professing Christians, do not really understand what it means to come to Christ. A large percentage believe that if they have been baptized, joined the church, made a verbal profession or commitment, or performed good works, then they have come to Christ. Coming to Christ is indeed the most important activity, because without it there is no salvation.

Biblical Invitations to Come to Christ

Jesus Christ Himself said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." As you read through the Bible, especially the New Testament, you will find many great and glorious passages that invite us to come to Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 11, beginning with verse 28 and going through verse 30, our Lord said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

But what did He say? "Come unto me." In Mark chapter 1 and verse 17, our Lord said, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Then, in John 21 and verse 12, our Lord looked at His disciples and simply said, "Come and dine." And, of

course, Revelation 22, verse 17, says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

There are many Scriptures that give us invitations to come freely and fully to Jesus Christ. Yet the question must be asked: What is coming to Christ? We could also ask, How do I know whether or not I have come to Christ? Before answering that question, however, we should consider an equally important one: generally speaking, why do men not come to Christ?

Six Reasons Why Men Do Not Come to Christ

Why is this building not packed with people wanting to hear the Word of God and find out about Jesus Christ? Why does the average person have no desire to come to Christ? We were driving to church this morning, and I noticed a truck pulling a jet ski behind it, perhaps another pulling a boat. There is no great care or desire to come to Christ or to hear the Word of God. Why do most people not desire to come to Christ?

There are a number of answers, and I want to give several. First, people do not come to Christ because of ignorance. Consider John 4 and the woman at the well. Jesus Christ had asked her for a drink of water, and she asked, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?” The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Then Jesus said, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”

Ponder what our Lord said. He looked at the woman and said, “If thou knewest the gift of God”; she did not. “And if thou knewest who spake to thee”; she did not. The woman was completely and totally ignorant of Jesus Christ, who He is, and His so great salvation.

Is it not interesting that the average person does not know one thing about Jesus Christ? Someone may say, “He said He was the Son of God.” But they really do not know Christ. They do not know His attributes or the Scriptures. They are absolutely and totally ignorant of Christ.

Interestingly enough, the Bible also teaches that ignorance is applied toward God. Ephesians 4:18 says, “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.”

Folks are just plain ignorant concerning Jesus Christ. Without asking you to turn there, remember the passage in 2 Corinthians 3, especially verse 14, which teaches about a veil being over the eyes of people who refuse and reject Jesus Christ: “But their minds were blinded.” Sin blinds the eyes. Sin will make us ignorant. We are already ignorant, but it will make us more ignorant. Then the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

Now, let me just put it like this. It is impossible for you to come to someone that you do not even know exists. If you are ignorant of that person, you cannot possibly come to him. It is that simple. So the very first reason that men do not come to Christ is that they are totally, completely ignorant.

Secondly, men do not come to Christ because of prejudice. You will also find this in Matthew 15, but we will look in Mark 7. Mark 7:5 says, “Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”

Now watch when he says, “Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.”

You know something? It is extremely incomprehensible to understand how people prefer traditions above the Word of God. They are prejudiced toward their own traditions.

I've often said I could go into the average church and split it with one sermon. All I've got to do is preach against tradition. If I preach against the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus, or some other little tradition that they have, I've got news for you folks: they will fight over those traditions. They'd rather have tradition than what the Word of God says. “We've always had a Christmas tree in the church. We've always had an Easter egg hunt. We've always done this. We've always done that.” People are plainly prejudiced to their traditions, and they prefer those traditions over the Word of God.

There's a third reason people do not come to Christ, and that's doctrinal error. In 1 Corinthians 1:23, the Apostle Paul writes, “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”

You will have to remember that the Greeks were wise in their own conceits. They loved the philosophies of men. Read Acts chapter 17. The Bible tells us that those men went about to do nothing but to hear something new and exciting and titillating. That's all they wanted to do. When they heard the preaching of Jesus Christ, they thought that it was absolutely foolishness.

The Jews, he says, stumble over Christ because they don't believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. They don't believe He's the Savior. They don't believe that He's the Lord of the world. Consequently, they stumble over it. Listen, you cannot come and you will not come to someone that you do not believe in. Why in the world would you come to someone that you do not think is God?

Because people are totally in error concerning the doctrine of Christ, they refuse Him and reject Him. So it's not just ignorance. It's not just prejudice. It's also doctrinal error. But fourthly, there's a fourth reason: it is because of the assault of Satan.

Notice what our Lord says in Matthew 12:29: “Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.” Our Lord made this statement when He was accused of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. He says, “How can one enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods except he first bind the strong man?”

In other words, if I am going to break into your home and steal what you have while you are there, I have to do something to you first. I have to subdue you; then I may ransack your house freely. If I do not subdue you, I might get shot, whipped, or beaten up. There is a principle: someone has to be subdued, or there is going to be trouble and a fight.

Now look in your Bible to Luke 9:41. Here was a man who brought his son to the disciples to cast out a demon, and they could not. In verse 40, the man says to Christ, “And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.” Verse 41 says, “And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.” Then verse 42 says, “And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.” Note that while he was coming, the devil threw him down.

There are many people who are injured, tempted, and led astray by the evil one. Pilgrim's Progress gives a wonderful episode of Satan's assault on one who is coming to Christ. There is indeed an enemy who will fight spiritual truth and fight against Christ. But there is a fifth reason why men do not come to Christ: pride of heart.

In Matthew 9, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw it, they asked, “Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” Jesus answered, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” He continued, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

These Pharisees, in their self-righteous hypocrisy, asked why Christ ate with publicans and sinners. If He were as holy and righteous as they were, they reasoned, He would have nothing to do with that despicable group of people. He would not associate with them or speak to them. He could not possibly be the Messiah or be holy because He associated with sinners.

Pride says, “I'm not a sinner.” Pride says, “I'm not so bad. I don't need saving. I'm as good as the next man.” And you are, because the next man is just as wicked, evil, and lost as you are. But pride says, “I

don't need a Savior. I don't need salvation." What did our Lord say? "They that be sick need a physician," not those that are whole.

There is not a person in this room who will get up in the morning and say, "I feel wonderful. I feel great. There's not a thing wrong with me." Yet pride refuses to acknowledge spiritual sickness and the need for Christ.

"I think I'll just go visit the doctor and help him pay for his new Mercedes." Would you do that? No. If you wake up sick in the morning, you are still not going to get up and go to the doctor. You will go to your medicine cabinet and try to doctor yourself. You will try your herbs, drink your water, and do whatever is necessary to take care of yourself. When you cannot get better, you will call your neighbor or friend and say, "Man, I've been sick for so long." They may say, "You need to try this. It worked for me. You need to eat yourself a peanut butter, mayonnaise, tomato, and ketchup mustard sandwich. Boy, it'll get you well." And guess what? We will do it. When whatever we do, and whatever our family and friends recommend, does not work, finally we will say, "Well, might as well go to the doctor," because we are sick and cannot get over it.

You know what our Lord is saying? When you realize that you are a sinner, wicked and ungodly and undone, and cannot save or help save yourself, finally our Lord says that you are willing to come to Him. But as long as you do not think you are so bad, you will never, ever come to Christ.

There are a multitude of people in this land who do not believe they are sinners. They do not believe they need to be saved or need repentance. Why? The pride of their heart has deceived them into thinking they are not so bad, not so depraved, and not so wicked that they need a Savior. The self-righteous have their own righteousness. Why do they need the righteousness of Christ? Pride of heart will keep men from coming to Christ.

And then, sixthly, sin. If you look in your Bibles again to John chapter 5, notice, beginning with verse 33. Our Lord says to these Jews, "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing

for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John."

What Coming to Christ Is Not

Our Lord said, "I have numerous witnesses as to whom I am. I have the witness of John the Baptist. You were willing for a season to rejoice in his witness and in his life." But He said, "I have greater witness than that of John. I have the works which My Father has given Me to do. Those works testify of Me." Then He said, "I have something even greater than My works. I have the testimony of the Father. The Father said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.'" And in verse 39 He says, "I have the testimony of the Scriptures. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

What is He saying? He is saying, "Look, here are the Scriptures. They testify of Me." In light of the testimony of John the Baptist, the testimony of His works, the testimony of the Father, and the testimony of the Scriptures, men still will not come to Christ. Why? Because their will is locked in stubborn rebellion against Christ. They are in their sin.

It is not that there is an insufficient amount of evidence, testimony, or truth. It is simply that men prefer sin rather than Christ, wickedness rather than righteousness, and rebellion rather than holiness.

Having given you these six reasons why men do not come to Christ, let me begin answering the question, What is coming to Christ? I will answer that question in two ways: first, negatively, telling you what is not coming to Christ; and then positively, telling you what is coming to Christ. Let us begin with what is not coming to Christ. First of all, coming to Christ is not a physical act.

What Coming to Christ Is Not: Physical Act

Christ looked at these people and said, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Obviously, they had come to Him physically. They were in His presence, and He was speaking to them. But just because they had come to Him physically did not mean that they

were in a saving relationship with Him. There are so many people today who try to equate a physical act with a spiritual one. They think that just because they have done something physically, it therefore equates to something spiritual. No, sir. These people had physically walked to where Christ was, and Christ said, "You will not come to me, that ye might have life."

John 6:2 says, "And a great multitude followed him." Why? "Because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased." Here were people who came to Christ, walked with Him, and followed Him because they saw the miracles. They were being entertained. They saw things they had never seen before. Had they come to Him physically? Oh, yes.

But in verse 26 our Lord finally tells them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." After our Lord went across the sea, they took ships and went with Him. They came to where He was physically, but He told them they were coming because He had fed them and they had not had to work for the food. They were coming for a free meal. That was the only reason they were coming to Him.

They came to Him physically and were in His presence, but they did not come to Christ savingly. Coming to Christ is not walking down an aisle, going forward at a meeting, raising your hand for prayer, joining a church, being baptized, or doing any good deed or any number of good deeds. Why? Because all of those are physical acts. Multitudes have done physical acts and physical things, and yet they have never come savingly to Jesus Christ.

It is true that a real, genuine Christian will be baptized, join a church, do many good works, and perform many other physical things. But he does not do those things in order to be saved. He does them because he has already been saved. He does not do them in order to come to Christ; he does them because he has already come to Christ. Coming to Christ is not a physical act.

Years ago, I was preaching in a jail every Sunday morning while I lived in that area. The jailer was a Christian and a friend of mine. One Sunday morning, he told me about a man who had just been

arrested for murdering his wife and his mother-in-law. The prisoners who wanted to hear the preaching were put in one large area called a bullpen. This man stood against the back wall, with his foot against the wall, while I preached.

Afterward, he came to me and said, “Preacher, that was a good sermon. I’m thankful you came. These men in here really needed that.” I said, “Oh, sir.” He replied, “I’m already a Christian.”

I asked, “Aren’t you the man who was just arrested, placed in this jail, and charged with murdering your wife and your mother-in-law?” “Yes,” he said, “that’s me.” I said, “How can you say that you’re a Christian when the Bible says, and you know, that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him? You just said that you are the man charged with murdering your wife and your mother-in-law, and you are standing there telling me you’re a Christian. How do you know that you’re a Christian?”

Here was his answer: “Oh,” he said, “I know I’m a Christian because I went forward in a Billy Graham crusade.”

He had done something physically. He had walked forward in front of a church building. He may have even said, "I believe," but coming to Christ is not a physical act, and you are going to see why. Secondly, coming to Christ is not an experience. It is not certain feelings, sensations, or hair-raising experiences. It is not hearing the clapping of thunder or seeing the flash of lightning. If you want an experience, the flesh and the devil can give you one. In fact, the problem with so many people who have wonderful experiences is that they end up trusting in their experience rather than Christ.

What Coming to Christ Is Not: Experience

You must remember that our Lord warned us in 2 Corinthians 11:14, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." If you want an experience, he can give you one. It will not necessarily be a saving experience, but it will be an experience. So many trust in their experience.

Let me give you an analogy. Suppose Cindy has two children and, in bearing them, was in labor forty-eight hours with each one. Suppose Cindy comes to my wife and asks, "Now Alice, have you ever

been in labor forty-eight hours in delivering a child?" Alice says, "No, of course not. The most I've ever been in labor is a couple of hours." Suppose Cindy then clasps her hands together and says piously, "Well then, you have never had a baby." The truth is, my wife has had twice as many babies as Cindy has had.

It is not the experience that counts, nor the degree or length of the experience, nor anything about the experience. What counts is this: Was there a real, genuine, living baby born? That is what counts. So many people say, "Well, if you've never been convicted the way I've been convicted, then you can't possibly be saved." They are using their experience as the norm and standard to measure not only their own salvation, but everyone else's salvation as well. Let me show you something about experiences. Turn in your Bibles to Acts, chapter 8. I want to show you a man who had an experience.

SCRIPTURE READING - Acts 8:5-20 (KJV)

> Although he had an experience and although he did physical things, he was certainly not a Christian, not by any stretch of the imagination. Acts chapter 8, verse 5: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city."
>
> "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."
>
> "Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." So now here is Simon.

> He's just had an experience. He at least had some emotional experience because he even professed Christ. He was baptized. He saw those miracles. He was excited. Verse 14: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee." The word "perish" is a strong word.

Peter told Simon exactly what his experience meant: “Thy money go to hell with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”

Simon was not saved; he had never been saved. Did Simon have an experience? Yes. Did Simon do something physical? Yes. Was he still lost? Yes. Why? Because coming to Christ is not anything physical, and it is certainly not an experience.

Do you know the only man in the New Testament to whom our Lord would not speak? Do you know why He would not speak to him? Because the man only wanted an experience. He was a wicked man, but he wanted an experience. Luke 23, beginning with verse 8, says: “And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.”

“And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked

him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves."

Why would Christ not even speak to King Herod? He had heard many things of Christ and hoped to see some miracle done by Him. In other words, Herod was saying, "Entertain me, dazzle me, give me an experience. Let me see something I've never seen before. Do your magic." Our Lord would not even condescend to answer such a reprobate. All Herod wanted was an experience. He wanted to see a miracle firsthand, and our Lord refused even to speak to him.

People will run all over this country and go to meeting after meeting after meeting, seeking an experience. You can have all the experiences you want, but they do not equal coming to Christ. Coming to Christ is not a physical act. Coming to Christ is not an experience. Thirdly, listen carefully, coming to Christ is not going to an old-fashioned altar. I am using that terminology purposefully. Coming to Christ is not going to an old-fashioned altar.

What Coming to Christ Is Not: Going to an Altar

I have heard preachers say that innumerable times: "You need to come forward to an old-fashioned altar." May I tell you who began the altar call? It was Charles Grandison Finney. Charles Finney was basically a semi-Pelagian. Pelagius was one of the arch-heretics, and Arminius modified his teaching somewhat. Finney could be called an Arminian, but he could also be called semi-Pelagian because he actually denied the total depravity of man. Finney not only denied the total depravity of man; he also believed that sinners could initiate their salvation. He believed it was sinners' responsibility to take the first step toward their salvation. Once they took that first step, God was obligated to save them. God was obligated to do the rest.

Therefore, he initiated the mourner's bench. He asked people to come forward and sit at the mourner's bench. Once they came forward, sat on that mourner's bench, began to mourn for their sins, quote-unquote, and cried to God, then, according to his theology, God was obligated to save them.

Listen carefully to what I am about to say, because I am going to contradict it in just a moment, but I will explain it. Both statements are true. There is no such thing as an old-fashioned altar in any church. There is no such thing as a physical altar in any church whatsoever. You may say, "But wait a minute, Brother Weaver. There was an altar in the Old Testament." Yes, there was. Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews, chapter 8, and let me show you something about that altar in the Old Testament. Let us begin with verse 5. In fact, let us begin reading with verse 1 and read down to verse 5: Hebrews, chapter 8, verse 1.

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." The true tabernacle is in heaven, not on earth. "For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." That is, Christ. "For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." If Christ had been on earth at that particular time, He would not have been a priest because the Levitical priesthood existed. Christ was of the tribe of Judah, not Levi.

Now notice what these Levitical priests did: "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."

Was there an altar in the Old Testament? The answer is yes. Did the tabernacle, or any of its furniture, originate with Moses or Aaron? Of course not. How did Moses know what to do in building the tabernacle and its furniture? There was a divine revelation. The tabernacle, the temple, and the furniture therein were of divine origin. God originated them. Furthermore, if you have a real, genuine, physical altar, it must not only be of divine origination; it must also be made of divine materials.

When you study the book of Exodus, what did Moses do? God said to Moses, "See that thou make them according to the pattern which I

gave you in the mount." In other words, God gave the materials out of which everything was to be built. He prescribed every detail. Thirdly, the divine pattern had to be followed. God gave the materials and the pattern, saying, "Here's the dimensions. Here's exactly how you build it."

Now, what is this? If you have an altar, it must have a divine origination, divine materials, and a divine pattern. It must also be placed in the exact location that God designs. In the Old Testament, if you were going to worship the one true and living God, where must you go? To that altar. That was the only acceptable place to worship God. If you were going to worship Him acceptably, you either had to be in the tabernacle or in the temple.

Now, is there any altar like that in any church today? No. There is no altar like that in any church today. So when people say, "Come forward to the altar," there is no altar there. There is no physical altar, and it cannot be. May I remind you once again that the tabernacle, the temple, and all the furniture therein were types, shadows, and emblems. That is what the Scripture says: "who serve as an example and shadow of heavenly things." Was that Old Testament altar real and genuine? No. It was a type, a shadow, an emblem, and a symbol, but it was not real. Was that tabernacle real?

You say, "Well, I could touch it." That does not mean it was real. It was a shadow. If I am in the shadow of an oak tree, am I in the tree? No, I am just in the shadow. The shadow is not real; the tree is what is real. Our Lord is saying that everything in the Old Testament concerning that tabernacle and temple was simply a shadow, because it foreshadowed the true tabernacle, the true temple, and the true altar.

Jesus Christ is the true altar. I told you there is no such thing as an old-fashioned altar in any church. Now I told you I was going to contradict that statement, and here it is: there is an altar in every church where the Word of God is preached. How can I say that? Look at Hebrews 13:10: "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." What did the apostle say? "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle."

Why was the book of Hebrews written? Some of those Jewish believers, quote-unquote, wanted to go back to the Old Testament types, emblems, and shadows. The author of Hebrews said, in effect, "If you want to go back to the type and shadow, you have no right to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the true altar, the true tabernacle, the true temple, the true high priest, and the true sacrifice." If you want the shadows, you have no right to Christ, who is the reality.

Is there an altar in the church? Yes. Who is the altar? Jesus Christ. Let me ask; I am not trying to make fun, you know I am not: do you have to come forward and stand here in front of me, or kneel here in front of me, to come to Christ? The answer is no. No, of course not, because Jesus Christ is our altar. Grace may be mediated to a sinner wherever the sinner is.

God can save you sitting in the pew. God can save you walking in the door. God can save you out in the yard. God can save you wherever He wants to save you, because the altar is Jesus Christ.

A story I read years ago was that, after Charles Haddon Spurgeon had died, R. A. Torrey preached in Spurgeon's Tabernacle. When he finished preaching, he invited people to come forward. That had never been done in Spurgeon's Tabernacle. Spurgeon certainly invited men to Christ; he was a great evangelistic preacher. But after he finished preaching, he would say, "If the Holy Spirit is convicting you or if you need help, I will be in my office in the morning. Please come see me, and I'll help you any way that I can."

After Torrey preached, he gave an invitation for people to come forward. After the service was over, a man who was a member of Spurgeon's church and also a newspaper man interviewed R. A. Torrey, the famed evangelist. He asked Torrey why he invited men to come forward after he finished preaching.

What Is Coming to Christ?

Torrey's response was, "I believe in striking while the iron is hot." The newspaper man put his pen down and said, "We think, sir, if the governor were alive today"—that is what they called Spurgeon, the governor—"he would say, 'If the Holy Spirit heated the iron, it would stay hot until morning.'" And that's true.

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who has been dead now a number of years, pastored and preached at Westminster in England for the longest time. He told about a man after the service one Sunday night who stayed and was the very last one out. Dr. Lloyd-Jones did not give an invitation for people to come forward or anything like that. He invited men to Christ, but he did not ask anyone to come forward. He noticed the man hanging back purposefully. When the man got to the door, he shook the doctor's hand and said, “Doctor, that was a very fine message tonight. I want you to know I was stirred greatly. Doctor, if you had given the invitation, I would have come forward to accept Christ.”

Dr. Jones said, “Well, that's wonderful, but, sir, I have a question for you. Would you receive Him right now?” The man said, “No, but I would have thirty-five minutes ago.” Dr. Jones said, “In that case, it would not have done you any good to receive Him thirty-five minutes ago if you're unwilling to receive Him right now.” You see, folks, the altar is Jesus Christ. It's not a physical thing, and you don't have to come to the front of a building to receive Christ.

What Coming to Christ Is: A Spiritual Act Wrought by God

What is coming to Christ? Coming to Christ is a spiritual act wrought in grace by the power of God. Let me ask a very pointed question: Where is Christ right now? Well, He's everywhere, but specifically, what does the Scripture say? He's seated at the right hand of God, in the heavenly.

If Christ is our altar, grace may indeed be mediated to anyone, at any place and at any time. But if Christ is seated at the right hand of God, then you must understand why it is impossible for natural man to come to Christ. In John 6:44 our Lord said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

“Can” is a term of ability. No man has the ability to come to Christ on his own. How can an unsaved man physically get to Jesus Christ? The answer is absolutely nothing. Our Lord said in John 3:3, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” In verse 5 He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee,

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." How can an unsaved man get to Christ when Christ is seated on the right hand of God, and by nature he cannot see Him or enter there? There is no way in the world that a sinner, in and of himself, can come to Christ savingly. That is why our Lord said, "No man can come unto me except the Father who sent me draw him."

"And I will raise him up at the last day." If you have to be drawn to come to Christ savingly by the Father, what is the Father's drawing? The word is "draw," not "drag." How does the Father draw us to Christ? Verse 45 says, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

What does God the Father do? He opens our eyes, our understanding, and our hearts. He teaches and instructs us. He shows us our sin, our wickedness, and our ugliness; He shows us that Jesus Christ alone is salvation, and He shows us the beauty of Christ. In teaching us, He woos us and draws us savingly, that we might see the beauty, glory, grandeur, and wonder of Jesus Christ. The questions you must ask are simple.

Are you longing to be holy, to turn from sin, and to know Christ intimately and savingly? Are you learning of your wickedness, sinfulness, helplessness, and hopelessness? Are you being taught that Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is salvation, and that unless He saved you, you are lost? If you are being taught these lessons, understand that they do not arise from your fallen nature or come from your corrupt and depraved mind. They come only from God.

He teaches us. You know what the Bible says in Philippians 2:13? "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is God who works that in you. That is why Psalm 110:3 says, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." God the Father draws us, enlightens us, educates us, and enables us to trust in Christ. Coming to Christ is a work of God.

You remember what our Lord said in Matthew 11: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the

Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." It is the Son who must reveal the Father, and the Father who must reveal the Son. You say, "But Brother Weaver, does not Scripture tell us that we must bow down with our heart?" Yes, it does. Romans 10:9 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." But who enlightens and educates you, draws you to that truth, gives you that truth, and enables you to confess Christ? It is God the Father.

Does not Scripture say, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"? Yes, it does. But the rest of Scripture says, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" It is God who sends the preacher, illuminates the mind to understand Christ, and enables us to call upon Him. Remember Matthew 14, when Peter saw Christ walking on the water and said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Our Lord said, "Come." Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on the water until he took his eyes off the Lord, saw the wind boisterous and the waves, and began to sink.

And what did he say? He cried, the Scripture says, “Lord, save me.” That is calling upon the Lord, because he realized that if Christ did not save him, he was a goner. What is coming to Christ? It is an act, a spiritual act, wrought in grace and by the power of God.

In John chapter 6, our Lord says, “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” They said, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.” And Jesus said, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” He also said, “This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.”

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Then Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye

have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life."

Now, wait a minute. What in the world did our Lord mean when he said, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you shall in no wise inherit the kingdom of God. You're not saved"? This passage certainly does not teach transubstantiation, which the Roman Catholics believe in. The priest does not take a little water or a little magic and turn a wafer into the real body of Christ and the wine into the real blood of Christ. That is not what our Lord is saying.

Do you realize that eating is a very simple act? Eating is simply the satisfying of a need. When we eat Christ, we live from Him. We assimilate His doctrine and His teaching into our souls. We conform our lives to His Word, deriving our sustenance and nourishment from Him.

Coming to Christ

We depend upon Him solely and completely, the same way we depend upon our food. Without our natural food, we perish. Without Christ, we perish. We live in Him, through Him, and by Him. So eating Christ means that we cannot live without Him. We must read His word daily, pray to Him daily, and seek Him daily, because He is our sustenance, our nourishment, and our life.

Coming to Christ Means Forsaking All and Submitting to Christ

When my wife married me, she came to me. She forsook her family and friends, especially her boyfriends, and came to me to be my wife, and mine only. When the sinner comes to Christ, he forsakes his sins and his old friends, the wicked ones. He forsakes anything and everything contrary to Christ and comes to Him saying, "I'm now yours and yours alone." You cannot come to someone without leaving someone.

If Jesus Christ is the King of kings—and He is—then when the sinner comes to Christ, he must throw down his weapons of warfare and rebellion, bow the knee, and submit to King Jesus. The modern-day church has so perverted this doctrine and truth. In the

average church, someone may come forward at an invitation, chewing gum, in a flippant, sometimes even arrogant attitude: “I’ve come to do Christ a favor. I’m going to join this church.” They hang on to their sin, wickedness, and rebellion, and the average church member cannot be distinguished from the average unsaved, arrogant, hateful infidel. They live alike, act alike, and talk alike.

When a convicted sinner comes to Christ, he comes broken, throwing down those weapons of warfare. He does not want his rebellion or his sin. All he wants is Christ and Christ alone. Coming to Christ means leaving ourselves, our righteousness, and our sins. We come to Him, bow to Him, acknowledge that He is King of kings and Lord of lords, and submit to His rule and government over our lives.

These are the dire straits that we’re in, in Christendom, as well as in our country. If you believe what I have taught this morning—and I hope you do, because it’s straight from Scripture—think about how many church members are really lost and have never, ever, savingly come to Christ. Now you know why the church is in such trouble in this country and why we’re in such trouble in this country. We need to come back to the Word of God, come and bow to Jesus Christ.

Father, we do ask for your blessing and your help and your grace. We pray, Lord, that you will use this message to open eyes and to convict and by your grace convert. We pray and ask for the Holy Spirit of God to apply this truth to each heart. And help us, Lord, to bow and bow savingly to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and to bring our lives into conformity to his word, his law, his truth.

We give Thee praise, honor, glory, in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

What is Coming to Christ

August 17, 2008

Coming to Christ

SCRIPTURE READING - John 5:32-44; John 6:43-45 (KJV)

Introduction and Scripture Reading

I want to bring a message this morning, which I've just entitled "Coming to Christ" or "What is Coming to Christ?"

John 5, verse 32: "There is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesses to me is true. You sent unto John, and he beareth witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man, but these things I say that you might be saved. He was a burning and shining light, and you were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John. For the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, beareth witness of me that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself which hath sent me hath borne witness of me.

> You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And you have not his word abiding in you, for whom he hath sent you believe not. Search the scriptures, for in them you think that you have eternal life, and there they which testify of me. And you will not come unto me that you might have life. I receive not honour from men, but I know you that you have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe? Who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?"
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> John 6, verse 43: "Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, murmur not among yourselves. No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me."
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> I suppose one of the greatest and most important subjects in the word of God is that of coming to Christ. The truth remains, however, that many still do not really know what it means to come to Christ.

The Necessity of Coming to Christ

If you would go to the average church, you would find that a large percentage of professing Christians believe that if they have been baptized, joined the church, made a verbal profession or commitment, or performed some kind of good works, then they have truly come to Christ. But coming to Christ is not only the most important subject in the Bible; it is an absolute necessity, because without it there is no salvation. Our Lord Himself said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh in the Father but by me."

As you read through the Bible, especially the New Testament, you will discover many wonderful invitations to come to Christ. In Matthew 11, verses 28 through 30, our Lord said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My

burden is light." In Mark 1 and verse 17, He said, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you fishers of men." In John 21 and verse 12, He simply said, "Come and dine." Revelation 22 and verse 17 says, "...and the Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him who heareth say, Come, and let him who is athirst come, and whosoever will let him drink of the water of life freely."

There are many invitations in the Bible to come to Christ, and sinners are encouraged to come to Him. But the question must be asked: What is coming to Christ? Before answering that question, I want to show you from the Bible why, generally speaking, men do not come to Christ.

Reasons People Do Not Come to Christ

Isn't it amazing that you can have empty pews on the Lord's Day? Why are people not breaking the doors down to get to Christ, when salvation is found only in Jesus Christ? What hinders men and keeps them away? The Bible reveals several things. First, people do not come to Christ because of ignorance. In John chapter 4, our Lord is speaking to the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman. In verse 9 she asked, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" Notice what Jesus said in verse 10.

"For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst ask of him, and he would have given thee living water." Notice what our Lord said: "If you knew who I was, and if you knew the gift that I had, you would have asked me." But the truth is, she was totally ignorant of Jesus Christ and of His gift. How in the world can you ask for something when you are absolutely, totally ignorant of it?

The Bible says in Ephesians 4:18, speaking of the unsaved, "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts." Our Lord says in 2 Corinthians 3:14, "but their minds were blinded." They cannot see; they are totally ignorant concerning Jesus Christ. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:4, "But the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe

not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, whose image of God, should shine unto them."

So, very obviously, one of the main reasons people do not come to Christ is that they do not know who He is or the gift that He has. Before my uncle died, I used to tell people about him. He was one of the most lovable, kind, and gracious uncles you have ever seen. You could not help but love him. He died when he was about 80, 89, something like that. I would say, “I would like you to love my uncle.” They would look at me strangely. It is impossible to love someone you do not know, and it is impossible to come to someone you do not know. One reason men do not come to Christ is simply ignorance.

The second reason the Bible gives is prejudice. In Mark 7:5, the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" And He answered, "Well, hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites? As it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

“Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups, and many other such like things ye do.” And he said unto them, “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.”

I find it absolutely amazing that people love tradition more than the Word of God. I have been in churches, and pastors and people have told me, “Brother Weaver, we’ve always done it like this.” But just because you have always done something this way does not necessarily mean it is right, scriptural, or biblical. There is nothing wrong with tradition as long as it is biblical. Even if it is a man-made tradition, there is nothing wrong with it as long as everybody realizes that it is not binding on the consciences of other people. The problem is that we get our traditions going and want to bind them upon the consciences of others when there is no biblical foundation for them.

Consequently, when someone comes preaching and teaching the Word of God, people say, “We don’t believe that. We’ve always done

it like this. We don't want anything upset." I could go into the average church and split it with one sermon. All I would have to do is preach against its tradition, because people like their traditions more than the Word of God. So there is a prejudice against the Word of God, especially among religious people. The Pharisees were the most religious people in our Lord's day. He said, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

But there is another reason why men do not come to Christ: doctrinal error. First Corinthians 1:23 says, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness." Do you realize that the preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ is, to a lot of people, absolutely foolish? That is one reason why this building is not packed out today. People believe it is more important to go fishing, boating, skiing, or do a hundred other things rather than hear the Word of God.

The Assault of Satan

Our Lord says the preaching of the cross is to the Jews a stumbling block; that is, they stumble over it. And to the Greek, it is absolutely foolishness. How in the world would you ever come to someone? How in the world could you ever embrace someone that you really did not believe in, or that you thought was absolutely foolish, and hear anything he said?

The truth of the matter is that there are so many people who are in error concerning the person of Jesus Christ and the work of Jesus Christ. Consequently, because of that error, they will never come to Christ. So it is not just simply prejudice. It is not just simply ignorance. It is doctrinal error. But there is a fourth reason, and that is the assault of Satan.

Our Lord said, "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he'll spoil his house." So the strong man has to be bound. Let me show you how you have an assault of Satan against someone who is coming to Christ.

In Luke chapter 9, here is a man who brought his son, who had demons, to the disciples of our Lord, and they could not cast him

out. He said, “And I brought thy disciples, For I besought my disciples to cast him out, and they could not.”

And Jesus answering said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and suffer you? Bring my son hither. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down and tare him. And Jesus rebuked him, rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again unto his father.” Note: while he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down and tare him. Do you realize the devil will do anything to distract people?

I have noticed this—so help me, I have seen it hundreds of times. You go into the church and preach as hard as you can preach, and right when you are trying to make an important point, one little kid in the front gets up to go to the bathroom, and every set of eyes in that house follows that little kid, just as though you had never seen a kid go to the bathroom before. I have actually seen people look up and start counting the tiles on the ceiling.

What in the world is going on? There is an assault going on. You need to read Pilgrim’s Progress, especially the episode where Satan attacked Pilgrim and the argument there. Certainly, there is indeed the assault of Satan. But another reason people do not come to Christ is pride of heart. Look in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 9.

Notice the pride and the arrogance of the human heart. In Matthew 9, verse 10: “And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house. Behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him as disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, the self-righteous religious hypocrites, when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, why is your Master with publicans and sinners?”

In other words, if Christ was as holy as we were and are, He wouldn't be associating with these people. He wouldn't be eating with them. Why is your Master eating with publicans and sinners? Very obviously, He can't be the Holy Son of God that He's claiming, because certainly He's eating with these people. And then notice: “And it came to pass in verse 10, He said, Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, Why, eat of your master with publicans and sinners.

But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that behold need not a physician, but they that are sick."

"Go ye and learn what that meaneth, and I will have mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Do you realize there are some people that really do not believe that they are genuinely, totally depraved? They don't believe that they're wicked and sinful and in rebellion against God. The Puritans had a saying, "I have wonderful news for a sinner if I can ever find one." But you say there are sinners everywhere. Oh, I know. But they do not think themselves to be sinners.

I was preaching in North Carolina. There was a lady who came every night and sat in the pews and wept. She had mascara on, and big old black streaks came down her cheeks. She would weep openly every night while I preached. Finally, about the fourth night, she came up to me and said, "Would you and the pastor please come by and talk to me tomorrow?"

We got to her house, and I said, "Did you want us to share with you from the Word of God?" She said, "Yes, I did." I said, "Let me take the Bible and show you what God says about sinners and sin." I began to take her through the Bible, showing her how awful and wicked her sins were before God, how man is defiled from the top of his head to the bottom of his foot, and that there is no good thing in him. I showed her where He says, "our righteousness were as filthy rags." I showed her how we were as a cast-out newborn child in all our blood and pollution.

I showed her how we were the scum of a boiling pot wearing as a detestable carcass. I showed her all these pictures that God gives us of sin in the Bible. Before I could get through, she dried her eyes somewhat and said, "Well, I might be bad, but I'm not that bad." I looked at the pastor and said, "Neither is she a candidate for salvation either. We're wasting our time."

Someone who is convicted by the Holy Ghost believes he is the worst sinner who ever lived. Someone genuinely convicted by the Holy Spirit would be willing to fight the Apostle Paul when he said, "I am the chief of sinners." It is the pride of the human heart that does not think we need a Savior. We do not think we need saving,

that we are that bad, or that we are really that depraved. Our Lord said, “They that behold need not a physician, but go ye and learn what that meaneth.” As long as you do not think you need saving, you will never come to Christ. Never. There is the pride of heart.

Then, if you go back in your Bibles to John 5, where we started, there is another reason men do not come to Christ, and that is certainly sin. Notice what happens in John chapter 5. Our Lord said, “You came unto John, and he bare witness of me.”

Notice verse 33: “You sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I received not testimony from man. But these things I say unto you, that you might be saved. He, John the Baptist, was a burning and shining light, and you were willing for a season to rejoice in that light.” Then our Lord says in verse 36, “But I have greater witness than that of John.” What is the greater witness? “The works which the Father had given me to do. The same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father sent me.” Look at all the miracles, all the wonders, and the life of our Lord. Then He says in verse 37 there is another witness, not just John and not just His works, but “the Father himself who had sent me, hath borne witness of me.” Yet, “You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And you have not his word abiding in you, for whom he hath sent you, believe not.”

Then He says, “Search the Scriptures. For in them you think you have eternal life.” That is their interpretation of them. He says, “but they are they which testify of me.” Here our Lord is talking to these people and saying, “You want witnesses to the truth? You want testimony to the truth? You can check with John. You can check with the works. You can check with the Father. You can check with the Scriptures.” It is not from a lack of testimony, witnesses, or truth that people will not come to Christ. In light of all that evidence, our Lord says, “but you will not come to Me that you might have life.” Why? Because their wills are locked in stubborn rebellion to Jesus Christ.

We had a fellow attend our church occasionally. He was one of the most likable, lovable men you would ever meet. He was unsaved, and he was a drunk. He did not get drunk all the time. He had a good job, a wonderful family, a wonderful Christian wife, and children who

attended a Christian school. Everybody prayed for him. But this man, about once a month, would have to pinch a good drunk.

What Is Coming to Christ?

Other times he was as sober and as hard working as he could be. He would give you literally the shirt off his back. He was kind and gracious. One day I said to him, "Carl, let me ask you a question. Why is it that you do not come to church more often? You know I want you to come. Your wife wants you to come. Your children want you to come. Our people want you to come. Why is it that you do not come to church more often when you know that everyone here wants you here?"

I never will forget what he said. He said, "Preacher, you want me to tell you the truth, or do you want me to lie to you?"

I said, "Carl, I want you to tell me the truth."

He said, "I'll tell you the truth. The reason I don't come more often is because I love my sin too much. I know you're right. I know that Bible's right. And when I come, I get convicted, and I know I'm wrong. So I don't want to be convicted, and I want to keep doing what I'm doing, so I stay away."

At least he was honest. But sin is a reason people do not come to Christ.

Having noted why men do not come to Christ, let me answer the question, What is coming to Christ? I want to answer it two ways: first, negatively, and then positively. I want to tell you first what is not coming to Christ.

What Coming to Christ Is Not (Negatively)

Coming to Christ is not a physical act. How can I say that? If you look in verse 40, these people had come to where Jesus Christ was. They had physically walked or ridden an animal to get to where He was, and yet our Lord looked at them and said, "You will not come unto Me, that ye might have life." They had come to Him physically, but they certainly had not come unto Him spiritually.

Look in John chapter 6, beginning with verse 1: "After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias, and a great multitude followed Him." Why?

They followed Him because they saw the miracles He did on those who were diseased. Jesus went up to a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. Notice that they followed Him; they went where He was literally and physically. But they did not come to Him savingly or in faith. If you skip down to verse 26 of John chapter 6, you see how plain, fleshly, and carnal these people were. At first, they followed Him because they saw the miracles and were impressed.

Then our Lord fed the five thousand. But in verse 26 He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.” The only reason they were coming now was that they wanted a free meal. Yet they were there where He was physically; they had gone to where He was.

When I say that coming to Christ is not a physical act, I mean that coming to Christ is not walking down an aisle, raising your hand for prayer, joining a church, or performing good deeds. It is not doing any of these things. All of those things are physical. Multitudes have done physical things, and yet they have never come savingly to Jesus Christ.

It is true that Christians are baptized, join churches, pray, raise their hands, and do many wonderful works. But they do not do those things in order to come to Christ; they do them because they have already come to Christ. So many associate walking down an aisle with coming to Christ.

When I lived in Greenville, South Carolina, I preached every Sunday morning at the jail. The jailer was a Christian, and before I went back to preach he would tell me who was there and what was going on. A man in Greenville had murdered his wife and his mother-in-law. The jailer told me, “We’ve got him back there, and we’re going to turn him out in the bullpen with the rest of the men.”

I went back and preached, already knowing who the fellow was. He stood against the back wall with his foot against it, listening,

while everybody else crowded around the front. After the service, he hung around for a little while, then came to me and said, “Preacher, that was a good message. The men in here really needed it.” I said, “You mean you didn’t?” “No,” he said, “I’m already a Christian.” I said, “You are?”

I said, “Are you not in here because you are charged with murdering your wife and your mother-in-law?” He said, “Yes, that’s what I’m in here for.” I asked him, “Since you just told me that you were a Christian, and you know that the Bible says no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him, how can you associate the fact that you are a Christian with violating God’s commandments and being guilty of murder?”

So help me, this was his answer: “I know I’m a Christian because I went forward in the Billy Graham crusade.” He had done something physically; he had walked down an aisle. He thought that he had come to Christ, yet his life was contrary to Christ and contrary to the Word.

Coming to Christ is not a physical act. Listen carefully. Secondly, coming to Christ is not an experience. Coming to Christ is not certain feelings or sensations. It is not hair-raising experiences. It is not hearing the clapping of thunder and seeing the flash of lightning. Do you understand that the flesh and the devil can give you those experiences?

If you want a real experience, I can tell you how to have one. Before you go to bed, eat a peanut butter, mayonnaise, mustard, ketchup, and pickle sandwich, and probably you are going to have an experience before morning. You are going to be sick. You can get experiences.

You can come to my house, and I can let you grab hold of electric wire. I can assure you it will be a hair-raising experience. You know what the Bible says? “And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

Today, everybody places emphasis upon their experience: “My experience is standard.” Let’s suppose Deborah asked my wife, “Have you ever been in labor forty-eight hours in delivering a child?” My wife says, “Of course not. The most I’ve ever been in labor is a

couple of hours." Then Deborah looks at my wife and says, "Since you've never been in labor forty-eight hours like I have, you've never had a child." The truth is, my wife has had more children than she has.

The point I'm trying to make is this: It is not the experience that counts. It is not the degree or length of the experience. It is not anything really about the experience. What really counts is this: Was there a real, live child born? So many want to use their experience and measure everyone else by it. If you have not had this experience, you are not saved. If you have not had this sensation, you are not saved.

Let me show you some folks who had an experience, and yet at least one man among them was unsaved. Look in your Bibles to Acts, chapter 8. His name was Simon. He was a sorcerer. Philip was preaching in Samaria: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."

"For unclean spirits crying with a loud voice came out of many that were possessed with them, and many taken with palsies that were lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city, but there was a certain man called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because at a long time he had bewitched them with his sorceries. But when they, that is the people, believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and in the name of Jesus Christ they were baptized, both men and women, then Simon himself believed also. And when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, wondering, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."

Here's a man who had an experience. In fact, the Bible says he believed. He was baptized. He continued with Philip, wondering.

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John. When they came down,

they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for as yet He was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. When Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands he may receive the Holy Ghost. Give me also this power."

In other words, you've got these people in the palm of your hand. I want this power too. But Peter said, "Thy money perish with thee," because Simon had thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money. "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter," in Christianity. Why? "For thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Notice what Peter said: "Thy money perish with thee."

You can look up the word perish in the Greek and in a concordance all day long; it is a strong word. Literally, it means this: "Your money go to hell with you," for that is exactly where you are going. That is what Peter told him. Here was a man who had an experience, but it was not a saving experience, a converting experience, or a regenerating experience. He had an experience, but Peter says, "Your money perish with you. You have neither part nor lot in this matter. Your heart's not right in the sight of God."

Folks, if you want an experience, your flesh can give you one, and the devil will give you one. But that does not mean you are saved. It does not mean that you have come to Christ.

Do you know the only man in the New Testament to whom our Lord would not speak? Our Lord would not even speak to him. Do you know why He refused to speak to him? Because he wanted an experience. Look in Luke 23, beginning with verse 8: "And when Herod"—and may I remind you that is King Herod—"when King Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad." Here was a civil ruler glad to see Jesus. But why was he glad? "For he was desirous to see Him of a long time, because he'd heard many things of Him."

Christ was brought before King Herod. The Scripture says, "And he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he, Herod,

questioned with him Jesus in many words, but he, Jesus, answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and accused him vehemently. And Herod, with his men of war, set him at naught, and mocked him, and arrayed him in gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod made friends together, for before they were an enmity between themselves."

King Herod was so happy because he wanted to see Christ. Why? "For he hoped to see some miracle done by Him." He wanted to experience. He wanted to see something first. He wanted to see our Lord perform some little trick for him. Our Lord would not even speak to him. How wicked to desire just an experience. Coming to Christ is not a physical act. Coming to Christ is not an experience.

Thirdly, are you listening? Coming to Christ is not going to an old-fashioned altar. I was brought up in fundamental independent Baptist churches, and I would always hear the preacher say, "Well, you need to come forward to an old-fashioned altar." Do you realize that the old-fashioned altar, as we know it, was actually begun in the 1800s with Charles G. Finney?

Charles G. Finney was a semi-Pelagian. He was not even an Arminian; he was worse than an Arminian. He denied the doctrine of total depravity, and he believed that sinners could actually initiate their own salvation. He believed that sinners had to take the first step and then God would do the rest. Therefore, he invited them to take the first step by coming forward to the mourner's bench. His theology was this: if you took the first step, if you initiated salvation, then God was obligated to finish it.

The True Altar Is Christ

There is no such thing as an old-fashioned physical altar in any church, especially in a Bible-believing church. Now, how can I say that? Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews, chapter 8, and look at verse 5. In fact, let us begin reading verse 1 so that you can see the entire context. Verse 5 is the key, but verse 1 begins the context. Hebrews 8:1 says, "Now the things which we have spoken, this is the sum."

"We have such a high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty of the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary,

and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." Now, the tabernacle that Moses set up was not the true one. "For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices. Wherefore, it is a necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest." Why?

Christ was not of the Levitical tribe. He was of the tribe of Judah, "seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." There were Levites who served that tabernacle, that shadow. Hebrews 8:5 says that they "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things," as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: "See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shown thee in the mount."

Did it happen like this? One day Moses said, "I know what I'll do. I'll build a tabernacle, and I'll divide it into the court and holy place and most holy. I'll do this and I'll do that." Is that how it happened? Of course not. In order for there to have been a tabernacle and an altar—a real, genuine, physical altar—it had to be of divine origin. God told Moses to build the tabernacle, and God gave him the pattern: "See that thou build it according to the pattern that was given thee."

Not only must it be of divine origin; it must be made of divinely ordained materials. Moses could not go out and say, "I know, I'll just build this altar out of old pine wood." God said, "Moses, here's how you build this altar. Here's how you build this. You build it a certain way." He gave the materials for the altar, the tent, and the curtain, and commanded Moses to follow the pattern.

Since that altar had a divine origin, was made of divinely ordained materials, and followed a divinely ordained pattern, when it was set up in the tabernacle, if you wanted to worship God, if you wanted to come to God, you had to go to that altar.

You could not go anywhere else. You could not sacrifice in the field and have it be acceptable to God. You had to go to that altar. It was the only place where you could truly worship God. Later, when it was transferred to the temple, it was the same thing: you had to go to the temple. There is no such thing as a physical altar in any

Bible-believing church. But in every Bible-believing church, there is an altar. It is not a physical altar.

Everything in the tabernacle and temple was nothing more than shadows, types, emblems, and symbols—pictures and representations of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ fulfilled all those Old Testament types. Hebrews 13:10 says, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." If you want to go back to the physical, to the types, shadows, emblems, and symbols, you have no right to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is our altar. Because He is our altar, grace may be mediated to sinners anywhere, at any time. We do have an altar.

We do have a high priest, and we do have a temple, but it is all Jesus Christ. Those who want to return to the Old Testament types, emblems, and symbols have no right to Jesus Christ. We do have an altar, but it is not a physical altar; it is the person of Jesus Christ.

After Charles Haddon Spurgeon died, R. A. Torrey preached in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. When Torrey finished preaching, he gave an invitation for people to come forward. That had never been done in the tabernacle. Spurgeon would say, "If God has spoken to your heart, if you need help or if you have questions, I will be in my office in the morning at nine o'clock. Please come and see me." After Torrey finished, a member of Spurgeon's Tabernacle came to Dr. Torrey with questions. This member was also a newspaper man reporting Torrey's meeting in the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

A newspaperman asked Dr. Torrey, "When you finished preaching, I noticed you gave an invitation for people to come forward. That has never been done in the tabernacle before. May I ask why you did it?" Dr. Torrey responded, "Well, I believe in striking while the iron is hot."

The newspaperman, a member of the tabernacle, put down his pen, looked down for a moment, and then said, "Methinks, sir, if the governor were alive today"—that was what they called Spurgeon—"he would say, 'If the Holy Spirit heated the iron, it would stay hot till morning.'"

That is certainly true.

What Coming to Christ Is (Positively)

Just because someone comes forward physically and thinks he has come forward to an old-fashioned altar does not necessarily mean that he has come to Christ. What, then, is coming to Christ? Coming to Christ is a spiritual act wrought in grace by the power of God. Where is Christ? Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Since Christ is seated at the right hand of God, and since He is our altar, grace may be mediated at any sinner, at any time, at any place.

You do not have to be in one particular building in order to be saved. When you understand that Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God in the heavenlies, you must understand what He said in John 6:44: “No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him.” How in the world can a sinner get to Christ when Christ is seated at the right hand of God? Can he scale the heavenlies? Is there a ladder by which he can reach the skies? Is there any way that he can climb on his own to get to Christ?

The Bible teaches that fallen man cannot even see or enter into the kingdom of God apart from regeneration. Jesus Christ said in John 3:3, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” He is blind to it. In verse 5 He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” How can you come to Christ if you are blind and cannot get there on your own? In order to come savingly to Jesus Christ, you must be drawn of the Father.

The word is drawn, not dragged. He said, “You can't come to Me unless the Father draw you.” How does the Father draw us? John 6:45 says, “It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.” The Father draws us through teaching us. He opens our understanding and our eyes.

He lets us see our wickedness, our sins, and our rebellion. He convicts us. He shows us that without Christ we are lost, doomed, dead, and dying. Then He shows us the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ: how He is our substitute, our sacrifice, and our only salvation. He puts in us an understanding of our helplessness and hopelessness apart from Jesus Christ. Then He shows us that Jesus

Christ alone is the answer of salvation, and He puts in us a desire to come to Christ, to bow to Him, to believe in Him, and to trust in Him.

If there are longings in your breast to be holy and godly, to turn from sin, and to live obediently, I can assure you those longings did not come from your fallen nature. The Bible says in Philippians 2:13, “For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure.” God must not only put the “to will” in us to come to Christ; when He puts the “to will” in us, He always puts the “to do” as well.

When I went to pastor the first church I ever pastored, a young lady who was a member of that church came to talk with me. She told me her salvation experience, quote unquote, and wanted to know what I thought. When she finished, I said, “I'll tell you what your problem is. You're lost. You're unsaved. You may be a member of this church and you may be a professing Christian, but you've never come to savingly to Jesus Christ.” And you know what she did?

She got mad at me. She not only stormed out of my office, she left the church and went to some other church for several years. One day, as I was preaching, I looked out and saw her sitting in the congregation. As I preached, she was weeping—mascara running down her face. Afterwards, she asked, "Could you speak to me?"

I said, "Yes, you may." She came into my office and said, "Pastor, the first thing I want to do is apologize to you for getting mad and leaving this church. You were right. My problem was and still is that I'm lost. I know I can't be a church member, but would it be all right with you if I just came and sat and listened to the Word of God?"

I said, "It would not only be all right; I'd be pleased to have you." She sat and wept Sunday after Sunday and Wednesday after Wednesday. Finally, one Sunday evening, she went out with tears streaming down her eyes. A couple of our ladies were at the door, and one of them was tender and compassionate. When this young woman went out, Gloria grabbed my hand, fell on my neck weeping, and said, "Is it there something that you can do for her?"

I said, "Gloria, the trouble she's in now is somebody did something for her besides God. I can tell her the truth, but I can't

convict her and I can't convert her. Only God can do that. The best thing that you can do is pray for her."

It wasn't a month before the woman was gloriously converted. The first thing she said was, "Pastor, I don't have to have any man tell me now that I'm a Christian and that I'm saved. I've come to Jesus Christ."

The Bible said in Psalm 110 in verse 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." It is God who makes us willing to come. Coming to Christ is believing with all of our heart and soul. That is why the Scripture says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised thee from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Scripture says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." That is true. But then the Bible said, "How can they call on Him whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in Him whom they've not heard?"

Coming to Christ Means Leaving and Submitting

"And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach without being sent?" Coming to Christ is a spiritual act. Let me sum it up for you: coming to Christ means that you leave something and someone. When my wife came to me to be my wife, she left her mother and father, her sisters, and her old boyfriends as well. When you come to Christ, you leave your sins, your self-righteousness, and your wickedness. You come to Him as He is fully and freely offered in the gospel, and you receive Him not just as Savior, but as Lord. Jesus Christ is King of kings, Lord of lords, and God of gods.

Let me give you one last illustration. Can you imagine a man who has led a revolt against his lawful king? He has sought to overthrow the king and dethrone him, but he sees that he is losing the war and knows there is no way he can prevail. So he thinks, I had better sue for peace and try to work something out. He comes into the presence of the king, chewing gum flippantly, with an AK-47 on his arm, an AR-15 over here, pistols over here, and bandoliers of bullets all about him. He sashays up and says, "Well, old kingy-wingy, it looks like you're winning. Maybe we can work things out, and maybe you could

use me as commander-in-chief of your army." What do you think the king would say?

I'll tell you how I would respond: "Take that reprobate and cut his head off." But if that same man came into my presence, threw away his weapons of warfare, bowed himself to me, and pleaded for mercy, saying, "I was wicked, wrong, ungodly, and rebellious. I don't deserve life or anything. Just have mercy upon me," I would probably say, "Let him live."

So many people want to come to Christ and bring all their baggage—all their sins, self-righteousness, and works—and expect our Lord to receive them with open arms. No. When you come to Christ, you bow to His sovereign authority and His Lordship. You acknowledge that you are wicked, wrong, and ungodly. You come not just physically, but spiritually. You come in your mind and in your heart.

You come in the power of God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of God, because you have been taught and drawn by God. When you come to Christ, Christ will bring you back to the Father and say, “Look, Father, I brought another of your children home. Here he is.” You can only come to God through Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer

It is not just a physical act, coming forward, going to an old-fashioned altar, or being a church member. We must be drawn by the Father, bow the knee to the Son of God, and trust in His work, sacrifice, atonement, and propitiation alone. We must come understanding that if Christ does not save us, we are lost and undone, for salvation is only in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Father, in the name of Christ, we ask for your blessing, mercy, and help. Teach us what it really means to come savingly to Jesus Christ. Thank You, Father, for Your grace. In Christ’s name, Amen.

CHAPTER 7

The Effectual Call

October 19, 2008

Introduction and Scripture Reading

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13–15, Paul writes: “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.”

Salvation is Entirely God's Work

Verse 13 says that God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, and verse 14 says, “Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jonah 2:9 declares, “Salvation is of the Lord.”

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is indeed the Alpha and the Omega. He is the Alpha and Omega in salvation—the beginning and

the end. Not only is our sovereign God the beginning and the end of salvation; He is also everything in between. Hebrews 12:2 declares that God is the author and finisher of our faith. Think about that: He is the author and finisher of our faith. If God is the one who authored our faith, then He is the one who finishes it.

Do you understand that only the author of a book can finish the book? He is the author of our faith, and He is the finisher of our faith. That is why Philippians 1:6 declares, “Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.” If God is the author of your faith, He will finish it. If God has begun a good work in you, He will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. Salvation is the work of God alone, not the work of man. Man cannot save himself or help save himself. Salvation is only, always, and completely the work of God.

The Impossibility of Man's Salvation

Hold 2 Thessalonians, but turn to Mark, chapter 10. Scripture could not be plainer on this subject than the passage before us. This is the story of the rich young ruler, the man who came running to our Lord and knelt, saying, "Good Master, what must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Our Lord said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." Literally, our Lord was rebuking that young man. He was saying, "If I'm good, then I'm God, and if I'm God, you don't come running into my presence demanding something." Then He told him, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and take up your cross, follow me." The young man went away exceedingly grieved because he had many riches.

Now notice Mark 10:23: "And Jesus looked round about him and said unto his disciples, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!'" The disciples were astonished at His words. Jesus answered again, saying, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Is it possible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle? No. The illustration indicates the impossibility of man's salvation.

In verse 26, "And they, that is his disciples, were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?'" What is that question? "Who then can be saved?" He said the rich cannot do it. They cannot buy it. They cannot trust their way in because of their riches; they trust in their riches. "Who then can be saved?" That is the question.

Look how our Lord answers it in verse 27: "And Jesus looking upon them saith, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God. With God all things are possible.'" The question is, "Who then can be saved?" Our Lord has just gotten it out of His mouth: "With men it"—salvation, or being saved—"is impossible. But not with God, for with God all things are possible." It is absolutely impossible for man to save himself. He cannot save himself; he cannot help save himself. Salvation is the work of God.

Election and Calling in 2 Thessalonians 2

In 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 13 tells us that God chooses: “God has chosen you to salvation.” Verse 14 tells us that God calls: “Whereunto he called you.” Verse 15 tells us that God commands: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast.” Verse 16 tells us that God consoles: “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God, even our Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation.” Finally, verse 17 tells us that God comforts and confirms. So in this text, everything is something that God does.

Verses 13 and 14 speak of two things: our election and our calling. The Bible teaches us that we were chosen in Christ in eternity past, but we are called in time and in history. Ephesians 1:4 makes this plain, and verse 3 shows that God the Father is in the context: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He”—that is, God the Father—“hath chosen us in Him”—that is, in Christ—“before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”

Common Call vs. Effectual Call

The Bible tells us very plainly that God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Election is foundational, but

without effectual calling, we would not be brought into salvation. The text therefore speaks of our election, which will be addressed briefly, and also of our calling.

Let me distinguish the difference between the common call and the effectual call. The common call is the external proclamation of the gospel written in the Word of God, declaring what men are responsible to do—that is, repent and believe—in order to their salvation. It renders them inexcusable in their rebellion and disobedience.

The common call is simply the proclamation of the written Word of God to men, declaring unto them their responsibility, and it renders them inexcusable. This is the external proclamation of the gospel; the text also speaks of the effectual call.

The common call is nothing less than the preaching of the Word of God. Everyone in this room today is hearing the common call. But there is a difference between that and the effectual call. The effectual call is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds to the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He persuades us and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ as He is freely and fully offered in the gospel.

The common call is the work of man; the effectual call is the work of God, especially God the Holy Spirit. The common call is the public preaching of the gospel. The effectual call is when the Holy Spirit applies that common call and makes it effectual.

Notice back in verse 13. The Apostle Paul says: “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Since the Apostle Paul mentions the doctrine of election, let me give you a brief overview. First of all, note that there are various kinds of election mentioned in the Word of God.

Overview of Election

First, there is a national election. In the national election, God chose Israel to be His people. He did not choose the Babylonians, the Egyptians, or the Assyrians; He chose Israel. In fact, in Isaiah 45:4,

God says: “For Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by name.” He specifically calls Israel His elect. There is a national election whereby Israel was chosen to be the people of God.

Secondly, there is a vocational election. How many tribes were there in Israel? Twelve. Which tribe was chosen to work around the tabernacle and the temple? Levi. No one but the Levites could work in the tabernacle and the temple—not any of the other tribes. Thus, there is not only a national election, but also a vocational election, whereby Levi was chosen to work around the tabernacle and the temple.

Thirdly, there is also a messianic election. Jesus Christ was chosen by God the Father to be the God-man. In Isaiah 42:1, Jesus Christ is referred to as God's elect: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Jesus Christ was chosen by God the Father to be the Messiah, the God-man, the Redeemer, the substitute, and our surety. He is the Messiah. So there is a national election, a vocational election, and a messianic election. Fourthly, there is a soteriological election.

Soteriology is simply the doctrine of salvation. We could say it like this: there is an election unto salvation. Look in verse 13: "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." God chose us to salvation.

Before going further, let me point out several facts concerning election. First of all, election is a biblical doctrine. The word "elect," or its equivalent, occurs 73 times in our Bible. You have to believe something about the doctrine, or else you are going to have to rip 73 passages out of your Bible. It is indeed a biblical doctrine.

Secondly, any time you see the doctrine of election in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, and even in the Old Testament, it is always given to us in the context of praise and thankfulness. Look again at verse 13: "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord." The word "bound" there is the Greek word meaning "owe." We owe God thanks for our election.

Why are we bound to thank God for our election? Listen to how the Apostle Paul explained it in Romans 9:29. Quoting Isaiah, he said, "As Isaiah said before, 'Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah.'" If God had not chosen some to be saved, how many would be saved? None. We would all have been totally destroyed. So election is always given in the context of praise. We are thankful that God has chosen some to be saved. How many? I do not know. The Bible says it is an innumerable number, which no man can number.

But I am simply pointing out that it is indeed an election unto salvation, and always it is given in the context of praise.

Thirdly, it is God who does the choosing. In John 15:16, our Lord said it plainly: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you."

The Nature of the Effectual Call

Referring back to Ephesians 1:4, which we read earlier, if God chose us before the foundation of the world, it is obvious that God did the choosing. How many of us had an existence before the foundation of the world? Not one. Not one. So God chose us before the foundation of the world.

Fourthly, election, soteriological election, is personal. It is unto salvation. Notice what he says in verse 13: “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation.” Fifthly, election is not salvation itself. It is the foundation of salvation, but it is unto salvation. He said in verse 13, “Because God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation, or to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Since election is unto salvation, God has therefore appointed the necessary means to accomplish that: sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

The Gracious Call

Our election and our effectual calling are intimately connected. In fact, calling is based upon our election. I want to show you three simple things today, because I am not really dealing with the doctrine of election; I am dealing with effectual calling. First, it is a gracious call. Secondly, it is a gospel call, and thirdly, it is a glorious call.

First, it is a gracious call. Go back to verse 14. The Bible says, “Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is a gracious call, first of all, as to the person calling. Who does the calling? Verse 14 says, “Whereunto he”—who does the “he” refer to? It refers back to God, who is mentioned in verse 13. So it is God who does the calling. Calling is an act of God; it is something that God does, therefore it is all of grace. God the Father is the author of the call. Calling is an act of God’s grace, just like justification, regeneration, and adoption are acts of God’s grace. Whenever God does anything for us, it is always an act of grace. Christians are called by many different names in the Bible.

Sometimes we are called saints, believers, chosen ones, and holy ones. It may surprise you that we are even referred to as the called ones. Why are saints sometimes referred to as the called ones? The Scripture answers this plainly.

Romans 1:6 says, "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ." Those saints at Rome were the called of Jesus Christ. Verse 7 says, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." In verses 6 and 7, we are referred to as the called of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul makes clear that those who belong to Christ are called by His name.

Jude 1:1 says, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ and called." We are sanctified by God the Father, preserved by God the Father, and called by God the Father. These are not descriptions of something we accomplish for ourselves, but of God's work toward His people.

Revelation 17:14 says, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." We are the called ones, the chosen ones, and the faithful ones. The Scripture joins these descriptions together as it speaks of those who are with the Lamb.

Obviously, if we are called, we did not do the calling. If I were to stand here today and say, "Jeremy, please come here," and call him, he would not be doing the calling; I would be doing it. The one who summons is the one who calls, and the one summoned receives the call.

Who does the calling? Acts 2:39 says, "For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Who does the calling? God, God the Father. Calling is an act of God. He says, "Even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Now, I want you to note that phrase is indeed a limiting phrase. "Even as many as." God does not call everyone in the same way. Here He calls us unto salvation. Look in your Bibles, the book of Romans chapter 9 and verse 24. Romans 9:24. Just showing you that this is an act of God. Look in Romans 9:24. Look what He says: "Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." Wow, God does the calling. If you will turn over to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, and I want you to look at verse 9.

I do not understand how something like this could be misconstrued and misunderstood. There are so many plain passages, but 1 Corinthians 1:9, the Scripture says, "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Isn't that plain enough? God called us.

Now, if you would turn to one other passage, to 2 Timothy chapter 1, and look at verses 8 and 9. I'm just trying to show you that this call is a gracious call because it is God who does the calling. In 2 Timothy 1:8, Paul admonishes Timothy not to be ashamed of him or the gospel, and he gives a good reason. Notice 2 Timothy 1:8. He says, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel

according to the power of God." Now, notice he's talking about God "who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works."

"But according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." So calling is an act of God. We no more call ourselves than we elect ourselves, redeem ourselves, or regenerate ourselves, or justify ourselves. God is just as active in the application of salvation as He was in the origination of salvation. It was God who originated salvation, and it is God who applies salvation. So if you have been called to be His child, it is God who has called you. It is God who made the difference in your life.

Look in your Bibles, 1 Corinthians 4:7. Here, let me ask this question again. And I want the Bible to answer it for you. Who made you to differ? Why is it that you're saved and others are lost? Why is it that you have understanding and others do not have understanding? Why do you see truth and others do not see truth? Well, look what the Bible asks the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:7. He asks this question. Look at it. 1 Corinthians 4:7: "For who maketh thee to differ from another?"

The Gracious Call

"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 asked the question, "For who maketh thee to differ one from another?" Who is it? It is God. You have the salvation that you have because of God. You have the understanding that you have because of God. You have the talents that you have because of God. It is God who makes us to differ one from another. So it is indeed a gracious call in the fact that God condescends to call.

You have to consider the person doing the calling. Secondly, it is a gracious call as to the persons called. You remember the Bible says in verse 14 of 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, "He has called you." He has called you. What did He call you? Were you holy? Were you righteous? Were you perfect? Were you really, genuinely wanting to be saved?

No, the truth of the matter is that when He calls you, you were just as wicked, ungodly, and as lost as you possibly could be. You were totally, completely, absolutely, unequivocally in bondage and in sin. In fact, the Bible says in 1 Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

What does it mean to be called out of darkness? Ephesians 2, beginning there in verse 1, says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Here is what you were when God found you. You were dead spiritually. But you certainly were not dead physically, because you did some things. What did you do?

Ephesians 2:2 says, “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation”—our conduct—“in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Verse 12 says, “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”

That is what you were when God found you and when God called you. You were a sinner, in rebellion, wicked, ungodly, and undone. God graciously condescended to call you. Therefore, the effectual call has to be a gracious call, not only as to the person doing the calling, but also as to the persons who are called.

The Gospel Call

The second point is that it is a gospel call. Second Thessalonians 2:13 tells us that He has chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Verse 14 says, “Whereunto he called you by our gospel.” It is a gospel call, first of all, as to its content. The word “gospel” simply means good news. It is the good news that Jesus Christ is the Savior, the Redeemer, the Reconciler, and Lord of all.

Consider 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. The Apostle Paul says, “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” Preachers have often said that 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 is the gospel in a nutshell: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and He was raised the third day according to the Scriptures.

Let me ask you some questions. If 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 is indeed the gospel in a nutshell, here are my two main questions. Was not Jesus Christ born according to the Scriptures? Did not Jesus Christ live according to the Scriptures? The gospel is not simply facts about Jesus Christ. The gospel is Jesus Christ.

The reason the Apostle Paul emphasizes the death and resurrection of Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, if you read the rest of the chapter, is that certain individuals in the Corinthian church were denying the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is true that Jesus Christ died according to the Scriptures. It is true that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures. It is equally true that He was born and lived according to the Scriptures.

You can believe these facts intelligently and still be lost. The gospel is not merely, “Believe this and believe that.” The gospel is Jesus Christ Himself. The effectual call is more than a verbal proclamation of the gospel. It is the proclamation of that gospel, embellished and accomplished in the power of God through the Holy Spirit.

How can I make such a statement? Let me show you. In 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Paul says, “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” Then notice verse 5: “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”

Notice, please, it is a gospel call, but it is more than simply the external preaching of the Word of God. It is a gospel call accomplished in the power of God and in the power of the Holy Ghost. It must be the Holy Spirit who makes it effectual. Man can

call outwardly, but I cannot call inwardly. I can proclaim to you your duties and responsibilities before God, but I cannot give you a mind, a heart, and a will to do what God commands you to do, nor can I enable you to do it. That is something God Himself must do.

It is a gospel call as to its content, and it is also a gospel call as to its power. We could say it is an efficacious call. It actually accomplishes something. I am showing you that it is an efficacious call. For instance, in 2 Thessalonians 2:14, the Scripture says, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." In other words, when God calls you effectually, you actually obtain something. He calls you from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. He calls you from the power of Satan unto the power of God.

If you want to know what it means when He calls you to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, look at 2 Corinthians 4:6. Here you will find an explanation of what it means to be called to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Scripture says, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness." What are we talking about? Creation. Do you remember when God sovereignly, powerfully, effectually, efficaciously spoke the world into existence? And He spoke the world into existence. He said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Now watch what he says: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." What is the obtaining of the glory of Jesus Christ? It is salvation. Here, then, is the effectual call that actually enables us to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Caricatures and Clarifications

There are many caricatures concerning the effectual calling. You know what a caricature is: something blown out of proportion that is not real. Bob Hope was always given his ski nose, and Jimmy Durante was represented the same way. When they did a caricature of Jimmy Carter, all you could see was teeth, like the Cheshire Cat.

Let me give you several caricatures concerning the effectual call. These caricatures are absolutely false. One is that the effectual call means God simply throws people into heaven while they are kicking, screaming, and hollering, "I don't want to go there. I don't want to be saved." That is absolutely asinine and totally false. Anybody God has ever saved wanted to be saved with all his heart. Anybody who ever goes to heaven wanted to go there. Effectual calling does not mean that God saves someone against his will and throws him into heaven.

Another caricature is that effectual calling means a person is saved apart from, or without, the Word of God. Some say, "If the doctrine of election and effectual calling are true, I am going to be saved anyhow. There is nothing I can do about it. I might as well eat, drink, and be merry." No, dear friend. God does not save people anyhow; God saves people God's how. God's how is through repentance and faith.

Another caricature, or misrepresentation, is that the effectual call cannot be resisted at all, because it is sometimes called irresistible grace. The common call, which I will show you, may be resisted, and even the effectual call may be resisted initially. But it cannot be resisted successfully, because if it could be resisted successfully, it would not be an effectual call. The Scripture teaches that we are absolutely, totally depraved.

What does the Bible say in Romans 3? "There is none that understandeth, there is none that doeth good, there is none that seeketh after God." Let me tell you, dear friend, if the effectual call was not effectual, there would never be anybody saved, because we are so perverted and so depraved and so anti-God by nature, we would not want it.

Let me show you what I am talking about. Look in Acts chapter 7, and begin reading with verse 51. You remember Stephen is preaching. Before reading Acts 7, find Nehemiah chapter 9. You remember Ezra and Nehemiah. Find it, because I want to read a verse from Nehemiah 9. Then go back to Acts chapter 7. Stephen is about to be stoned to death. He is preaching to these Jews, and he says this in verse 51:

Resisting the Holy Spirit

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." Now, wait a minute. What did he just say? "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." Well, let me ask you a question, first of all. How did they resist the Holy Ghost? Hold Acts 7, but go to Nehemiah 9:30. Look what the Bible says:

"Yet many years didst thou"—talking about God—"yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands."

With that in mind, look at Acts 7:51 again: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." How did Israel resist the Holy Ghost? By refusing the preaching and teaching that was given through the prophets. So what call were they resisting? The common call, the outward call, the external call.

Let me demonstrate that now that you are in Acts 7. Skip down to verse 52. He asked, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." Isn't that interesting? When Peter said in verse 51, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye," he was saying that they were resisting the preaching of the gospel—the outward, external call. To show that they did exactly the same thing to Stephen, skip down to verse 57.

Stephen's preaching is recorded there: "Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." What in the world did he just say? "You always resist the Holy Ghost." How do you resist the Holy Ghost? He said, "You wouldn't listen to the preachers. You killed them." And what did they do to Stephen? Exactly what he was preaching about.

The Power of Effectual Calling

Yes, the Holy Spirit may be resisted. He may be resisted in the common call, and He also may be resisted initially in the effectual call, but He cannot be resisted successfully in the effectual call.

Let me begin to tie this together. To me, this shows the absolute power of God and gives confidence for missions, for witnessing, and for whatever we are called to do. Look at 1 Corinthians 1:18: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Now watch. We are talking about preaching. "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness." The Jews stumbled over Jesus Christ. They did not want to recognize Him as the Messiah, as the God-man.

When the Apostle Paul, Peter, and the others preached, the Jews did not care. What about the preaching to the Greeks? The Greeks thought it was foolishness. Remember, the Greeks were philosophers. They thought they had all the wisdom. You can read about that in Acts chapter 17. Thus, the preaching of the gospel is foolishness to those who do not believe: the Jews stumble over it, and the Greeks think it is foolishness.

Now let us read verses 22, 23, and 24 together: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Do you see what I see? Is there a difference here? What was this preaching? Is not this preaching a call—an outward call? Yes. When Paul preached, it was foolishness and a stumblingblock. They could

not see Christ or the beauty of salvation. But in verse 24 he says, “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” There is a totally different calling in verse 24 from that mentioned in verses 21, 22, and 23. In verse 24, they are called in such a way that they now see the beauty and wisdom of Jesus Christ. People stumble and fall over the external preaching of the Word of God, but it is the calling—the effectual calling—by the power of God that draws sinners to Himself. Now, look at verse 26. He is talking about those of us who have been called.

Paul is talking about those of us who have been saved: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Isn't that amazing? "Ye see your calling, brethren."

This same effectual call is taught by our Lord in John chapter 6: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." How many can come to Christ on their own? Not one. In order to come to Christ savingly, we must be drawn by the Father. What does that mean? Verse 45 says, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. What is the drawing? What is the effectual call?

It is when God opens our understanding, illuminates our minds, renews our wills, teaches us, and shows us the beauty and knowledge of Jesus Christ. He shows us how wicked and sinful we are, that Christ is our only hope, and places in us a desire to be saved and to come to Christ. The Father draws us through the conviction,

illumination, enlightenment, and teaching of the Holy Spirit. He teaches us that we are sinners and cannot save ourselves; He teaches us the beauty, glory, and graciousness of Jesus Christ.

Let me illustrate this. All of us have had children. Have you ever noticed that children by nature prefer candy and ice cream to broccoli, collards, turnips, and peas? As a parent, you want your child to eat healthy food, but the child by nature wants ice cream, candy, hamburgers—everything that is bad for him. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could wave your hand over your child and he would say, "Ice cream, candy? Give me some good old broccoli and cauliflower. I prefer it raw"?

Well, God can do that. God changes us from loving sin, wickedness, disobedience, and rebellion to loving truth and righteousness.

One of my favorite illustrations concerns two mothers sitting on a front porch. They were talking when one mother's eighteen-year-old son came out of the house. He wore a suit, shirt, and tie; his hair was combed, his fingernails were clean, and his shoes were shined. He kissed his mother on the cheek and said, "Mother, I'm leaving now. I'll be in by eleven o'clock. If I have any problems, I'll call you." Then he got in the car and drove off.

The mother looked at her neighbor and said, "Isn't that absolutely disgusting?" The neighbor was horrified: "Disgusting? I would give anything if my teenage son dressed so well, acted so mannerly, and was so clean and neat."

"Oh, no," the mother said. "I don't mean that it was disgusting that he was clean, neat, and mannerly. What I think is disgusting is that a little five-foot-two, blonde-headed, blue-eyed girl got him to do in a week what I couldn't get him to do in eighteen years."

God changes our want-tos. He has the power to open our eyes. Second Timothy 1:9 says, "...who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works." It is not something that we have done, but something that God has done. God can make us want salvation, despise sin, and despise wickedness. In Psalm 110:3, speaking of Messiah, we read, "Thy people shall be willing in the day

of thy power." When God exerts His power upon us, He makes us willing.

Someone may say, "When I came to Christ, I was willing to come to Christ. I wanted to come to Christ." But who made you willing? Who made you want to come to Christ? Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." If you will to come to Christ, it is God who put that "to will" in you. If you wanted to come to Christ, it is God who put that "to will" in you. All who came to Christ willed to come, but only God made them willing. Only God made us willing to come on His terms.

There is a little verse taught to children: "God never compels us to go, oh no. He never compels us to go. God never compels us to go against our will. He just makes us willing to go." It is like Exodus 23:28, when God drove the Hivites out of the land. He never made them go; He sent hornets to make them willing to go. When the hornets got hold of them, they were willing to leave. When God gets hold of us, we are willing to come to Christ and willing to come on His terms.

The Glorious Call and Assurance

It is not only a gracious call and a gospel call; it is a glorious call. We have been called by the gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. First Peter 5:10 says, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus." Romans 8:16-18 tells us that we are not only heirs of Christ, but heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. First John 3:1 says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

"Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." It is indeed a glorious call.

Let me tie things together by way of application. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul spoke about our election and our effectual calling. Now look at 1 Thessalonians 1:4: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and

says, "You know, as well as I know, that you're God's elect." How did he know they were God's elect? This is a very important question.

Did he scale a ladder up to heaven and look in the Lamb's Book of Life? No. Did God just somehow mysteriously and sovereignly reveal it to him? No. I can tell you whether or not you're God's elect. You can tell me whether or not I'm God's elect. He says, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." How can you know for sure that you're God's elect?

I had a woman come to me one time in tears, completely broken. I asked her what the problem was, and she said, "I don't know whether or not I'm God's elect." She said, "I want to be saved and I want to be holy and I want to be godly. I want to live for Christ." I hated to laugh, but I just smiled. I said, "Dear lady, let me tell you something. If you were not one of God's elect, none of those desires would ever be in your mind or in your heart."

How do we know that our election is of God? Look at verse 5: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." Note what Paul says. You can know you're God's elect because you've been effectually called unto salvation. Look again at 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." How do we know that we're chosen? Verse 14 says, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." You know you're God's elect because you've been effectually called to the gospel. You've been saved, and your life is being brought into conformity to the Word of God.

Look in verse 15: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions"—or the teachings—"which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." Duty is based upon doctrine. Knowing that you're God's elect and that God has called you enables you to stand fast and obey Him. It's only His grace and His power. God is the author of the effectual call. God alone can call savingly.

Our responsibility is to proclaim the Word of God and tell men what God requires of them. That telling, preaching, and teaching will render them inexcusable. It is up to God, however, to draw them and call them effectually to Jesus Christ. I can give you an external call, a common call, but only God can give you that internal, effectual, efficacious call to the obtaining of the glory of Jesus Christ.

I preach because I know some are going to be saved. I don't know who or where. My job is not to save them; my job is to tell them. As I tell them, God is going to save them. He will draw them. You remember that passage in Acts? "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." We need to thank God that there is an effectual call, that God does call us savingly to salvation.

Anyone who has ever been saved by Jesus Christ would not change or have it any other way for the entire world. His salvation is real.

Let's pray. Father, we do ask that You would speak to our hearts, teach us, and build us up in the most holy faith. May we give Thee praise for our election and for our calling. Lord, we pray that You would indeed save Thy people, whoever they are, wherever they may be. Bring them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.

I want to assure you of this: Anyone who has ever been saved by Jesus Christ would not change it or have it any other way for the entire world. His salvation is real.

Let us pray. Father, speak to our hearts, teach us, and build us up in the most holy faith. May we praise Thee for our election and calling. Lord, save Thy people, whoever they are, wherever they may be. Bring them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

Walking on Water

April 18, 2010

Walking on the Water

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 14:22-33 (KJV)

Introduction and Scripture Reading

> "And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship and to go before Him into the other side while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray.
>
> "And when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit, and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to

> Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased."

The Internet Quiz and the Reality of Walking on Water

> Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped, saying, "Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God."
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> Some of you have seen the Internet quiz, which comes with a picture. It simply asks, How many men have walked on the water? The answer is three: Jesus, Peter, and the third one is the guy below. In the picture, a man is jumping over the edge, with his feet just touching the water, and behind him is a charging bull. It looks as if the man is actually running on the water. However, I have seen the video, and the man actually sinks, as does the bull. Someone has done a little Photoshop work, taking the picture just when his feet barely hit the water, so that it really looks as though he is running across the top of the water.

Only two have walked on water: our Lord and, of course, Peter. There are lessons that you and I are to learn from this incident in Matthew chapter 14. Our message begins in verse 22: "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and to go before him into the other side while he sent the multitudes away."

The word "straightway" means immediately, at once. Our Lord immediately commanded His disciples to get into a ship and go to the other side. The word "constrain" refers not only to a command but also to compulsion. Our Lord was compelling His disciples to get into the ship and go to the other side. So we have to ask: Why was our Lord so insistent that His disciples leave immediately, and why did He compel them to go to the other side?

Why Jesus Constrained the Disciples to Leave

The context of this incident is given after the feeding of the five thousand. Matthew records: "And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past. Send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said to them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat."

"And they said to him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes. And he said, Bring them hither to me. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass. And he took the five loaves and the two fishes. And looking up to heaven, he blessed and brake and gave the loaves to his disciples and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled. And they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."

There was a huge multitude there—five thousand men. If each one was married, that would be another five thousand women, plus children, probably fifteen or twenty thousand people. Then our Lord immediately constrained His disciples to get into a ship and go to the other side. Why? John records something additional that Matthew does not. After our Lord fed the five thousand, John 6:15 says, concerning the multitude, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."

The Bible says, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." This immediately follows the feeding of the five thousand. The people were going to take our Lord by force and make Him a king, but they desired Christ as king only so that He might feed them and deliver them from the Romans.

They had no desire to submit to Him or recognize Him through repentance and faith. Their desire for a temporal king and a temporal kingdom was completely carnal and had absolutely no foundation in Scripture. Initially, the multitudes sought Christ and followed Him because they saw the miracles which He did. They were enthralled, entertained, and mystified.

In Mark chapter 2 and verse 12, after He had performed one miracle, they said, “We never saw it on this fashion.” In other words, this was something totally and completely different. John 6:2 says, “And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.” These were people who wanted to be entertained. Christ was working all these miracles, and they were eager to see them.

After He fed them, however, they not only wanted to make Him a king, but they followed Him for a totally different reason. In John 6:26, our Lord tells them, “Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.” In other words, they wanted free food.

Here were some welfare recipients. If they had lived in America, they would have been happy, because the government will feed anybody and everybody as long as they submit to it. But this was Christ. He said that the only reason they were following Him was because they had received free food. So let us ask the question again.

Why did our Lord command, constrain, and compel His disciples to get into a ship and go to the other side? I can give you several possible answers. He probably did not want them to take part with the multitude in their rashness, trying to seek Him by force and make Him a king, all for the wrong reasons. Very obviously, it is easy to get caught up in a multitude. He was preventing the occasion of sin by removing His disciples from the circumstance and situation surrounding them. He commanded, compelled, and constrained them to get into the ship and leave. In other words, they would not be caught up in this frenzy, rashness, and carnal act.

Secondly, He may simply have wanted to teach them to obey. They wanted to stay; He wanted them to go. A good soldier learns to obey, even when he suffers hardship. They may not have wanted to leave Him alone in a desert place. They were in a desert place, remember? They said, “This is a desert place.” Matthew 14:23 says, “And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray. And when the evening was come, he was alone.” They may not have wanted to leave our Lord alone. He was in a desert place.

Yet He commanded them, and He was in control. He was in command, not them. He gave the orders; therefore, it was theirs to obey. A third reason for sending the disciples away is that it set the stage for Christ not only to demonstrate His deity and sovereignty by walking on the water, but also to teach a valuable lesson for all of us. So they obeyed. Again, Matthew 14:23 says, “And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray.”

The Disciples' Struggle on the Sea

"And when the evening was come, he was there alone." Watch verse 24: "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary." They were in the midst of the Sea of Galilee, or the Sea of Tiberias; it is all one and the same. The sea is about ten miles wide. In John chapter 6, verse 19, John tells us that they were about twenty-five or thirty furlongs out into the sea, approximately four miles. They were actually in the middle of the sea, and the wind was contrary to them. They had been rowing all night and had not gotten more than four or five miles. They had not even crossed the sea. He had told them to go to the other side, but they were now in the middle of the sea. "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary."

"And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them walking on the sea." The fourth watch of the night would have been between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. These disciples had rowed and toiled all night long. It was getting close to daybreak, and they had only reached the middle of the sea.

Try to picture this. The Lord had sent them away and told them to go to the other side. They were endeavoring to obey, but because of the wind and the sea, they were only about halfway across. They were tired, exhausted, sleepy, and frightened. The sea was contrary to them, and the wind was contrary to them.

It was now nearly morning. There was either just a little moonlight, or perhaps the sun was about to rise. Suddenly, in that little bit of light, they saw something that looked like a man walking on the water. They were four or five miles out in the sea, and there was not enough light to distinguish who or what it was. Why would they expect it to be Christ? They had left Him in a desert place, and

He had commanded them to go to the other side. So they asked themselves, Who is this, or what is this? They supposed it to be a spirit, a ghost.

Jesus' Revelation and Peter's Request

They were terribly frightened. It is easy to be frightened once you are tired, exhausted, and sleepy. Every one of us has been in a dead sleep from exhaustion when, suddenly, a loud noise occurs. What do we do? We jump straight up in bed. We have no idea what it is, and it scares us momentarily.

Note verse 26: “And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit, and they cried out for fear.” They were not only exhausted and sleepy; now they were frightened. Verse 27 says, “But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I. Be not afraid.” Instantly our Lord spoke to them. Here is the word “straightway” again: immediately, at once. Our Lord said, “Be not afraid, it is I.” He did not wish them to be fearful at all.

Adam Clarke, the commentator, made this observation: in this one miracle, we may discern three things. Though at a distance from His disciples, He knew their distress—the wind and the sea were contrary to them. Second, He found them on the lake, probably in darkness, and knew exactly where to go. Third, He walked upon the water. Job says in Job 9:8, “He walketh on the waves of the sea,” intimating that this is possible only for omnipotence. The One who is all-powerful has to be God.

In verse 27, when our Lord said, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid," evidently His words had the desired effect upon His disciples. Peter especially either ignores or forgets his toil, exhaustion, and sleepiness, as well as the storm, and asks to come to Christ: "And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."

Notice carefully what Peter said: "If it be thou, bid me come unto thee." Peter is not necessarily asking for a supernatural miracle. He is asking primarily to come to Christ. Walking on the water was simply a means to the end. What Peter wanted was this: "Lord, I

want to come to you; get me to you no matter how I get there. I just want to be there."

There are several lessons we must learn here. The first should be obvious: any time you discern by faith, according to the Word of God, that Christ is moving toward you in grace and mercy, it is your duty and responsibility to endeavor to come to Him in obedience and faith. If we discern the grace and mercy of God upon us, approaching us, or about to fall upon us, we have a greater responsibility to be more obedient and to exercise more faith.

Peter's Fear and Sinking

The next lesson is vastly important. When our Lord said, "It is I, be not afraid," Peter did not rashly jump from the boat and cry, "Lord, I'm coming to you." He asked permission: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee." Peter would not leave that boat or attempt to come to Christ without Christ's warrant and authority. If Peter had merely jumped from the boat and said, "Lord, I'm coming to you," without Christ's warrant and authority, it would have been nothing less than blasphemy, because it would have been nothing less than tempting God.

There is a vast difference between doing something biblical and commanded and doing something absolutely stupid, tempting Christ by saying that you trust Him and asking Him to protect you when you have no warrant or authority to do that. It is like someone going to the Empire State Building, getting to the top, and jumping off while saying, “Oh, but I’m trusting Christ to catch me before I hit the bottom.” Is that faith? That is not faith. It is foolishness. Such acts are not acts of faith; they are acts of presumption and a blasphemous tempting of God.

Do you not remember that even our Lord Himself was tempted in this manner? In Luke 4:9, the devil took Him up to the pinnacle of the temple and said, “Jump off if you’re the Christ.” Christ refused. He would not do anything rash or presumptuous. Peter, therefore, was not acting rashly.

Would you, on your own, attempt to go forty days and forty nights without food or water? If you do, you will end up dead. You can go

forty days without food, but you usually cannot go more than three days without water without dying. Elijah did exactly that, but he did it at the warrant and command of God. In 1 Kings 19:8, the Bible says, “And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.” It would have been foolish, presumptuous, and a tempting of God if Elijah had simply decided to do that on his own initiative.

God commanded him to eat and drink and then go to Horeb, and that is exactly what he did. Moses was in the mount the same amount of time without food or water. Peter, then, was not acting rashly. He sought our Lord’s will and authority before he stepped out. It must be admitted that Peter did act in faith when he left the safety of the ship and stepped into the raging sea.

He did indeed trust that it was Christ. He trusted Christ's word because Christ said, "Come." Peter said, "I believe it's you, Lord, and I believe your word." He stepped out of the ship and began to walk to Christ. Impossibilities become possibilities when we obey the word of our Lord.

There is a difference between Christ and Peter walking on the water. Christ walks on the water by virtue of His own power and authority, since He is God. Peter walks on the water because he is held up by the power of Christ. Spurgeon says, "Peter's Lord is about to teach him a practical lesson. He asked to be bidden to come. He may come. He does come. He leaves the boat. He treads the way. He's on his way towards his Lord. We can do anything if we have divine authorization and courage enough to take our Lord at his word." That is true. We may do anything if we have, first of all, divine authorization, and secondly, courage to take our Lord at His word.

Peter walked on the waves of the raging sea, but something suddenly began to change. Peter began to sink. Matthew 14:29-30 says, "And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

The Nature of Fear vs. Faith and Love

The Bible tells us that he saw the wind was boisterous—that is, strong, powerful, and violent. But was the wind not exactly like that before they ever saw Christ? Yes. Verse 24 tells us that they had rowed all night and could not get anywhere because the wind was contrary to them. Was it not exactly like that when Peter stepped out of the boat? Yes. The wind was like that before Christ came, and it was like that when Peter stepped out of the ship.

So you have to ask the question: Why did he sink? I have heard it preached all my life that Peter began to sink because he saw that the wind was boisterous, meaning that he took his eyes off Christ and looked at his circumstances and surroundings. Certainly, it is never wise to take your eyes away from Christ or His Word. However, we are always surrounded by circumstances because they are part and parcel of our lives.

You have to remember something: Peter, by vocation, was a fisherman. Do you not think he had been in storms like this previously? Of course he had. You cannot be four or five miles out on a lake, or crossing a lake, without sooner or later having boisterous wind. He had been in similar circumstances, I am sure. Let me ask you: If you are driving down the road and see a tornado approaching, is it wise to pray? Is it wise to shut your eyes while you pray? Remember, you are driving down the road, and the answer is no.

If I see a tornado coming while I am driving, I am going to pray. But while I am praying, I am going to keep my eye on that tornado to make sure I can avoid it and go in the opposite direction, or at least where it has already been, so that I will not be involved in that situation. I am going to pray, but I am also going to keep my eye upon my circumstances. Yet my faith is still in Christ; I am seeking His divine protection.

Peter may not have taken his eyes off Christ. If Christ was walking in the midst of the sea, and they were in the midst of the sea, when Peter stepped out of the boat, the wind was everywhere and the waves were everywhere. He could have been looking directly at Christ and still have seen the wind and the waves. If it was not the

wind and the waves that made him sink, what was it? Look back at verse 30: “But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.” The wind was boisterous before Christ appeared and when Peter stepped out of the boat. There was no change in the wind. The only change was in Peter: he became afraid. You may say, “Oh, but brother, do not condemn Peter, because if I happened to be in that situation, I would have been afraid as well.”

You would have sunk too. You must understand that there is a difference between biblical fear and humanistic fear. Biblically, one fears when he believes God, obeys His Word, and exercises faith in Him. The difference is shown immediately in Hebrews 11:7: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Notice that the Bible begins, “By faith.” Noah, being warned of God of things not yet seen, moved with fear. What was Noah afraid of? God—His judgment, His wrath, His truth, and His Word. He knew that God was not playing and that God would not lie.

Noah’s fear, then, was actually a reverential awe and respect of God, which moved him to obey and to do what was necessary to save his family. His fear and his faith were evidenced by his obedience. Humanistic fear is totally different from that. Humanistic fear is simply fear that is not based upon faith. It is not based upon the Word of God. Humanistic fear is just simply fear for fear’s sake.

It is rooted and grounded in our perception of danger, helplessness, and hopelessness. We know that we are in danger, yet we do not know what to do. We do not know where to turn. We do not know how to respond. Such fear is condemned in the Word of God. It evidences an ignorance of the Word of God and a lack of faith in the Son of God. Humanistic fear is the opposite of faith.

Look back in Matthew 14 again. Humanistic fear is the opposite of faith. We normally think that unbelief is the opposite of faith, and it can be, but there are other things that are the opposite of faith as well. We are told in no uncertain terms that fear renders faith impossible. Notice verse 30: "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid." It was only when he became afraid that he began to

sink. The wind had not changed. Once he stepped out of the ship, the wind was still the same. The only change was that Peter became afraid, and he began to sink.

Watch verse 31: "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Why is He calling him "little faith"? Because he feared. Fear is the opposite of faith. Hold Matthew 14, but look in your Bibles to Proverbs 29:25.

This is an excellent verse to memorize: "The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." What is a snare? A snare is a trap. Once we fall into the trap, we are snared, caught, and caged like an animal. The fear of man is a snare. But "whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe"; that is, if you have faith in the Lord, you will be protected and defended.

Here are two opposites: fear on the one hand and faith on the other. It is the fear of man that brings the snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be made safe. As you read through the New Testament, think of how many did not obey our Lord. You will always find this phrase: "because of the fear of the Jews." The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe. Everyone has fears, but no one wishes to live by fear.

I preached a message years ago on the historical and biblical significance of the beard. Some of you have heard it. Did you know that it is one of the top messages on SermonAudio, listened to by people all across the world? “Who is Israel?” “The historical and biblical significance of the beard.” “Romans 13.” Those are the top ones that have been listened to all across this world.

I even got an email from a man in Italy, a chaplain in the United States Army, who had listened to this message and said, “I can’t wait until I can get out of the service so I can grow my beard.” The reason I grew this beard years ago was because of what the Bible teaches concerning beards. When I first grew it, I would have horrible nightmares. My nightmare was that I would wake up clean-shaven and would not know what had happened to my beard. I had a fear of losing my beard. You say, “Well, that’s silly.” No, it’s not silly. It was

a fear. Finally, after years and years, I got over it, but still it was there.

Everyone has fears. There is not one American who loves to hear these words: "Hello, I'm from the government and I'm here to help you." There are fears. We fear enemies. We fear agents. We fear entrapments. We fear power-mad politicians. We fear uncontrolled maniacs. We fear drunks and dopeheads and whoremongers and adulterers. Some would say they are all the same crowd, one and the same. Maybe. But the point I am trying to make is that there are many, many different fears.

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 10, beginning with verse 25. Our Lord says, "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, that is Satan, or lord of the filth, the lord of the flies, how much more shall they call them of his household?" If they have stigmatized our Lord and called Him ungodly, wicked names, how much more are they going to call those of His own household? Watch verse 26: "Fear them not therefore."

Jesus said, "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in the light. And what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye from the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your heavenly Father."

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore. Ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Note what He is referring to. In this passage, first of all, He says we are not to fear those who castigate us or call us names. We are not to fear those who seek to take our lives. We are not to fear those who seek to take our goods. Why? Because we are of more value than a sparrow. And those sparrows need a sonar reap. Yes, your heavenly Father takes care of them.

Now turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 2 and look at verse 10, at what our Lord told some believers there. Revelation 2:10:

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.” Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Now wait a minute. You can suffer many things. You can suffer ill health. You can suffer loss of wealth. You can suffer loss of family. That is not all. He says, “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.”

“Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.” He said some of you would be cast into prison.

Put these two passages together. Our Lord tells us plainly that we are not to fear those who ridicule, mock, slander, persecute, and prosecute. We are not to fear those who kill the body. We are not to fear those who seek to harm us in any way. We are not to fear that we are going to be forsaken, deserted, or left alone. We are told that God providentially looks after His own, and we are told that the only one we are to fear is the one true and living God, and Him alone.

Hebrews 13:6 gives a powerful summary of all these passages about fear: “So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” After all these passages saying, “Fear not,” this is the one verse that summarizes everything. Did you hear that? “So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me.”

If you have not memorized this verse, I would encourage you to do so. This is a powerful verse. Let that seep down into your souls. Consider it. Meditate upon it. Ponder it. Make application to your life. What is it that we are to say boldly? “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me.”

What can man do to you? A lot of things. He can persecute you, prosecute you, imprison you, steal from you, and take your life. But we are to fear none of these things.

Second Timothy 1:7 says, “For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” If God does not give us a spirit of fear, from whence, then, does fear originate? It could come from sin, flesh, the world, or the devil. But does it come from God? It is interesting that when you read in the New Testament, especially when angels would speak to men, their

opening words were usually, “Fear not.” Even our Lord would often begin His words with, “Fear not.”

Since God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind, Romans 8:15 says, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” God says specifically that we have not received the spirit of bondage, which is fear. We have received the Spirit of adoption; that is, we are His children, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.”

Why do we fear? Here is the answer: because we do not have faith, and we are not perfected in love. Scripture shows that unbelief is the opposite of faith, fear is the opposite of faith, and love is also the opposite of fear. First John 4:17 says, “Herein is our love made perfect. That we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” Thus, faith is the opposite of fear, and love is the opposite of fear.

In verse 17, the general idea is that love is rendered complete and entire in the manner which the Apostle specifies: when we endeavor to be like Christ and please the Father. He said, “As he is, so are we in this world.” How was Christ in this world? Our Lord said in John 8:29, “And he that sent me is with me. The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him.”

How are we to be like Christ? How are we to have boldness in the day of judgment? We must endeavor to do always those things that please Him in every area of our life. That is how we are to be like Christ, and that is how we are to have boldness in the day of judgment: by endeavoring to please Him in all things.

First John 4:18 tells us that if we love and exercise faith as we should, there is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. Love is an affection, a disposition, and a state of being which does not produce fear. If you genuinely love someone, you trust that individual.

If you genuinely love someone, you trust that individual. I am not afraid of my mother. I am not afraid of my wife, although she shoots very well, so I keep her supplied with ammunition. I have no fear that she is going to take that Glock and point it toward me one day. I love her, and I trust her. I have no fear for my children, my grandchildren, or my friends. If you love someone, you trust them, and love is a disposition which does not produce fear.

If our hearts are genuinely filled with the love of God, we would trust Him completely. There would be absolutely nothing to fear in this world or the world to come. We are told that perfect love casts out fear. When love is complete, when it is allowed to exert its proper influence on the soul, there is absolutely nothing that will alarm us or cause us to be alarmed.

The reason that love casts out fear is because fear has torment. Fear is a very distressing emotion. We fear poverty, sickness, bereavement, death, and many things. The love of God frees us and delivers us from all these distressing apprehensions. It leads us to trust Him as we should. If we have hearts full of love and faith, there will not be any fear. Perfect love casteth out fear. Fear hath torment. Fear distresses us, fills us with anguish, and makes us restless and uneasy.

It keeps us in servitude and bondage. As long as you fear, you are going to be in bondage. We need to pray more that the love of God would indeed fill our hearts, because it is perfect love that casts out fear. The Scripture says, "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." The fact that we have fear, the evidence that we fear, demonstrates that we have a long way to go. Even the Apostle Peter was not perfect.

He feared, therefore he sank. He was afraid, because fear is the opposite of faith. Fear is the opposite of love. Had he loved as he should have, he would have trusted and would not have sunk. It was not the wind or the circumstances; it was the fear that made him sink.

Isaiah 35:4 tells us, “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense. He will come and save you.” When you look

at this world and this nation, to use a cliché that you are familiar with, it is going to hell in a handbasket. What does God say to His own? Fear not. Be strong. "I'm going to come with a recompense. I will take care of the problem. I will rectify the situation. Just be strong. Don't fear. I'll do it."

Our Lord said this to His disciples in Matthew 8: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. Notice what He said: "Why are ye so fearful? O ye of little faith." Remember, fear is the opposite of faith. If you had faith, you would not be fearful. In Mark 4:40, He said to them, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" In other words, if you have faith, you are not going to be fearful. If you have fear, it is because you do not have faith. Like oil and water, faith and fear do not mix. Love and fear do not mix.

If we would be holy, mature, and complete, we need to cease fearing, begin loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, body, spirit, and being, as He has commanded us, and exercise faith in Him. The more we believe, the less we doubt and fear. The more we love, the less we fear and distrust. Peter began to sink, not because of the wind or the raging sea, but because he was afraid.

Applications and Conclusion

There are no perfect saints in this life. Even the apostles were not perfect. The strongest faith and greatest courage have a mixture of fear. Those who boldly say, "Lord, I believe," must also say, "Lord, help my unbelief." Nothing but perfect love can cast out fear. Good men often fail in the graces in which they are most eminent and which they exercise most often. Our failure demonstrates that we are not perfect. Peter was courageous at first, but afterward his heart failed him. Often it is the lengthening of the trial that exposes the weakness of our faith.

I do not know how far Christ was from the boat or how many steps Peter actually took on the water. He may have walked three or four steps, or ten or fifteen. Christ was far enough away that Peter began to fear, and when he feared, he sank. We must learn not only to start well, but to end well.

Faith may be true and yet weak. Peter was a true believer. He had enough faith to leave the ship and enter the water, but not enough to carry him through. Therefore Christ told him he had little faith. Yet weakness of faith is still faith. He was still a believer, and the man with the weakest faith is just as saved as the man with the strongest faith, because faith is faith. The third application is this: the weakness of our faith.

The prevalence of our doubts and the lack of our love is very displeasing to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is true He does not cast off weak believers. But it is also true He is not pleased with the weakness of our faith, especially those who are close to Him. For He asked Peter, "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" Why did you doubt?

If you and I were to really examine our fears, if we were to really examine our doubts with a strict inquiry, we would probably find there's no real good reason to doubt Christ or His Word. And there's no real good reason for you and I to have our fears and our doubts. Christ is still Christ on a stormy day as equally as He is Christ on a sunny day. He does not change. We may safely trust Him in the storm as equally as we may trust Him in the calm.

Psalm 46 is a song that stirred Martin Luther to write, "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing." Notice Psalm 46, verse 1: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Notice, God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in the time of trouble. Therefore will we not fear if the whole earth breaks asunder? We will not fear.

And we must understand the reason we do fear is due to our smallness of faith and our lack of love to our sovereign Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So we need to learn to pray, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." We need to learn to pray, "Father, shed the love of God abroad in our hearts. Father, Holy Ghost, help us to love and believe as thou hast commanded us to in thy Word." Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day.

We thank you for your truth. We thank you for your encouragement. We thank you, Heavenly Father, that thou art the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Help us, Lord, to boldly say, "The Lord is my helper. I will not fear what man can do unto me." Give us grace that we may believe and to exercise the faith that you've given us. We ask that you would shed the love of God abroad in our hearts that make us, Lord, loving and submissive and obedient. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

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CHAPTER 9

A Stench in God's Nostrils

May 13, 2012

Introduction: The Reality of Stenches

Jonah chapter 1, verse 1 and 2: “Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before me.”

All of us have experienced stenches. Practically anyone who drives has either hit a skunk, straddled one in the road, or simply driven by one that was already there, and the dead-skunk stench attached itself to the car. It is very difficult to get off the car. If you think that is difficult, let your dog have a run-in with a skunk. Multiple washings, using every known means under the sun, usually will not get rid of the stench. It simply has to wear itself out.

Alice can tell you that from experience. One of the funniest things Alice and I saw—we were passing through a little town—was this fine old stately home. Out in the yard, at the edge of the road, was a little toy poodle with a diamond collar, bows in her ears, and pink toenails. There she was, rolling in a dead skunk beside the road. I

thought to myself, Mama will be really surprised when her baby comes back inside.

Each of us understands exactly what we are talking about when we speak of a stench. We have known the stench of dead animals. I constantly find dead possums, raccoons, squirrels, and sometimes skunks in my yard. If you do not move them quickly, after a few days in the sun they are genuinely ripe beyond belief. They stink.

One of the most eye-opening experiences I had was many years ago, when I was preaching in Ohio. It was summertime, hot, and the church had no air conditioning. They put a glass of water under the pulpit. I hated to drink it in front of everyone because it was so hot, and I knew that would make them thirsty. But after preaching forty-five minutes or an hour, I was about to perish. I reached under the pulpit and got that water. Quickly I turned my head and took a big gulp. Just as I gulped, the smell hit me. It was sulfur water. I snatched the glass down, held the water in my mouth, and really wanted to spit it out.

Finally, I got enough nerve to swallow it, and I said, “Thank God that’s over with.” Everybody laughed because they were accustomed to it. It was nothing to them, but it stunk to high heaven. Ever since that night, they would keep slipping a bottle of sulfur water or a glass of it to me. But I was wise. I was not going to drink that stinking stuff anymore. We understand stinks.

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 10:1, “Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor.” Dead flies in the ointment cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor. Have you ever thought, as you read through the Bible, how the word stink is used? It struck me as I was looking at the book of Jonah.

Biblical Usage of 'Stink'

You may say, “There’s nothing in there about a stink.” Yes, there is. Hold Jonah chapter 1, and turn to Genesis chapter 34. Let me show you how the word stink is used. You remember how Simeon and Levi went into the city and killed every male because of what happened to Dinah, their sister. Genesis 34:27 says, “The sons of Jacob came

upon the slain and spoiled the city because they had defiled their sister. They took their sheep and their oxen and their asses and that which was in the city and that which was in the field and all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house."

"And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You trouble me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites, and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.'"

Note what Simeon and Levi had done. They had successfully killed all the men of Shechem. They had won the battle, but they had not won the war. Jacob rightly said, "You haven't understood exactly what you've done." There were far more Canaanites and Perizzites than those they had killed, and they would encompass him because Simeon and Levi had made him to stink. That is, they had made an odious and intolerable situation.

Jacob said, "You've made me to stink." The only reason Jacob and his family survived was because God sovereignly protected him. Genesis 35:5 says, "And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." It was the terror of God that preserved them after the boys had made Jacob and his family to stink in the eyes of all the Canaanites and Perizzites.

In 2 Samuel 10 is another illustration of how the word stink is used. "And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness to me." David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father, and David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon. The princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, "Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? Hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee to search the city, and to spy it out, and overthrow it?"

Wherefore, Hanun took David's servants, shaved off one-half their beards, cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away. When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, "Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return."

When the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, they sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, the king of Maacah with a thousand men, and Ish-tob with twelve thousand men. When David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the hosts of the mighty men. The children of Ammon came out and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate, while the Syrians were by themselves in the field. Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, so he chose the choice men of Israel and put them in array against the Syrians. The Syrians and the children of Ammon were defeated. But note verse 6: "And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David." How did they create this stink?

The stink was simply this: David had sent his diplomats to comfort Hanun. Hanun got bad counsel from his men, so he shaved off half their beards, cut their garments to their buttocks, and sent them away. He dishonored David's ambassadors, and consequently there was a war. But I want you to note that it was referred to as a stink.

Not everyone has the same sense of smell. It is heightened in some individuals, while others seemingly cannot smell at all. Those who have the ability to smell, especially those with a highly sensitive nose, can usually detect a noisome odor very quickly. But there are several questions that we must think about, even if we have a heightened sense of smell. Do we have the same sense of smell that God does? Do we have any idea of that which is a stench in God's nostrils? Are we sensitive to spiritual odors, or, as I could say, spiritual stinks?

Spiritual Sensitivity to Sin's Stench

I never will forget talking to a preacher one time. He got to talking about "buzzard Baptists." I asked, "What is a buzzard Baptist?" He said, "Those are the people that belong to the church, but they never

come, they never attend, until there's a stink. And they always hover then and come out around the stink." He said, "I call them buzzard Baptists."

Stop and think about that. That's right in an awful lot of areas. But are we sensitive to that which stinks before God? Our Lord Himself used an illustration in reference to the scribes and the Pharisees. In Matthew 23:27 He said, "Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites. For you are likened to whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness."

Sin as Scum and Filthiness in Ezekiel

What did our Lord say? He said, "Your so-called religiosity, your so-called spirituality stinks. It's nothing but dead men's bones and uncleanness. It's totally, completely noisome." Consider another illustration that shows us the stink of sin in Ezekiel chapter 24. Let's begin reading there with verse one.

SCRIPTURE READING - Ezekiel 24:1-14 (KJV)

The message today may be unpleasant in one sense of the word, but it's absolutely necessary that we understand what sin is to God. Notice, if you would, Ezekiel chapter 24, verse one.

"Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of the same day the king of Babylon has set himself against Jerusalem the same day. And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Set on a pot, set it on, and pour water into it. Gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder, fill it with the choice bones. Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, and make it boil well, and let them see the bones of it therein. Wherefore, thus saith the Lord God, Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it.

Bring it out piece by piece, let no lot fall upon it, for her blood is in the midst of her, and set it upon the top of a rock, She poured

> it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust, that it might cause fury to come up, to take vengeance. I have set her blood upon the top of the rock, that it should not be covered. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Woe to the bloody city!
>
> I will even make the pile for fire great, heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burned. Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, and the scum of it may be consumed. She hath wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her. Her scum shall be in the midst of the fire, and thy filthiness is lewdness, because I have purged thee. Thou wast not purged. Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee."

"I, the Lord, have spoken it. It shall come to pass. I will do it. I will not go back. Neither will I spare, neither will I repent. According to thy ways and according to thy doings shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God."

Now note what God said and what God did. He commanded that the pot be filled with water, the choice pieces put in it, and everything boiled down. The pieces were to be removed, leaving the bones or whatever scum remained; then the pot was set back on the fire with only the scum in it.

It was to be heated until the scum stuck to the sides of the pan. Have you ever had something burned in a boiler or oven? It stinks; it creates a huge stink. God referred to these sins as scum, great scum, and filthiness. Filthiness stinks. Scum stinks. Here in the South, we often talk about pond scum—the scum that comes upon stagnant water. You can smell it. It stinks. God refers to this simply as scum, great scum, and filthiness.

Do you understand that spiritual garbage is still garbage? Spiritual stink is still stink. It has a distinctive smell. It smells like disobedience, wickedness, and rebellion. And the Word of God tells us, when that smell, when that stink comes before a holy, righteous God, it nauseates Him. It has the scent and the smell of death. For the wages of sin is death. That's why God said in verse 14 of Ezekiel

chapter 24, He's spoken it. He's not going back. He's not going to repent. He's going to destroy these individuals because of their sins. And He likens their sins to this big stink. I want you to look in your Bibles to the book of Jeremiah chapter 16. Jeremiah 16. And notice if you would please verse 18. Jeremiah 16 and verse 18. God uses this illustration many times in the Scripture. Jeremiah 16 and verse 18. Look what he says, Jeremiah 16 verse 18, "And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double." Why?

Idolatry as Stinking Carcasses

Because they have defiled my land, they have filled my inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things." Notice if you would, God says they have filled my inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things. Now these detestable and abominable things that they had filled his inheritance with, happened to be their idols. Their wicked, reprobate, hateful idols, which of course was pollution and corruption. And God said they filled my land with this. The idols were called carcasses because they were lifeless. They were useless, they were worthless, they were stinking, they were loathsome, they were abominable and vile.

I want you to hold Jeremiah 16, but look in your Bibles, if you would, to Psalm 115. And let me show you what God says about idols. Look in Psalm 115. Notice, if you would, beginning there with verse four, Psalm 115 in verse four. Look what God says. Psalm 115, verse 4. He says, "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands." Now He says, verse 5, Psalm 115, verse 5, "They have mouths, but they speak not.

Eyes have they, but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not. Noses have they, but they smell not. They have hands, but they handle not. Feet have they, but they walk not, neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trusteth in them."

Idols were dead carcasses, and they stunk. One of my favorite Hebrew words is gillulim, a word used for idols. It is translated as “dung balls.” That is what God calls these idols: dung balls. That is why He said their carcasses had defiled His inheritance. They were filthy, abominable, and detestable. Not only were the idols

detestable, filthy, and vile, but the ceremonies and rituals used in worshiping them were filthy and vile as well.

Consider what God says in Amos 5, even concerning His own ceremonies, which He had ordained, when the people's hearts were contrary to Him. God says, "I hate, I despise your feast days. I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though you offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them, neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts."

If God would not accept or receive those sacrifices and ceremonies which He had ordained when they were performed merely as ritual, with an empty heart, what makes you think that God will accept some ceremony or some sacrifice offered to a dumb idol that He refers to as a dung ball? Moreover, understand that when they sacrificed to these idols, they sacrificed animals. Sometimes they sacrificed humans. They did not merely offer lifeless objects; their worship involved sacrifices that were offensive and contrary to God.

Jeremiah 7:31 shows how offensive this was to God: "And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart." Their idolatries were more odious and loathsome than any stinking carcass, because their idolatries were a stench in God's nostrils and an insult to God as well.

Do you remember that, in the Old Testament, whenever there was a sacrifice made to God according to God's ordination, the Bible always said it was a sweet smell or a sweet savor unto God? All of God's offerings were known as a sweet savor or a sweet-smell offering. Do you know why all those offerings in the Old Testament were known as sweet-smell or sweet-savor offerings? The answer is because they pictured the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away our sin.

The Apostle Paul says, "Now thanks be unto God who always causes us to triumph in Christ and make manifest the savor or the smell of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor, or a sweet smell of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish." Note what he said: in Christ we are a sweet savor;

we are a sweet smell. However, unauthorized, unbiblical, and ungodly sacrifices were a stench unto God. They were totally offensive to Him and completely unacceptable. It is only in Christ that we are a sweet smell and a sweet savor unto God.

The Believer's Remaining Corruption as a Stench

The body or mass of sin that resides in our carcass or our carcasses is just as displeasing to the Lord and just as much a stench in His nostrils. All of us have been around people who stink. Sometimes they stink because they have not had a bath. Sometimes they stink because they are working hard; it is hot, and sweat is dried on them. Sometimes people stink because of chemical and hormonal problems in their bodies. We understand what it is to smell a stink.

Have you ever considered that your sin, your disobedience, and your rebellion are a stench in God's nostrils? Have you ever thought about that?

David said in Psalm 38:5, “My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.” His foolishness was his sin. Foolishness is another word for sin in the Bible: “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” What is foolishness? It is sin. David said, in effect, “My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my sin.”

I want to show you from the Bible how our sin stinks before God. Turn to Romans, chapter 7. The Apostle Paul uses an illustration here that is very vivid and very clear. Look at verse 24: “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Albert Barnes said of this verse, “The body of this death denotes the corrupt and evil propensities of the soul. It is thus used to denote the law of sin in the members as being that which the apostle was struggling and from which he desired to be delivered.” The body of death denotes the corrupt and evil propensities of the soul.

John Gill said, “The body of sin speaks of the load of sin and burden of corruption under which he, the apostle, groaned, and still bespeaks him a regenerate man. For not of outward calamities, but of indwelling sin, is he all along speaking in the context. Wherefore,

it is better by the body of this death to understand what he in Romans 6 calls the body of sin."

That is, it is the mass of corruption lodged in him, called a body because of its fleshly, carnal nature, because of its manner of operation—it exerts itself by the members of the body—and because it consists of various parts and members, as a body does. It is a body of death because it makes men liable to death. It was that which the Apostle says slew him, and which itself is to a regenerate man as a dead carcass, stinking and loathsome. When Paul cried, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" he was speaking of the remaining corruption that is in him.

Have you ever been praying, only to find your mind wandering until you are entertaining vile thoughts, or thoughts that simply pop into your mind? How can that happen while I am praying? Or have you ever been trying to read the Scripture when suddenly you start thinking about vacation or something you have to do? Have you ever wanted to live and do what is right, only to have a horrible thought come into your mind? Where in the world did that come from?

That is the remaining corruption in you. That is sin. When Paul said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" the body of this death is a Hebraism, which should be understood to mean this dead body, this carcass of sin to which I am inseparably fastened. It is noisome and stinks in every area. I do not like it, and I do not want it, but I am attached to it.

Here is the illustration. Tyrants sometimes used this as a means of putting individuals to death. When a murderer was caught timely, this was the order of his death: they would take the man he had murdered and tie the murdered man to the living man face to face, arm to arm, hand to hand, stomach to stomach, leg to leg, and foot to foot. The living man would be bound to the dead body until the putrefaction of that body killed him. Tyrants sometimes condemned people to death even though they had murdered no one, tying a dead body to them and letting them slowly putrefy with it.

That is the illustration the apostle is using when he says, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul is saying, It seems as if I have a dead body attached to

me—this stinking, corrupt, depraved mass that is still in me. We will not be glorified or perfect until eternity. Until then, we are still seeking to fight with and overcome this mass of corruption.

Christ Makes Us a Sweet Savor

Our sin, our disobedience, and our lack of holiness should make us groan under the weight of this—in other words, when we begin to realize that we are indeed a stench in the nostrils of God. It should make us cry like the Apostle Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When Paul made that cry, he was not simply searching for a deliverer, nor was he ignorant of the true Deliverer.

If you will go back to Romans 7:24, he said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Verse 25 says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He knew that true deliverance was through Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. Have you stopped to think that it is the blood of Jesus Christ that has covered our sins? It is Christ who makes our vile stench sweet and acceptable to God the Father.

Let me give you an illustration. In Exodus 15, the children of Israel were traveling through the desert. "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah because they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried to the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them." Notice that the LORD shewed him a tree. He cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet. The tree that makes us sweet and acceptable to God is the cross of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We must understand that, as long as we are in this mortal body, we are still corruption. Turn to 1 Corinthians 15. The Apostle Paul is speaking about the bodily resurrection from the dead, and beginning with verse 50 he says:

"Now this, I say, brethren, that flesh and blood"—that is what you and I are at this point—"cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption"—that is us—"inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep. We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; the last trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Jonah 1:2: Wickedness Comes Up Before God

Sin is an abomination to God. It is a stench in God's nostrils, and it cries out to God.

Now let us look again at Jonah 1:1–2 in the light of these truths: "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me." Note that statement: "for their wickedness is come up before me." Literally, their wickedness has come up before God's face. That is what God says. Sin is a bold and open affront to God. It is against Him, in His sight and in His face. None of us wants anyone in our face, especially an individual who stinks. Sin not only stinks; it gets in the face of God.

Many years ago, Venning wrote a wonderful book entitled The Plague of Plagues. I want to give you one paragraph of what he wrote:

"The sinfulness of sin not only appears from, but consists in that it is contrary to God. Indeed, it's contrariety and enmity itself. Carnal men are sinners, are called by the name of enemies to God, Romans 5:8. But the carnal mind or sin is called enmity itself, Romans 8:7. Accordingly, its acts were expressed by names of enmity and acts of hostility, such as walking contrary to God, Leviticus 26:21, rebelling against God, Isaiah 1:2, rising up against Him as an enemy, Micah 2:8, striving and contending with Him, Isaiah 45:9, and despising

God, Numbers 11:20. It makes men haters of God, Romans 1:30, resistors of God, Acts 7:51, fighters against God, Acts 5:39, and even blasphemers of God, and in short, very atheists who say there is no God, Psalm 14:1. Now listen, it goes about to un-God God and is by some of the ancients called deicidium, that is, God murder or God killing."

When you stop and think about sin, sin is not only contrary to God; it is that. Sin would not only dethrone God if it could, it would murder God. Sin does not fear God. Do you not remember there in Romans 3, the Apostle Paul enlisting all of those sins? He says, "there is no fear of God before their eyes."

So sin, like the Ninevites, rises up before God. The Ninevites sinned willingly, openly, and in absolute defiance of the Supreme Judge of all the earth. That is exactly what sin does. God says in Jonah 1 and verse 2 that their sin, or their wickedness, has come up before Him. Their wickedness is personified. It is as though it had risen into God's face. Its person, its stench, and its cry for judgment have come before the sovereign, supreme Judge. Its vileness, arrogance, rebellion, and hatefulness cry aloud for divine vengeance. Their wickedness has filled the cup to the brim, and the inhabitants are now ripe for destruction. Wickedness was committed openly and boldly, with much impudence, not only in the sight of God, but against God. They will not be allowed any longer to flaunt themselves. Sin is a dare to God.

Sin is a challenge to God's justice, God's honor, and God's righteousness. Sin does not believe God, and it does not fear God. Sin basically says, "I dare You to do what You are saying You will do." In Revelation 18:5, speaking of Babylon the great, God says, "For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." Her sins have reached unto heaven.

Look back in Jonah 1:2. God says, "For their wickedness is come up before me." Matthew Henry said of that verse, "Their wickedness has come up. That is, it has come to a high degree, to its highest pitch. The measure of it is full to the brim. Their wickedness has come up, and then it is time for vengeance to come down. It has come up before me, to my face, so the word is. It is a bold and open affront to God." It is sinning against Him in His sight. Therefore,

Jonah must cry against it. He must witness against their great wickedness and warn them of the destruction that was coming upon them for it. God is coming forth against it, and He sends Jonah before to proclaim war and sound the alarm: “Cry aloud, and spare not.”

Sin's Cry for Vengeance

Do you realize that sin not only has a distinctive stench? It has a distinctive cry. When Cain murdered Abel, God asked, “Where is your brother Abel?” Cain answered, “I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?” God said in Genesis 4:10, “Thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.” The blood was crying for justice and vengeance.

In Genesis 18, God said, “Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know it.” Notice that their sin was very grievous, and their cry had come up to Him.

James 5:1 says, “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.”

You have heaped treasure together for the last days. Now look what God says: “Behold, the hire of your laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.” You've lived in pleasure on the earth. You've been wanton. You've nourished your heart. It's a day of slaughter. You've condemned and killed the just, and He does not resist you. God says, your time is coming. The cries of your laborers have entered into My ears.

Sin has its own stench and its own voice. While the stench of sin is detestable to God, God hears its voice because it's crying for judgment, justice, and vengeance.

Applications: Hating Sin and Finding Cleansing in Christ

Now, let me make a couple of applications. The first one is this: Have you ever considered why God hates sin? I told you earlier that sin is contrary to God. If it could, sin would dethrone God. It would murder God; it would kill God. In one sense of the word, it did. You say, how can you say that? Well, it did kill the Son of God, who gave Himself to redeem us.

You say, but Pastor, He voluntarily laid down His life. I know that. But why did He voluntarily lay down His life? Why was it necessary for Him to die? Because of our sin. We can say that sin, our sin, caused the Son of God to die in the sense that He laid down His life as our substitute and as our sacrifice. I hope you're beginning to see so that you might understand what God said in Jeremiah 44 and verse 4: “Oh, do not that abominable thing which I hate.” Why does God hate sin? It's contrary to Him. It will dethrone Him. It was for that cause His Son came and died. We should learn to hate sin as God hates sin, and learn for it to be a stench in our nostrils as it is in His.

The second application of this. Don't laugh. We need to consider the stinks in our lives. You say, what in the world are you talking about, Pastor? Usually, when something goes wrong or doesn't work out the way we want it to, we say, “And that stinks.” Or we say, “I smell a rat.” Well, rats stink. Have you ever stopped to think that part and parcel of God's curse upon our disobedience, God's curse upon our sins, is a stink?

Isaiah 3 records the curses God would bring. In verse 17, He says, "therefore, the Lord will smite thee with a scab, the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts. And that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments." He lists all these things, but verse 24 gives the culmination: "And it shall come to pass that instead of a sweet smell, there shall be a stink. And instead of a girdle a rent, instead of well-set hair baldness, instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth, and burning instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war." "And it shall come to pass, and instead of a sweet smell, there shall be a stink."

In other words, everything is going to go wrong. Instead of a girdle, there is going to be a rending. Instead of well-set hair, there is going to be baldness. Why is the stink of God coming upon us? Because of our sins, our disobedience, and our rebellion. Nothing is right when we are wrong with the Lord.

Now, I want to end this with something that you need to genuinely think about. First John 1:9 says, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Verse 7 says, "and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." The sacrifice of Christ was the sweet smell to God the Father because it was perfection, holiness, justice, and righteousness. If we want to get rid of the stink in our lives, it has to be through the propitiation, the atonement, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He not only washes us and cleanses us with His own blood; He then places upon us His robe of righteousness. When God sees us in Christ, it is not our stench in His nostrils. That is what we are outside of Christ. In Christ, God says, "that's a sweet smell for I smell my son. And that's acceptable to me." Only in Jesus Christ are we a sweet smell unto God the Father.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We ask You to help us to understand the absolute necessity, Lord, of holiness in our lives and the absolute necessity of being found in Jesus Christ. O God, give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear, and may we live for Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

This program was produced by Dominion Ministry. For more information about Pastor Weaver's sermons, you may contact Dominion Ministry by mail at 7400 Abercorn, that's A-B-E-R-C-O-R-N Street, Suite 705, P-M-B 175, Savannah, Georgia, 31406. Or give us a call at 912-925-0995. You can also visit our website at www.dominionministry.com.

CHAPTER 10

Ministering to Christ

May 4, 2014

Introduction: The Question of Ministering to the Lord

All right, well, let's open our Bibles today to the book of Acts chapter 13. Acts chapter 13. And we're going to read the first three verses. Acts chapter 13. Today, I'm going to be bringing a message which I've entitled "Ministering to Christ." I think you'll see why I titled it that just momentarily. Acts chapter 13. And let's read the first three verses. Acts 13, beginning with verse 1: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." I've been reading through the book of Acts recently, and as I hit verse 2, verse 2 really caught my attention. I want you to look at that: "as they ministered to the Lord."

Here's my question: Have you ever ministered to the Lord? How does one minister to the Lord? And what does ministering to the Lord imply? So, are you now or have you ever ministered to the Lord? Let me tell you what I believe after having looked at this passage. I believe that if we understand this concept of ministering to the Lord, it will change our service, our sacrifice, our prayer life, our ministry, and everything about it.

The Universal Call to Ministry

You have to remember 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 31, I'm sure you do, where the Apostle Paul said, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." I do want you to turn—hold Acts 13, we're coming back there—but turn over to the book of Colossians, chapter 3, and let's look, if you would, please, at verses 23 and 24. There's a verse here I want you to see. It's easily quoted. Colossians 3, verses 23 and 24, because we're still talking about ministering to the Lord. He said in Colossians 3, verse 23, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." Now would you look at the word "serve" there. In verse 24, he says, "for ye serve the Lord Christ." The word "serve" is the Greek word for slave or bondservant. Literally, he says in verse 24, "for ye are the bondservant or the slave of the Lord Christ."

So as a slave then, you're obligated and duty-bound to minister to your master. I've pointed out in times past how the Apostle Paul delighted to call himself the bondslave of Jesus Christ.

Every Christian Is in the Ministry

Since we are talking about ministering to the Lord, let me make something exceedingly clear: you do not have to be a pastor to minister to the Lord. Many individuals in the Bible ministered to the Lord who were not pastors or necessarily teachers, and many may equally do so today. We must discover what it really means to minister to the Lord and how we are to minister to Him.

The problem is that we tend to categorize everything. We think, “There’s Brother Weaver. He’s in the ministry. He’s a preacher.”

That is true. I am in the ministry, and yes, I am a preacher. But please understand: if you are a Christian, you are in the ministry as well. Do not think of this as the official version—that I am in the ministry and you are not. No, you are in the ministry equally. We may have a different ministry, but we are still in the ministry.

There are various kinds of ministries in the Bible, and God demands that each one of us develop and concentrate on our particular ministry. Do not think that you have to be in a pulpit simply to minister to Christ. Romans 12:6 says, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given unto us, whether prophecy or preaching, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; and he that ruleth with diligence; and he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” Note how all these things are talking about serving the Lord.

The Meaning of 'Ministering' in Scripture

When you look back at verse 7, where he says, “...or ministry, let us wait on our ministering,” Matthew Poole, the commentator, said this: “Under this word that is ministering comprehends all ordinary ecclesiastical functions which is afterwards divided into two sorts. The first relating to the word of God and the second to other pious or godly works.” Notice what he said. There is a division: first relating to the Word, and then any other pious or godly work. What he is saying is that it is all ministry.

Let me show you how widely this word is used. In Acts chapter 6 and verse 4, it is used of those who dispense the word of life, or preach the Word of God. But in Acts chapter 6, verses 1 through 3, it also refers to those who administer what you and I would call the temporal affairs of the church. Basically speaking, the word “ministering” here is used in Christianity to denote the service which is rendered to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master.

And so the apostle in Romans 12 and verse 7 says this: whatever your ministry is, you are to concentrate upon that ministry. You are to make sure that you attend to it and give diligence to it.

Let me show you how wide the application of this word has. Look in Luke chapter 10 and verse 40. This may surprise you. You remember how Jesus was at Mary and Martha's house. Let us begin reading verse 38: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about with much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?"

"Bid her therefore that she help me." The word "serve," which occurs twice in verse 40, is exactly the same word as "ministering" in Romans 12:7: "If we have a ministry, let us wait upon our ministry." Literally, Martha said she was cumbered about with much ministry, and she came to Him and said, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to minister alone?"

There are two main words used in the Bible when it comes to ministering. The first is the verb diakoneo and the noun diakonos, from which we derive our English word "deacon." The word literally means a servant. Let us consider how wide this word is. It is translated in our Bibles as "minister" and "serve," but it indicates being a servant, an attendant, a domestic; serving, waiting upon, ministering to, rendering ministering offices, waiting upon tables, and serving food and drink to guests, just as Martha was doing. It also means supplying food and the necessities of life; relieving someone's necessities by taking or giving alms; providing for and taking care of someone; distributing the things necessary to sustain life; and waiting upon the office of a deacon. This word is used in every one of those ways in the Bible. We will be looking at a number of passages where that word is used.

But the second word deserves emphasis. Everyone understands the word diakonos, deacon. The second word is emphasized in Acts chapter 13, verse 2: "as they ministered to the Lord and fasted." This is not the verb diakoneo. It is an unusual Greek word, leitourgeo; the noun is leitourgos. Leitourgeo is translated in our Bible as "minister"

or “ministered” only three times. It is translated other ways in the Bible, but only “minister” or “ministered” three times.

Leitourgeo: Ministering at One's Own Expense

The first time it is used is in Acts chapter 13 and verse 2, where they ministered to the Lord. What does that mean? Let us go to the second time that it is used, in Philippians chapter 2, and read verses 25 through 30 in order to understand the meaning of the word.

The Apostle Paul said, “Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.” This struck me as I was looking at it. He did not say, “he that ministered to my needs,” but “he that ministered to my wants.”

“For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.”

Paul said, “Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, my companion in labour, my fellowsoldier, but your messenger, he that ministered to my wants.” The Greek word here is leitourgeo. Epaphroditus literally wore himself out ministering and taking care of the Apostle Paul. He ministered to Paul in such a way that he became sick—so sick that he nearly died. Paul said that God had mercy not only upon Epaphroditus in sparing his life, but also upon Paul in allowing Epaphroditus to continue. Paul was sending him back to Philippi and explaining why he became so sick and so nigh unto death: “Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.” Wow.

Epaphroditus served Paul selflessly and at his own expense. The Philippians should have been helping him, but they were not. So

Paul said, to make up their lack of service to him—their lack of help and ministry—Epaphroditus literally wore himself out. He served not only at his own expense financially, but also physically; it cost him his health.

Three times this word is translated "ministered" in our Bible: first in Acts 13:2, second in Philippians 2:25, and third here in Romans 13. Romans 13 deals with the civil ruler. In verse 4, speaking of the civil ruler, Paul says, "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." The word "minister" in both instances is diakonos—he is the deacon, the servant of God.

But in verse 6 he says, "For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing." The Greek word for "minister" here is leitourgoi. It literally means to assume an office which must be administered at one's own expense—to discharge an office at one's own cost, doing a service and performing a work.

This word is used to describe the work of the priests and Levites around the tabernacle and the temple. It is also used to describe Christians as they minister to Christ, whether they instruct others in the way of salvation, serve the needs of others as Epaphroditus did, or serve in a governmental function ordained of God.

Let me spell something out for you. We understand that those in the Christian ministry often serve at their own expense. I go off preaching. I never ask for an honorarium or for anything; I just go. Sometimes my expenses are covered, and sometimes they are not. Sometimes they are more than covered, and sometimes they are not. We understand that everything we have, we have only by the grace and mercy of God. So we understand that the Christian ministry is basically at our own expense.

What we fail to understand is this: civil government is also supposed to be a Christian ministry. Did you know that in the beginning of our country, most of our congressmen either served at their own expense or close to it?

For instance, from 1789 to 1815, members of Congress received a daily payment of six dollars while in session. From 1815 to 1817, congressional members received an annual salary of $1,500 per year. From 1818 to 1855, they received a per diem of $8 per day. The word "per diem" is a Latin term meaning "per day," or "for each day." It refers to an allowance someone is to have as expenses for a day. So let us stop and think about this: from 1818 to 1855, while they were in session, eight bucks per day; out of session, nothing. You must also consider that during those years, congressmen received no gain per se. There were no perks.

There was no health insurance and no retirement package. In all probability, the little bit they did receive did not cover all their expenses. So here is what I propose: today, offer a sitting congressman coverage for his meals and transportation to and from Washington or the state capitol, and perhaps room and board while he is there—and nothing else. See how much he really wants to serve. You see what I am saying?

This word talks about ministering at your own expense. In Acts chapter 13, verse 2, the Bible says, "as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." We are not told exactly how they were ministering or what was involved, but whatever it was, it was at their own time and expense. In all probability, prayer was involved, because the Bible also says they fasted. Usually in the Bible, prayer and fasting were connected. If they were doing something else, the Bible does not say.

But the questions that must be raised in light of this text are, first, do we minister to the Lord? And secondly, if we do minister to Him, how do we minister to Him? It is vitally important that we understand that whatever we do is to be a ministry unto the Lord, since we are His bondslaves.

How We Minister to the Lord: Serving Others

Can you stop and think about how that would change your life? I do not care if it is washing dishes, sweeping the floor, or waiting tables. Can you imagine how it would change your life and your attitude if you realized that whatever you did—whether you ate or drank,

whatever you did in word or deed—you were ministering to the Lord? You have a ministry.

How do we minister to the Lord? First, we minister to the Lord by serving and ministering to others, especially His people. In the context of Acts chapter 13, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." In verse 5, we learn that He called them to preach. When they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews, and they had also John to their minister. In this instance, their ministry was preaching and teaching the word of God.

Preaching is one way to minister. It is not the only way, though certainly it is one of the main and important ways, and not something to be disallowed or discredited. But it is not the only way to minister. The Apostle Paul also speaks in Galatians chapter 6, verse 10, and then in Hebrews chapter 6.

Galatians 6:10 says, "As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, but especially unto them who are the household of faith." In other words, as we have opportunity, we are to do good unto all men, but especially unto those who are the household of faith. We have a duty and an obligation to minister to everybody to whom we can minister, but especially to those who are the household of faith.

Hebrews 6:10 says, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." We could read it like this: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have ministered to him, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." That is an interesting way to understand the connection between ministering to the saints and ministering toward Christ.

The word "minister" in both instances in Hebrews 6:10 is the word diakonos, which means to serve. We minister to Christ by serving His people. Obviously, Christ does not need to be ministered unto in the strictest sense of the word. Why? Because Christ is God. He is the all-sufficient One. He has need of absolutely nothing. So

how do we minister to Him? The answer is by ministering to His people. His people have plenty of needs.

Matthew 25, beginning with verse 34, says, “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” The passage continues through verse 46 and shows how service to Christ is rendered through service to His brethren.

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

So the question is this: How did those on the right hand minister to Christ? By ministering to other people. How did those on the left hand not minister to Christ? By not ministering to others. Ministering has a very broad definition. One may help sickly saints, comfort the bereaved, supply physical needs, or encourage another spiritually speaking. It is all ministry to Christ.

In 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 16, note Paul's request and why: "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus." Why should the Lord give mercy to this individual and to his house? "For he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."

So what did Onesiphorus do? He sought Paul out when Paul was in prison in Rome. What did he do? He probably carried him food. He probably prayed with him. He probably encouraged him. He visited him. He did many things. And Paul is asking the Lord to have mercy upon him because he ministered to the Apostle Paul. You don't have to turn there, but you remember the little book of Philemon right before the book of Hebrews. You remember Onesimus was a runaway slave. And he belonged to Philemon. And he got thrown into the same dungeon with the Apostle Paul. And God converted him. And when he got out, Paul sent him back to Philemon and he said this in verse 13: "Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel." What? Yeah. Paul said to Philemon, "I'd love to have kept him, but, you know, he's yours, so I'm sending him back. But, you know, you owe me even your own life as well."

So how can we minister? We can minister to others. By visiting. By encouraging. By praying. By doing a number of things. I want you to look in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 9. 2 Corinthians chapter 9. I want you to see that we can also minister to Christ by supplying the needs of the saints. In 2 Corinthians 9, verses 12 and 13, 2 Corinthians 9, verses 12 and 13, the Apostle Paul says, "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men."

Now the word "administration" in verse 12 and in verse 13 are translated from the word diakonos. However, the word "service" in verse 12 is from the word leitourgia. We minister to Christ by serving

others. Let me show you. I want you to go in your Bibles to Mark chapter 15 and we will go to Luke 8 after Mark 15. So go ahead and find Luke 8 as well. After you mark Luke and John. So go to Luke and find it and then turn, if you would, to Mark 15. OK. Look at Mark chapter 15 and verses 40 and 41. Here's an interesting passage. Mark 15, verses 40 and 41. Talking about the crucifixion of Christ. Mark 15, verse 40.

There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem. These women are specified as having ministered to Jesus Christ. But how did they do that?

Luke 8:3 gives one specific way: “And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.” They took care of His needs—food, clothing, and whatever else was necessary. Evidently, some of these women were fairly well off, and they supplied His needs. In Romans 15:27, the Apostle Paul said, “It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.”

We minister to Christ first and foremost by ministering to others, especially His people. The second way we minister to the Lord is by offering to Him the sacrifices of praise. How often do we fail to praise the Lord? Think about it. We are sickly; we have needs and problems, all kinds of things. We plead with Him, beg Him, beseech Him; we cry, pray, fast, and continue pleading. Finally, God marvelously and mercifully answers our prayers, and we simply take the answer and go our way. We are not truly thankful for the Giver of the gift.

How We Minister to the Lord: Sacrifices of Praise

One of the main duties of the priest, not only in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament, was not merely to offer sacrifices, but to offer incense. Do you know what incense was a picture and type of? Let me show you.

One of the duties of a priest was to offer up incense. Revelation 8:3-4 gives us the context: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Note, if you would please, that the prayers of the saints are connected with incense.

Now go back to Luke chapter 1 and consider Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. Zacharias was a priest, and it happened to be his turn to minister in the temple. Luke 1:8-11 says: "And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense."

Notice how he ministered and what was happening as he ministered. The whole multitude of the people was praying without at the time of incense. What were the people doing while he was offering incense? They were praying. Why? Because incense was symbolical of the prayers of the saints. The people understood that the priest's service at the altar of incense was connected with their prayers before God.

Now, the Bible clearly teaches the priesthood of every believer. You have to remember, the Bible says in Revelation 1 and verse 6 that our Lord has made us kings and priests unto our God. So, I want you to turn to two passages. I want you to turn to Hebrews 13 and just hold it, but Hosea chapter 14 first. Okay. So you can turn to Hebrews chapter 13, just hold that passage. And then I want you to go back to the book of Hosea. We'll read Hosea first. Hebrews 13, just hold that passage and then go back to Hosea chapter 14. Okay. Daniel, Hosea. Hosea, chapter 14, right after the book of Daniel. Look in Hosea, chapter 14, and verses 1 and 2. Hosea 14, verses 1 and 2. God says, "O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Well, how do we return to the LORD our God? Well, he says in verse 2, "Take with you words, and turn to the

LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.

Watch this last phrase: "so will we render the calves of our lips." So what is the prayer request? "Take away all iniquity"—that is, forgive us, grant us repentance. "Receive us graciously," and what will be the result? "So will we render the calves of our lips." That is, we will give praise unto you. Look in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 15, and you'll see how the Apostle applies Hosea 14 and verse 2. Hebrews chapter 13 verse 15, the Bible says, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." So what are we to be doing continually? Giving thanks and giving praise to our Lord. I want you to understand, it's not just the fruit of our lips that we're to be offering. It's actually more than that, because what did he say in Romans 12, 1 and 2? "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." So if we actually are presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, our lips are part of our bodies. And we should be constantly praising our Lord. How do we know whether or not our lives are a living sacrifice?

The Apostle Paul answers that in Philippians 1:11: “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” If we are actually presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, our lives will be filled with the fruits of righteousness. If we are going to minister to the Lord, we do so not only by serving others, especially God's people, but also by constantly and continually offering praise unto Him.

How We Minister to the Lord: Declaring the Gospel

Thirdly, we minister to the Lord by declaring His gospel and His truth. Remember exactly why the Holy Spirit said, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” Did Barnabas and Saul understand that God had called them to preach and teach? The answer is definitely yes. That is immediately what

they began to do. In Romans 15:16, the Apostle Paul said: “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” Notice that he said, “ministering the gospel of God.”

Have you ever stopped to think that preaching the word of God is a ministry to Jesus Christ? I may be ministering to Christ as I preach the word of God. But you minister to Christ by hearing, receiving, and applying the word of God. In 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, the Apostle Paul said concerning these Corinthians: “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” He says, “Ye are the epistle of Christ, ministered by us.” Wow. Do you realize

You are to be the writing paper that I write on as I preach, and the Holy Spirit is to make it real in your life.

Do you realize that one does not necessarily have to be called to preach to share the Word of God? Every Christian has that responsibility. Every Christian can share the truth of God. There are many and varied ways to share it: gospel tracts, witnessing, consoling, comforting, encouraging, praying, living a godly and holy life, and simply being willing, ready, and able to help others. Your life should be lived in such a way that it is indeed a living example of the gospel.

Applications: The Cost and Reward of Ministry

Have you ever, or are you now, ministering to Christ? Let me make some applications. The two main words for ministry are diakonos and leitourgos. Leitourgos, and leitourgeo, the verb, literally mean to serve at our expense.

We must understand that the ministry costs us. It is our expense. In all probability, one who is in the ministry will never get rich in it if he is genuinely ministering the Word of God and staying faithful and true to the Word of God.

Let us be absolutely honest: the ministry costs. It cost Christ His life. It may end up costing us our lives. But whatever expense we have in ministering to Christ, what is that compared to what it cost Him and what He gave to us? He said in Mark 10:45, “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.

It costs us to cook food and carry it to someone who is sick. It costs us when we carry food to a grieving family, drive somewhere to encourage somebody or pray with them, entertain, make DVDs and tapes, and try. But that is ministry.

Those who teach the Word of God and live the Word of God really and truly do minister and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Although it may cost us temporarily, we must remember that the Lord is not going to be any man’s debtor. Turn to Matthew chapter 19.

Matthew 19:27 records Peter's question: “Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” We have given up everything. Jesus answered, “Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.” Even the gift of eternal life is worth everything we could ever spend or everything it could ever cost us. That is why Colossians 3:24 says, “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

Second Peter 1:11 says, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” If you minister to Him, He shall minister to you. Our Lord says, You spend your life ministering; I will minister to you.

What we fail to do is take the attitude that Jesus Christ took. We have to understand that the ministry is our business. I am not saying the church is a business; it is not. But here is what I mean by that: in

Luke chapter 2, when our Lord was in the temple and His parents went off without Him, they came back looking for Him and found Him sitting in the temple, hearing and answering questions. His mother said, "How could you do this?"

"And we've sought thee sorrowfully. How could you do this to us?" And what did our Lord say? "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" "This is my life," He said. This is my life. This is my life. It should be your life—the ministry, ministering to Jesus Christ.

Praying, fasting, and many other Christian exercises do indeed minister unto our Lord. And when we minister to Him, we should make sure that we perform these exercises with a thought in mind that we are ministering to Christ. I don't know about you, but it's an impacting thought in my mind to even conceive of the idea that I may be able to minister to Jesus Christ. Isn't that amazing?

Now let me show you something—one last passage. Look in 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, verse 1. I want you to stop and think. I don't care what ministry you have. I don't care if you give, if you share, if you live a godly life, if you're praying, or if you're encouraging others. I don't care what ministry you have; look at this thought. The Apostle Paul says, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." Do you realize the only reason any of us have any ministry at all is because of the mercy of God? Would you stop to think about that?

If God was not merciful to us, we would never be able to be a blessing to anybody or to help anybody, much less be a minister to Jesus Christ. You need to stop and consider that everything that you do is ministry. I don't care if it's cooking for your husband, looking after your parents, sharing the gospel, or taking care of your baby. It's all ministry. If you ever grasp the idea that whatever you do in word or in deed, whether you eat or drink, you're to do all for His glory and in ministry to Him—as they ministered to Christ.

I want to ask you to do this today: sometime when you get home, ask the Lord to help you minister to Him and realize that your life is a ministry because you are the bondslave of Jesus Christ.

Father, we bow to Thee today. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth. We ask, Father, that You would help us to live for Thee, to minister to Thee, and, as we minister to Thee, to minister to others as well. Father, we give Thee glory and praise in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

Jedediah Strong Smith-Mountain Man

September 29, 2019

SCRIPTURE READING - Joshua 14:6-13 (KJV)

Introduction: Caleb and the Mountain

Joshua 14:6-13

Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh Barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land.

And I brought word again as it was in my heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God. And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy foot hath trodden shall be thine inheritance and thy children's forever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God. And now,

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

Jedediah Strong Smith: Mountain Man

"If so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance."

One of the places that I preached in this last series of meetings out West was at a Christian history conference. Today I am bringing a message entitled "Jedediah Strong Smith: Mountain Man." You have probably never heard of Jedediah Strong Smith, but let me mention something about history. First of all, you must understand that history is nothing less than God's eternal decree coming to pass in time. If you and I want to really understand God and His decree, we have to study history and know what happened in time, because nothing comes to pass except that which God has ordained.

History as God's Decree and the Need for Godly Examples

Secondly, may I point out that we are living today in a day and time when there are so few real men and so few real examples of godly, masculine Christianity? In fact, the truth of the matter today is that everything is against the man, everything against white man, and everything is against a white Christian man, and everything is against a white Southern Christian man, particularly. Therefore, we need examples and someone to emulate.

Jedediah Strong Smith was like Caleb. He wanted a mountain, and he became one of the best mountain men that ever lived. He said, and I am quoting, "I started into the mountains with the

determination of becoming a first-rate hunter, of making myself thoroughly acquainted with the character and habits of the Indians, of tracing out the sources of the Columbia River, and following it to its mouth, and making the whole profitable unto me, and I have perfectly succeeded."

Jedediah Smith's Background and Achievements

Jedediah Strong Smith is unique in many ways. First, he was born January the 6th, 1799, in Bainbridge, New York. However, he was raised in Pennsylvania and in Ohio. It is almost inconceivable that such a man as I am going to describe today could have been born in the East.

Secondly, this man achieved absolute greatness in eight short years. He did more in that time than most people have done in a lifetime. With Thomas Fitzpatrick, he discovered the South Pass, the gateway to the continent. He was the first white man to cross the Sierra Nevada, the first to walk into California from the American frontier, and the first to taste the bitter waters of the Great Salt Lake. He was the first to accomplish the whole of the Great Basin and the first to enter Oregon, walking up from California. He was also the first to officiate a public Christian worship service in what is now the state of South Dakota.

In his lifetime, Jedediah Strong Smith traveled more extensively in unknown territory than any other mountain man. California historian James J. Rawls asserts that Smith, rather than the self-promoting John C. Frémont, is truly worthy of the title “the Pathfinder.”

Thirdly, Jedediah Strong Smith was a Christian, not simply a professor of Christianity. He lived and practiced his Christianity in an atmosphere where most men were irreligious and cared little about God and the Bible. Mountain men were known as drinkers, gamblers, and fornicators. They were rough, uneducated, and often uncomfortable in civilized society. This was not the case with Jedediah Smith, also called “Diah” for short. Jedediah was educated, modest, and temperate.

Smith's Christian Character

No profanity came from his mouth. His honesty and morals were unquestionable. At the end of a long day hiking in the mountains, he would light a fire, cook and eat his food, and spend the evening reading his Bible and singing hymns. His fellow mountain men thought his religion strange, but his genuineness won them over. None could question his talents as a scout or his endurance on the trail.

Jedediah Strong Smith was tall and silent, and he never used tobacco. He never used profanity or boasted. He was reared a Wesleyan Methodist in those days when the holy fire of Wesleyanism engulfed the West. Smith was a devout Christian who always remained a gentleman, even in the wildest frontier company. He was cool under pressure, with strength and leadership grounded in his faith.

In the annals of his fellow mountain men and the more civilized contemporaries who knew him, the record is clear concerning his consistent and unmatched leadership, his exceptional courage, and his unblemished Christian character. His closest compatriots said he made religion an active principle, from the duties of which nothing could seduce him. One author wrote, “He took his religion with him into the wilderness and let nothing corrode it.” That would have made him merely curious, except that he also took with him indifference, deprivation, and personal suffering; endurance beyond the point where other men died; courage and coolness under fire; intelligence that impressed everyone; leadership of a high order; and energy and drive enough for three men.

Another author stated, “Smith did not fit the stereotype of the typical mountain man. He never drank. He never used tobacco. He never boasted and was rarely humorous. But that which stands out in his life is his stringent faith. He prayed. He studied his Bible. He meditated.” He worshipped the God of heaven and earth.

Smith's Faith in Action: Worship and Prayer

Jedediah Smith never married. His closest companions were his Bible and his rifle. Wherever he went, he carried three books: his

Bible, his journal, and an original 1814 first copy of Lewis and Clark's journals. According to the information that I read, only 1,417 of those journals were ever sold to the public, and he had one of them. Jedediah Smith was an individual who practiced faith on a daily basis. He did not simply worship on Sunday and forget it the rest of the week. He was absolutely, totally consistent.

Here is one of the entries in his journal: "Then let us come forward with faith, nothing doubting, and He that is God will unquestionably hear us." When fellow trapper John Gardner died, Jedediah Smith gave the eulogy. It was recorded by another member of that expedition, Hugh Glass: "Mr. Smith, a young man of our company made a powerful prayer which moved us greatly. And I am persuaded that John died in peace." Remember that this statement was made by a fellow member of the expedition whose name was Hugh Glass. Hugh Glass will be mentioned shortly in reference to another episode.

Dangers Faced: Indians, Weather, and Grizzly Bears

Jedediah knew most of the mountain men. He worked with them, traded with them, and ministered to them as he was able. He survived what you and I would call frigid winters, scorching summers, ravages of timber wolves and grizzly bears, two horrific massacres, and a bloody melee with the Indians.

Jedediah Smith began when he was at the age of 22, when he answered an ad in the Missouri Gazette placed by Missouri's Lieutenant Governor, William H. Ashley. Here was the ad: Ashley was seeking "enterprising young men to ascend the River Missouri to its source to be employed for three years." It was an invitation for men to come and work for three years in the wilderness. Smith made his way to Missouri in 1822, determined to become a trapper. He was now working with Missouri's Lieutenant Governor, William Henry Ashley. They traveled not only up the Missouri River, but also to the mouth of the Yellowstone River.

There he remained with a man named Andrew Henry until the following spring. After that, he went downriver to where Ashley had wintered. Ashley, Smith, and the other fur trappers soon encountered hostilities with the Arikara Indians. In the battle that

ensued on June 1, 1823, Smith was supposedly to have distinguished himself with bravery, coolness, and courage. Jedediah Smith, as mentioned earlier, is credited with conducting the first Christian worship service in the current state of South Dakota.

In performing this, he was in actuality working out as a missionary as well. The context of this worship service is significant. On May 31, 1823, Smith and his men were brutally attacked in their encampment outside the Twin Villages by the Arikara Indians, who were from South Dakota. Thirteen trappers died in that massacre, and eleven were wounded. At an impromptu funeral service, Jedediah Smith stepped forward to pray to God, whose judgment had fallen upon them that day and whose love and mercy they sorely needed. He conducted not only this funeral, but also a worship service known to be the very first one in the state of South Dakota.

They then buried the men who had died and merely placed a log over their graves, fearing that the Indians would discover the graves and dig them up as well. These men were trappers and hunters. To show how successful they were, Jedediah Smith, along with William Henry Ashley and his party, brought nearly 9,000 pounds of beaver pelts to St. Louis in 1825.

Nine thousand pounds of beaver pelts—that is a lot of beaver. Smith became a partner in what became known as the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. In 1826, Smith, along with David E. Jackson and William and Milton Sublette, bought the company from William Ashley. It was then referred to as Smith, Jackson, and Sublette. The Sublette brothers were great trappers and mountain men as well. In 1827, they sold furs at a rendezvous in the Great Salt Lake.

Mountain men usually faced three great dangers: Indians, weather, and grizzly bears. Any one of these could bring great suffering and death. In a letter Jedediah Smith wrote to his brother Ralph on December 24, 1829, Smith said, “Many hostile tribes of Indians inhabit this space. In August 1827, ten men who were in company with me lost their lives by the Amuchabas Indians.”

“In July 1828, fifteen men who were in company with me lost their lives by the Umpqua Indians. Many others have lost their lives

in different places." Then he said, "My brother, I have need of your prayers to bear me up before the throne of grace." Here was a man facing Indians almost daily, saying, "I need your prayers to hold me up before the throne of grace."

On the second expedition in 1824, Jedediah Smith was attacked by a grizzly bear. Jim Clyman was one of the men on that expedition and an eyewitness. Here is what he wrote.

The grizzly did not hesitate a moment, but sprang on the captain, taking him by the head, first pitching, sprawling on the earth, breaking several of his ribs and cutting his head badly. The bear had taken nearly all his head in its capacious mouth, close to the left eye on the one side and close to the right ear on the other side, and laid the skull bare to near the crown of the head. One of his ears was torn from the head out to the outer rim. The bear would not quit.

The grizzly's great grip snapped the captain's knife and several of his ribs at the same time. Clyman had his gun handy by then, and he was afraid that captain was already done for. But Clyman put a bullet in the bear's big stomach that pulled the beast off the captain. But that didn't stop its rage. Ed Rose fired a slug into its head and it went down.

More men shot it again. They wrote, 'You can't trust a grizzly to die until you hit it four or five times. And then you better not turn your back either too soon.' Clyman wrote: 'But the captain just lay there looking up as calm as he could be. No moaning. No cursing, no rage as would have come from the rest of his men if their heads nearly bitten off by a mountain bear.'

"Boys," Smith said as he caught his breath, "you got to fix me up. Take hold of the captain," Clyman told Thomas Fitzpatrick, who was bending over the wounded man, "and we'll carry him to water." But nobody wanted to move him; he was hurt so badly. They asked what was best. "Go for water," Smith said. "And if you've got a needle and thread, get it out and sort my wounds."

His head was bleeding like a river runs. None of the party knew anything about surgical matters, but they had to do something. Clyman got out a pair of scissors, cut off Smith's hair, and began his first job of dressing wounds. The bear had jawed down close to

Smith's left eye on one side and close to his right ear on the other, laying the skull bare nearly to the crown. One ear was torn from his head and barely hanging on. James Clyman of Virginia had one big old needle and some black thread. While the captain gave directions himself, Clyman stitched Smith up as best he could.

The ear was last. "I can't do it, Jed," Clyman protested. "It's too torn up." "Oh, you must try to stitch it up in one way or the other," Smith said. So Clyman put the needle in and stitched the ear through and through, laying the last braided parts together as nice as he could.

When the ordeal was over, the captain could get up and mount his horse. They rode about a mile to the water they had found and pitched their tent. With only one tent, Smith was made as comfortable as circumstances permitted. That day taught them a lesson about the character of the grizzly bear that they never forgot, and it taught them even more about the kind of man who was leading them through the wilderness.

After two weeks of rest, Smith resumed leading the expedition. Can you imagine a man torn up by a grizzly bear remaining so calm that he gave directions to the man sewing him up? Once sewn up, he could balance himself on his horse and ride a mile to an encampment. Not everyone who had a run-in with a grizzly bear was as blessed as Jedediah Smith.

Contrast with Hugh Glass and Other Mountain Men

You remember I mentioned a man by the name of Hugh Glass earlier? Hugh Glass also had a run-in with a grizzly bear. He was mauled by the bear, left for dead by his companions, and stumbled more than 250 miles to Fort Kiowa to get help.

It was the same group of trappers, in August or early September of 1823. Henry and the remaining members of his party of fifteen men were well up the Grand River. Hugh Glass had been hired as a hunter to provide meat for the men, and he was leading the expedition in search of game in the river bottom. Suddenly, a she-grizzly with two cubs came out and rushed upon him. She attacked so quickly that Hugh could do nothing but scream.

The other members of the party heard him and hurried to him as quickly as they could. When they arrived, they finally killed the bear, but his wounds were so severe that Mr. Henry said old Glass would not live until morning.

However, the next day Hugh Glass was still alive. They were in Indian territory, so Mr. Ashley determined that the best thing to do was keep moving. They could not stay still. They fixed a litter and carried Glass in it. After two days, they were moving so slowly that they were in danger from the Indians. They were also trying to join another party. Until the two groups could unite and have sufficient force to fight any renegade Indians, both parties remained in danger.

So Henry then makes a proposition. He asked for two men to volunteer to stay behind and bury old Glass when he dies. And then make their way to the fort. And if they would stay behind, he would give them a bonus of $80 extra each. Well, one of the men that agreed to stay behind was a man by the name of John Fitzgerald. You see, Henry not only wanted to save the rest of his men, but he also wanted to fulfill his Christian duty to give old Glass a decent burial. So John Fitzgerald and a younger man agreed to stay behind. The younger man, it was his first venture into the wilderness. It was the first expedition he was going to be on. The information I'm going to give you, let me tell you where it comes from.

The original account was written by James Hall and published in 1825. But Hall did not give the names of these two men. Later on, another article by Edmund Flagg in 1838 gave the name of John Fitzgerald and he also gave the name of a younger man that stayed with Fitzgerald as the name of Bridges. There was a man by the name of Hiram M. Chittenden who wrote a comprehensive history of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company and all of that era. And he got his information and he named the younger man as Jim Bridger, James Bridger. So here is John Fitzgerald. And I'll tell you about Jim Bridger shortly. Here is John Fitzgerald and Jim Bridger who have agreed to stay behind now until old Glass dies and bury him and then make their way to the fort.

The only visible motions in Hugh Glass were his breathing and his eye movement. That was all. He could move his eyes and he could breathe, but nothing else. Five days later, after the party left, John

Fitzgerald and Jim Bridger were with old Glass, who was still alive. John Fitzgerald, the older man, recognized the danger they faced. He knew the Indians were on the move, and it was the two of them. They had already stayed longer than Mr. Henry had asked them to, because Henry thought old Glass was going to go under; they thought he was going to die. So Fitzgerald thought they had better leave him to die on his own, get them to safety, and join the other company. They took Hugh Glass on a litter and put him by the water. Then they took his rifle, his knife, his tomahawk, and his fire-making equipment—things that a dead man wouldn't need anyhow—and left him.

Hugh Glass was still alive. When he realized that his friends had deserted him, he determined that he was going to live. He began to crawl toward the Missouri River. He had a desire not only to survive, but also to revenge himself against those two cowardly caretakers. He was motivated and pushed to survive. Due to his injuries, his travel was exceedingly slow. The only nourishment that he could find was from insects and snakes and grass, or whatever he could grasp.

A week into his painful trek, he came across some wolves who were killing a buffalo calf. He stopped and watched the wolves. After they had eaten, Glass crawled and got half the carcass of that buffalo calf. He went to a safe place and laid himself up for two weeks until he had eaten all of that buffalo meat. After two weeks of rest and that nourishment, he was able to walk a little bit and stumble.

He then walked and stumbled until he got to the Missouri River, where he found some Lakota Sioux Indians who were friendly. From them, he got a hide boat, drifted down the river, and stumbled into Fort Kiowa on October 1823. He had crawled, walked, stumbled, and drifted 250 miles. Can you imagine that? Two hundred fifty miles.

Although his wounds were dressed and he got everything that he needed to revenge himself, he was unable to do so because John Fitzgerald had joined the army and was out of reach. When he found out who the young man was, Jim Bridger, and noticed that he was young and that it was his first expedition, he forgave him. Jim Bridger is known for Bridger's Pass and Fort Bridger. James Bridger died on a Missouri farm in 1881 at the age of seventy-seven and was

one of the last living mountain men. It seems as if the lives of all these mountain men were interwoven, and they had to be because they lived together, worked together, and fought together.

But not all of them had the same motivations. Jedediah Smith was quite different from the other mountain men. It was not simply money or fame that he desired. He really wanted to serve the Lord. He wrote to his brother Ralph: "It is that I may be able to help those who stand in need that I face every danger."

Smith's Motivation: Service and Family

"It is for this that I traverse the mountains covered with eternal snow. It is for this that I pass over the sandy plains in the heat of the summer, thirsty for water. It is for this that I go for days without eating and am pretty much satisfied if I can gather a few roots, a few snails, or much better, a piece of horse flesh or a fine roasted dog, let it be the greatest pleasure that we can enjoy to smooth the pillow of our parents' age as much as in us lies and take from them all causes of trouble."

Notice what he said. He was doing all this mainly to help others. Finally, he wanted to smooth the lives of his parents in their old age. Jedediah was concerned for his elderly parents and wanted to make their last days as comfortable as possible. Therefore, he inserted money into his letter to help support them. The amount was $2,200, which was not pocket change in those days.

On December 24, 1829, from the Wind River on the east side of the Rocky Mountains, Jedediah Smith wrote his parents in Ohio: "It is a long time since I left home, and many times I have been ready to bring my business to a close and endeavor to come home, but have been hitherto hindered. However, I will endeavor by the assistance of divine providence to come home as soon as possible."

“But whether I shall ever be allowed the privilege, God only knows. I feel the need of the watch and care of a Christian church. You may well suppose that our society is the roughest kind. Men of good morals seldom enter into this business of this kind. I hope that you will remember me before the throne of grace. May God, in his

infinite mercy, allow me to soon join my parents is the prayer of your undutiful son, Jedediah Smith."

In 1830, Jedediah's mother died, and it rattled him. He was convicted over the neglect of his family and decided he had enough of mountain life. He purchased a farm and a townhouse, complete with servants, in St. Louis, Missouri. However, he had to make one last trip into the mountains, because when Smith sold his shares in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company the year before, he had agreed to help procure supplies for the subsequent owners.

Smith's Death and Legacy

He left in the spring of 1831. While looking for water on the Santa Fe Trail, he was killed by Comanche warriors. According to Dale Morgan, Jedediah Smith's biographer, Smith was looking for water when he encountered an estimated fifteen to twenty Comanches. After a brief face-to-face standoff, the Comanches scared his horse and shot Smith in the left shoulder. Jedediah wheeled his horse around and, with one rifle shot, killed the chief. The Comanches rushed him before he could use his pistols and stabbed him to death with their lances. Austin Smith retrieved Jedediah's rifle and pistols after the Indians had taken and sold them to Mexican traders. As a mountain man, Jedediah Smith knew he was involved both in trailblazing in the wilderness and in what we would call basic Christian missionary work. He saw the West differently than many people.

He saw the West as the creation of God, the great Creator, to be there for the use of His people. He spoke of divine providence that guided and protected him against the dangers on the trail. In a letter addressed to his brother on January 26, 1831, Jedediah Smith wrote about the motivation for his life. He said that he exists and works and is driven by the idea that "in God we live and move and have our being" and that "on bended knee we ought to offer up the grateful acknowledgement of His dear Son, knowing that for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Smith saw himself as the agent, the spokesman for God, a tool to be used from God and to draw others to faith in Jesus Christ. Of

Jedediah Smith it was stated, “Jedediah Smith, the Bible-carrying mountain man fur trader, and trapper explored and mapped most of the Far West in the 1820s from Colorado and Wyoming to Utah to California and Oregon.” Remember, he did all this in eight years. In an 1832 eulogy in the Illinois Monthly, they called Jedediah Smith “a man whom none could approach without respect and whom none could know without esteem.” As a mountain man, explorer, and trapper, Jedediah Smith was doubtless the greatest pathfinder of them all.

Application: Holding Fast in Any Environment

What does Jedediah Smith’s testimony in life have to do with us today? It is not enough to know that a man lived, the dates that he lived, and what he did. We must know how that is to affect us. Matthew 21:32 says that Jesus Christ looked at the Pharisees and, concerning John the Baptist, said, “You believe him not. But the publicans and the harlots believed him.” He continued, “And you, when you had seen it, repented not afterwards that you might believe.” In other words, these people were responsible to learn from the work of God in the lives of others. Therefore, you and I are responsible to learn from the life of Jedediah Smith and the work that God did in his life. So what are we to learn?

The truth is that one can live a godly, obedient Christian life regardless of one's environment, companions, and circumstances. If Jedediah Smith could be a godly man in the roughest company, in the roughest country, and in the roughest environment; if he could be obedient and live according to the Word of God in his day and time, is it not possible for you and I to do the same, even though we are in a much better environment and much better company?

We are encouraged in the Bible to hold fast. Jedediah Smith, in the worst environment and the worst company, held fast that which he believed. Each of these passages uses the Greek word krateo, which literally means to have power, to be powerful, to seize, to hold on to, and not let go. First Thessalonians 5:21 says, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” Hold fast that which is good. Hold on to it. Do not let it go or slip.

Hebrews 4:14 says, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” Jesus Christ witnessed a good profession before Pontius Pilate, and Paul told Timothy to hold fast that profession that he had made as well. Here Jedediah Smith was holding fast his profession of faith before all of these wicked mountain men.

His company and environment did not matter; he was holding fast his profession of faith. Hebrews 10:23 says, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).” Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. Our Lord also admonished His church in Revelation 2:25, “But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.” Hold fast. If a man like Jedediah Smith could hold fast the Christian faith in the environment and company in which he lived, we should not have much difficulty doing that today. The second is this.

Application: Worship in Uncomfortable Settings

Smith saw the work of God in the physical creation of a wild American West. Most of us have never really seen the West. We stay in the South all our lives. I am thankful that God has allowed me to travel and preach, but you would be absolutely astounded at God's creation in Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, California, and Oregon. When Smith saw these places, he worshiped the God who created all of this.

He celebrated his faith daily with Bible reading and prayer. He sang hymns as he traveled in the mountains. When he was in a civilized area, he cleaned up and went to church. One biographer said of Jedediah that he made the lone wilderness his place of meditation, the mountaintop his altar, and religion an active, practical principle, from the duties of which nothing could seduce or dissuade him.

Here is the fact that you and I must face: Smith worshiped and served God in a most uncomfortable setting. I am thankful I have never faced a grizzly bear, wild Indians, or freezing to death. But if Smith could worship and serve God in the face of such difficulties, what is wrong with us when we have all the comforts of heat and air conditioning, soft chairs and pews, electrical lighting, and so much

more, yet will not worship as we should? We will not be thankful or appreciative.

You should hear some of the excuses I receive as a pastor for why people will not come to church. “Well, we had company show up.” I have company that shows up, too. I give them the opportunity: You may either go with us or stay here until we get back. “Well, I woke up this morning and my big toe was hurting.” “I have a headache.” Isn’t it amazing?

Here Smith was worshiping God in the worst of conditions, and here we are in the best of conditions, making every excuse to stay out of the house of God, away from the preaching of the Word of God. Most of the time, we cannot even get away from the television set long enough to read a chapter out of the Bible. Do you understand what I am saying?

In Luke 11:31, our Lord said, “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them.” “For she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.” He continued: “The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here.”

Why is the queen of the south, the queen of Sheba, going to rise up and testify against that generation? Because she came from the utmost parts of the earth. She traveled a great distance just to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and a greater than Solomon was there. What about the men of Nineveh? How are they going to condemn that generation? Jonah went through preaching, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” He did not have three points and a poem; he just said one thing. These people repented at the very first hearing of Jonah’s preaching.

Men hear truth over and over and over and over and reject it. The queen of Sheba traveled great distances just to hear truth, while today most people will not walk across the street to hear a message from the Word of God. And when they do hear, they reject it. They refuse it.

Conclusion and Prayer

I had rather be a Jedediah Strong Smith in the mountains, in the worst environment, with the worst companions, holding fast the faith of Jesus Christ, than to be in the midst of a lukewarm, ignorant, and apathetic group of Christians. We need to learn to hold fast, stand for truth, and not let circumstances, situations, environments, or companions hinder us from that which we know is right. We need to make every effort to learn the Word of God and apply it to our lives.

My prayer would be that God would give us more men like Jedediah Smith. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word, for Your truth, and for godly men in time and history from whom we can learn biblical principles.

From whom we can emulate their manly virtues and Christian graces. Help us to be holy, godly, and to stand; and, having done all, to stand. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

Philemon and Onesimus the Fugitive Slave

February 15, 2012

SCRIPTURE READING - Philemon 1:7-21 (KJV)

Introduction and Reading of Philemon

For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother. Wherefore, though I might be much more bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee being such in one as Paul the aged, and now so a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds, which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me. Whom I have sent again that thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels, whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel.

But without thy mind would I do nothing, that thy benefits should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. For perhaps

> he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him now forever, not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, and how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on mine account. I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand. I will repay it. Howbeit, I do not say to thee, how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides. Yea, brother, let me have joy in thee, in the Lord, refresh my bowels in the Lord. Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

Philemon and Onesimus, the Fugitive Slave

Historical Context of the Epistle

The Epistle of Philemon is a personal epistle, a personal letter written by the Apostle Paul to his friend Philemon when Paul was a prisoner in Rome. We are very confident that Paul was indeed a prisoner in Rome. In verse 1, he writes, “Paul a prisoner of Jesus Christ and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer.” In verse 9, he says, “Yet for love’s sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” In verse 23, he writes, “There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus.” So very obviously, Paul was in prison.

Paul was also in this same prison when he wrote the book of Colossians. A number of epistles are referred to as the prison epistles because the Apostle Paul wrote them while he was in prison. Philippians is another one. In Colossians 4:18, Paul refers to his bonds as well: “The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.”

This epistle, along with the Colossian epistle, was written around A.D. 60. Probably they were written almost at the same time, and in all probability they were carried by the same individual or individuals. In Philemon, verses 23 and 24, Paul is speaking about some fellow prisoners there. He mentions Marcus, Aristarchus,

Demas, and Lucas, his fellow laborers, as well as Epaphras: "Salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus." He then mentions Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, and Lucas.

In Colossians 4:10, these same individuals are named: "Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you." Then, "And Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him." In verse 12: "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." And in verse 14: "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you."

These individuals were with Paul in prison, and they probably returned and carried these epistles. Archippus, who is mentioned in Philemon, is also mentioned in Colossians. Archippus probably lived in Colossae, or what at least was a Colossian church, and Philemon may have been a Colossian as well. These individuals were with the Apostle Paul, with the exception of Philemon, and probably carried these epistles back to those to whom they were written.

The reason Paul is writing to Philemon concerns his fugitive slave Onesimus. Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon and entreats Philemon to receive his runaway slave as he would receive the Apostle Paul. Philemon is a very small book, only twenty-five verses, yet there are many wonderful doctrinal truths taught in it. I cannot teach them all, but I want to point out a few examples.

Doctrinal Truths in Philemon

In verse 18 is a wonderful example of imputation, suretyship, and substitution. The apostle Paul says concerning Onesimus, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on my account." That is exactly what was done in relationship to Jesus Christ. Our sins were charged to His account: imputation, suretyship, and substitution.

We also have another truth in verse 17: how to receive each other in the faith. There is a biblical doctrine not only of biblical hospitality, but of how to receive each other as Christians. "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself." He tells Philemon to treat Onesimus exactly as he would treat Paul.

In verse 19, the Apostle Paul also teaches how we should be thankful and grateful to those whom the Lord has used as instruments in our own conversion: “I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand. I will repay it.” Then he says, “Albeit, I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.”

Evidently, Philemon was converted under the ministry of the Apostle Paul as well. Onesimus was a slave, and he was Philemon’s slave. In verse 16, the Apostle Paul says concerning Onesimus, “Not now as a servant, but above a servant.” The word servant in the Greek is doulos, which literally means a slave or a bond slave. Many times in the New Testament, when you see the word servant, it is actually the word slave.

Onesimus was a runaway slave. He belonged to Philemon. He had not only fled from Philemon to Rome, but had also stolen from him. That is why he owed Philemon. He had probably stolen from him in more ways than one. I find it very interesting that the Apostle Paul uses Philemon’s Christian character and godly attributes as encouragement to get him to forgive Onesimus and receive him back. In verse 7, Paul said, “For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.”

Paul's Appeal and Use of 'Trump Cards'

In other words, Paul says, “I know your hospitality, your graciousness, your kindness, and your generosity.” He is saying, “I know you are going to do the same thing toward Onesimus when I send him back. He is not going to be the exception.”

Paul uses several trump cards to get Philemon to do exactly what he wants him to do. First of all, remember that the Apostle Paul is an apostle. What does that mean? It means that he possessed what I would call apostolic authority. In 2 Corinthians 13:10, Paul writes, “Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification and not to destruction.” The word power there literally means power, jurisdiction, or authority. Paul said, “I do have authority,” but he wanted to use that authority for

edification and not for destruction. So, looking back in Philemon at verse 8, notice what the Apostle Paul said.

"Wherefore, though I might be much more bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient." Notice what he said: "Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee, which is convenient." In other words, Philemon, I could command you. I could order you. But he said, "I'm not going to do that. I'm just going to beseech you. I'm just going to ask you to do that which you should do." So Paul is going to use his authority for edification, but he is not going to do any demanding or commanding. He is simply going to beseech Philemon to do what needs to be done.

There is another trump card that the Apostle Paul plays. Look at it in verse 9: "Yet for love's sake I'd rather beseech thee, I'm not going to command you, I'm just going to ask you, being such in one as Paul the aged and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ." Paul says, "You have got to remember this, Philemon. Number one, I'm just asking you to do this. But you have got to remember that I'm an old man. You have got to have mercy on old men, and you have got to be tender, gracious, and kind to old men."

You have seen that. You have seen that bumper sticker that says, "Don't mess with old men. They're too decrepit and too old to fight. They'll just shoot you and get it over with." Well, that is what the Apostle Paul said: "I'm an old man. You have just got to have mercy on me. Remember my old age." Moreover, he said, "I'm a prisoner of Jesus Christ." In other words, the Apostle Paul was in prison for the faith's sake.

He was not there because he had done anything wrong. Therefore, he said, "I rather beseech thee as being Paul the age and therefore prisoner of Jesus Christ," which should remind us of something. There are individuals in prison even today who are suffering for righteousness' sake. They are there because of their faith and because of their stand for truth and righteousness, and they are the prisoners of Jesus Christ.

Look back in verse 9: "Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such in one as Paul the age, and now a prisoner of Jesus Christ." Paul was a Roman prisoner? No. He was in a Roman prison,

but he was the prisoner of Jesus Christ. There are plenty of prisoners of Jesus Christ who may be in state or federal prisons, but they are not state or federal prisoners; they are the prisoners of Jesus Christ. They are there by His providence, in His time, and for His glory.

Now, I do want you to hold the book of Philemon, and I want you to turn to 2 Timothy chapter 1, and also to the book of Revelation chapter 2. So we're going to 2 Timothy chapter 1 first. 2 Timothy chapter 1. And look if you would, what the Apostle Paul says in verse 8. He's writing to Timothy and he says, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner. But be thou partaker of the affliction of the gospel according to the power of God." So what did Paul say? Don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner. There is nothing to be ashamed about for those who are in prison for the faith's sake, and neither should the saints of God ever be ashamed of those who are imprisoned for righteousness' sake. Period. Now if you'll look in your Bibles to the book of Revelation chapter 2 and verse 10, I want you to note what our Lord said to some who there were in the church.

Revelation 2 and verse 10, He tells those Christians, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried. And you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Notice, some shall be cast into prison. By the way, may I point out that those who are cast into prison for the faith's sake, for righteousness' sake, or in good company.

Joseph was wrongly imprisoned, so was the Apostle Peter, so was John the Baptist, so was the Apostle Paul, so were most of the early disciples, and so was our Lord Jesus himself. So he says, be not thou ashamed of me, nor his prisoners. That is a fact. The one thing that haunted the Apostle Paul throughout his life was that he wrongfully persecuted and imprisoned the saints of God. In fact, if you'll look in your Bibles to the book of Acts chapter 26 and verse 10, you'll see what the Apostle Paul said. Acts chapter 26 and verse 10, he's giving his testimony, and he says this, Acts 26 verse 10, "Which thing I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints that I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priest, and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them." So the apostle Paul said,

I shut many of the saints that got up in prison. And when they were executed, hey, I gave my voice against them.

Turn to Acts chapter 28, verses 30 and 31. The Apostle Paul, who had wrongfully imprisoned many of the saints, is now himself wrongfully in prison. We read, “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”

Onesimus: From Unprofitable to Profitable

Paul had not simply rented a house and lived there as a free man. At this particular time, he was a prisoner. He had been in dungeons, but while he was in Rome for two years, he was able to have a rented house. Certainly, Roman guards were there. He was not at liberty to walk around or to leave, but he did have the liberty to receive all who came unto him.

With that in mind, go back to the book of Philemon, chapter 1, and look at verse 10. Paul was in prison in Rome, had his own hired house, could not walk about, but could receive company. In Philemon 1:10, we read, “I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.”

It is extremely interesting that the Word of God does not tell us how Onesimus got to the Apostle Paul. Since he had stolen and run away, it could have been that he had previously met, heard of, or known Paul. Perhaps he knew Paul was there, and Paul was the only one to whom he could get.

Maybe Onesimus was in need again and wanted to borrow money. Who knows? I do not know. He may have been convicted of what he had done and sought spiritual counsel. It could also be that he himself was arrested and put in that same house. The Scripture does not tell us. But it does tell us that somehow Onesimus got to the Apostle Paul, and that under Paul's ministry, while he was in prison, Onesimus was converted.

Now note what the Apostle says. After Onesimus was converted, Paul writes to Philemon, “Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the

gospel. But without thy mind would I do nothing, that thy benefits should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly."

Paul was saying, "I know that if you were here, Philemon, you would minister to me, help me, and take care of me. I really wanted to keep Onesimus, that he might minister to me in thy stead; but without thy mind would I do nothing. I do not want it to be of necessity; I want it to be willingly."

Now go back to verse 12. Here is what happened: "Whom I have sent again that thou receive him that is mine own bowels." The Apostle Paul took Onesimus and sent him back to his master, Philemon, asking him to receive him as his own bowels, as his own son.

In verse 11, Paul is still talking about Onesimus: "which in times past was to the unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me." There is a play on the name Onesimus. The word Onesimus literally means profitable. Up until this time, Onesimus was unprofitable. He was unprofitable to himself, unprofitable to Philemon, and probably unprofitable to everyone who was around him. I do not know the character of Onesimus particularly.

We are not told that he was a lazy, slothful, a sluggard, indifferent, or irresponsible. I do not know if he was that or if he was just a thief. But whether he was just a thief or all the other put together two, he was certainly unprofitable because he was Philemon's slave, stole from Philemon, and ran away to Rome. It was only after his conversion that the apostle Paul sent him back to Philemon, and now tells Philemon that he is profitable. So, what does the apostle Paul do?

He sends Onesimus, the runaway slave, back to his Christian master, and says that he is now going to be a profitable slave. In verse 15 he says, "For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever." Perhaps he departed for a season. In other words, he has been gone a while. A season is an indefinite period of time. It could be up to a year. The Bible does not tell us how long Onesimus was with the Apostle Paul. It could have been a few weeks, a few months, or up to a year. So he says, perhaps this unprofitable servant who stole from you and ran away from you

just for this little season, now you are going to receive him back. He is going to be profitable, and you are going to have him forever.

The interesting part of this little book now comes to light. When the Apostle Paul sends him back, he indicates to Philemon that the status of Onesimus has changed. He is not now simply a servant or a slave, but he is above a servant or slave. He is a brother in the Lord. Philemon was a Christian master, a Christian slave master. Onesimus was now a Christian slave. And what does Paul do? He sends him back.

Christian Slaves and Their Masters

In 1 Timothy chapter 6, the Apostle Paul teaches concerning Christian slave masters and Christian slaves. Each time you see the word servants here, it is the word doulos, which means slaves. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul writes, "Let as many slaves as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed."

Isn't that interesting? If you are a slave, especially if you are a Christian slave, you honor your own master and count him worthy of all honor, that God's doctrine be not blasphemed. Watch verse 2: "And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them." What is he saying? If a slave has a Christian master, do not despise him. But because he is a brother, rather do him service, because he is faithful and beloved, a partaker of the benefit. Do him service because his master is faithful and beloved, a partaker of the benefit. And then he tells Timothy, "These things teach and exhort."

Paul says that anyone who teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words—even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine according to godliness—is proud, knowing nothing, and doting about questions and strifes of words. From these come envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. What did he say? Anyone who does not teach that the slave should honor the Christian master and give him service is proud, knowing nothing; he is perverse and corrupt, supposing that gain is godliness. From such, he says, withdraw thyself.

Now go back to Philemon. Paul does not stop with the fact that Onesimus is now a Christian slave. He is sending a Christian slave back to a Christian master. Look in verse 16: he is sending him back "not now as a servant, but above a servant." He is "a brother beloved." He is more than just a slave; he is now a brother in the Lord. He is still a slave, but he is a brother in the Lord. Paul says he is "especially to me, but how much more to thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord."

Paul is viewing Onesimus as his son in the flesh. So he sends him back to Philemon and says, "I want you to receive him." He is not now just a slave; he is above a slave, a brother beloved, "especially to me." There was evidently a unique bond between the Apostle Paul and Onesimus. "Especially to me, but how much more to thee both in the flesh and in the Lord." What is Paul saying to Philemon? Onesimus is special to me. I have begotten him in my bonds. But if he is special to me, how much more should he be special to you? "Both in the flesh and in the Lord." Onesimus was Philemon's fleshly brother. He was his own brother.

Biblical Slavery vs. Humanistic Slavery

When we hear that, the first thing that enters our mind is this: Philemon had his own brother as a slave? Yes, he did. His own brother stole from him and ran away into Rome. How could a brother keep his brother in slavery? That is the problem with you and me today: we do not understand biblical law, nor do we understand biblical slavery. There is a vast difference between biblical slavery and humanistic slavery. There is a doctrine of biblical slavery. What most people think of when they think of slavery is pure humanistic slavery. All slavery is not equal. There is indeed a biblical concept of slavery.

The Bible is not a politically correct book. It has never been politically correct, and it never shall be. The same Bible that condemns kidnapping and man-stealing allows slavery. The same Bible that condemns abortion allows capital punishment. The same Bible that condemns murder allows self-defense.

The same Bible that condemns sodomy allows marital heterosexual sex. The Bible is an enigma to the humanist Humanists

cannot understand it, do not want to understand it, and will probably never understand it. And when someone comes up and will say, slavery is just wrong, all slavery is wrong, it shows that you know nothing about the Bible, and nothing about biblical law at all. It is truth, and I'm not going to take all of my time this morning to prove it, but slavery is indeed ordained by God. But let me hurriedly say, all people have been enslaved at one time or the other.

Yes, there were and still are white slaves. Yes, there were black slaves. Yes, there have been oriental slaves. Middle Eastern slaves. Everyone, every race has been enslaved at one point or the other. But there is a difference between biblical slavery and humanistic slavery. Biblical slavery is always for the benefit and the protection of the people. It is not for their destruction. Jefferson Davis had this to say concerning slavery, and let me just give you a brief quote. Because slavery was being widely discussed, back in the 1860s, and Jefferson Davis said it like this, "its slavery was established by the decree of Almighty God."

"It is sanctioned in the Bible in both testaments from Genesis to Revelation. It has existed in all ages and has been found among the people of a high civilization and nations of the highest proficiency in the arts. Let the gentleman go to Revelation," he's talking about the Bible, "slavery existed then in the earliest ages and among the chosen people of God. And in Revelation we're told that it shall exist till the end of time shall come."

“You find it in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the prophecies, Psalms, and the epistles of Paul, you find it recognized and sanctioned everywhere in the Bible.” That is certainly true. You must remember that it was God’s people who were enslaved in Egypt. Once again, you have to distinguish between biblical slavery and non-biblical slavery, because already you are asking, How can a brother keep his own brother in slavery? I will show you.

There is a humanistic slavery, and that humanistic slavery is condemned in Scripture. Deuteronomy 24:7 says, “If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him, then that thief shall die.” “Thou shalt put evil away from among you.”

So if I go and kidnap Ed and sell him into slavery, God says I am to be put to death. Let me dispel a myth. White men did not go into Africa, capture black men and women, and haul them into slavery. White men in that time, in that period, if they went into Africa, died—if not by disease, by the Africans themselves. How did we get the black slaves? Very easily: the black kings and the black chiefs sold their own captives and sometimes their own people.

They marched them down to the beach, and the white vessels came to the beach and took the slaves that the chiefs were selling. You have to remember that many times these people were captured in war. And you say, "That's awful." It may have been awful, but it was better than being dead. Usually in those days, they simply killed them or made them slaves. I am just pointing that out.

Although man-stealing and kidnapping are condemned, there were numerous ways that a person could become a lawful slave—and I am using the word lawful. If you want to know more about slavery, I would suggest that you listen to the fifteen-part series I did on where we are and how we got here, because five messages deal with slavery. The first two deal with the biblical concept, and I go through the Bible; the last three deal with the historical application of slavery. I am not going to give you all of that, but there are numerous ways that a man could become a lawful slave.

The first one is through warfare, which I have already mentioned. Oftentimes, conquered people were spared death because they were enslaved and brought into bondage. Slavery may not be the perfect state, but it is better than being dead. What did Israel do to the inhabitants of Canaan whom they did not kill? They made them their slaves. Every race has done this at some point or another, and every people have been enslaved at some point and some time.

I am not dealing with that right now. I am trying to show you how Philemon got Onesimus, his own brother, as a slave.

Second, a man could become a slave through sin, rebellion, and disobedience. We already know that Onesimus was a thief because he stole from Philemon. He may have been a thief previously as well; I do not know. The Bible does not say. But in Exodus chapter 22, beginning at verse 1, look what God says: "If a man shall steal an ox

or a sheep and kill it or sell it, he shall restore five ox 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." Without going into a great deal on the doctrine of restitution, which is clearly taught in many passages in the Bible and is taught in Philemon as well, the ratio of restitution depended upon, number one, what was stolen, and number two, who it was stolen from. Usually, it was either a five-fold or a four-fold restitution. Occasionally, there was a seven-fold restitution. Sometimes there was a double restitution, and sometimes a 20% restitution, depending.

But here is a man who is breaking in. God says in verse 2, "If a thief be found breaking up and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him." This is teaching particularly at night, because you do not know who he is or whether he is armed. God said that if he is breaking in at night, you kill him.

Watch verse 3: "If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him, for he should make full restitution." If the sun has risen, you can see that he is unarmed, you are not in danger, and you can identify him. Therefore, God says, do not kill him. Instead, he should make full restitution.

If he has stolen my ox, he now owes me five oxen, unless verse 4 comes into play. If he is found alive in his hand and has done nothing to it other than steal it, he is to restore double. He has taken my ox, so he owes me five; but if I catch him before he gets out of the barnyard or off my property, or before he hurts my ox, he owes me two.

You have heard the old adage, "Crime doesn't pay." That is only if you follow biblical law. If you follow man's law, it does pay. That is why we have so many crooks, criminals, and thieves.

Suppose he has stolen my ox, sold it, and spent the money. He now owes me five oxen. What does God say? Let him make restitution. But he has no money; that is why he stole to begin with. So what does God say? He shall be sold for his theft. He becomes a

slave, either to me or to someone else, until he works out restitution—the amount of five oxen. The restitution did not go to the state; it went to the man who was stolen from. Thus, you could become a slave by being a thief: if you stole and had nothing to repay, you were sold into slavery until you made full restitution.

Selling Oneself into Slavery

How Onesimus Became a Slave

Thirdly, it was possible in the Bible to sell oneself into slavery. There were times when men were irresponsible, lazy, indolent, undisciplined, or lacked the necessary business acumen to succeed. They failed miserably and therefore had no other choice rather than to sell themselves into bondage. Sometimes they sold themselves as strangers—that is, to someone who was a non-Israelite living in the land. Sometimes they sold themselves to fellow Israelites.

For instance, look in your Bibles to Leviticus chapter 25, and notice verse 47 first. It was possible to sell yourself into slavery to a stranger: “And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger, or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger’s family.”

He goes on to say that this man could be redeemed. In other words, the family could buy him back from the stranger. Once he was bought back, he became a slave to the family until he worked out that which they had spent to redeem him. He owed the family. Who is going to deal more gently with you, your family or a stranger?

Now go back to verse 39: “And if a brother that dwelleth by thee waxen poor, and be sold unto thee.” Here is an Israelite buying an Israelite. It could be a physical brother, or simply a brother Israelite. “But if a brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor and be sold unto thee, thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant, but as an hired servant and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year jubilee. And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return.”

God did place a limitation upon Hebrew slavery. Deuteronomy 15:12 teaches, "And if thy brother, an Hebrew man or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years, then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty. Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress, of that which the Lord thy God hath blessed thee, that thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee, therefore I command thee this day." You could keep a Hebrew servant up to six years.

So when an Israelite or a Hebrew was sold to a stranger, the family could redeem him. When one was sold to an Israelite or to his own family, he could be a slave up to six years.

Now, what in the world is God doing? How did men get themselves into slavery? Either through being a thief, or irresponsible, or undisciplined, or being lazy, or being a sluggard. Sometimes, I suppose, he could just be the providence of God in that he lost everything that he had. In biblical slavery, then, one becomes a slave to someone who does have some business acumen, discipline, and knowledge. For six years, that individual becomes an apprentice to someone who knows how to work, plan, and save. Therefore, at the end of six years—on the seventh year—he is to leave with a well-ordered, disciplined life and, if you will notice, with enough stock and equipment to start over his own life and once again live a disciplined, well-ordered life.

The point I am trying to make is this: biblical slavery is for the benefit of the slave. It is for his education. By the way, this would also be a means of evangelism. What if you had a stranger as your slave and the stranger came into the faith? You could keep him six years, and on the seventh he would have to go free. So it was also a means of evangelism.

The Bible does not tell us what the previous life of Onesimus was like. But we know he was a thief, or that he stole from Philemon, and he may have been a thief previously. Either the family redeemed him, or somehow he was lazy and irresponsible, and Philemon took

Onesimus in to train him, teach him, and discipline him. Instead, Onesimus stole from Philemon and ran away.

Paul's Pledge and Final Applications

So how could a brother keep his own brother in slavery? That is how. Paul sends Onesimus back in repentance, now willing and able to make restitution. He tells Philemon in verse 18, “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on mine account. I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand. I will repay it. Albeit, I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.”

Here is what Paul is saying: Onesimus may not be able to pay you right now, but I am. When I get out, I will take care of it. Do not worry about it; you will not lose anything. Whatever he owes you, put that on my account. Paul says, “I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand. I will repay it.” You want money, Philemon? I will give it to you. But let me remind you: you owe your own self even to me. I owe you, but you owe me. We will work it out, but remember, I will pay it.

Everything you are, you have because God used me as the instrument of your conversion. Therefore, you owe me. Paul does not hesitate to remind Philemon that he owed him his own life besides.

Paul teaches us in this little epistle that it is better to ask than to assume. Paul really wanted to keep Onesimus. He knew Philemon would not mind, but he said, “Without thy mind, I would do nothing.” He would ask. If Philemon wanted to send Onesimus back, that was totally up to Philemon. Paul was not going to assume that Philemon would allow Onesimus to stay.

Remember this: asking is no big deal, and we should never be afraid to ask. Scripture tells us that we have not because we ask not.

On the other hand, the Apostle Paul warns us concerning the abuse of authority. Although he could command Philemon, he would not; he would rather beseech him. It never hurts to ask. When we assume that someone is willing to do something, give us something, let us have something, or lend us something, without asking, we usually create hard feelings and difficulties. Besides, all anyone can

say when asked is yes or no. It is that simple. Paul tells us, therefore, that it is better to ask than to assume.

Secondly, in verse 17, Paul admonishes Philemon to receive Onesimus as himself: “If thou count me therefore, partner, receive him as myself.” That is, Philemon must treat Onesimus exactly as he would treat Paul, the Apostle. This is what the Apostle is telling us.

We cannot play favorites with the saints of God. Would Philemon not really be upset, irritated, and angry with Onesimus? I would. If my own brother had stolen from me and run away, I would be upset and angry. But the Apostle Paul says, no, you just receive him as myself.

I know that some are more lovable than others, some more likable, and that it is easier to be around some than others. Understand that. But if someone is a genuine saint of God, regardless of personality or stage in the Christian life, we must learn to receive him as we would receive the Lord Jesus Himself. “As much as you've done it to the least of these my brethren, what? You've done it unto me.” So there is a biblical doctrine of learning to receive.

The third application is this: biblical slavery is far easier and much better than governmental slavery. Humanistic governmental slavery simply makes men and women useless, parasitic welfarites who have neither inclination nor desire to work because they think they can make more money on the dole, or on welfare, than by working. They are satisfied to let other people take care of them. Governmental welfare has been aptly described this way: it is when the government steals from a stranger to support another stranger. That is just about right.

Biblical slavery had limitations and was designed to educate and teach men and women to work and assume responsibility for themselves. It had a termination point, an ending time. Governmental slavery is permanent. Biblical slavery was for the benefit of the slave. He was to be taught, educated, and disciplined; he was to learn to be responsible for himself, to take care of himself and his family. Humanistic slavery destroys all of that. Paul sent Onesimus, the runaway slave, back to Philemon not only as a brother in Christ, but as a Christian slave until he worked out that which he

owed his brother. We can learn from that as well. We are responsible. We are accountable.

God's law is far easier and far lighter than man's law. And God's law is for our benefit and for our protection, whereas man's law is always for our own destruction. I'd rather be a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ than a slave to any government on earth.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your love, for Your grace, for Your mercy. Lord, we pray for these on the prayer list. We think of Phil and Rick, Lord, and their needs, hearing, and papers; ask, Father, for You to undertake for them. We pray, Father, that You would help us to be biblical in our worldview, to think biblically and scripturally, and to act biblically and scripturally, and give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 13

You Are Contemptible

June 14, 2020

Introduction: You Are Contemptible

In Matthew, chapter 5, verse 13, our Lord said, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?” The title of the message is, You Are Contemptible. I think you will understand why momentarily. It is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.

Suppose I told you very bluntly today that you are contemptible. You would probably respond, “I do not like to hear those words from you, nor do I want to hear those words from anyone.” Suppose I went further and told you that you were not only contemptible, but you were also despicable, useless, worthless, of no value, and of no account. You would probably ask me if I were trying deliberately to hurt you or destroy my own ministry at the same time. I am sure those thoughts would at least enter into your mind. However, the truth is, you really are contemptible. You really are despicable. You really are worthless and valueless based upon your standing according to the Word of God.

So let me point it out very clearly: you are contemptible, and so am I. Each one of us happens to be contemptible one way or the other. We are either held in contempt in the eyes of God or held in contempt in the eyes of man. We are either deemed valuable or worthless. We are either loved or hated. We are either the salt of the earth and therefore valuable, or we have lost our salt, our saltiness, and therefore are absolutely worthless. There is no in-between. It is like something I heard years ago: one man said, “Honesty is like pregnancy. Either you is or you ain't.” There is no in-between.

That is the way it is with this. We are either valuable or worthless. Everyone understands that salt is a necessary item, and it is necessary for many reasons. There are some who state that Roman soldiers were either paid in salt or received a salt allowance. If that is true, then we can understand where we get the old saying that a man is not worth his salt.

In other words, he really has not worked. He is actually worthless. We have many today that are not worth their salt because many people will not work and therefore they’re useless. Our English word salary is derived from the word salt. The English word salary does come from the Latin word salarium, which means stipend or money allowance, and salarium appears to be linked to salt by the word sal or salaria, which means pertaining to salt. Did you realize that salt is mentioned over 40 times in the Bible? It is very significant, and there are many uses for salt, which the Bible makes exceedingly clear.

Salt as Flavoring

Let me give you at least five of them today before I begin trying to make applications. First of all, salt is used as flavoring. It is salt that makes things that are unsavory to be edible. There is a verse in Job 6 and verse 6 that asks this simple question: “Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?” Obviously, if you are going to eat the white of an egg, you are going to add salt, usually salt and pepper. There are a lot of things that are simply unedible unless they have salt on them. An application of this truth to Christians is that since we are supposed to be the salt of the earth, we are to make society and culture livable

and enjoyable as we adhere to the truth of God and biblical principles. Therefore, we are to be the divine flavor to the world.

We are not to be morose, pathetic, discouraged, and defeated. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, “I might have entered into the ministry if certain clergymen I knew had not looked and acted so much like undertakers.” Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in his diary, “I have been to church today and I am not depressed.” There are a lot of churches you go to from which you would certainly walk away depressed. The truth of the matter is, we as the salt of the earth are to add flavoring.

What kind of flavor does your Christianity bring forth? It should bring forth a biblical flavor. If it does not, you need to gauge your life according to the Word of God.

First of all, salt is used as flavoring. Secondly, salt is a preservative. When our Lord says, “Ye are the salt of the earth,” and then asks, “but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?” our text presupposes that the world is decaying and therefore needs salt—a preservative. Any old-timer knows about salted meats. Salt has always been used as a preserver.

Salt as a Preservative

I remember, as a boy, meat being brought in from the smokehouse, with the salt washed off before we began to cut and cook it. Obviously, salt is important as a preservative. According to Genesis chapter 19, if ten righteous men had been found in Sodom and Gomorrah, it would have been preserved. But there were not ten righteous men; therefore Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain, were destroyed.

If you want to know what the world would look like without the saltiness of Christianity, look around you. Basically, we have lost our saltiness and our power to preserve because of our compromise and apostasy. The decay of society is evident because we have not exercised dominion; we have not been as godly, holy, and obedient as we should have been. Therefore, as Christians, we have lost our power to preserve.

Let me show you how important salt was. Salt was considered a contraband item during the War of Northern Aggression. General William Tecumseh Sherman said, “Salt is eminently contraband, because of its use in curing meats, without which armies cannot be subsisted.” He understood that armies needed salt to preserve meat, and salt, like quinine and other medicines, was contraband during that war because he did not want the southern soldiers to have any assistance at all.

Salt not only flavors, according to the Bible; salt also preserves. Thirdly, salt also stings.

Salt Stings

If you do not believe that salt stings, I have a way to prove it: wait until you get an open wound and then rub salt in it. You will find out very quickly that it stings very sharply. What application do we gather from the fact that salt stings? The stinging aspect of salt should remind us that God has commanded us to rebuke, to reprove, and to confront a wicked society and culture. We are to be a sting to the consciences of wicked men. We sting their consciences by doing that which is right and holy and godly.

Leviticus 19:17 says, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.” God says, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart.” But He also says, “Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.” If we suffer sin upon our neighbour, if we fail to rebuke our neighbour, or if we fail to rebuke our brother, then we hate him. God says, “Thou shalt not hate.” The positive command in this context is that we rebuke and confront.

That is why, in 1 Timothy 5:20, the Apostle Paul told Timothy, “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” Let me explain something about that verse. A private sin would merit a private rebuke, but a public sin merits a public rebuke. That is why he said, “Them that sin, rebuke before all.” In other words, if the sin has been public, the rebuke is to be public, that others may fear. They see that sin is being confronted and dealt with. Now turn to Revelation 3:19.

We are still talking about rebuking and stinging. Look at Revelation chapter 3, verse 19, and see what our Lord says to the church: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent.” Now, is that not interesting? In Leviticus 19:17, He said, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy neighbor. Thou shalt rebuke him.” Now our Lord says, “As many as I love,” showing again the positive aspect of Leviticus 19. The positive aspect is that we shall indeed rebuke. That is what He said: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”

Rebuking, then, is not an aspect of hatred. Rebuking is not an aspect of being angry with someone. Rebuking is an aspect of love. There is another verse in the Bible we need to consider. Proverbs 27:5 says, “Open rebuke is better than secret love.” Open rebuke is better than secret love. God says it is more appropriate to rebuke someone in love than to love someone secretly and never say a thing to him. The Scripture makes that very clear.

There is a stinging aspect of salt, and that stinging aspect is that we do not allow each other to get away with sin, wickedness, and rebellion. Here are a few appropriate questions. Think about these. Have you stung any consciences lately? Have you confronted anyone about their sins? Have you confronted an erring brother? The Bible says very plainly in the book of James, “He that converteth an erring brother from the wickedness of his way, he shall save a soul from death.” So very obviously, we can ask: Have we corrected, have we confronted, and have we stung the consciences of a brother or of anyone? Here is another question that we can ask.

When we do sting and when we do confront, we have to understand that it must be with biblical love and humility, and not with pride, arrogance, haughtiness, a superior attitude, or a haughty disposition. Galatians 6:1–2 says: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” Now, look at verse 1: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault.” Here is a man who trips; here is a man who falls.

He may not have planned it or intended for it to happen, but it did happen. So he is sent.

Now, God says, “You who are spiritual, restore such an one.” That means you have to rebuke and confront. But how do you do so? In a spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. When I confront that erring brother, I have to realize that, if it had not been for the grace of God, it could be me and someone else confronting me. I can be tempted just as he can be tempted. So I am not coming to him with a haughty, arrogant, proud, pharisaical attitude, saying, “Tom, you stupid rascal. Why did you do that?” What am I going to do if I say something like that to Tom? I am probably going to get my head knocked in. Obviously, if I speak to him that way, is he going to respond to me in a biblical manner? Of course not, because I have not approached him in a biblical manner. I have called him all kinds of names.

We often think of people doing things that are very stupid, view them as stupid, and confess that they are stupid. But if we stop to think about the person who did it, it may not have been stupid to him. He may have been thinking something entirely different. So God says that when we confront or rebuke each other, we cannot come name-calling or with a superior attitude, saying, “Well, I didn't do that.” The only reason I did not do that is because of the grace of God.

We are all sinners, and we can all be tempted. When we sting, rebuke, reprove, or confront, it must be with a biblical attitude. Have you stung anyone’s conscience lately, and have you done so with biblical humility and love, understanding that if it were not for God’s grace in your life, it would be you being confronted?

Salt Makes Thirsty

Salt is not only flavoring; salt preserves, and salt stings. Fourthly, salt always makes one thirsty. Try eating a very salty dish, popcorn, or Chinese food, and shortly you will desire a lot of liquid. There is an old saying. Alice and I love fresh fish, particularly pond fish and river fish. Even as a boy, after eating fish I would go back for a glass of water and say, “My fish are wanting to swim,” because, obviously, fish makes you thirsty. Salt does indeed make someone thirsty.

If we really have salt in ourselves, if we are truly salted Christians, we should make other people thirst for the righteousness found only

in Jesus Christ. We should make people thirst for the water which only He can provide.

There was a meeting of the generals in the Southern Army during the War of Northern Aggression. General Richard Stoddard Ewell had left his saber in Stonewall Jackson's tent. When he returned to retrieve it, he stood outside the tent because Stonewall Jackson was wrestling with God in prayer. After hearing Stonewall pray, General Ewell said, "If this is Christianity, I must have it. I must have it. I must have it." That was the beginning of his conviction and conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do your words, actions, and attitudes make others thirst for the righteousness found only in Jesus Christ? Do our lives make others want to know the truth that you and I possess when we live according to biblical principles?

Salt, in order to be effective, has to mingle with the substance it is affecting, yet at the same time remains distinct from that substance. You can salt your grits, which you should do. Once you have good salted grits, you eat the grits, but you know where the salt is. You know they are salted; you can taste the salt. The salt has been mingled with the grits, but it is still distinct. You can mingle it with rice or anything else, and it is still distinct. Salt is unlike the medium in which it is placed.

Our Lord illustrated this in Matthew chapter 9. The Pharisees did not understand this truth about salt: that it can be mixed with a substance and yet remain distinct. As Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he arose and followed him. As Jesus sat at meat in the house, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to the disciples, "Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" In other words, if he was holy, he would know that these were unholy people. He would have nothing to do with them.

But when Jesus heard that, he said to them, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come

to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Why, then, did our Lord mingle with the publicans and sinners? He mingled with them to affect them; they did not affect him. He was the true salt of the earth.

As Christians, let me put it to you bluntly: we are in the world, but we are not of the world. We are in the world, but the world is not in us. There should be something different about our lives, so that when other people see us, they can say, "He is different. He is not only different, but there is something about him."

May not understand it, may not comprehend it, but there's something about that individual that makes him stand out. Well, what is it? It's the grace of God. It's the mercy of God. It is the truth of God in our lives. And so we should be able to make people thirst after the righteousness of Jesus Christ without becoming one of them who needs the water of life. So our Lord mingled with sinners.

Salt in Covenants and Sacrifices

But he did not become a sinner. We can mingle with the world, but we're not of the world and the world is not to be in us. Fifthly, listen carefully, salt was used in sacrifices and in covenants. Salt was used in sacrifices and in covenants, and yes, salt was used in sacrifices to God. Salt was used in covenants. I'm going to show you just a moment from the Bible.

But do you realize when men ate together and became friends, there was an Arabic expression that went like this. There is salt between us. In other words, we become friends, we become one. The phrase was very common to the Oriental people. And they consider then eating of salt a pledge of fidelity, which bound them in a covenantal relationship. So I want you to turn in your Bibles, first of all, to the book of Leviticus, the book of Leviticus, and look in chapter two and verse 13, Leviticus chapter two and verse 13. Now, remember, if you would, salt is used in covenants. It's also used in sacrifices to God. So in Leviticus chapter 2 and verse 13, look what the Bible says.

And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt. Neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to

be lacking from thy meat offering. With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt. Interesting? God calls it a covenant of salt, or the salt of the covenant. And He says, with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.

Now, I want you to look in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Numbers, chapter 18 and verse 19. Numbers 18, verse 19. Numbers 18, verse 19, And all the heave offerings of the holy things which the children of Israel offer unto the Lord have I given thee and thy sons and thy daughters with thee by a statute forever. It is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord unto thee and to thy seed with thee. Note, if you would, God refers to it again as a covenant of salt between Aaron and his descendants, in other words, the Levites, it is called a covenant of salt. Now, turning your Bibles to Second Chronicles, Chapter 13, Second Chronicles, Chapter 13. And look, if you would please, at verse five. Second Chronicles, Chapter 13 and verse five, there's about to be a war between Judah and Israel.

The Southern Kingdom and the Northern Kingdom are addressed in 2 Chronicles 13:5. Abijah, king of the Southern Kingdom, says to the Northern Kingdom, “Ought you not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David forever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?” A covenant of salt. Three times now we have read about this covenant of salt.

In light of these passages, we should be able to understand the directions of the Lord our God. Mark 9:50 says, “Salt is good. But if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will you season it?” Then our Lord says, “Have salt in yourselves and have peace one with another.”

Salt is an emblem of a firm union, concord, and agreement. That is why in the Old Testament it was called a covenant of salt and a covenant of peace. Matthew Poole said, “They could not have been salt to season others, if themselves had not first been salted with the gracious habits of knowledge, faith, love, fear of God.” Our Savior says, “Keep this salt in yourselves.”

Let not this holy fire die from the altar. Take heed of losing your savor, and have peace one with another. It is one thing in the nature of salt to unite and knit the parts of the body salted together. The

upholding of union and peace with one another will declare that you have salt in yourselves. By this, says the Apostle, we know that we have been translated from death into life, because we love the brethren.

In light of the truth of covenantal salt and the command to have salt in ourselves and have peace one with another, we must ask whether we promote peace and harmony or bring disruption and division. When God tells us to have salt in ourselves, he is saying that we are to be the one.

It is kind of like what the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians, chapter four: endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. That is having salt in yourself. You have to remember this: one of the things that God has said to hate, in Proverbs 6:19, is he that soweth discord among the brethren.

Seasoned Speech

So you have to ask yourself these questions. Do our attitudes, actions, and words bring peace or division? Do we ever think of holding our tongue? Do we ever refrain from saying the first thought that enters into our mind? Is it necessary at times to speak rudely, sharply, and loudly?

There are so many applications that I could make to my own life. Proverbs 21:23 says, “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles.” This is one of my favorite verses, and I quote it fairly regularly. How many of you have ever said, “Oh, I wish I hadn't said that”? Every one of us. So the Bible says that he who keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

Now, in light of the fact that our Lord tells us that we are going to have to give an account of every idle word that we speak, it would be wise to watch our mouth and our tongue. 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.” No wonder He said, “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles.”

Here are two questions: How do we keep our mouths and our tongues in order to keep our soul from troubles? And how do we

make sure that we do not speak idle words? The answer is in Colossians 4:6. Here is how we make sure that we do not speak idle words and how we keep our mouth and tongue: “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” This is how we make sure that we do not speak idle words: let our speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that we may know how we ought to answer every man.

According to this passage, we need three things in our conversation: grace, salt, and knowledge. We understand grace and knowledge. I cannot talk to Daniel about a subject if I do not understand the subject; if I have no knowledge of it, there is no way I could discuss it with him. I can understand grace, but how in the world? What does it mean when it says that our conversation is to be seasoned with salt? We understand grace and knowledge, but we do not necessarily understand needing our conversation seasoned with salt. When the Bible says that our conversation should be seasoned with salt, it means that our conversations should be wholesome and savory.

So let me point something out. Our discourses, our conversations with each other, are most important because this is, where the rubber hits the road. Do you realize it is our conversations with other people that determine whether or not we end up ministering to them or whether we end up driving them away? Listen carefully: it is not what we say. It is also how we say it.

If you have never understood tonal patterns, you need to grasp their implication. I can say something absolutely acceptable and say it in such a way that it becomes totally unacceptable. I could look at my wife and say, “I love you, sweetheart,” and that would be acceptable. But I could look at her and say, “I love you,” and she would know by my tone that I do not love her at that moment; I am mad at her. It is the same statement, but our tone patterns reveal our emotions, feelings, and irritations.

She could keep calling me, and finally I could say, “What?” Did I answer her? Yes. But what did my tonal pattern show? I am irritated and upset. It is not only what we say, but also how we say it. A tonal pattern can convey something totally different from what we are trying to say. This is why, when a matter is very important or

delicate, I tell people to talk face to face, not over the telephone or by email. You cannot see facial expressions over a telephone, except with a smartphone—and most people do not know how to use such things. You certainly cannot see a person's facial expression by email. Face to face, however, I can understand what you mean not only by your tone pattern, but also by your facial expression.

If something is really serious and worth discussing, you should be able to do it face to face. Now, there are two passages that correlate with Colossians 4:6. Look there once more and hold your place, because we are coming back to it: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

Turn to Ephesians 4:29. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. Corrupt communication is not necessarily only cursing or slang words. You can say things that simply do not need to be said.

And they can be truthful things. If I know something about Robert, if Robert has confided in me, I don't have to run tell it to Wesley. It's none of his business. You follow what I'm saying? Just because you know something does not necessarily mean that you have to tell it. And it can become corrupt if you are revealing things that you should not be revealing. So he says, let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying. And the word edify means to build up and to strengthen.

But that which is building up and strengthening, that it may minister grace to the hearer. So if it's not going to minister grace to the hearer, he says it's useless anyhow. So go back now to the book of Colossians, chapter three and verse 16. I want to tie these together and answer the questions I asked earlier. Look in Colossians three and verse 16. He says, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.

Teaching and admonishing one another, how? In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the

Lord. So I began this message by sharing the title, You Are Contemptible. And one of the ways that we become contemptible is by our speech, by our conversations with others. And the way that we watch our mouths and our tongues is we do exactly what Colossians 4 and verse 6 says. We always season our conversation with grace and with salt and with knowledge.

We let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth. We only speak that which is edifying and godly. And the word of Christ is dwelling in us richly in all things. OK. And as long as we're speaking the word of Christ, we're certainly watching our tongues and our mouths. So I want you to go back to Matthew, chapter five, to our text, because I want you to see this, I'm trying to tie all of this together for you momentarily.

The Consequence of Lost Saltiness

So I started the message with the title, you are contemptible. I pointed out in the introduction that each one of us is contemptible in one way or the other. You are either contemptible in the eyes of man, or you're contemptible in the eyes of God. So in verse 13 of Matthew chapter 5, our Lord says, You are the salt of the earth. Now watch. But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? In other words, you can't regain it usually.

It is therefore good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under the foot of men. If salt has lost its savor, its saltiness, it is good for nothing. What do you do with it? You throw it out and stomp it into the ground. Our Lord said it similarly in Luke chapter 14 and verse 34: “Salt is good, but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?” So now the salt has lost its savor. He said it is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men.

The interesting thing is the Greek word katapateo, and it literally means to tread underfoot, to trample, and to tread down. Metaphorically speaking, what our Lord is saying is that if we have lost our saltiness, then we are worth nothing other than being treated rudely and with contempt, spurned, absolutely worthless, and deserving no respect whatsoever. When we as Christians compromise, become worldly, lose our lives, and lose our biblical

principles, we lose our saltiness and become absolutely worthless. We become contemptible to God and to man. Man then refers to us as hypocrites, pretenders, and fakes because they see that we profess one thing and live another; they laugh at us and mock us.

The laughing and mocking would be fine if we were living a righteous and obedient life. But when they laugh at us and mock us because we are unbiblical and ungodly, it indicates that we have lost our saltiness and that they are trampling us under their feet.

Psalm 123, verses 3 and 4, records David's prayer: "Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease and with the contempt of the proud." The wicked and the world already despise us and hold us in contempt. When we lose our saltiness, lose our biblical principles, and live and act like the world, we give them even more reason to despise us and tread us underfoot. In Revelation chapter 3 and verse 16, look at what the Lord told the church.

He is talking to the church of the Laodiceans. In verse 14 he says, "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." Watch verse 15: "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."

The word lukewarm refers to that which is tepid. Most people like coffee either cold or hot, but not in between. Our Lord says, because you are neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, "I will spue thee out." John Gill, the great Baptist expositor, wrote about a lukewarm professor:

"A lukewarm professor is one that serves God and mammon. He halts between two opinions and knows not what religion is best, and cares little for any; yet keeps in a round of duty, though indifferent to it, and contents himself with it. He is unconcerned about the life and power of godliness, takes up with the external form of it, and has no thought about the glory of God, the interest of Christ, or truth."

This was too much the case of this church, at least of a great number of its members, and it was very loathsome to Jesus Christ. Look at the word he uses in verse 16: “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” The word spew is an old verb meaning to vomit or to reject with extreme disgust.

When I was a little boy, my parents visited some neighbors. We were always glad when they did because they had children with whom we could play. My father and mother were in the living room visiting with their friends, and they were having coffee. Dad called me and said, “Son, please come get my cup and get me another cup of coffee.” I said, “Yes, sir.” I went and got his cup, and the lady said.

The saccharine is on the table. Saccharine? I do not know what saccharine is. I have never heard of saccharine. You know, one of those little tiny pills supposed to equal a teaspoon? My father always took two teaspoons of sugar in his coffee, so I put two teaspoons of those little pills in his coffee. I was a kid; I did not know. He took one swallow of that coffee and spat it out right on the carpet. He looked at me and said, “Son, if I did not think this would kill you, I would make you drink every drop of it.” I am sure it was embarrassing that he spat it out on her carpet. Can you imagine what that must have tasted like with two teaspoons of those little saccharine tablets in that stuff?

This is exactly what our Lord is saying. He said, “Because you are neither cold or hot, but you are lukewarm, I will spit you out.” I cannot stomach you. I cannot hold you in my mouth. You are out of here.

Albert Barnes said this: “Referring perhaps to the well-known fact that tepid water tends to produce sickness at the stomach and an inclination to vomit, the image is intensely strong and denotes deep disgust and loathing at the indifference which prevailed in the Church of Laodicea.” The idea is that they would be utterly rejected and cast off as a church, a threatening of which there had been an abundant fulfillment in subsequent times. What was threatened to that church may be expected to occur to all churches if they are in the same condition, and all professing Christians and Christian

churches that are lukewarm have special reason to dread the indignation of the Savior.

Betrayal and Contempt

An easy way to be held in contempt by God is to betray Jesus Christ. We betray Him every day by our attitudes and actions. The world is always exceedingly glad and happy and will accept us and love us as long as we betray Jesus Christ.

If you will look in your Bibles to Mark, chapter 14, and verse 10, notice what the Bible says concerning Judas Iscariot. You know that Judas betrayed Christ. “And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests to betray him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.” It is the betrayal of Jesus Christ that makes the wicked glad.

Judas was willing to be paid in order to betray Christ. Many professing Christians are like Judas, in one sense, looking for a convenient time and a convenient way to betray Christ in order to obtain what they want and desire. Unhappily, many professing Christians do not even measure up to Judas, because at least Judas betrayed Christ for money. Most Christians betray Him merely to satisfy their own desires and lusts. We want what we want, and we are willing to violate the Word of God to obtain it. When we treat God with such contempt through our disobedience, rebellion, iniquity, and transgression of His law, He justly and righteously places us in contempt.

Look at Malachi, chapter 2, verses 7 through 9. The Bible says, “For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” Now watch: “But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.”

So how does a Christian make sure that God does not hold him in contempt? The answer is obedience. I certainly do not want my

heavenly Father angry with me, and the way to keep Him from anger is by obeying Him. That is why David said in Psalm 119:22, “Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.”

We may be held in contempt by man in one of two ways. First, we may be held in contempt for living a righteous, godly, and holy life. In this sense, they persecute us wrongly. That is why our Lord said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name's sake.”

Secondly, men may hold us in contempt because of our disobedience, our un-Christian attitudes and actions, our compromises, and our betrayals of the faith. We rightly and justly deserve that contempt. On the other hand, God will also hold us in contempt if we betray His Son and disobey Him. I would much rather be held in contempt by man than by God.

The Apostle Paul says, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Thus, you are contemptible in one way or the other: either man is holding you in contempt because of your obedience to God, or God is holding you in contempt for your disobedience to Him. The problem is that God's contempt is eternal. He said in Daniel 12:2, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt.” If we want to honor God, we must obey Him. And how do we obey Him? By being the salt of the earth.

Conclusion: Be Salty

Are you salty? Have you lost your saltiness? If you have, repent and beseech him for his mercy and grace. It is only as we keep his word and obey him that we have salt in ourselves.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. Lord, we ask that you would indeed make us salty, that we might honor thee and glorify thee. Help us to be obedient and bring our lives into greater conformity to Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 14

The Glory Of God

April 30, 2014

Introduction: The Question from Romans 6:4

Let us look in Romans chapter 6. The message today is entitled “The Glory of God.” Notice Romans 6, verse 1: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

I have a confession to make. This message was developed out of my own curiosity. I was reading through Romans and came to chapter 6, verse 4. I read it, reread it, and asked myself: Why are we specifically told that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father? What is implied, and what does the Bible mean when it says that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father? Evidently, it applies to us, because he says, “even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

The Glory of God in Scripture

I know that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God the Father; that is what the Bible says. I wanted to know what the glory of the Father was, how that applied to my life and to your life, and how it would make us walk more holily and more obediently. If verse 4 tells us that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and the conclusion is, therefore, that we should walk in newness of life, we must grasp and understand what that means at all costs.

When we think of the glory of God, we can think of a multitude of Scriptures that refer to it. Some of those Scriptures are exceedingly common. For instance, 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 31.

The Bible says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Think about that. If you are to do all to the glory of God, what really does that mean? Romans 15:7 commands, "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Receive ye one another.

There is a biblical reception to be given to the saints of God, and it is to be done in a biblical way: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Then 2 Corinthians 1:20 says, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." These are three Scriptures that refer to the glory of God and also refer to an impact upon our lives. If Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God the Father, how does that mean that we must therefore walk in newness of life?

Jeremiah wrote: "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."

God says that if you are going to glory in anything, you might want to glory in this: that you know Him and that you understand Him. Therefore, when Romans 6:4 says, "That like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in

newness of life," there is something we must understand concerning the glory of God.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, said: "The proper study of the Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can engage the attention of the child of God is the name, nature, and the person, the doings, and the existence of the great and mighty God, which he calls Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the divinity."

It is a subject so vast that all of our thoughts are lost in its immensity, and so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can comprehend and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content and self-confidence, and go our way thinking, "Behold, I am wise." But when we come to this master science, the knowledge of God, finding that our plumb line cannot sound its depth and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought, "I am but yesterday, and know nothing."

When you begin to study the doctrine of God and see how great, majestic, and glorious He is, and how utterly impossible it is for us to comprehend God in His fullness, we have to say, "I am nothing."

Do you realize that the very first catechetical question usually asked in catechetical instruction, especially in the Westminster or Philadelphia confession, is, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer is, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." When we say that our chief end is to glorify God, we must remember what Scripture says in Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." In other words, we have not lived up to that which God has commanded us. We have not glorified Him as we should. Even as Christians, we still do not glorify Him as we should.

Fallen man, natural man, unsaved man, according to Romans 8:6 and 8, is at enmity against God. He hates God and is certainly not interested in glorifying God. But based upon Romans 6:4, what does it mean when the Bible says that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and how does that apply to us?

God's External and Essential Glory

When we talk about the glory of God, the first thing we should think about is that God's glory is revealed in His creation. Psalm 19 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.” God's glory may indeed be seen in His creation. That is God's external glory, and I will explain that in just a moment.

Revelation 4:11 declares this: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” We have to acknowledge that everything that exists exists for God’s honor and God’s glory. Everything that God does in creation, in providence, and in redemption is ultimately for His own honor and glory.

Romans 11:36 sums this up: “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” Look at that verse: “For of him”—that is, originally—“and through him”—that is, providentially—“and to him”—that is, ultimately—“are all things: to whom be glory for ever.” So everything that is done in creation, in providence, and in redemption is done for God’s honor and glory.

When we think of God’s glory, we normally think of that external glory, which is revealed in creation. But may I point out the fact that God has a glory that is above creation? David speaks about that glory in Psalm 8:1: “O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.” It is true that the external glory of God is seen in creation, but God has a glory that He has set above the heavens. Psalm 57:5 and 11 says: “Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.”

So God has a glory that is revealed in the earth, and God has a glory that is above the earth. God’s glory is the goal of all of His plans for mankind. The glory of God is that which you and I see in creation, providence, and redemption. In every one of these areas, God is concerned with His glory. In fact, all that God orchestrates, all that God wills, all that God determines, all that God purposes, and all that God causes to occur in and through His creation in this life is for His honor and glory.

The Glory of God

When we talk about God's glory, let me say first of all that it is impossible to define God's glory. I can tell you the Hebrew word for glory is kabod and the Greek word is doxa. I can tell you what kabod and doxa mean—that is, how they are translated. But I cannot define God's glory. I can define the words which speak of His glory, but I cannot define His glory. Why? Because to define God is to limit God. If you try to define God's glory, you are trying to limit God's glory, which is absolutely and totally impossible.

God's glory is synonymous with His magnificence, splendor, beauty, and perfection. God's glory speaks of His dignity, honor, wisdom, majesty, and unquestionable justice in all His dealings and His creation. Everything that is and everything that exists exists for God's honor and glory. All the credit for everything that we are and everything that we have belongs to God alone.

Everything that you have, God gave you: your family, friends, finances, children, breath, life, and health. Everything that you have, God gave you. If you do not think He gave you your breath, try to breathe without Him, and you will find that you do not exist. God has an external glory, and I am going to show you in just a moment that God also has an essential glory.

When I thought about all these passages dealing with God's glory, I thought, how does that apply to Romans 6 and verse 4? The Bible specifically tells us that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead by the glory of the Father, and therefore we should walk in newness of life. How do I explain this? How do I even learn what that means? I came to the realization that everything must be interpreted within the analogy of faith. Whatever the Bible is teaching in Romans 6:4, it is also taught in other passages of the Bible as well.

Moses' Request and God's Revelation of His Glory

A passage in the Old Testament came to mind, so turn, please, to Exodus chapter 33. Hold Romans 6; we are coming back there. In this passage, Moses had been pleading with God for assurance that God would be with him as he undertook to lead the people. In Exodus 33, beginning with verse 17—in fact, let us read verse 16.

Moses, verse 15: “And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.”

"Lord, if you're not going to be with me, I don't want to go. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." Moses is pleading for God's presence to go with them. "And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name." Moses, you ask for my presence. I'm going to make sure that I go with you.

Moses then says, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."

Moses did not ask to know the will of God. He did not ask to see the mighty power of God. He did not ask to see the greatness of God. Moses said, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.” Show me thy glory.

If we studied the glory of God in creation, the glory of God in providence, and the glory of God in redemption for the rest of our lives, we could never exhaust those three subjects. We could never do it. When you consider that God has a glory above the earth, that He has an internal and inherent glory, known as His essential glory, we could never fathom that glory. Why? Because one would have to be God in order to understand the glory of God. Yet Moses says, “Shew me thy glory.”

God said, “Here’s what I’ll do. I’ll make all my goodness pass before thee. And I will proclaim that I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.”

The first thing to understand is this: What God showed Moses were His attributes. The attributes of God are manifestations of God’s glory. Now, God is not through. In Exodus 34:5, we read: “And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

There are two key attributes pointed out in Exodus 34: God's grace and God's justice. God is infinitely just, and God is sovereignly gracious. Moses said, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." Charles Haddon Spurgeon was preaching from Exodus 33, where Moses said, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory."

Spurgeon says, "We find that Moses saw no similitude, no form pass before him. He had an audience. He had a vision. But it was an audience from behind a covering and a vision, not of a person, but an attribute. Behold, then, the scene. There stands Moses about to be honored with visions of God. The Lord is about to answer thee, O Moses, God is come. Dost thou not tremble?"

"Do not thy knees knock together? Are not thy bones loosened? Are not thy sinews broken? Canst thou bear the thought of God coming to thee? Oh, I can picture Moses as he stood in the cleft of the rock with the hand of God before his eyes, and I can see him look as man never looked before, confident in faith, yet more than confounded at himself that he could have asked such a petition. Now, what attribute is God about to show Moses? His petition is, 'Shew me thy glory.' Will He show him His justice? Will He show him His holiness? Will He show him His wrath? Will He show him His power? Will he break yon cedar and show him he is almighty? Will he rend yon mountain and show him that he can be angry? Will he bring his sins to remembrance and show him that he is omniscient? No."

"Hear the still small voice. 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee.' Ah, the goodness of God. That is God's glory. God's greatest glory is that he is good. The brightest gem in the crown of God is his goodness. 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee.' There is a panorama such as time would not be long enough for you to see. God said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee.'

"But there was something more. No one attribute of God sets God out to perfection. There must always be another. He said, 'I will shew

mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And I will be gracious to whom I'll be gracious.' There is another attribute of God. There is his sovereignty."

God's goodness without his sovereignty does not completely set forth his nature. When Moses said, "Shew me thy glory," God said, "I'm going to make all my goodness pass before thee. And then I'm going to tell you, I'll be gracious to whom I'll be gracious, and I'll be merciful to whom I will be merciful." Now, I want to ask you a question.

The Goodness and Sovereignty of God in Sending and Raising Christ

How does all this fit in with Romans 6 and verse 4? Paul writes, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Some commentators take the phrase "the glory of God" and make it synonymous with, or equal to, God's power. Matthew Poole, normally a great commentator, says, "By the glory of the Father, in other words, by the power of the Father, which is called his glorious power, God has said elsewhere to have raised him by his power. And he said to live by the power of God." Thus Matthew Poole and others say that all the glory of God is simply the power of God. Certainly, the power of God has to be included in God's glory, because it is one of God's attributes.

But you have to ask this question: If you limit verse 4, that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, to the power of God, is that all there is to God's glory? The answer is obviously no. Now, let me ask some questions. I am asking these for a reason. I know that most of you can answer them. I am setting you up so I can explain Romans 6 and verse 4.

Was God obligated to create the world? No, He was not. What did the Bible say in Revelation 4 and verse 11? We read it earlier: "For thy pleasure they were created." God was not obligated to create the world. A preacher asked me recently, "Why did God create the world?" My response was, "For his own honor and glory." According

to Revelation 4:11, he said, “That’s exactly what I believe.” But he added, “You know, I heard another preacher say the reason God created the world was because he was lonely.”

Do you realize that speaks of deficiency in God? If God is lonely, He is not fulfilled and content in and of Himself. That is a denial of the Godhood of God. Was God obligated to create the world? No, He was not. After God created the world, was He obligated to provide for everyone and everything in it? No. After man sinned and rebelled against God, was God obligated to provide salvation? No. Is God right now obligated to save sinners? No. Would God be absolutely just if He damned every sinner? The answer is yes. He would be.

If you do not understand what I am talking about regarding obligation, look in your Bibles at Romans 11:33–35, which shows that it is impossible to bring God into obligation to anyone at any time. Paul writes, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

“For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?” Who hath known the mind of the Lord? No one. Who hath been His counsellor? No one. Who has first given to God anything? No one. You may say, “But I tithe and I give gifts.” The only reason you can tithe and give gifts is because God first gave to you. “But I love Him.” The only reason you love Him is because He first loved you. You cannot do anything first to God; therefore, you cannot bring God into obligation. The only thing God owes sinners is justice—and you do not want that. You want mercy.

Since God was not obligated to create, provide, send salvation, or save anybody, let us ask a question. Romans 6:4 says, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Since God was not obligated to provide salvation, and since God is not obligated to save sinners, why did He send Jesus Christ? Why did He set forth Christ to be our propitiation?

Why does He forgive our sins? Why did He provide such a great and glorious salvation in Jesus Christ? Why does God justify the ungodly? The answer comes simply: because of the goodness of God in His grace. Romans 3:24 says, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Note the emphasis on freely. Being justified freely means that we did not earn it, merit it, or deserve it. God freely and graciously, out of the goodness of His heart, sent redemption in Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:20–21 tells us, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” God in His goodness and in His abundant grace sent Christ. He sent Christ to be our substitute. He set forth Christ as a propitiation for our sins. It was only as Jesus Christ took our place, suffered our lawful wrath, and suffered the penalty of the broken law for us that God was enabled then to be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus Christ, according to Romans 3:26.

Paul charges the ungodly, those who refuse the great salvation that God has provided in Jesus Christ. Note the words that the apostle Paul uses: “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?” He addresses the person who judges others while doing the same things, and asks whether that person thinks he will escape the judgment of God.

Then Paul asks, “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” The charge is not merely that they refuse salvation; they despise the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering. But after hardness and an impenitent heart, they treasure up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

When you refuse the salvation God has provided, you misuse and abuse the goodness of God in sending Jesus Christ.

I'm hopefully going to start tying this together for you. I want you to think with me now. This is one of those messages you have to think. I don't have three points and a poem. This whole message is

just explaining one simple phrase. Look in Romans 6:4: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Watch this. “That like as Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we should walk in newness of life.” How was he raised up? By the glory of the Father. Now we see the glory of the Father according to Scripture in two specific areas.

What did God show Moses? Moses said, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.” And God said, “Moses, I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to make all my goodness to pass before you. And then I’m going to proclaim that I’ll be gracious to whom I’ll be gracious. And I’ll be merciful to whom I’ll be merciful.”

First of all, see the goodness of God in sending Christ as our salvation. Just think about this. The goodness of God in sending Christ. Christ is involved: “That like as Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we should walk in newness of life.” So the first thing we should see is the goodness of God in sending Christ for our salvation.

John 3:17 says, “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” God sent not His Son to condemn, but to save. Romans 5:10 says, “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

Galatians 4:4 says, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” First John 4:10 says, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

There is the goodness of God in sending Christ for our salvation. What did God show Moses? First, His goodness; secondly, His sovereignty. God sovereignly raised Jesus Christ from the dead. God did not raise any of the Old Testament prophets from the dead like He did Christ. He did not raise any of the New Testament apostles or

prophets from the dead like He did Christ. No. God sovereignly chose Christ and He sovereignly raised Him from the dead.

The resurrection of Christ is attributed to the Father over and over in the Scriptures. Acts 3:15 says, “And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.” Acts 4:10 says, “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.” Acts 13:30 declares, “But God raised him from the dead.” Acts 17:31 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.” Romans 10:9 says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Galatians 1:1 speaks of “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead).” Ephesians 1:20 says, “Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.” Finally, Hebrews 13:20 describes “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.” We have seen the goodness of God in sending Christ and the sovereignty of God in raising Christ from the dead.

The 'Like As' and 'Even So' of Romans 6:4

Now look at Romans 6:4. Here are two very important phrases. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as...” The words “like as” are from the Greek word hosper, which means “like as,” “even as,” or “just as.” Just as Christ was raised from the dead, just as God graciously and sovereignly worked in His life, even so He did in our lives.

Let me tell you something that you might not be aware of. Did you know that God the Father chose God the Son to be the mediator? You say, “What?” Well, I understand that, but there is a specific Scripture that tells you so. Look in your Bibles to Isaiah, and hold Romans 6; we are coming right back. Look in Isaiah chapter 42,

verse 1. I want you to see how the Bible speaks about Jesus Christ: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." This is a Messianic prophecy. The Bible is telling us that Jesus Christ is God's elect. There was a mediatorial election by God the Father, and God the Father chose Jesus Christ to be the mediator. Wow!

Now turn in your Bibles to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. Just like Christ was chosen to be the God-man and to be the mediator, God also chose us unto salvation. Look at 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 13: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Now, wait a minute. Who chose us to salvation? God did. There is a theological election. God chose us, or a soteriological election: God actually chose us to salvation. If you want to read Ephesians 1, verse 4, or simply let me quote it, Scripture says: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

Now let me show you. The Bible says in Romans 6, verse 4, "like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." Just like, just as. Just as Jesus Christ was chosen by God to be the mediator, so God chose us to salvation in Jesus Christ.

Illustrations of Sovereign Grace: John 5 and John 11

Now let me put this together for you. Look in your Bibles to John chapter 5. There is still another little phrase in Romans 6, verse 4 that I have to explain, but look in John 5, beginning at verse 1. I do not have to read much of this for you to get the idea. John 5, verse 1: "After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches."

"In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was

there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool. But while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath."

Now I want to ask you some questions. How many people were at this pool? A great multitude. How many were sick? All of them—sick, halt, lame, impotent, blind. What does the Bible say Jesus Christ did? He went in the midst of all these sick, lame, blind, impotent people, found one man, and said, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The man said, "Sir, I don't have anybody to help me. While I'm trying to get to the pool, somebody else steps in, and then it's too late for me." Jesus said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

Why did Jesus Christ walk in the midst of all those sick, blind, impotent, and lame people and heal one man? He did not heal anybody else. How many of those people needed healing? All of them. How many could our Lord have healed had He desired? All of them. Did this man recognize who Christ was? No. Did he cry out for help? No. Jesus came to him. He approached him, and when He said, "Wilt thou be made whole," the man still did not know who Christ was. Christ said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

Now, why did Jesus Christ heal one man? Look in John 5 and verse 21: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." Then: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."

Why does the Son quicken whom He will, and why has all judgment been committed unto the Son? Here is why: "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Jesus Christ is God. What is the one attribute that sets God apart from everyone else? It is His sovereignty. God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases. He is the only One who can do that. The Bible says in Psalm 115:3, "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

Why did Jesus Christ walk in the midst of all those sick people and heal that one man? He did it so that everybody would know that He is God, and that He does as He pleases. What did God tell Moses? "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will be merciful to whom I will be merciful." I am God. I can do as I please. I can be gracious to whom I please.

Let us look at an illustration in John chapter 11. Everybody knows the story of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They were dear friends of our Lord, and Lazarus died. John 11:1 says, "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

What happened to Lazarus? He died. How then could our Lord say, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby"? How could He say that? He died. Yet verse 6 says, "When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was."

"Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world."

Verse 11 continues: "These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead."

Wait a minute. Am I confused? Our Lord said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Now he says, "Lazarus is dead." Is there a

contradiction? Oh no. When our Lord went there, Martha first went out to meet him.

"Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Martha said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said, "I am the resurrection." The resurrection had walked into town. She did not have to worry about Lazarus. "Believest thou this?" She said, "Lord, I believe that thou art the Son of God." Our Lord was telling Martha to believe exactly what he was saying.

"And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Martha said, "Hmm, this might be a little more than I can handle." So she sent Mary out there. Mary followed the same course. Verse 34 follows.

SCRIPTURE READING - John 11:34-44 (KJV)

> "And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid."

> What did Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is God incarnate, do? He said, "Lazarus, come forth." And what happened? "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes."

Jesus Christ did not call all of the dead forth; He singled out Lazarus. He will be gracious to whom He will be gracious, and merciful to whom He will be merciful. He sovereignly singled out Lazarus to be raised from the dead.

Remember what Moses said: “God, show me Thy glory.” God made all His goodness pass before Moses, and then said, “I'll be gracious to whom I'll be gracious. I'll be merciful to whom I'll be merciful.” Thus we see God's goodness and God's sovereignty. We have seen it in John 5 and John 11. Now look at Romans 6:4: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Application: Walking in Newness of Life

Remember the little phrase “like as.” The second phrase, “even so,” is the Greek word houtos, meaning “even so,” “likewise,” or “in like manner.” Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, or likewise, we also should walk in newness of life.

What did God the Son do in John 5? He walked in the midst of that multitude, singled out one man, and healed him. What did He do in John 11? He singled out one man, Lazarus, and raised him from the dead. Do you remember what our Lord said in John 10:3? “He calleth his own sheep by name.” And John 10:27: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

What is Paul telling us in Romans 6:4? Just as God chose Jesus Christ and sovereignly spoke the word and raised Him from the dead, that same God chose us in Christ, sovereignly spoke the word, and gave us regeneration, conversion, and faith to believe in Him. Just as He saved Christ by raising Him from the dead, He saved us by raising us spiritually from the dead in like manner. Then verse 5 explains further: “For if we have been planted together in the

likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

Oh, dear friend, let me ask you, what does the Bible say? When Christ was raised from the dead, He was raised from the dead that He dieth no more. Are we going to die? No. Our bodies may drop off, but we're not going to ever, ever die. Because just like God raised Him from the dead, even so we also are raised in newness of life. And just like Christ was raised from the dead to live unto the Father, why did He raise us from the dead? That we might live unto the Father just as Christ did. Do you see the motive for walking in newness of life?

We understand that God did not have to save us. God did not have to send Christ. God did not have to give redemption. And yet in the goodness and the grace of God, He sent redemption. And then in His sovereignty, He singled us out and saved us, when we deserve nothing but justice and damnation. Wow! You're talking about a motive to walk in newness of life.

Let me just read 2 Thessalonians 1 and verse 11. Paul is praying for the Thessalonians and he says this: "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." What was it that saved those Thessalonians? The goodness of God and the faith of God and the power of the Holy Ghost.

Now listen to this one. In 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 6, the Bible says that God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The glory of the Father that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is the same glory that raised us from the dead.

Therefore, we're to walk in newness of life. Let me make just a couple of applications and we'll close. Here's the question: How then do we glorify God? Well, here's the answer: We glorify God by walking in newness of life according to the same goodness and the same power that was shown to Christ. It is in us. It was exercised in us. And it is now our motive for godly obedience and holy living. The

same God that chose Christ chose us. The same God that raised Christ from the dead raised us from the dead as well. Now, here's my second application.

When we quote 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,” we must remember that we are obligated to do this because God chose and saved us by Jesus Christ, that we might live unto Him and walk in newness of life. We owe God a double debt. We are His creatures by virtue of creation, and we are His by virtue of redemption. He bought us.

That is why the Scripture says, “Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” He owns us, and we are doubly obligated to honor Him. The same God, power, goodness, and grace that raised Christ from the dead and gave Him newness of life will enable us to be obedient and walk in newness of life. “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” As Zechariah 4:6 says, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD.” Salvation from A to Z, or, in the Greek, from Alpha to Omega, is of God.

He is the first and the last, and everything in between. Without Him, we are nothing and can do nothing. But with Him, as the Apostle Paul says, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” The glory of the Father, just as when He raised Christ from the dead, raised us by the same power. No wonder we should walk in newness of life.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we pray that You would give us grace, mercy, and holiness. Help us to see that there are godly motives for obedience. We acknowledge and confess that salvation is of the Lord. Everything is of Thee. The only thing we provided was the sinner. We give Thee praise and honor, thankful that, as You chose Christ to be our mediator, You chose us in Him. Just as You sovereignly raised Him from the dead, You sovereignly raised us to newness of life in Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are obligated to worship Thee, honor Thee, and be obedient.

May we be like Him and bring our lives into conformity to Your Word. Give us grace, Lord, to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

How to Know if You are Saved

April 23, 2023

Introduction: The Problem of Doubt

Let us open our Bibles to two passages, 2 Corinthians 5 and Hebrews chapter 12. For time's sake, I am going to read 2 Corinthians 5 right now, and we will certainly pick up Hebrews chapter 12 shortly. Look, if you would, at verse 17. The title of the message today is, How to Know if You Are Saved. I can tell you that the reason for this message is that some folks have been asking me certain questions, and I would answer those questions.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

I realize that there are many people who think they are saved, but in reality they are not. There are also, I would say, some who think they are unsaved, but in reality they are saved. When I say that, I can explain it briefly. Oftentimes, those who are saved and think that they might be unsaved are individuals who have a greater perception

of their depravity, wickedness, and sin. Sometimes, when they doubt their own salvation and see how wicked they are, God is simply showing them how great His salvation is. There have been eminent Christians down through the ages who have struggled with assurance of salvation.

It was not that they did not believe the Bible; they certainly did so. It was the fact that they had experienced a much deeper sense of sin and wickedness, and they simply could not grasp that these truths would apply to them. They saw the truth applied to others, but applying it to themselves was more difficult. It is always interesting that you can apply the truth to other people more easily than you can apply the truth to yourself.

For instance, I have had people say, "Would you pray for me for this and that?" And I said, "Most certainly. I will be more than happy to do that." Then I happen to need this or that, and I start praying myself. The problem is that I know my sins, depravity, and wickedness, but I do not know theirs. It is easier to say, "Lord, bless them." You understand. I am simply saying that oftentimes we see this to be true in our lives.

So a crisis of doubt, in reality, can happen to any Christian. Sometimes even the mightiest of preachers have experienced doubt. I am going to give you a quote from John Owen. John Owen was known, like Spurgeon, as the Prince of Preachers. John Owen was a tremendous Puritan preacher.

In fact, I have his sixteen volumes in my library, containing the messages he wrote and preached over the years. But he said this: he had struggled oftentimes with forgiveness. "I myself preached Christ some years when I had but very little, if any, experimental acquaintance with access to God through Christ." Although he preached Christ, he sensed very little of Christ in his life.

After a season, when his soul was oppressed with horror and darkness, Owen began to see that God graciously relieved his spirit by the powerful application of Psalm 130. If you have never read Psalm 130, I challenge you to do so. If you have never read Owen's exposition of Psalm 130, I challenge you to do that as well.

Here is another quote that might surprise you. Drake Osborne, who wrote an article in 2018 on Charles Haddon Spurgeon, said that even Charles Spurgeon at times doubted his salvation. Although he spilled mountains of ink pleading with sinners to trust Christ's work as final and sure, the Prince of Preachers often struggled with an inability to sense the surety of God's love for himself. Spurgeon said, "I must confess here with sorrow that I have seasons of despondency and depression of spirit which I trust none of you are called to suffer, and at such times I have doubted my interest in Christ, my calling, my election, my perseverance, my Savior's blood, and my Father's love." Charles knew that it was always the tendency of the sinful human heart to doubt so great a gift of salvation.

What is the cure for such doubt? What do Christians do when they despair of saving grace and it seems as if the love of God is for all? The cure for Spurgeon was seeing the face of Christ by hearing the gospel. He said, "I've told you before that some years ago I felt a great depression of spirit. I knew whom I had believed, but somehow I could not get the comfort out of the truth. I preached. I even began to wonder whether I was really saved."

While away from home on holiday, he went to the Wesleyan Chapel, where a local preacher occupied the pulpit and preached a sermon full of gospel. The tears flowed from his eyes, and he was in "such a perfect delirium of joy" on hearing the gospel, which he seldom had an opportunity of doing because "he's always preaching himself." Then he said, "Oh, yes, there is spiritual life in me, for the gospel can touch my heart and stir my soul."

If men like John Owen and Charles Haddon Spurgeon at times questioned their salvation, then other Christians do so as well. These men, and most such Christians, do not question the truth of Christianity. They believe Christianity. They do not question the person and work of Jesus Christ; they know that He is the only way of salvation. They do not question the inspiration and authority of the Bible. How, then, can they lack assurance? How can they question their salvation? Many times, they are not questioning God; they are questioning themselves.

Do I really have saving faith? Did I genuinely repent? Is my faith real? Am I self-deceived? How could God love me when I am such a

desperate sinner? It is not necessarily the truth of Christianity they question; many times, they simply question themselves. When you begin questioning yourself like that, and especially when you try to argue with the Apostle Paul that you are a greater sinner than he was, the truth of John 5:24 may not give consolation. Jesus Christ said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”

Assurance Based on God's Word

Someone in that condition might say, “I understand how anyone else could understand and apply that truth, but I may not do so because I am such a vile sinner.” Look in your Bibles to 1 John 5. Assurance is always based upon the Word of God. Verse 11 says, “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” This is the record: God has given us eternal life, and that life is in His Son. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” In one sense, this is very simple: if you have Jesus Christ, you have life; if you do not have Jesus Christ, you do not have life. Many people try to put their feelings into the matter: “I do not feel saved. I do not feel that I have Jesus Christ.” Your feelings have nothing to do with it. Either you have Jesus Christ, or you do not have Jesus Christ.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petition that we desire of Him. So John said, these things are written that you may know that you have eternal life. Someone would say, “I don't feel like I have eternal life.” But eternal life is not a feeling. Eternal life is a fact based upon the personal work of Jesus Christ.

Causes of Lost Assurance

How can one lose assurance of his faith? How can one doubt his salvation? There are many answers to those questions. Primarily, sin

would be the cause. But a failure to perform basic Christian duties like prayer, Bible study, and attending the preaching of the Word of God can also cast doubt in your mind, and these things are sin as well. There are other problems. Physical, mental, emotional, and even hormonal imbalances can cause people not to think correctly and biblically. I know one individual, a very godly woman, who came into great doubt concerning her salvation.

She counseled with a pastor friend of mine, and over and over he gave her truth after truth, but she could not grasp it. Finally, he suggested that she have a full medical checkup. Her hormones were so out of balance, it was unbelievable. After a little medication, when everything was back in balance, there was no doubt any longer. There are many things that will affect our mind and our thinking as well.

So, if we are asking, “How do I know whether I am saved or not?” or, “Is someone doubting their salvation?” it is reasonable to conclude that one must have a profession of faith of some sort in order to doubt or to have a lack of assurance. Clearly, someone who is unsaved would not have doubts as to salvation, because they would know they certainly are not saved—unless, of course, they are deceived, thinking that somehow, someway, they are going to make it into the kingdom of God. Maybe they are trusting in their church membership, their baptism, or their good works.

The truth of the matter is, those are all foolish deceptions. Sometimes individuals even think they can get into the kingdom of God simply by their association with godly people. I've known preacher's children who thought they were saved just because their daddy or granddaddy was a preacher. No. Unless you are in Jesus Christ, obviously, you do not have life.

We are told that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch, in Acts 11:26. The word Christian means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. It means to be Christ-like. Therefore, a Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ, a follower of Christ, and one who is obedient to Christ.

Let me give you the contrast. In Luke 6:46, Jesus Christ looked at those people and said, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the

things which I say unto you?" Here are some who call Jesus Christ Lord, but they are totally disobedient. Here are others who say Jesus Christ is Lord, and they are obedient. They are the disciples of Jesus Christ, and they follow Him.

Principle 1: The Changed Life (2 Corinthians 5:17)

What I want to do today is give you two principles whereby anyone may gauge and understand the assurance of salvation. These two principles are always working in a real, genuine Christian's life. They may be light or heavy, slight or great, weak or strong, but they are always working. The reason they are always working is because we are, by faith, the children of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first principle is found in 2 Corinthians 5:17. Christians are always to be living a changed life: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

It is important to note that Scripture says, "if any man be in Christ." To be in Christ evidently means to be united to Jesus Christ by faith, implanted and engrafted into Him as the branch is in the vine. That branch is in the vine in such a position that it receives all its nourishment and sustenance from the vine itself. In other words, it is entirely dependent upon the vine. A new creation is in Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ alone. That is why I said, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, or creation.

The word creature is the Greek word ktisis, K-T-I-S-I-S, which refers basically to anything created. Christians are a new creation in the sense that we have been transformed by the grace of God. We are totally different.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. All things are passed away. The Greek word for old is archaios, from which we get our English word archaic. It refers to that which is old, ancient, and primal. Our old man, according to Romans chapter 6, has been crucified in the Lord Jesus Christ. What we were in Adam, what we were in our old man, is now passed away. All things have now become new in Christ.

Behold, all things are become new. The word new is the Greek word kainos, which means new in respect to form, substance, and that which is of a new kind. It is that which is uncommon and unprecedented. This very phrase argues for the greatest change imaginable, because only God can work such a change in the soul, the heart, and the life of man. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. All things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new.

The phrase translated "all things are become new" is a second perfect active indicative in the Greek. It means something has happened once and now continues to happen. When he says that we are become new and that all things have become new, it means there is a newness at one point in time, and then that newness continues throughout. In other words, we have changed, and we continue to change. We go in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

If you were to read Romans chapter 6, you would find the words likeness and even so. If we have been crucified with Christ, or buried with Him by baptism, like as Christ was buried and raised from the dead, even so we should walk in newness of life. The words likeness and even as indicate that there is not only an initial change, but also a continual change.

When you look at verse 17, it is not simply, "I repented one time," or, "I changed one time." There was that initial change, but then there follows a continuous change.

John Gill says, "All things are passed away." The old course of living, the old way of serving God, whether among Jews or Gentiles, the old legal righteousness, old companions and acquaintances are dropped. External things such as riches, honors, learning, knowledge, and former sentiments of religion are relinquished. When he says old things have passed away, he talks about old friends.

Stop and think about your own conversion. When you were converted, everything changed—your friends changed, your family changed. I liken it to when I married Alice. I had to drop all my old girlfriends. She would not let me see them anymore. Everything

changed. She became my new best friend, and my old best friend had to fade into the woodwork somewhere. I am simply pointing out the fact that old things had passed away.

Gill continues: “Behold, all things have become new.” There is a new course of life, both of faith and holiness; a new way of serving God through Christ by the Spirit and from principles of grace; a new, another, and better righteousness received and embraced. New companions are sought after and delighted in. New riches, honors, glory, a new Jerusalem, and new heavens and a new earth are expected by new creatures.

Or the sense of the whole may be this: If any man has entered into the kingdom of God, into the gospel dispensation, into a gospel church state—which seems to be the sense of the phrase “in Christ”—he has become a new creature, or entered into a new creation, as it were, into a new world. That is true, because once you are in Jesus Christ, everything becomes new.

I remember, as a young Christian, learning certain things and being flabbergasted because they were absolutely contrary to what I had been taught all my life. You have to say, “Well, that has to be done away with.” The old self is to be disposed of, and the new life in Christ gives us a transformation. We did not change only once twenty, fifty, or even sixty years ago. We changed once, but we continue to change. As Galatians 6:15 says, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature.” It is not circumcision or uncircumcision that avails anything, but being a new creature in Jesus Christ.

This verse means that we change initially, but our change continues. Look at Ephesians chapter 4, beginning with verse 17. These changes are to be continual. He gives you the initial change; now look at how that change continues.

The Necessity of Continual Change

“This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.” You do not walk like the unsaved. “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." They are blind, ignorant, and their understanding is darkened. "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

That is what we are not to be, obviously, and we are not that. We may have used to have been that, but we are no longer that.

Now look at verse 20: "But ye have not so learned Christ." Isn't that an interesting verse? Did you realize that you must learn Jesus Christ? What do you learn when you learn Jesus Christ? "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." He has spoken to you initially and opened your eyes to His truth. You "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 … put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Once you have been saved, once you have been converted by the grace of God, you put off the old habits and the old conduct, and you put on the new man, which is after God, created in righteousness and true holiness. He tells you how to put off and to put on.

He says, "Wherefore, putting away lying,"—that is, to put off—"speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." Be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Neither give place to the devil.

There is a righteous anger and a sinful anger. If we are angry with our brother or sister, we must not let the sun go down upon our wrath. In other words, get it settled before you go to bed, because if you do not, you are giving place to the devil. So you put all that off.

"Let him that stole steal no more." You cannot do things the way you used to. You may say, "When I was tight, I could always deceive, defraud, and steal." No, not if you are in Christ now. "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." An honest man is not merely someone who does not steal; he is someone willing to share and be generous.

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to

the hearers." How do you grieve the Holy Spirit? In this context, it is by not changing—by refusing to put off the old conduct and habits and put on what is holy and righteous. Verse 31 is entirely a put-off verse: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." How do you replace it? "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Each of us has habits. Sometimes they are good, and sometimes they are bad. I have seen and talked to men who quit smoking, yet, while talking to me, they take their hand and reach into the shirt pocket. There is nothing there; it is just habit. All those old habits have to be broken.

If you have a bad habit, or a habit that you know needs to be gone, it will not do you any good simply to quit. If you just quit a bad habit, sooner or later you will go back to it. You must not only quit the bad habit, but replace it with a holy, righteous, good, godly, and biblical habit. You cannot replace something with nothing. You have to replace something with something.

This is what he is telling you in Ephesians chapter 4. The same truth is given in Colossians chapter 3. This is all about changing. Our life is to be a life of continual change. God demands change.

I have heard people ask, "Would you pray that this situation will change? How about praying that these circumstances will change?" God never demands changes in circumstances and situations. He demands changes in people. When people change, situations change and circumstances change. But it is the people who must change.

In Colossians 3, beginning at verse 5, we read: "Mortify, that is, make dead, therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. For the which thing's sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." We are not children of disobedience; we are children of obedience.

In Colossians 3:7-17, Paul says that believers once walked in these things when they lived in them, but now they are saved and converted. They are to put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, and lying, having put off the old man with his

deeds, and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. In this new life there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all in all.

As the elect of God, holy and beloved, believers are to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. If any man has a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave him, so also should he forgive. Above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Let the peace of God rule your hearts, to which you are called in one body, and be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

This chapter is about change. We are continually to put off the habits, conduct, attitudes, and actions of the old man, and put on what is new and righteous in our thoughts, attitudes, actions, and everything. There should never be a time in the life of a Christian when he ceases to change. Our lives are to be a continual change because God is opening our eyes and showing us new truth.

I had a pastor friend who is now dead, and years ago he wrote me a letter. He stated that he had not changed any of his positions in twenty or thirty years.

What he intended to convey was, “I’m staunch.” But what he really conveyed was this: God had not taught him anything in twenty or thirty years. And that is a fact. If we are studying our Scriptures, if God is opening our eyes and enlightening us, we must change. We must embrace the truth God has shown us. It is impossible to grow in grace without changing, and impossible to live a holy life without change.

You remember 2 Peter 3:18: “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” The little word “and” is the Greek word kai, K-A-I, and it is also translated in our Bibles as “even.” So you could read it, “But grow in grace even in the

knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." You are not growing in grace unless you are growing in knowledge. If you are growing in knowledge, you must be changing, because you are understanding things you have never understood before. The Christian life is a life of change.

He speaks of initial change and then of constant and continual change. So what happens to a Christian who does not want to change? What happens to a Christian who says, "I'm comfortable the way I am. I'm happy just to do my own thing"?

I laugh because everybody knows that we have dogs—in fact, lots of animals. We have five dogs. Three or four of them are rescues. I put them in the truck, and they are about to die to get in. They want in so badly. They are jumping, and I let them all in. I get about a hundred yards down the drive, and now they are excited to get out because they know I am taking them for a run. So I stop the truck and say, "Stay, stay."

I open the door, jump out, and then all of them are out. They are like 100 miles an hour straight down that road, running as fast as they can. They only stop for bathroom breaks or if some animal has passed by where they can sniff and smell and that kind of thing. But the dogs are basically trained. Whenever I want them back, all I do is blow my truck horn, and guess what?

Three of them are males, and two of them are females. When I blow that truck horn, all those males run at breakneck speed just to get in the truck. You will never guess what the two females do: "We're going to sniff around a little more." No, you are going to get in the truck. I get out of that truck and say, "Don't you make me put on my mean voice. You get in this truck, and you get in it now." Then they come and hop in the truck.

You know, that is the way we are. A lot of times we will obey instantly, and a lot of times we just want to stay out and do our own thing. What in the world is going to happen when we want to do our own thing? Listen to me. Here are two arenas, two realms. Christians are always to be living a changed life. If they do not live that changed life, they will be living a chastised life.

Principle 2: The Chastised Life (Hebrews 12:5-11)

In Hebrews 12:5-6 we read: “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as of the children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

Verses 5 and 6 are basically a quote from Proverbs 3:11-12: “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction: For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.” Hebrews 12:5-6 is actually a quote from Proverbs 3:11-12.

What does this passage teach us? Listen carefully. First of all, it should be noted that chastening is an act of love, and it is a relationship of a father to the son. Look at verse 5: “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord.” Look at verse 6: “For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Our Lord said basically the same thing in Revelation 3:19 when He said to the church, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” Be zealous therefore, and repent.

God does not chasten us because He hates us. He does not chasten us because He is angry with us. He chastens us because He loves us and desires that we live a holy life.

Now, it is amazing to me that even children understand this principle. I have preached for fifty-eight years, and I have taught from the fourth grade all the way through college. One fourth-grade student whom I remember quite well was a young man by the name of Ronnie. He was a big boy for the fourth grade. In fact, he was so big that he could have bullied all the other boys. He did not, but he could have. I mean, that is how big he was. And this boy was obnoxious.

He would do something every day that I had to chastise him. In our Christian school, you had to sign and give us permission to chastise the children physically. Usually, when I had to whip someone, I would call the daddy and say, “Look, your son has done such and such, and I am going to discipline him. If you would like to be here while this is being done, you need to come now.” Most of the

time they said, “Preacher, just go ahead and take care of it.” Fine. And that is what I would do.

Ronnie would do something every day that I had to chasten him. When I would get him in the office—and any student in the office—the first thing I would do was ask them what they had done. I wanted them to confess. I wanted them to know what they had done to deserve a whipping, a spanking. Once I got that confession out of them, I would ask, “Do I hate you?” “No, sir.”

“Am I angry with you?” “No, sir.” “But I’m going to chastise you.” “Yes, sir.” “Why am I going to chastise you?” I would expect this answer: “Because you love me.” And I would say, “That is correct. Now, bend over. I’m going to give you three licks.” After I whipped the child, I would put my arm around him and say, “Son, I just want to tell you that I love you. Let’s have prayer. Let’s ask the Lord to bless this chastisement, make it effectual, and change your life.”

Every day I had to do that to this boy. Every day. He was from a broken home. His father had remarried, and he was living with his father and his father’s new wife. One day it dawned on me what was happening. I walked into the classroom that morning and said, “Ronnie, I need you to come with me.” “Yes, sir.” We walked into the office, and I put my arm around him.

I said, “Son, I just want to tell you today that I love you. Let’s have prayer and ask the Lord to give you a good day and bless today, so we won’t need any more whippings.” He said, “Yes, sir.” I prayed with him and did that every day when I walked in. I never had to chastise that child again. Never. He had been provoking me so I would end up putting my arm around him and telling him that I loved him. He was so hungry for love, and he understood that discipline was love.

This is what He is telling you in Hebrews 12:5-6 and Proverbs 3:11-12: it is a father-son relationship, an act of love. The Father delights in us, and He is going to correct us. The second truth is found in verses 6 and 7: “For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?”

None of us are perfect. Each one of us is a sinner, and each one of us will need chastisement sooner or later. Every son is going to receive the rod, because every son is a sinner. “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons.” The third truth is found in verse 8: “But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”

God only chastens His own children. He does not chasten the unsaved; He judges them. Chastisement is for correction, while judgment is for condemnation. Here is the principle: if you never get chastised, then you do not belong to God; you are not His child. He said, “If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”

The Purpose and Nature of Chastening

If your child disobeyed, sinned, or did something very wicked and wrong, would you wait six months to correct him? No. By then, he might have forgotten it, you might have forgotten it, and during that time he could have continued in it, becoming more rebellious and disobedient. I am not saying that God will strike and chasten you instantly, but it will not be long. Ask yourself this question: Do you think you love your children more than our Father loves His children? The answer is no. He will not allow us to get away with our sin. Mark it down: if you can continue in sin and disobedience and never get chastened, you are not a Christian.

Again, verse 8 says, “But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” The word bastard is not an ugly word. It comes from the Greek word nothos and literally means an illegitimate child, one born of a concubine or a slave. It indicates an individual who has no standing in the family, with a father who does not care for him. But that is not our heavenly Father.

So God chastens only His own. He does not chasten the unsaved; He judges them. The fourth, fifth, and sixth truths are found in verses 9 through 11: “Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for

our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Here is the fourth truth: the goal of chastisement is submission. We submitted to our earthly fathers when they chastised us, and they did it after their own pleasure. The word pleasure does not mean that they took joy in it; it means determination. They determined that we needed chastisement and gave it to us.

He says, "We've had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence." We submitted. We did what they asked, what they desired, and what they wanted. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? Our Heavenly Father wants from us what earthly fathers want from their children, and that is submission. We want to say to our earthly fathers, "Yes, Dad, you're right." We want to say to our Heavenly Father, "Yes, Father, You are right."

The fifth truth is that no chastening is enjoyable. He says in verse 11, "No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous." After my father chastised me as a child, I never raised my fist and said, "Yes, that's exactly what I wanted. That was good. I really enjoyed that."

My father had a good attitude. His attitude was this: "If you do it right, you don't have to do it often." And he did it right. I never wanted it.

If you did not enjoy the chastisement from your earthly father, you are probably not going to enjoy the chastisement from your heavenly Father. Do you know why you have to whip your child so many times? The answer is because you do not exactly know what it is going to take to make that child submissive and obedient. You do not know how far to go.

God is not like that. He knows exactly what we need. He knows exactly what it will take, and He knows exactly what it will make and bring us into submission. He knows. Chastening is not enjoyable.

Here is the sixth one: God's chastening always works. "Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous:

nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

The implication here is very plain. If you are a child of God and cease living a changed life, beginning to sin and disobey, you are going to enter into a chastised life. When God chastises you, you will repent. When you repent, it is going to produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby.

If you are a child of God, you cannot sin against God and escape His chastisement. He will chastise you. He will bring you to the point where you are willing to turn from that sin and live obediently, live righteously, and live that changed life.

Application: Two Realms for the Christian

These two principles are forever at work in a true child of God. You are either living a changed life or a chastised life. If you are not living a changed life, you are not a Christian. If you can sin and get by with it, you are not a Christian, because God chastens every son whom He receiveth.

The two principles are forever working in a Christian's life. They are not something in which you and I can escape. You are either going to be living that changed life or the chastised life. You are either going to be obedient, or you are going to be chastened back into obedience.

I do not know the author of this statement, but I added to it because I thought it was wonderful: "In the divine decree that never changes, in the divine heart that never alters, in the divine memory that never fails, in the divine thought that never forgets, all the names of the godly are written." That is true. I added this: He wrote my name in His decree, in His heart, in His memory, and in His thoughts.

Since I am His child, He will discipline me. The word discipline is connected to the word disciple. Disciples are those who are disciplined by their teacher. Discipline, or chastisement, may be by the Word or by the rod.

Micah 6:9 says, "The Lord's voice crieth in the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name. Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed

it." You may learn by hearing His voice, by hearing His Word and changing your life, and that is what Christianity is all about. But if you refuse to hear, if you rebel, then He says, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." When God appoints a rod for our chastisement, we should be thankful.

When we are chastened for our sins, it means that we are genuinely saved. God is not going to allow us to sin and get by with it; He will correct us. How does God chasten us? The method and means of chastening are totally up to God. God knows exactly what it will take to bring us back on track.

That chastisement can come from different rods. It may be physical, financial, or familial. It could be the loss of a family member or disturbance in the family. It might be whichever way He decides. God knows exactly how to get our attention, and He knows exactly what it will take to bring us back. And I think that rod is going to be

At the point in which we deserve to be whipped, these two principles are forever going back and forth in the Christian's life. Salvation is not a feeling; salvation is a fact, an accomplished fact. It is something done by and in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you are losing a sense of assurance, remember this: you are either living a changed life or a chastised life. If you are living a changed life, bringing your life into conformity to the Word of God, then God has done a work in your heart and in your life. Look at the unsaved, the lost, and the ungodly, and remember that is exactly where you would be if God had not done something in your heart. You are different; I am different; every Christian is different. God wants us to be continually different, more holy, more obedient, and more godly. When we are losing that change in our lives, we enter the chastised life.

"Hear ye the rod, and him who hath appointed it." For a Christian, you are either changing or you are chastised. There is no other realm or area. You must obey, or you will experience chastisement.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We pray, Lord, that You

would indeed teach us. Help us to live a changed life, that we may avoid chastisement. If and when we are chastised, may we repent, turn from our sins, and eagerly and readily run back to Thee. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 16

A Method To Gauge Your Love To Christ

October 1, 2016

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 7:36-50 (KJV)

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at his feet behind him, weeping and began to wash his feet with tears and did wipe them with the hairs of her head and kissed his feet and anointed him with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he said, Master, say on.

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me,

therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said to him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman?

I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss. But this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he saith unto her, thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say with themselves, who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, thy faith has saved thee, go in peace.

A Method to Gauge Your Love to Christ

Introduction: The Need for a Gauge of Love

Almost everyone in this room has a rain gauge, because we desire to know how much rain there is. We have gauges for almost everything imaginable: blood pressure, blood sugar, oxygen levels, tire pressure, and micrometers. We have gauges for a host of other things as well. But one important question we need to ask is this: How do we gauge our love for the Lord Jesus Christ?

Several gauges are mentioned in Scripture, and one of those gauges is obedience. Our Lord said in John 14:21, “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” He said in verse 24, “He that keepeth not my sayings loveth me not.” And in 1 John 5:3, “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” Certainly, obedience is a gauge as well.

But our lesson today shows us another gauge by which we may measure our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches us that our love will be gauged by our understanding of our sin, depravity, and ruin, as well as our forgiveness.

The Context: Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman

The context of the message is this: Jesus Christ was invited to dine in the house of a Pharisee named Simon. Our Lord sat at the table, and an absolutely notorious sinner came to Him. Interestingly, even Simon knew this woman and knew that she was a sinner. In fact, she is labeled a sinner. The Greek word is basically hamartolos, which refers to one who is preeminently sinful, especially one who is wicked and devoted to sin. It also refers specifically to men staying with certain vices and crimes.

The Bible does not tell us what kind of sins this woman was engaged in. We can only imagine; they are not specifically named. But she brought an alabaster box of ointment, broke the box, and began anointing His feet and weeping. She was literally washing His feet with tears. Her weeping was deeply emotional. The Greek word used to describe it is klaio, which literally means to mourn, to weep, and to lament as one weeping as a sign of pain and grief.

This woman was devastated. She was brokenhearted, and she was weeping profusely.

The Pharisee's Heart and Christ's Response

The heart of a Pharisee is exposed in verse 39: “Now, when the Pharisee, which had bidden him, saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.” Pharisees were notoriously self-righteous. They did not wish to contaminate themselves by being around sinners. Their attitude is described in Isaiah 65:5. The first part deals with the attitude of a Pharisee, and the second part deals with what God thinks about that attitude: “Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou.” But the rest of the verse says, God speaking, “These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.” In other words, God cannot stand that Pharisaical, super-pious attitude.

Since the Pharisees were self-righteous, they could not understand how Jesus Christ could communicate with and associate with sinners. For instance, Matthew 9:11 says, “And when the

Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples, Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" In Mark 2:16, "And the scribes and the Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners. And they said to his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners." Then Luke 15:2 says, "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

Note Simon's attitude. Although Simon had invited Jesus Christ to his house, whether or not he believed that He was really and truly Lord God is doubtful. He did not even accord Him the status of a prophet. "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner." The reason Simon would not accord Him even the position of a prophet was that He did not meet the standard of the Pharisees: "Come not near me, for I am holier than thou. Don't touch me; I do not want to contaminate myself with you." Our Lord very politely demonstrates that He knew not only the heart of this sinful woman, but the Pharisee's heart as well.

Our Lord is very unlike us. Had I been present when this man said something like this, my attitude would have been, "Let me tell you something, you dirty, four-flushing hypocrite, you." I would have wanted to chew him up and spit him out. But our Lord did not do that. He simply said, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." Basically, He asked permission. He was in Simon's house, and Simon said, "Master, say on."

The lesson our Lord is conveying is simple and plain enough for even a Pharisee to comprehend. Adam Clark states that by the creditor our Lord means God, and by the two debtors, Simon and the woman who was present. Simon, who had the light of the law and, in consequence of his profession as a Pharisee, was obliged to abstain from outward iniquity, might be considered the debtor who owed the fifty pence, or fifty denarii. The woman, whom Clark supposes to have been a heathen, having no such advantages, no rule to regulate her actions, and no curb on her evil propensities, might be considered the debtor who owed five hundred pence, or denarii. When compared, Simon's debt to God might be considered in Reverend Starr's 50 to 500.

However, notwithstanding this great disparity, both were insolvent; neither could pay. Simon, the religious Pharisee, could no more pay his fifty to God than this poor heathen could pay her five hundred. If both were not freely forgiven by divine mercy, both must finally perish. Having nothing to pay, He kindly forgave them both.

Some think that this very Simon was no inconsiderable debtor to our Lord, having been mercifully cleansed from leprosy, and that he was the same Simon called Simon the leper. Matthew 26:6 says, "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper." Mark 14:3 likewise says that, being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, Jesus sat at meat, and a woman came with an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious; she broke the box and poured it on His head. The incident in Mark 14 is different from this one, but it could have been the same Simon.

In that instance, he is called Simon the leper. So, obviously, if Simon is the same as Simon the leper, he was indeed a debtor as well.

The Parable of the Two Debtors Explained

Here is the lesson our Lord is giving: "And there was a certain creditor which had two debtors, the one owed 500 pence and the other 50. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" Simon answered, "I suppose that he to whom he forgave most." And he said unto him, "Thou hast rightly judged."

The scope of this parable is to demonstrate that Simon was wrong in condemning the woman who was acquitted by a heavenly Judge. Our Lord proves that she is righteous, not because she pleased God, but because her sins were forgiven.

The argument Christ employs is taken not from the cause but from the effect. Her actions did not merit forgiveness; her actions were because she had already been forgiven. We do not love in order to be forgiven. We love because we have been forgiven. The reason this woman was so loving, grateful, and thankful was that she realized not only the greatness of her sins, but also the greatness of the forgiveness extended to her.

Our Lord speaks of the creditor, who would be God in this parable. One owed him 500 pence and the other owed him 50 pence. These amounts are relatively small. But neither of them was able to pay the debt.

Theological Lessons from the Parable

The Scripture makes clear that all sins are debts. We owe God. We do not owe God only because He is the Creator and we are the creature; we owe God because we are sinners and have violated His law. We owe God because, in His providence, He has been gracious and kind to each one of us. We owe Him, period, and in reality we owe Him a debt that we cannot pay.

The Bible says in Galatians 3:10, "For as many as are under the works of the law are under the curse of the law: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." We are debtors and owe Him, but we are under the curse and cannot pay, because the law demands not only our physical death, but spiritual death as well. We are all debtors to Him and have no ability in ourselves to pay.

I believe that, as all sins, so likewise all sinners are not equal in the sight of God. Listen: all of us are sinners and guilty, but obviously some are viler than others. Just because we are all sinners does not mean that we are as wicked as everyone else. We are wicked, but there are degrees of guilt and degrees among sinners. For instance, murder demands the death penalty, while theft simply demands restitution.

Moreover, when you stop and think, is lying a sin? Of course it is. But is adultery worse than lying? Of course it is. So there are degrees in sin, and there are degrees in sinners. We may all be sinners, but some sinners are more vile, wicked, and despicable than others. Yet we are all sinners; the same thing is true of the sins.

Thirdly, it does not matter whether you are a big sinner or a little sinner; you are still a sinner and still liable to the law of God. What did James 2:10–11 say? "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit murder or adultery, also said, Do not kill. Now thou

commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."

The same thing is true if you covet. You are still a transgressor, whether you have murdered or not. If you dishonor your father and mother, you are still a transgressor of the law, whether you have murdered or stolen. It does not matter whether you are a big sinner or a little sinner: you are still a sinner and still transgress God's law.

Fourthly, God is absolutely gracious and free in the forgiveness of our sins. It does not matter whether our sins are great or small; God forgives them. Psalm 130:4 says, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." Psalm 85:2 says, "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin." Christ here speaks of both debtors as forgiven.

Then he makes his astounding statement: the one who has been forgiven much loves much; the one who has been forgiven little loves little. The comprehension of our depravity, the depths and wickedness of our sins, and the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of our sins all correlate to our love for Jesus Christ. Look at verse 43, because our Lord agrees with Simon. When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. "Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" Simon answered, "I suppose it he, to whom he forgave most."

And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. Consider the sharp contrast between the sinful woman and the sinful Pharisee. The woman who was forgiven, whose sins were multitudinous and great, loved much. The Pharisee, who did not think himself a big sinner, did not even love our Lord enough to provide Him with the common courtesies of the day.

The Contrast Between the Woman and the Pharisee

Our Lord said to Simon, "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, and thou gavest me no water for my feet." It was standard civil procedure to provide someone a pan of water so that he could wash his feet. He gave Christ no water, but she washed His feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. There was no towel either, but she took care of that. He gave Christ no kiss.

The Bible says that we are to greet one another with a holy kiss. In Bible times, the way a man greeted another man was with a holy kiss. He would catch the man's beard and kiss the beard, not his face. That was a normal, standard, biblical greeting in those days. That is why Christ said, “Thou gavest me no kiss.” Simon did not recognize Him or give Him the common courtesy of acknowledging who He was.

He did not anoint Christ's head with oil, which was another courtesy. But this woman had anointed His feet.

“Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” Our Lord is saying concerning this woman, therefore, she loved much. Her great love was not the cause for the remission of her sins. The full and free remission of her many sins was the cause of her great love.

This woman had to have already been repentant. She had already been dealt with by grace and mercy, because had she not been, she would never have sought the Lord Jesus Christ out or done these things.

The Principle: Love Corresponds to Perceived Forgiveness

She would never have recognized the depth of her sin, nor the greatness of His forgiveness. Something had already happened in her life. Our Lord does not leave out the Pharisee either, for He goes on to say, “But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” This has special respect to Simon the Pharisee, whose debts, in his opinion, were very few, very little, or very small—at least ten times less than those of this notorious sinful woman. Therefore, he felt no obligation even to provide Christ with the common courtesies and civilities of the day. Our Lord was instructing Simon on an important point and forcing him to acknowledge a simple fact: the greater the sinner, the greater the forgiveness; and once it is realized, there will be a greater display of love and affection.

The truth is that a man's love to God will be in proportion to the obligations he understands himself to be under to the bounty of his

Maker, his Creator, his Lord, and his Savior. Everything we are and everything we have is simply because of Him. Have you ever really paused to think of the greatness of your sins? Have you stopped to think of the exceeding sinfulness of your sins? Has the just penalty of your sins ever really weighed upon your mind? Have you ever understood the depth of God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness in saving you and forgiving you?

Ralph Vinning, in The Plague of Plagues, writes: “The sinfulness of sin not only appears from but consists in this, that it is contrary to God. Indeed, it is contrary and enmity itself. Carnal men or sinners are called by the name, the name of enemies to God. But the carnal mind itself, or sin, is called enmity itself. Accordingly, it and its acts are expressed by names of enmity, such as acts of hostility, such as walking contrary to God, rebelling against God, rising up against Him as an enemy, striving and contending with God, and despising God. It makes men haters of God, resistors of God, fighters against God, even blasphemers of God, and in short, very atheist, who say there is no God. It goes about to un-God God, and is by some of the ancients called God murder or God killing. Though all these things are not done by every sinful man, yet they are not only in the nature of sin and that of every sin more or less, but are all of them in the heart of all sinners in their seed, in root.”

What is done by any man would be done by every man if God did not restrain some men by His power and constrain others to obedience by His love and power. Here, then, is the desperately wicked nature of sin: it is not only high treason against the majesty of God, but it scorns to confess its crime. It is obstinate and will not that he God reign over it. It is not only not subject, but it will not be subject nor be reconciled to God. Such is its enmity.

I want to take the Bible and show you, momentarily, seven pictures of sin. When God said in Jeremiah 44:4, speaking of sin, “Oh, do not that abominable thing which I hate,” I want you to understand how sin is a stench in His nostrils. If you do not understand these pictures and illustrations, you will never grasp the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God in your life.

Seven Biblical Pictures of Sin

I warn you: the pictures I am going to show you are distasteful, disgusting, and damning. But they are pictures of our sin and of what we are by nature. I cannot give you every picture in the Bible, but I will give you some that are very plain and easily understood.

In 1 Kings 8:38, Solomon is dedicating the temple and makes an astounding prayer request, likening sin to a plague. In fact, the Bible compares it to the plague of leprosy: "What prayer and supplications soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house."

But note this phrase: "and shall know every man the plague of his own heart." If you would take the time to read Leviticus chapters 13 and 14, you will find that leprosy is indeed a type of sin. There are other passages as well that teach about leprosy. Let me encourage you to go to the internet and type in pictures of leprosy. You will be absolutely astounded, because leprosy deforms, destroys, and rots the body. There is no disease that is more contagious and infectious than leprosy. It spreads over the entire body and basically causes the flesh to rot off. It is a filthy, putrid breaking forth in the flesh and is literally a loathsome disease in the Bible.

When a man had leprosy, he normally had to be exiled. He had to cover himself, especially his face, to contain his breath. If he saw anyone approaching anywhere near him, he had to scream, "Unclean, unclean, unclean! Do not come near me." The plague of leprosy is a picture of our sin. This picture does not mean much merely by my telling you that it is a picture of sin. But once you look up pictures of leprosy, you will understand how loathsome it is. The very first thing God does is give us a picture of the plague of our hearts.

Now turn to Isaiah chapter one. Here is a second picture. In Isaiah 1:5-6, our sin is likened to wounds and putrefying sores that have not been bound up or mollified with ointment. God asks, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the top of the head, there is no soundness in it, but

wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores that have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Here, then, is a picture of our sin and of a sinner before God. From the top of the head to the bottom of the foot, we are full of wounds, bruises, and sores. A putrefying sore is oozing and running pus and contamination—one big oozing sore from the top of our head to the bottom of our foot.

This picture demonstrates not only our corruption but also our lack of desirability. When David was confessing his sin in Psalm 38:5, he said, "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness." My wounds stink. I do not know about you, but in my lifetime I have had boils, risons, and sores that stunk. That is exactly what David said: "My wounds stink." He said in Psalm 13:7, "For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh."

What is he talking about? He is talking about exactly what Isaiah is referring to in Isaiah 1:6. I was preaching in South Carolina, and the service had already started. We had been about fifteen minutes into the song service when a man walked in at the back wearing a very large and loose pair of overalls. It was awkward because, although it was a little country town, hardly anyone dressed like that, especially in this church.

The pastor leaned over and said, "I'm really thankful to see him here tonight." My curiosity was piqued, and I wondered why he was so thankful to see this individual. After I preached, the pastor took me down to introduce me to the man. He said, "Brother, I told Pastor Weaver that I'm so thankful to see you tonight and so thankful you were able to come out. Would you be considerate enough to show Brother Weaver why you were late and what you went through to get here?" The man said yes, reached down, and picked up the legs of those overalls.

When he pulled them up, he pulled him up to his knees. I do not know how much higher, but all I saw from the knee down was nothing but putrefying sores, oozing pus and corruption. I immediately turned my head away. I could not look at it. I did not want to look at it after I saw it. Then this passage came to my mind:

That is exactly what our sins look like to a holy, righteous God. I could not look at a man's legs. And so God says, that is what we are.

The picture certainly does not flatter us, and it does not flatter our sins. We do not think much of sin. We do not think that it is really that bad. But God says, yes, it is bad. Look in your Bibles to Isaiah 64. To me, it gets actually worse the more you look at these pictures. In verse 6, here is another picture that God gives us. Sin is pictured as dirty, filthy, rotten cloths. He says, “But we're all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf in our iniquities, like the wind have taken us away.”

There are four truths in verse 6. God is describing us as such. First, we are called an unclean thing. That is, we are polluted and defiled. The word here accurately and properly means that which is polluted and defiled in a Levitical sense—in other words, the pollution and abominations mentioned in the Law of Moses as given by God. What God is telling us is that we are regarded as wholly, totally, and completely polluted and depraved. We are all as an unclean thing.

There is nothing clean about us—nothing clean about our attitude, our actions, or our persons. We are abominable and filthy.

Secondly, in verse 4, he says, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” The old MS Bible had this remark: “If preachers knew properly the meaning of this word, would they make such a liberal use of it in their public ministry? Why should any use a word the meaning of which he does not understand? How many in the congregation blush for the incautious man and his filthy rags.” Why would a comment like that be placed in the Bible beside this verse? The answer is simple. The Hebrew word for filthy rags here refers literally to a cloth of separation, or a maturity rag, or a minstrel’s cloth, which is nauseous and odious—such as a man would loathe to touch, much less take up. Thus, “all of our righteousnesses” means every good thing about us, everything we could possibly do that we would think good in any way. They are all as filthy rags.

Now here is my question: If our best righteousnesses are as these filthy rags, what do our sins look like? He goes on in verse 6, saying, “We all do fade as a leaf.” We are withered away like the leaf of

autumn. Our beauty is gone; our strength is fled. When autumn and winter come, leaves die, drop off, and are gone. In and of ourselves, we face only death and destruction. We are helpless and hopeless. Unless there is divine intervention, we perish.

Fourthly, he says in verse 6, “Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” We are blown hither and yon by our sins. They rule over us, take us wherever they want to take us, and ultimately destroy us. This is a picture of our sins, and it is not flattering at all.

Turn over to Ezekiel chapter 16 for a fourth picture of our sins. Begin reading with verse 3, through verse 6. In fact, let us read verse 2, so you can see that our Lord is talking about Jerusalem: “Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem, Thy birth and thy nativity is the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite.”

“As for thy nativity in the day that thou wast born, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee. Thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee. But thou wast cast out in the open field to the loathing of thy person in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, When thou wast in thy blood, live. Yea, I said unto thee, When thou wast in thy blood, live.”

Keeping up the simile of a newborn infant that has done nothing, and has had nothing done to it, but is covered with minstrel's blood, this denotes the wretched and miserable estate of what we are by nature. Here is a child that is not clean, not swaddled, not salted, but simply thrown out because it is unloved, unwanted, unpitied, loathsome, abominable, and in danger of being destroyed and perishing.

Because no one cares for him, God says, “That’s how I found you. That’s what you were.” I read this week that some woman had a newborn baby, wrapped it in a blanket, and put it beside the road. The baby was not washed, salted, or suppled. Then, perhaps the same woman, or someone with her, left the road and purposely ran over the child and killed it. My first thought was, Lord, I know how

to handle people like that if I could just get to them. The second thought was this passage: that is what we were—unloved, unwanted, polluted. The word polluted here literally means to be treaded down and stomped down like mire in the street. Thus God gives us another picture of our sin. We were nothing more than the blood and pollution of a newborn child—distressed, left to ourselves, and ready to die.

If God in His mercy had not passed by us, said, "Live," and picked us up, we too would have perished. Turn to Ezekiel 24, because here is another picture of our sin. Fifthly, sin is pictured as the scum of a boiling pot wherein is a detestable carcass. In Ezekiel 24, beginning at verse 6, God says, "Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it. Bring it out piece by piece, let no lot fall upon it."

For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock. She poured it not upon the ground to cover it with dust, that it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance. I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great, heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, spice it well, and let the bones be burned.

Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, watch, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed. She hath wearied herself with her lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her; her scum shall be in the fire. Now go back to verse 6: "Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it."

So God likens our sin to the scum of a boiling pot wherein is a detestable carcass. Everyone at some point has burned a pot of coffee. I do like coffee as long as it is fresh, but after it gets about an hour old I cannot handle it. If you leave that coffee in the pot all day long, do not turn it off, and all the moisture cooks out, everything bakes on the bottom. It stinks to high heaven. Probably every one of us has burned meat before, and it stinks. Do you realize you can take the most odious smell imaginable, and it compares to nothing with the stench of our sins before a holy God? God says, if you put a

detestable carcass in a pot and boil it down until all that scum is right there, that is a good picture of sin.

Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Romans, chapter seven. Here is another picture, one that I think we can understand very easily. Look at verse 24, at what the Apostle Paul cries: “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

We may render Paul's cry as, “Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this dead body?” The body of death, or the dead body, refers to the whole mass of sin, or those ingredients of which the whole man is composed. When Paul says, “Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death, or from this dead body,” he is referring to a dead carcass, to that which is stinking and loathsome.

Now Mesentius and some of the other pagans had an unusual punishment for murderers and other vile criminals. This was not a biblical punishment, but it was done by the pagans. If you murdered a man or committed some vile crime and a man died, they would take the dead man you had murdered and tie him, face to face, chest to chest, legs to legs, and arms to arms, with the dead man on top and your own body underneath. You would lie there until the worms and the putrefaction of the dead man ate the living man and killed him.

That is what Paul is talking about: “Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this dead body?” I am carrying around a dead body, this stinking, sinful, wicked, depraved nature. Pitt wrote concerning this barbarous practice: “What tongue can such barbarities record, Or count the slaughters of his ruthless sword? 'Twas not enough the good the guiltless bled, Still worse he bound the living to the dead. These limb to limb and face to face he joined, O monstrous crime of unexampled kind, Till choked with stench the lingering wretches lay, And in the loathsome embrace died away.” That is the analogy Paul is using to show how wicked and vile our sins are: “Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this dead body, or the body of this death?”

It is a picture of our sin. The seventh picture is found in 2 Peter 2:22: the vomit of a dog and the wallowing of a sow in the mire. “It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is returned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” When Peter says this has happened according to the true proverb, he is referring to Proverbs 26:11: “As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.” If you can appreciate the vomit of a dog, then you can appreciate your sin. Or if you can appreciate the willingness to sound the mire.

I do not know whether you have ever been around a pigpen, but it stinks. That is exactly what God is likening our sin to. In Isaiah 19:14, He says, “The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof, and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit.” I remember years ago preaching not only in New Orleans, Louisiana, but also in New York City. I had to step over drunk men who were passed out, lying in their own vomit—in both New Orleans and New York.

In Isaiah 28:8, God says, “For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.” Jeremiah 48:26 says, “Make ye him drunken, for he magnified himself against the Lord: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision.” Now stop and think with me for a moment. I have just given you seven pictures of what our sin really is.

There are more pictures in the Bible. I have given you seven. Can you now understand why Paul cried in Romans chapter 6, verses 1 and 2, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” How and why would you want to go back to anything like that?

Jeremiah chapter 7 shows how people pervert Scripture and think that somehow we have been delivered that we may sin. “Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Now watch, would you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom you know not, and come and stand before me in this house that is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?”

The pictures are real. We were sinners, and the Lord had mercy upon us and saved us. Shall we not love Him and serve Him more than ever? Can we not appreciate that from which He delivered us? Our Lord said, “To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much.”

Undoubtedly, this woman realized the greatness of her sins and the grief and pain that they caused a holy God. Have you ever thought upon this? What did my sins do to Jesus Christ? How did they affect Him? “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we were healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Stop and think. Every sin that we ever committed was laid upon Jesus Christ. Think of the grief and the pain—not just physical, but spiritual and emotional—that we caused Him. Have you ever contemplated this?

Oh God, I was so rebellious, wicked, vile, and selfish. Lord, I was everything contrary to You, and yet You saved me. Have you ever thought about your disobediences and sins? You will never recognize the depth of God's forgiveness and the greatness of His love and mercy until you realize the exceeding sinfulness of your sins and the corruption and depravity of your nature.

Application: Praying for Deeper Revelation

The Creator has a righteous claim upon all His debtors, and none of us can meet it. Reconciliation can only be brought about by His grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness. The method to gauge our love for Christ, then, is this: How deeply do you understand your depravity, sins, and rebellion? And how deeply do you appreciate the mercy, grace, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ?

To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. To whom little is forgiven—when you do not think you are so bad—the same loveth little. You have no appreciation for what Jesus Christ has done for you. If we want to love Him more, there are two prayer requests we should make. First, “Lord, show me myself.” If He ever shows you yourself without the second request, you will despair immensely.

After praying, “Lord, show me myself,” pray, “Lord, show me Thyself.” If we see who we are and what we are, and who Jesus Christ is, what He is, and what He has done for us, it should make us love Him immensely. Our Lord says there is a correlation between our love and our understanding of these two things. To love Him more, we need to understand more.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your love, grace, and mercy. Lord, we acknowledge that we are sinners exceedingly. Every one of these pictures is true. We were those things apart from Thee; we are those things apart from Thee, and even worse. But we glory in Thy divine forgiveness and revel in Thy love, mercy, and grace. Help us, Lord, to love Thee more, praise Thee more, serve Thee more, honor Thee more, and recognize more that which You have done for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 17

When Preaching Does Not Help

November 11, 2017

When Preaching Will Not Help

Introduction: The Context of Jeremiah 6:8-10

Jeremiah chapter 6, verses 8 through 10, says:

"Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thine hand as a grapegatherer into the baskets. To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it."

If you were to read the first nine verses, you would find that God is declaring basically war upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their sin and rebellion. The Babylonians are going to come to destroy them. In verse 4, he simply says, "Prepare ye war against her." Verse

5 says, “Let us destroy all of her palaces,” and verse 6, “Hew down the trees, cast them out against Jerusalem.” Here is the context of warning, and yet Jeremiah asks, “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear?”

Preaching is Never Useless but May Not Help

I started to title this message, “When Preaching is Useless.” However, preaching is never useless. It always accomplishes that which God has ordained. That is why Isaiah 55 and verse 11 says, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” There is a time, however, when preaching will not help, which we will discover later.

There is a theological side to preaching, and there is also a practical side. Theologically speaking, it was God the Father who ordained the preaching of the Gospel. It was God the Son who engaged in preaching the Gospel, and it is God the Holy Spirit who is covenantally engaged to honor the preaching of the Gospel. First and foremost, true biblical preaching can only be understood in reference to God, since it involves the knowledge of God and should be a theological exposition of His Word.

Practically speaking, preaching may either bless or curse. Those who have hearing ears and seeing eyes will always be blessed by the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. But those who refuse to hear and heed will always be cursed. You must remember that in the law there were blessings and curses. All you have to do is read Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28, and Deuteronomy 29 as well.

Biblical Examples of Preaching That Did Not Help

It is absolutely necessary for us to understand that there comes a time when preaching will not help individuals, families, churches, societies, or nations. In order to understand this concept, all one has to do is study the lives of Noah, Jeremiah, and Isaiah. It does not matter how plain and pure the preaching is, nor that those doing the preaching are compassionate and concerned. Their preaching simply does not help. Noah, Jeremiah, and Isaiah were unable to help their culture, society, generation, or nation.

For instance, the Bible in 2 Peter 2 and verse 5 calls Noah a preacher of righteousness. The Bible tells you in 1 Peter 3 and verse 20 that, while the ark was a preparing, which was 120 years, there were eight souls saved. Eight people were saved out of 120 years of preaching. Noah's preaching did not benefit his generation at all. It did not help his society or save his culture, because God destroyed them. Those eight who were saved were his own family; no one else was saved.

Jeremiah is also known as the weeping prophet, and he was unable to reach his own people. In fact, Jeremiah chapter 6 and all through the book of Jeremiah, God tells us that Judah and Jerusalem would be destroyed because of the righteous anger and wrath of God. Practically speaking, all of Jeremiah's preaching did not help his generation, culture, or nation, because most of them were destroyed.

So we have to ask the question, why? Why is it that there are times that preaching just absolutely will not help? Well, let me ask you this question. How is it that there are churches on practically every corner in every city, plus innumerable country churches, and yet, at the same time, our cities, our children, our culture, our society continues to disintegrate and fall apart? Stop and think about this. In fact, there are many churches today that are closing their doors. They're being forsaken. And so the question has to be asked, why? I suppose that there are many answers that could be given to that question. However, what I want to do today is to give you three answers. While these answers are not necessarily exhaustive, I believe that they are indeed on point. So before I begin, let me just point something out. We need to understand that all preaching is not preaching, or what passes for preaching is not necessarily preaching. So you can ask me, well, what in the world do you mean by that?

What is True Biblical Preaching?

Well, simply because someone speaks about religious issues or moral issues or societal issues does not mean that that individual is actually preaching. He may be speaking, he may be putting forth his opinion, or he may be enunciating certain truths, even moral truths, but it is not necessarily biblical preaching. So let me show you. If you

will turn back in your Bibles to the book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah chapter 8, and I want you to look at verses 7 and 8. Nehemiah chapter 8, verses 7 and 8. And here God tells us what biblical preaching really and truly is. So watch this carefully. Nehemiah chapter 8, and let's take up in the middle of verse 7 with, "and the Levites," and that way I don't have to call all of their names, but we have them named previously in verse 7. So it says in the middle of verse 7, "and the Levites caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place." Now watch how they did that. "So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

So if you look at verse 8, you have to come to the conclusion that real biblical preaching consists of exposition, explanation, and application. So they read in the book of the law distinctly, that's exposition. And they gave the sense thereof, that's explanation. And they caused the people to understand, that's application. In other words, when they got through, the people then understood what they were required by God to do in order to bring their lives into conformity to his word. In other words, there was an application.

The question has to be asked: Is that what is being done in the average church today? The answer is far from it. The modern-day seeker-friendly churches are filled with programs, entertainment, skits, dramas, and plays—anything and everything but real biblical preaching. The truth of the matter is that the average church today would not allow real exposition of the Word of God to take place, or at least not on a regular basis.

In 2 Timothy 4:3, the Bible says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.” For this point, let me make it obvious: the Scripture says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.” They will endure anything else. They may even endure false doctrine or unsound doctrine, but they will not endure sound doctrine. So what in the world is going on today? Why is there a time when preaching will not help?

Problem #1: There is a Problem with Preachers

There is a problem with preachers today. Many have never been called of God and therefore never sent of God to preach. Romans 10:15 asks, “And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” In other words, for a man to genuinely preach, God has to send him.

There are today a multitude of false prophets. There are also a number of individuals who are professional preachers. And there are individuals who truly and genuinely think they are called to preach, but in reality they are not. I think of the story I heard years ago, when I first started preaching, about the old farm boy who was plowing the mule.

He plowed and plowed and plowed until he became tired. Finally, he sat down under the shade of a tree and leaned back to rest. As he leaned back, he looked into the sky. There were clouds, and they formed the letters GP. He said, “That’s it. Go preach. God wants me to preach.” So he went to the pastor, and the pastor said, “Well, we’ll find out.” He let him preach one Sunday.

And of course, it was a royal flub. After the young man got through, the pastor said, “Son, I think you misinterpreted the clouds. I think the clouds meant go to plowing.”

There are individuals like that, but there are also individuals who claim to be professionals. One of my good friends, who is a doctor, was genuinely considering entering the ministry. He asked his pastor, “Why did you enter the ministry?” thinking he would get a good answer. His pastor responded, “It was a good job.” That really burst his balloon very quickly.

I was at a wedding a few years back in a huge church. The pastor and I both had part in the wedding. Afterward, a woman came up to the pastor, bubbling over and telling him how wonderfully he had done, what a wonderful job he had done, and just gushing. Finally, he cut her short. He said, “Of course I did. I’m a professional.”

There are individuals who are simply professionals. Look in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 23, and mark that passage. Notice verse 21. Here is what God says about the false prophets, the professional preachers, and those who think they have been called when in reality

they have not: “I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.” God said, here are men preaching whom I did not send and to whom I did not speak.

The question automatically arises: How can you tell whether a man is indeed called of God to preach? How can you tell whether he is God-called and God-sent? The answer comes from Isaiah chapter 8, verse 20: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

The Problem with the Preaching

God says that those whom He sends will always preach and teach His word. Obviously, the only way that you can tell is whether or not one is really giving himself into expounding the Word of God. Yes, there is a problem with the preachers. The second point is that there is a problem with the preaching. If a man has not really been called of God and sent of God, how can he truly preach?

Let me tell you something. You cannot preach and teach what you do not know, love, and possess. It is impossible. And you certainly cannot preach it with what you and I would call passion and love, because you do not even possess it yourself. You do not even know it. One of the problems with preaching today is that there are so many preachers—bellyship preachers. By bellyship, I mean they like the food and the fellowship, but they do not like studying.

Problem #2: There is a Problem with Preaching

But you cannot continue to put out unless you continually take in. Now, look in Jeremiah 23. Here is a passage that we need to look at. God is saying, look at these false prophets and notice what He said. Just to show you there is a problem with the preaching. In Jeremiah chapter 23 and verse 22, He said it like this.

"But if they," that is, these false prophets, "if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." But they did not stand in His counsel. They did not hear God's word. Consequently, the people did not change. So if a

professional preacher or a false preacher is not really preaching and teaching the Word of God, what does he really preach and teach?

I have often thought about this. I study all the time, or try to, and I want to and enjoy studying. But I have often wondered how much work a man really has to do to bring a thirty- or forty-minute message without incorporating the Word of God in it, without saying anything to offend someone or everyone, and yet at the same time make his little sermonette exciting and entertaining, so that the people want to come back. Can you imagine the work involved in doing something like that for thirty or forty minutes?

I was talking to a friend this morning who had visited a big Baptist church several times in South Carolina. He said the first message was eight minutes long. The second time he went, it was fifteen minutes long. That was the message: eight minutes and fifteen minutes. Let me answer the question from the Bible: If they are not really preaching and teaching the Word of God, what do they preach and teach?

In Jeremiah chapter 23, beginning at verse 25, God says, "I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully."

"What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness. Yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord."

There are three charges here against the false prophets. First, in verse 30, God says, "Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour." God charges these false prophets with stealing His words. A failure to preach God's Word by keeping it from the people, or by taking only part of it and leaving the rest—the failure to preach and teach the whole counsel of God—is considered by God a violation of the eighth commandment. It is theft. If I say, "I'm going to preach this part of the Bible, but not that part," I am a thief. If I preach this doctrine but not that doctrine, I am a thief. God charges them with stealing His words.

Everyone in this room has probably read Ezekiel 3 and Ezekiel 33, where God charged Ezekiel to be a warner, someone who cried out concerning danger. If he warned a man and the man did not listen, his blood was on his own head; but if Ezekiel did not warn him, his blood was on Ezekiel's hands. I remember being told as a young man and young preacher that if I did not witness to everyone I saw, their blood was on my hands.

Let me point out that this is humanly and practically impossible. If Alice asked me to go to town and buy a gallon of milk, and I stopped to witness to everyone I saw, I would never get home; I would continually be seeing people. Paul dealt with the sin of blood guiltiness in Acts 20:26–27. Listen to what the apostle Paul said.

Paul was talking to preachers when he said, “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” How do we get blood on our hands? By failing to preach the whole counsel of God. God says that when we do not do that, we are stealing, and their blood is then upon our hands.

That is why God said in Deuteronomy 4:2, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” That is why, in Revelation 22:19, God says we are not to add to the words of this prophecy. Preaching is not going to help if the man happens to be a false prophet, a professional preacher, or simply someone who has never been called of God. It is just that simple. It will not help.

Preaching will not help, not only when the prophets are uncalled and unsent, but when they are adding to the Word. In Jeremiah 23:31, God says, “Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.” In other words, they are saying things that God has never said. If you read Jeremiah 28 and 29, you will read about Hananiah and Shemaiah, two false prophets who preached and prophesied things that God never said. God said, “I did not send them, and I didn't say those things.” He charged them with rebellion and then killed them. Thus, there is a problem not only with people stealing from the Word of God, but also with adding to the Word of God.

Furthermore, Jeremiah 23:32 says, “Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness. Yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.” They are substituting for the Word of God—their own dreams, opinions, and thoughts. They are not expounding the Word of God; they are telling everybody what they think and what they believe.

In Jeremiah 23:26–27, God says, “How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.” Anytime you steal His words, anytime you say He said when He did not say, and anytime you substitute for the Word of God, you are doing nothing but preaching the deceit of your own heart. In verse 16 of the same chapter, God makes this exceedingly clear: “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.”

Preaching will not help if God’s Word is not preached. The dreams, opinions, counsel, and advice of men that seek to replace the Word of God are useless. The entertainment, funny stories, heart-wrenching illustrations, heart-binding or spellbinding oratory will all pass away as empty, useless, fruitless, and futile. There is a problem not only with preachers; there is also a problem with

preaching today, because most preachers are not really expounding, explaining, and applying the Word of God.

Problem #3: There is a Problem with the People

There is a problem with the people. It is true that there are problems with preachers and problems with preaching, and they are probably two major problems. But that is certainly not all the problems. One of the largest problems is that people really and truly do not want the Word of God. Because they do not want the Word of God, they seek professional preachers, false preachers, or someone who has been uncalled by God to give them what they really want.

As 2 Timothy 4:3 says, "For the time will come when they," that is plural, "they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." It is not the teachers who have the itching ears; it is the people. They do not want the Word of God, so they get the preachers they really want, who will tickle and scratch their ears.

If you study the book of Jeremiah, you will find that Jeremiah experienced this firsthand. Jeremiah is the prophet, the preacher, but a multitude of false prophets surround him. They are deceiving the people and leading them astray. Jeremiah's message is very hard: unless you repent, God is going to destroy you; God is going to kill you.

Who wants to hear something like that? The false prophets were saying, "Nebuchadnezzar is not going to really destroy Judah and Jerusalem. And those people that are already taken captive, well, they're coming back." They were saying what the people truly wanted to hear. Jeremiah was preaching the truth, and nobody wanted to listen to him.

Jeremiah 18:18 shows how truly the people did not want the Word of God: "Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah. For the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words."

Here is what they said: “We’ll devise devices against Jeremiah. Jeremiah’s wrong. The law’s not going to perish. The counsel’s not going to cease from the wise. Let’s smite him with the tongue. Let’s talk about him. Let’s lambast him. Let’s cuss him out. Let’s tell him what we think. And then make sure that we do not heed or listen to any of his words.” They simply would not listen to him.

Jeremiah 20:10 says, “For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it.” In other words, “You tell us something on Jeremiah.” “All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.” They wanted Jeremiah to fall, falter, and fail. They were doing everything they could to tempt and seduce him, to make him falter and fail, so they could take revenge upon him, because they did not like what he was preaching.

They not only refused to listen to Jeremiah and tried to entrap him; finally, they decided they were going to kill him. If you do not like the message, just kill the messenger. Jeremiah 26:8-9 says, “Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.”

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, was known for his compassion, love, and tenderness. Yet all of his preaching, praying, and proclamation did not help his society, culture, city, people, or country.

The Uncircumcised Ear and Heart

In Jeremiah 6:10, after telling how God would destroy Judah and Jerusalem, Jeremiah asks, “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear?” Can I find anybody who is going to listen? “Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.”

To understand this, look back at Jeremiah 5:1–2. God tells Jeremiah, “Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man,” singular, “if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.” God said that if Jeremiah could find one man in the whole city of Jerusalem who executed judgment and sought the truth, He would pardon the entire city. Then watch verse 2. God says, “And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely.” In other words, they might talk religiously, but they are hypocrites. They have no desire for God or His Word.

Now go back to Jeremiah 6:10: “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear?” Nobody is listening. That is why he asks, “To whom shall I speak, and give warning?” He cannot find anyone. Listen to what Calvin wrote concerning this verse: “Hence he adds, Behold, the ear is uncircumcised.” Look again at verse 10: “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken.” Calvin says, “Behold, the ear is uncircumcised.”

“The uncircumcised ear is that which rejects all true doctrine. An uncircumcised heart is that which is perverse and rebellious. But we ought to understand the reason of this, as circumcision was an evidence of obedience. So the scripture calls those uncircumcised who are unteachable, who cast away every fear of God and all sense of religion and follow their own lusts and desires. But to be thus called was greatly disliked by the Jews, for circumcision gave them no common ground of confidence, since it was the symbol and pledge of adoption, and since they knew that they were thereby separated from other nations so as to be called God's holy people. But the prophet divested them of this vain conceit by calling them uncircumcised in heart and ears, for they had dealt wickedly with God when they promised to be obedient to his will.”

It is like the Apostle Paul says: the circumcision of the flesh means nothing if the heart is uncircumcised. If the ear is uncircumcised, it will not hear; it will not heed.

Stephen, the first martyr in the New Testament, was preaching to these Jews right before they murdered him. In Acts chapter 7 and

verse 51, he said, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.” What did he call them? Uncircumcised in heart and in ears. So we ask, “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear?” I can't find anybody. No one wants the truth. No one's willing to listen to the truth.

Jeremiah 7 continues this matter of being uncircumcised in heart and ears. God 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 unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

“Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction.”

“Truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.” When one will not hear, when one will not heed, truth perishes and truth is cut off from their mouth. John Calvin said it like this: “And this we learn more fully from what follows, for he says, Behold, the word of the Lord hath been a reproach, and it hath not pleased them, or they have no delight in it.”

“The prophet now more clearly shows that the fault was in the Jews themselves, because they had despised God. Whence then was the impotence of which he had spoken, even from their licentiousness, because they deemed God and his prophets as nothing. Since then their minds were thus hardened and so impiously to despise the truth, it followed that they could not hear and attend in as much as they were deprived of all right knowledge. Whence was this? Even because they had closed their eyes and deafened their ears and given themselves up altogether to the devil

so that he led them in every kind of madness. In short, he shows at the end of this verse what was the beginning of all their evils even because the Word of God did not please them, that is because they had cast aside every care for true religion because they were not pleased when the prophets came and offered to them the favor of God. As in the truth had become unsavory to them, so they rejected it."

"When it ought to have been especially delightful to them, so it happened that they became wholly stupid, and void of all judgment and reason, and hence also came the uncircumcision of the ears which mention had been made." That is exactly what Jeremiah is saying. Jeremiah 6:10: "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken. Behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it." If the Word of God is not being preached, if the Word of God is not being expounded, explained, and applied, what is being preached? God answers that for us. In Jeremiah chapter 13, God commanded Jeremiah to take a girdle and bury it by the river Euphrates and then go back and get it. Of course, the girdle had rotted and was falling apart.

God says in Jeremiah 13:10, "This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in 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." The same is true today, just as it was in the day of Jeremiah. When someone considers the Word of God a reproach and has no delight in it, what do they replace it with? They walk in the imagination of their heart and after other gods, to serve them and worship them.

If you deny the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in Scripture, the only god you can worship and serve is a god of your imagination, a god of your making, and not the God of truth. Jeremiah 16:10 asks, "Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? Or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?" The answer follows: "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 ye have done worse than your fathers."

Then comes the explanation: "For, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me."

Let me spell it out for you. Men despise God's Word because they love their word. Men despise God's worship because they love their worship. Men despise the one true and living God because they love the god of their imagination. Men despise the will of the one true and living God because they love their will. In other words, whenever you refuse to hear God's Word, you are already an idolater. You are already walking in the imagination of your own heart, and you have already developed in your own mind a god of your own imagination. There are very few people who could tell you the attributes of the God of the Bible.

Years ago, I was visiting a preacher in his office, and the subject of election came up. He and I were discussing what the Bible said about election. The door was standing wide open, and his secretary was evidently listening to our conversation, which did not bother me. But all of a sudden, she jumped up from her desk and ran into her pastor's office.

Here is exactly what she said: "I don't care what the Bible says. I know God is not like that." He looked at her and said, "Did you hear what you just said?" She already had a God of her imagination. The only God that exists is the God of the Bible. When men consider the Word of God a reproach and have no delight in it, they will delight themselves in the imagination of their own heart.

They will want people to encourage them and scratch and tickle their ears, saying, "Yes, you're right. You're right." Let me show you something else. Look in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 5, verses 30 and 31. Here is an interesting question at the end of verse 31. God says, "A wonderful"—and that does not mean glorious, as we think of wonderful. Marsha could tell me, "Well, I just won or inherited a million dollars." I would say, "Well, that's wonderful." But that is not what this word means here. It means something awesome: "An awesome and a horrible thing is committed in the land."

The People Love to Have It So

What is it? “The prophets prophesy falsely,” that is, they tell lies; they do not preach the Word of God. “And the priests bear rule by their means”; that is, they are tyrants. “And my people love to have it so.” Why would a people love to hear lies and be under tyranny? Number one, you are hearing what you want to hear. Number two, you do not have any responsibility; you are just being told what to do. Liberty and freedom require responsibility. They require accountability. So he says, “The prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so.”

But look at this question: “And what will ye do in the end thereof?” I’m going to come back to that question momentarily, but let me make a couple of applications. The first one is this: Listen carefully. There are times when preaching will not help. But preaching is never useless, because it always accomplishes that which God has ordained it to accomplish.

The Dual Ministry of the Word: Life and Death

When we think of preaching, we normally think of reconciliation. And yes, God does use His Word to bring forth reconciliation. But there is also another ministry of the Word, and that is condemnation.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2:14, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.” Not sometimes, but always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. Then he says in verse 15, “For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.” “In them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”

Remember those Old Testament offerings. The sweet incense and even the smell of the roasted meat ascended into heaven and were called a sweet savour, or a sweet smell. So God is saying in verse 15: If I preach His Word to a room full of a hundred unsaved individuals, and God works so powerfully and miraculously that

every one is genuinely saved and converted, what does God do? He says, "My Son is preached, and I'm glorified."

But if I preach and expound His Word and those hundred men clench their fists and speak through tight lips—"Get out of here. I hate you. I don't want to hear that again"—what does God say? "My Son is preached, and I'm glorified."

We are the savour of life unto life and of death unto death. The same sun that melts the wax will harden the clay. The same gospel that draws men to Jesus Christ will drive away those who are unrepentant and hate truth. God's Word never returns void; it accomplishes whatever He pleases, whether in reconciliation or condemnation. But there are times when it will not help because people will not listen.

Conclusion: What Will You Do in the End?

Jeremiah 5:31 says, "The prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so." "But what will ye do in the end thereof?" What are you going to do when you die? What are you going to do when you face God? You have listened to lies, believed lies, submitted to tyranny, and refused responsibility, accountability, and obedience to God. What will happen? What good will it do you? All it will have done is condemn you.

Look in your Bibles at Jeremiah 15. When it came to Elijah, God moved him out of the land, and the three-and-a-half-year drought was a physical picture of a spiritual reality. God was not speaking because His prophet was out of the land. Jeremiah was left in the land; God simply shut his mouth. Jeremiah 15:19 says, "Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth."

Now look what he says about these people who would not hear: "Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord. And I will

deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible." What did he say? If they return to you, that is one thing, but do not go back to them. They are going to fight against you, but they are not going to succeed. I am going to protect you.

So the question is, when we have despised the Word of God, counted it a reproach, and no longer want to hear it, believe it, or obey it because we want to do our thing and walk after the imagination of our hearts, what will we do in the end when our society disintegrates, our culture is destroyed, our families are broken, and our churches are shut? What will we do in the end? All because we have counted the Word of God a reproach and had no delight in it.

To whom shall I give warning? Ask Isaiah. Who has ears to hear? I once said, let him hear.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth. Lord, help us to love Thy Word and love Thy truth and delight in it. May it not be a reproach to us, but may it be our joy and our treasure. Lord, we pray that we would be people who hear and obey and bring our lives into conformity to Thy Word.

We think of our culture today, our civilization, our society, our churches, and our nation. How desperately, Lord, we need Thee and need Thy Word. We ask that Thou wouldst be pleased to work in our hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 18

For Fear Of The Jews

September 17, 2018

Introduction: The Fear of the Jews in Scripture and Today

John 7:1 says, “After these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him.” The title of this message is “For Fear of the Jews.” Lord willing, next Sunday I am going to bring the message, “Overcoming the Fear of the Jews.” If you read the New Testament, you will discover that the fear of the Jews brought heartache and shame to many believers in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is equally true today.

We have been warned in Proverbs 29:25 that “the fear of man bringeth a snare.” Whenever it is pointed out from Scripture that it was the Jews who had Jesus Christ crucified, usually Jewish organizations like the ADL or the Southern Poverty Law Center will rise up and call you an anti-Semite. In fact, there are so many today who believe that whatever the Jews do cannot be wrong and that they cannot be criticized, regardless of what they do.

But have you ever really wondered about the term Semite, or Shemite? Let me ask this simple question: How can one be classified as an anti-Semite if he believes in Jesus Christ? I am going to show you from Scripture how the Jews themselves are, in reality, anti-Semites.

Who Are the Semites? Biblical Lineage of Shem

Now you remember that Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Everything in the Old Testament and the New Testament came through Shem. By everything, I mean that which is spiritual, right, and holy. Of course, the Bible gives the lineage of Ham and Japheth as well. But Genesis 11:10 records the lineage of Shem: "These are the generations of Shem. Shem was 100 years old and begat Arphaxad two years after the Flood." If you read on, you will find everyone who is in the line of Shem. Then, in verses 26 and 27, we read, "And Terah lived 70 years and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran."

These are the generations of Terah. Terah begat Abram, that is, Abraham, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. The interesting thing is that Lot was a descendant of Shem. Lot produced the Ammonites and the Moabites. So, if you were against the Ammonites and the Moabites, would you be considered an anti-Semite?

Let me show you something else. In Genesis chapter 25, you will remember that Abraham and Sarah had one son, Isaac. You will also remember that Abraham and Hagar the Egyptian had one son, Ishmael. Ishmael would be in the lineage of Shem, since he is the son of Abraham. Therefore, the Ishmaelites would be Semites as well.

After Sarah died, Genesis 25:1 says that Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. She bare him Zimram, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these are the children of Keturah.

When we speak of someone being an anti-Semite, in reality that person would have to be against an awful lot of people. Abraham is a

direct descendant of Shem, and those whom he produced would also be in that lineage. You will find the same thing repeated in 1 Chronicles chapter 1, verses 32 and 33, concerning all the children of Abraham by Keturah. Would these children be considered Semites as well, since they came from the loins of Abraham? If one is classified as an anti-Semitic individual, he must be against an awful lot of people, and not just the Jews.

Jesus Christ: The True Son of Abraham and Anti-Semitism Defined

Here is a good question: How did the Jews become the only Semitic people? If you look up the word Semitic, it says that anyone who speaks a Semitic language is claimed to be a Semite, or a Shemite; anyone who is against them would be classified as an anti-Semite.

The greatest anti-Semite would be someone who is against Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:1, the very first verse in the New Testament, declares who Jesus Christ is: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Jesus Christ is the true son of David.

He is the King of Israel. In fact, He is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and God of Gods. But He is also called the Son of Abraham. All of the promises that God gave to Abraham He gave to Abraham in Jesus Christ. When you look in the book of Galatians, you find that Jesus Christ is the true seed of Abraham. So that is why I am saying anyone who is against Jesus Christ would be the true anti-Semite as well.

Also, according to the Bible, there are those who claim to be Jews who are not really Jews. For instance, if you turn in your Bibles to the book of Revelation, chapter 2, you will find that there were impostors in the New Testament, and there are impostors today as well. Notice in Revelation chapter 2 and verse 9. The Lord is speaking to the churches in Revelation chapter 2 and in Revelation chapter 3. In Revelation chapter 2 and verse 9, He is talking to the church of Ephesus, and He says, "I know thy works and thy tribulation and poverty but thou art rich and I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews and are not but are of the synagogue of Satan."

So He says here are some that claim to be Jews, but they are not; they are the synagogue of Satan. In Revelation 3 and verse 9, again He is talking to the church of Philadelphia. He says, “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” So there is a whole group of people who claim to be Jews who are not really Jews at all.

I know some of you have heard, though you probably do not remember, that years ago I did a six-part series on Who Is Israel. I also did a five-part series on Jews, Judaism, and Christianity. I would encourage you to hear those if you have not heard them, and to re-listen to them if you have heard them. Let me just give you a couple of things to refresh your mind.

Biblical Usage of 'Jew': Tribe, Land, Nation, and Religion

I have pointed this out recently, and I will do it again. The very first time the word Jews occurs in our Bible, you will find it in 2 Kings chapter 16 and verse 6. The Bible says, “At that time Rezin the king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria and drove the Jews from Elath and the Syrians came to Elath and dwelt there unto this day.” Now Elath was down below Judah. Here you have the word Jews.

Actually, it is referring to Judeans, those who lived in the southern kingdom. The Hebrew word for Jews is Yehudi; Yehudi is the word. It refers mainly to a descendant of Judah, someone of the tribe of Judah, or someone who lives in the land of Judea. But it is used six different ways in the Bible. Sometimes it refers to a person or persons from the tribe of Judah; sometimes to the kingdom of Judah; sometimes to the land of Judea; sometimes to the nation of Judah; sometimes to the house of Judah; and, sixthly, to the religion of the Jews.

In the New Testament, the Greek word is Ioudaios, which literally means a Judean. In the Old Testament, when you think of the term Jew, you think of it in terms of a land, country, nation, or people. Not so in the New Testament, and not so today. It is ignorance, as

well as being unbiblical, to refer to all Israelites as Jews. The original Judahites were Israelites, but not all Israelites were Judahites.

Let me say that another way. The original Jews were Israelites, but not all Israelites are Jews. The reason I am saying that is because the term Jews came from those people who lived in the southern kingdom of Judea. The northern kingdom was simply known as Israelites. Here is a quote from the Jewish Almanac, on page three: “Strictly speaking, it is incorrect to call an ancient Israelite a Jew or to call a contemporary Jew an Israelite or a Hebrew.” The quotation says that it is incorrect to call an ancient Israelite a Jew, and also incorrect to call a contemporary Jew an Israelite or a Hebrew. The Jews had, of course, their own religion, and that religion was Judaism.

Perverted from the Torah, from the Old Testament teaching. In the book of Acts, chapter 26, verses 4 and 5, the Apostle Paul is giving a defense of himself before King Agrippa. He says, “My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.” Notice that he said, “of our religion.” They had their own religion.

In the book of Galatians, right after 2 Corinthians, chapter 1, verses 13 and 14, the Apostle Paul again talks about the Jews’ religion. In verse 13, he says, “For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it.” Obviously, there is a contrast here between Christianity and the Jews’ religion. The Jews’ religion was that which persecuted the church of God. Then he says in verse 14, “And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.” So twice in two verses he talks about the Jews’ religion.

When you hear the term Jew today, you do not think of a nation, a land, or a country; you think of a religion. That is how it is used in the New Testament: to denote a religion.

Jesus Was Not a Jew in the Religious Sense

So that brings me to this statement again, which shocks those people, but it is still true. In the strictest sense of the word, Jesus Christ was not a Jew. He was of the tribe of Judah; He was a Judahite. He also was born in the southern kingdom, in Bethlehem, which means He would be a Judean. But He was raised in Galilee and in Nazareth, which is in the northern kingdom. His time in the southern kingdom was very minute. Jesus Christ did not embrace the religion of the Jews; therefore, He was not a Jew.

In John chapter 7 and verse 1, the Jews are trying to kill Jesus Christ. There is an obvious difference between Jesus Christ and the Jews. The Bible says, “After these things Jesus walked in Galilee,” the northern kingdom, “for he would not walk in Jewry,” which is Judea in the southern kingdom, “because the Jews sought to kill him.” The reason He was attacked so viciously by the Jews is that He destroyed their religion and exposed their unbiblical traditions and violation of God’s law. Thus, they hated Him and tried to destroy Him. Thus, the true anti-Semites would be the Jews themselves, because Jesus Christ is the true Son of David and the true Son of Abraham.

Now, look again at verse 1: “After these things Jesus walked in Galilee for he would not walk in Judea because the Jews sought to kill him.” Did every Judean, every person in the southern kingdom, seek to kill Jesus Christ? The answer is no. Sometimes, when you see the phrase “the Jews,” it does not even refer to the people of Judea.

The 'Jews' as a Ruling Elite, Not All Judeans

Anyone of the tribe of Judah refers to a ruling elite, a ruling clique, to those who held the power. Interestingly enough, the Bible shows us this. Look in John chapter 7 and verse 13: “Howbeit no man spake openly of him,” that is, of Jesus Christ, “for fear of the Jews.” Why would they fear the Jews? Those in the southern kingdom would certainly be Judeans as well. Obviously, the phrase “the Jews” refers to someone else.

Look in John chapter 19 and verse 38. I will come back and deal with this verse next Sunday, Lord willing: “And after this Joseph of

Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus." Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews. Yet he was a Judean himself. Therefore, "the Jews" does not refer to everyone who lived in the Southern Kingdom; it refers to a ruling elite.

Go back to John chapter 12, beginning with verse 41: "These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Let me remind you of something. The Sadducees controlled the Temple. They were the high priests in their lineage and their ilk. The Pharisees controlled the people and the populace, and they had control of the synagogue. It was not every Judean that could have you kicked out of the synagogue. It was not every Judean that could have you excluded from the Temple. It was not every Judean that could have you arrested.

It was the Jews, that is, the ruling elite. John 20:19 says, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week," that is 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." The disciples were in this room with the doors shut and, in all probability, locked. Why? For fear of the Jews. It was a ruling elite that could have them arrested and thrown into prisons and dungeons, although in Israel there were no prisons; the Romans had them, and the Jews were in league with the Romans. The Jews had the power to expel people from the synagogue and even the Sanhedrin. Thus many people in the days of Jesus Christ, including some rulers who believed on Him, were not willing to confess Him for fear of the Jews.

They did not want to confront the Jews or cross them. They did not want to be kicked out of the synagogue or excluded from the Temple.

In John chapter 9, we find a man who had been born blind. Our Lord healed him. It had never been heard of before that one born blind had been healed, but our Lord healed him. The Jews became involved because he was healed on the Sabbath day. Beginning with verse 14, the Bible says, "And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?"

"And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. But the Jews"—what Jews? The ruling elite, the Pharisees, to whom he was speaking—"But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind?"

"How then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself."

These words spake his parents because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. So it was not every Judean that could have you put out of the synagogue. It was the Pharisees, a ruling elite.

I have never read anywhere in the New Testament where the common people tried to murder or kill Jesus Christ. On the contrary, Mark 12:37 says, "and the common people heard him gladly." They listened and wanted to hear. So why did the Jews—the ruling elite, the power group controlling religion during Christ's time—want to murder Jesus Christ? There are a number of answers. First, they sought to murder Him because He violated their traditions and belief system.

Why the Ruling Elite Sought to Kill Jesus

He also had the audacity to challenge them and demonstrate their error and lawlessness. Over and over they charged Him with violating the Sabbath. Our Lord never violated the Sabbath; He violated their interpretation of the Sabbath and their tradition concerning it. Therefore they sought to murder Him.

In John chapter 5, our Lord healed a man at the pool of Bethesda. Look at verse 2: "Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches." This pool was in Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom. We are speaking, then, of the Judahites who lived in Judea. Go back now to John chapter 5 and look at verse

"The man departed, and told the Jews." He did not tell everybody in Judea; he told the rulers that it was Jesus who had made him whole. "Therefore did the Jews," that is, a religious clique, "persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day." Jesus violated their interpretation of the Sabbath; He did not violate the Sabbath. But what really provoked them was that He said God was His Father. The implication was that, since God was His Father, He was God as well. Jesus answered them, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Therefore the Jews—not all the Judeans, but the ruling elite—sought the more to kill Him, because He had not only broken the Sabbath, according to their interpretation, but also said that God was His Father, "making himself equal with God." Our Lord had the audacity to point out that these people really had no faith.

They did not even believe Torah, the writings of Moses, which they claimed to believe. Jesus asked them, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" They claimed to be people of the book and to believe the Old Testament, but they did not even believe Moses. Had they believed Moses, they would have believed Christ. Our Lord said, in effect, that

He did not have to condemn them; Moses would do that. If they had received Moses' words, they would have received Christ's words.

In Luke 13, our Lord heals a woman in the synagogue on the Sabbath. "And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath." A woman had "a spirit of infirmity eighteen years," was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. She was bent over and could not straighten herself. "And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity."

In Luke 13, our Lord laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. He told the people, "There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." The Lord answered, "Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

When He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed, and all the people—the common people—"rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him." Here was the ruler of the synagogue saying that Jesus should not have healed that woman, a daughter of Abraham, on the Sabbath. Would you call this ruler an anti-Semite because he was against the healing of a daughter of Abraham? Obviously, these people hated Jesus Christ.

The truth of the matter is this: our Lord exposed their sins, wickedness, and unbelief. Secondly, here is another reason why they wanted Him killed. They understood that if they did not do something, all the people would end up following Him, and they would lose their position and power. If you look in John chapter 11, Jesus Christ raises Lazarus from the dead, and an interesting thing happens.

John 11, verse 44: "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then

many of the Jews," or Judeans, "which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him." So the term Jews refers here to the common people. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, that is, the other Jews, and told them what Jesus had done. Thus, the term "the Jews" refers to the common people, or the Judeans, and then the Pharisees are singled out. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the chief priests, and the scribes were all rulers. Since so many believed, look what happens in verse 47: "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles."

"If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." They were not really concerned whether the people got healed, whether they got saved, or whether they believed on Him. What they were really concerned about was losing their position and their power. The Romans would come and take away both their place and their nation.

So here you have the Jews. If you look in John 12:19, again, look at what the Pharisees said concerning Jesus Christ: "The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him." Therefore, they had to do something to stop Jesus Christ.

Now, let me ask you a question. Look at John 7:1. The Bible says, "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee," that is, in the northern kingdom, "for he would not walk in Jewry," that is, in Judea in the southern kingdom, "because the Jews sought to kill him."

In light of these texts, why then did He not walk in Jewry? Why did He not preach and teach in Judea at this time? The answer is that our Lord was not simply being prudent. He was prudent, but He was refusing to tempt His Father. Prudence does indeed dictate that we withdraw ourselves in order to protect our lives, but there is a greater truth here: we cannot tempt God. Go back in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 4. I want to show you one of the temptations delivered unto Jesus Christ.

Jesus' Withdrawal: Prudence and Judgment

By Satan. Matthew 4, beginning with verse 5, says, “Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

Notice first of all the temptation: Get up on the pinnacle of the temple and jump off. Let God catch you; let God save you. The devil even quotes Scripture: “He shall give his angels charge concerning thee.” Jesus answered him, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

If I knew that Steve was trying to kill me, would it not be absolutely foolish for me to hang around him? I would avoid him like the plague. There is a vast difference between faith and foolishness. If you want to climb to the top of the Empire State Building, get on the ledge, and jump off, saying, “Lord, catch me,” you are going to make a big splatter on the street. That is tempting God. That is being absolutely foolish. Our Lord was not going to tempt His Father, and He was not going to hang around these individuals who sought to kill Him.

When the Bible says in John chapter 7, verse 1, that He walked no more in Jewry, but walked in Galilee, it means that He went to Galilee, where He lived, walked, taught, and preached. His life there was centered around Galilee, which is in the northern kingdom. There was no cessation in the work of Christ; He simply moved to a different location.

This passage teaches us clearly that we do not need to uselessly and needlessly expose ourselves to danger. The sixth commandment says, “Thou shalt not kill.” The positive is that we should preserve life. Each of us has a duty, responsibility, and obligation to preserve our lives and do whatever is necessary to preserve them. It is lawful, and indeed advisable, for good men to do whatever is necessary to preserve their lives so that they can be of further use to God, His kingdom, and His work.

You must remember what our Lord said in Matthew 10:23 to His disciples: “When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.” If they do not want you here, leave and go someplace else. It is just that simple. These Jews who hated Jesus Christ and wanted to kill Him were the ruling elite.

By the way, in John 19, before Pilate, Pilate was willing to let Jesus Christ go. He asked, “Shall I release unto you the King of the Jews?” or Barabbas. The Bible says, “and the chief priests stirred up the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.” The people did not necessarily want to see Jesus Christ crucified; it was the high priests who once again had Him crucified. They did not want Him around.

There is a second reason, I believe, why Jesus Christ did not walk in Jewry after this: salvation, light, and gospel truth shall be taken from those who refuse them and do not want them. Why would Jesus Christ waste His time preaching to a people who did not want the truth and would not receive it? Certainly, I would preach at least one time, but one of the greatest judgments that God can issue against any people is simply to let them alone.

Look in your Bibles at Matthew 15, beginning with verse 12. Jesus Christ had been preaching and teaching and had really confronted the Pharisees, calling them hypocrites. He told them that Isaiah prophesied correctly: “you draw near to me with your mouth and you honor me with your lips, but your heart is far from me.” He told them that in vain they worship Him, and that what they really worship is the tradition of men.

“Then came his disciples and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?” They were upset and hurt. “But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”

The Pharisees could care less about the Word of God. They cared about their traditions, their rituals, and their ceremonies. When the disciples came and said, “They are offended,” our Lord’s answer was,

in effect, “It’s no skin off my nose.” Leave them alone. They do not want the truth, and they will not listen to the truth.

Let them die in their sins. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch. Our Lord gave the same instruction to His disciples when He sent them forth preaching: “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them.” He continued, “Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.”

If they will not receive you or hear you, if they want no part of the gospel, shake the dust from your feet. Leave them alone. Let them die in their sins. If they will not listen and will not receive the Word of God, that is the only other possible alternative.

We see this again in Acts 13. Paul and Barnabas had been preaching, and great crowds came to hear them. “And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.” But “when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.” Then Paul and Barnabas became bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you.”

“But seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” We will leave you alone. We will let you die in your sin. You do not have to listen to us, but in refusing the Word of God, you will die in your sins. When Jesus Christ walked away from Judea, He was essentially leaving them alone to die in their sins.

Application: Overcoming the Fear of the Ruling Elite Today

Let me make one application. The title of the message is “For Fear of the Jews.” The phrase “the fear of the Jews” referred to the ruling elite, the power clique of our Lord’s day. We have a power clique and a ruling elite in our day—in fact, probably a number of them. The truth is that most people refuse to speak out and refuse to confess Jesus Christ for fear of the ruling elite. Proverbs 29:25 says, “The

fear of man bringeth a snare." Fear not only ensnares; fear also enslaves.

How do we overcome the fear of man? The only way we can overcome it is by fearing God properly, rightly, and biblically. Look in your Bibles to Luke chapter 12, verses 4 and 5. Our Lord says, "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

Have you ever stopped to think about this? The worst that man can do to you is take your life. Nobody wants to die. But if you are a child of God, if you are a Christian, and you lose your life, the Bible says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. You just get an early promotion to glory. So why should we fear anyone who could merely bring us into the presence of the Lord?

It is true that our goods may be confiscated. It is true that our liberties may be taken from us. But those are minor compared to losing our lives. So our Lord said, "I'll tell you what: you just better fear the One True and the Living God, because if He kills you, He not only has power to kill, He has power to cast you into Hell." Your fear should be directed to Him. If we fear God properly, we are not going to fear man.

David gives us a statement of faith in Psalm 56 and verse 11: "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." Again, he said it in Psalm 118, verse 6: "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" In other words, man cannot do anything as long as I am with the Lord and I have the Lord.

You remember David also said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." Why? Because his fear was of God and of God alone. If we fear God properly, we will not fear man. We need to ask ourselves a simple question: Who do we really fear? Do we fear the power elite? Do we fear prison? Do we fear confiscation of goods? Do we fear loss of life? Or do we fear God? We must learn to overcome the fear of the ruling elite, regardless of who they are and where they are.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to you this day. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. We pray that you would help us to be fearless and bold and brave. And Lord, help us to proclaim thy word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 19

Purpose Of Heart

November 19, 2018

Acts 11:19-24 records: “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

“Then tidings of these things came unto 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 had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.”

Introduction: The Problem of Failing Christians

Why do so many professing Christians fail in the things of God? How is it that many professing Christians do not even read their Bibles,

much less study them? For some, the only time they genuinely pray is when they get into an emergency situation, thinking about prayer only when they are in desperate straits. Many today treat attendance at the house of God as either painful or relatively unimportant. We do not generally rejoice in the preaching and exhortation of the Word of God. We do not really value it, nor do we count it absolutely necessary. Most professing Christians today view preaching as optional. You can come, or you can not come; you can take it, or you can leave it.

Interestingly enough, as you read through the Old Testament, there were many saints who genuinely valued the Word of God. Job said in Job 23:12, "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." Job said, in effect, "I'd rather hear the words of God than eat, or eat a T-bone steak. I value that. I esteem His words more than my necessary food."

David said it like this in Psalm 19:9–10: "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." The word of God is of far greater value than gold, even fine gold.

Jeremiah 15:16 says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts." Jeremiah said that God's words were found and that he ate them; they were the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

John Owen, an old Puritan known as the Prince of the Puritans, said, "At the word of Jehovah, we must stoop and bow down our souls before it, and captivate our understandings to the obedience of faith. The word is that revealed will of God, which is our sanctification, and the instrument whereby he works our holiness. According to the prayer of our Savior, 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth'" (John 17:17).

When you look at Acts chapter 11, you understand that Barnabas is the key person in this passage. He was the preacher, the teacher, and the exhorter. He was probably thankful that some of the success

of the gospel in that area came through men from his part of the country. Verse 20 says, “And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.”

Barnabas Sees the Grace of God

Acts 4:36 says, “And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus.” Surely he was thankful that some of his own people were involved in preaching the gospel. But notice verse 23: “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God.” Have you ever thought about the fact that you can see the grace of God? How is it possible to see the grace of God? You can see it in the lives, attitudes, faith, actions, and conduct of people.

It may have taken a day or several days, perhaps even a week, for him to observe many things, but the Bible says that he saw the grace of God. There are two important truths we must learn from verse 23 before we come to our text. First, God's grace always produces fruit, and that fruit is evident in the lives of those who are converted. It is absolutely impossible for someone to be saved and transformed by the grace of God and not have fruit in his life. The fruit is produced by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:9 says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If there is no fruit in an individual's life, then the Holy Spirit is not there; and if the Holy Spirit is not there, that person is not a Christian.

Galatians 5:22-23 tells us plainly what the fruit of the Spirit is: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." When the Holy Spirit of God indwells a person, there will be, to some degree, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. It may not be present to a degree of perfection, but it will be there. It is like our Lord's parable of the sower. When the good seed fell on good ground, some brought forth thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some an hundredfold. There will be some kind of fruit. It is just that simple. Whenever God works in a person's heart, it will be evident and able to be seen.

The second truth is found in verse 23: "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad." Barnabas was thankful, happy, and glad to see the work of God in the lives of these Grecians. They were not Jews, but they were Grecians, and he was thankful and glad.

Barnabas's Gladness and Exhortation

Let me put it this way: God is absolutely sovereign. God works when he pleases, where he pleases, how he pleases, in whom he pleases, and in the places where it pleases him to work. God will often work in the hearts and lives of people we do not like. Do you realize there was one man in the New Testament—and you know who he is?

He was undoubtedly the most loathed, despicable, lowdown scoundrel. If a poll had been taken in the first century of the man most likely to bust hell wide open, Saul of Tarsus would have won it hands down. Yet God, in His mercy and grace, saved Saul, who became the Apostle Paul. God is not obligated to work where we want Him to work. He works where He pleases.

The point is this: Would I like to see God start a revival right here? The answer is yes. Would I like to see Him add people to this study and the hearing of the Word of God? Yes. But if God did it in another church, in another county from here, it really would not matter to me. I would simply be thankful that God did it. God is not obligated just to bless us, or to bless our ministry, or to bless our work. He can work wherever He pleases.

We cannot be jealous. We have to be thankful that God is working anywhere. Since God was working there, they sent Barnabas. Acts 11:23 says, "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all." Barnabas was given the opportunity to exhort.

The word exhort is a very interesting word. It is the Greek word parakaleo, which means one who is called alongside to help. It is the same word translated as Comforter in our Bibles. It is the same word used of the Holy Spirit, who is called the divine paraclete, from parakaleo. In John 14:26, our Lord says, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall

teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John 15:26 says, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."

The Bible gives us this word, exhort, in Acts 11:23. Barnabas was glad and exhorted them all. To exhort means to beseech, encourage, strengthen, entreat, instruct, and teach. Barnabas did some very able exhorting in this short passage.

In all probability, this exhortation included much about tests, trials, tribulations, and persecutions. I do not know that for a fact, but I assume that it did, because Acts 11:19 says, "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only." Notice that he speaks of the persecution that arose around Stephen. If you turn back to Acts chapter 8, you find that Stephen has been martyred—he has been murdered.

They laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul of Tarsus. Saul was not content with taking the life of one of the brethren. The Bible says, "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." Obviously, there had been a great persecution.

The Exhortation: Purpose of Heart to Cleave to the Lord

It was still going on when we reach Acts chapter 11. All the disciples in Jerusalem were scattered, except the apostles. We are not told everything that Barnabas exhorted these people, but we are given the crux and highlight of his exhortation. This is the exhortation we need

to understand and apply. In verse 23, we read: "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

Do you realize that one of the main graces, virtues, and principles missing in our lives is what we would call purpose of heart? His exhortation was that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. What does purpose of heart mean? How would you describe it? Where is it? And what is it?

You may not be able to sit there and give me a working definition of purpose of heart. But I'll guarantee you, in reality, you know what it means. I never will forget that years ago, when I was in college, I had to take a voice and diction class. One of the students in that class, a Japanese student named Jung Ho Lee, remains unforgettable. In that class, we had to read and enunciate words—“how, now, brown, cow,” and so on. Mr. Pratt had sent a book around, and we took turns reading a sentence from it. When Young Ho Lee's turn came, he read that sentence.

"She gave me the cold shoulder." He stopped, looked at Mr. Pratt, and said, "Mr. Pratt, what cold shoulder?" Mr. Pratt said, "Young, you know it's when you're trying to flirt with a pretty young girl and be sweet and nice to her and she just kind of goes, 'Oh,' and turns around and walks away, or at least looks the other way and ignores you." I never will forget. He said, "Oh, that."

Different culture, but he understood what it was. He did not understand the terminology. So if I say, "Can you give me a working definition of what it means to have purpose of heart?" you may not be able to give me a working definition, but you have said, and heard other people say, something like this: "He has no heart for the work of God," or, "His soul is not in this ministry. He doesn't care."

The truth of the matter is this: most professing Christians today really and truly have no heart for the things of God. Stop and think. Most professing Christians are so absolutely wishy-washy, characterless, spineless, off and on, up and down, inconsistent, unstable, undependable, and unpredictable. There's no consistency in the lives of the average professing Christians.

I want to show you how James describes it. Hold Acts chapter 11, but look in your Bibles to the book of James, chapter 1 and verse 8. Hebrews, James. Notice, if you would. James chapter 1, look in verse 8. James says it like this: "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." A double minded man is unstable in all of his ways.

The Greek word there is actually dipsuchos, dipsuchos. Literally, a double-souled man is what he's saying. It's translated double-minded, but it's someone who has two souls or two minds—someone who has a divided interest, who cannot be consistent, and who is highly and totally unstable. He's restless, wavering, doubting, inconsistent. Because, obviously, he's got two souls, how could he have purpose of heart when he's double-minded? There's nothing in his life on which he has a real genuine purpose.

Purpose of Heart

James 1:8 pretty well describes what we would call modern-day Christianity. We do not have the singleness of purpose nor the singleness of heart that the early Christians had. One reason that we are in such a horrible state in Christianity is that there is no purpose of heart.

This purpose of heart is in connection with cleaving unto the Lord. The Scripture says, "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." The word for purpose here is the Greek word prothesis. It is translated in our Bibles as purpose.

Defining Purpose of Heart

Here's what it literally means: a setting forth of a thing with a firm mind; having a fixed and settled resolution; putting the mind in place. It means to lay the law down to the mind, especially in regard to present and future conduct. When you are talking about a purpose of heart, you are talking about a single mind and about the law being laid down to your mind.

This is made evident and clear. For instance, the same word is used in connection with the showbread. The only difference is that

the Greek word artos, which is the word bread, is added to it: prothesis artos, the showbread. The showbread refers to the twelve loaves of wheat bread that corresponded to the twelve tribes of Israel. They were loaves offered to God every Sabbath day.

They were laid in two rows and remained there for seven days straight in the tabernacle, and later in the temple. Every Sabbath the old loaves were taken out and new loaves were placed there. Anyone could see the loaves. They were there. So when we are talking about a purpose of mind, it is going to be plain and evident to us, and ultimately evident to someone else as well.

So many people think that once they have been saved and dedicated their lives to the Lord, there is no more necessity to renew their dedication or determination. Yet this showbread was renewed every week. There was a fresh batch put out.

The Necessity of Holding Fast

God commands us on numerous matters to hold fast certain things. It is impossible to hold fast in these areas without a purpose of heart. If there is no determination, there will be no holding fast. There must be a resolution and a purpose in mind to do it.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:21, the Scripture says, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” Hold fast. Hold fast that which is good. Whatever is good, whatever is righteous, whatever is holy, God says we better hold on to it. We are commanded to prove all things and then hold fast that which is good.

Second Thessalonians 2:15 says, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” He is not talking about the traditions of men. He is talking about biblical traditions, those that have been taught by the Word or by epistle. We are to stand fast, and we are to hold these things.

Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” The form of sound words, of course, refers to sound doctrine. Hold that fast. These are things God commands us to hold firmly and not release.

Everyone has seen a tug-of-war between two teams, usually on opposite sides of a creek, with one team trying to pull the other into the water. What does each team do? They each have a hold on that rope, and they are holding fast with all their strength, determination, and resolution. They are holding everything they can to keep from being pulled into the creek, while trying to pull the other team in.

What would happen if six of the eight people on one side decided, "Well, I'm not going to hold fast"? Obviously, they would lose; they would be pulled in. Every time God tells us to hold fast to something, there is something somewhere trying to take advantage of us, get us to lose something, or cause us to drop something. We must have a purpose of heart to hold fast.

Hebrews 3:6 says, "But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." We are to hold fast our confidence and our hope unto the end that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 4:14 says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." We cannot give in or give up on the fact that Jesus Christ is God, Jesus Christ is Lord, Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. We are to hold fast. Hebrews 10:23 says, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)" God tells us we have to hold fast our profession of faith.

In Revelation 2:25, our Lord speaks to the church of Thyatira: "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." Whatever you have, hold on to it. Do not throw it away. Do not give in. Do not give up. In Revelation 3:3, he says to the angel of the church of Sardis, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." In every one of these passages, God has told us to hold fast to something.

How do we do that? We have to have a purpose of heart. A purpose of heart is a regular, fixed, determined plan or determined design in our minds that we will now and forever adhere to the Lord Jesus Christ, to His Word, and to His truth. One of our greatest failures in Christendom today is that when God saves someone, when there is a new convert, very few people take them under their wings and teach them. Consequently, many of these young

Christians wander around needlessly for several years until, somehow, in the grace and mercy of God, they figure out that there has to be a purpose of heart in their life. There has to be a determination. Purpose of heart includes more than understanding. Yes, it is in our understanding and in our entire minds, but it also includes our will and affections as well.

It is to be the leading principle. It is to be the strongest affection. It is to be the guiding principle of our lives that always leads us and guides us to the adherence to the Word of God. There will never be any growth and there will never be any maturity apart from purpose of heart. It just will not work. If you do not have purpose of heart to study, if you do not have purpose of heart to pray, if you do not have purpose of heart to be faithful, there's no way in the world anyone is ever going to mature in the faith.

Acts 11:23 shows what Barnabas was exhorting these people to do: "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." The word cleave is the Greek word prosmeno. It means to continue with, to abide fast with, to tarry with, to stay with, and to hold fast unto. We understand what the word cleave means. The Hebrew word is used in the Old Testament. I have not looked up the Septuagint, what the Greek word would be, but "man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife." Once he marries her, he is to stay with her, to tarry with her, to abide with her, and to live with her. Once you cleave to the Lord, it means, of course, that you are indeed forsaking everything that's contrary to Him.

Cleaving to Christ as the Vine

A good illustration of what it means, with purpose of heart, to cleave unto the Lord is found in John 15. The word cleave means to abide in and to stay with, to hold fast to. Our Lord said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

SCRIPTURE READING - John 15:3-10 (KJV)

> "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit

> of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."
>
> Obviously, when you look at this passage, the branch has to cleave to the vine, or the branch has to cleave to the tree, however you want to say it. Every branch that is severed from the vine or severed from the tree withers and dies. All of those limbs that get severed from the trees in my yard, I usually pick them up and put them in a burn pile and burn them. There is no limb, there is no branch that can bear fruit when it is separated from its life source.

You are going to say, “But Brother Weaver, this is a picture.” Yes, it is a picture, but a picture of what? John 15 gives us a picture of one who does not abide in Jesus Christ. He has come to the point that he thinks he does not need Jesus Christ. He was never in Christ to begin with; therefore, he falls, withers, and dies. Then men gather them up, the Bible says, and cast them into the fire. Evidently, cleaving to the Lord Jesus Christ requires purpose of heart and is very, very important.

We cannot live apart from Him. He is our nourishment and our strength. We have to receive Jesus Christ as He is fully and freely offered in the gospel. We take Him as He is presented to us, not dividing Him as some people try to do. No, we have to have the whole Christ. John Trapp, the old Puritan, said it like this: “It stands men upon to see that their work, though it be but mean, that is small, yet it may be clean, though not fine, yet not foul, soiled and slubbered with the slur of a rotten heart. Let them consent to take

the whole Christ in all of his offices and efficacies and depart with him nevermore."

The Negative Side of Purpose: Separation from Sin

Let me show you a couple of very simple illustrations of purpose of heart. If you look in your Bible at Romans 1:1, here is a simple illustration. At the same time, it is one that you and I must understand: every positive has a negative, and every negative has a positive. I want to deal with the purpose of heart momentarily. Romans 1:1 says, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." Paul was separated unto the gospel of God. That is the positive. If Paul was separated unto the gospel, then we must ask, What is the negative? What was he separated from? We know what he was separated unto: the gospel. Therefore, he was separated from the world, sin, and error. For instance, look in your Bibles at Galatians chapter 5, and notice verse 24. Galatians 5:24. Paul says it like this.

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Then, in chapter 6 and verse 14, he says, "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." So, when you read, "Paul, an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God," you have to ask what he was separated from.

Let me give you one more simple illustration. Look in your Bibles to the book of Daniel, chapter 1. Everybody knows the story of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Look at Daniel 1:8: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the 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."

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were with Daniel in this. Daniel purposed in his heart that he was not going to defile himself with the king's meat or wine. I do not know what was wrong with the king's meat. The Bible does not tell us. It could have been some unclean things, but it may not have been. It could have been venison, steak, lamb, or goat; all of that would have been clean. But it also could have been that, although it might have been clean food, it may

have been dedicated to an idol. I do not know. The Bible does not say.

There was something about the king's portion that Daniel viewed as defiling to him. So the Bible says he purposed in his heart that he was not going to defile himself: "I'm not going to eat that. I'm not going to drink that."

If there is a purpose of heart and cleaving to the Lord, there also have to be negative implications. Just as there were negative implications for Daniel, if we purpose in our hearts to cleave unto the Lord, we must understand that sin and holiness do not mix. If we are cleaving unto Him, other things have to go.

When I married Alice, 55 years ago, all the other women lost. The rest of them are gone; they are not mine. I have only one. The point is this: when we cleave to the Lord, that is the positive. The negative means we have to turn our backs on anything and everything contrary to and against cleaving unto the Lord.

Everyone has weaknesses. If you say, “I don't have a weakness,” that is yours: pride. Our flesh is weak. The spirit indeed is willing, our Lord said, but the flesh is weak. Everybody has a predominant sin or fleshly desire. So if we are going to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, we have to be particularly careful in the area of our predominant sin, specifically in that area in which we are weak.

For instance, in Amos 5:15, God said, “Hate the evil, and love the good.” You cannot love the good without hating the evil. You cannot cleave to the Lord without hating anything and everything that would destroy that cleaving. So there have to be negative implications as well.

Replacing Sin with Holiness

It is important for us to know this. When Daniel purposed in his heart that he was not going to defile himself with the king's meat and the king's wine, he had to replace that with something. What did he replace it with? Pulse and water. Whatever is going to be put away, you have to replace it with something that is good and right and holy. You cannot replace something with nothing. If you are going to

replace that which would harm you, you have to replace it with something that is going to help you.

In 1 Peter 1:13-16, we read: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

He said in verse 13, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind." That is, get ready to think. Get ready to lay out your plan. Get ready to purpose in your heart and in your mind. You gird up the loins of your mind; you be sober. Then he tells you in verse 14, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." An obedient child, of course, is a child that obeys. But each one of us has been, in times past, disobedient children—even David. All of us.

If we are going to be girding up the loins of our mind and have a purpose of heart, we cannot fashion ourselves according to the former lusts of our ignorance. We have to change. If lust happens to be my weakness, and I know that is a weakness, then I had better stay away from the television set, movies, many magazines, sometimes the beaches, and whatever else would tend to promote lust in my life. If I have trouble with drunkenness, I had better stay away from the bars and social clubs. In other words, if I am going to be an obedient child, I cannot live and do as I used to. I have to change everything now, fashioning my life for holiness and obedience. I have to have a plan, a purpose, and a determination to do this.

It should be patently obvious that sin and holiness do not mix; they do not go together. Moreover, he goes on to say in verse 15, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

The purpose of heart is that which leads me to cleave only unto the Lord Jesus Christ, to His truth and to His Word, and to turn from anything and everything contrary to Him. With purpose of

heart, you are to cleave unto the Lord. Let me explain something about this. I mentioned earlier that showbread was replaced every week. I could say today, “I have purpose of heart that I am going to stay faithful and true to the Lord Jesus Christ. I have purpose of heart that I do not want to sin against Him, grieve Him, or vex Him in any way whatsoever.” And that is wonderful for me to say.

Daily Renewal of Purpose

Tomorrow, I may face a very severe temptation. What must I do? I must say, with purpose of heart, I refuse that temptation. Although my flesh might like it and my mind might like it, I refuse it. It is wicked. It is wrong. It is contrary to God, and I am not going to do it. Thus I am renewing my purpose of heart, even on a daily basis. Sometimes I might have to do it on an hourly basis. Once you have a purpose of heart, that does not mean, “I had a purpose of heart twenty years ago.” No, it must be renewed, because you will face tests, trials, and temptations daily.

Applications: Perseverance and Avoiding Distraction

It is not sufficient to start well. One must also finish well. You do not win a race by starting it; you win the race by ending it and coming in first. You have to finish well. Many individuals start out well, like the grain that fell in the thorny ground and on the stony ground; it sprang up immediately. But when the sun was up, it withered away and died.

First John 2:19 says, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” The proof that you are really, genuinely a child of God is that you continue in the faith, continue in repentance, and continue with the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6 says, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” If God started a work in you, He will finish it. Someone says, “I used to be saved.” No, you never were saved. If God starts a work in you, He will finish it. That is why the Bible says in Hebrews 12:2 that He is the author and the finisher of our faith.

There is no preservation in Jesus Christ apart from perseverance. The fact that He gives us persevering grace demonstrates that He has preserved us in Christ. When you claim to be preserved in Christ but never persevere, your claim has no basis in Scripture. Those whom He preserves in Jesus Christ He enables to persevere in the faith as well.

The second application is this: a distracted heart, or double mind, is the bane of a Christian. When you have singleness of heart, purpose of heart, and Christ as the object, with His truth and His Word as the jewels set before you, you have no interest in the trash of this world. When Christ lives in us and we see something tempting, our flesh may say, "What's wrong with that? What harm is there in doing this?" If I am unsure, I had better say no and give our Lord the benefit of the doubt. It is always easier to change a no to a yes than a yes to a no. When in doubt, don't.

When Barnabas exhorts us with purpose of heart, we cleave unto the Lord. We need to follow the counsel of the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:22: "Abstain from all appearance of evil." What will keep us going, keep us straight, and help us live holily and righteously? It is purpose of heart. That is what is missing today, and that is why Barnabas exhorted these people that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. That purpose has to be laid out daily in your mind.

Every morning, when you wake, after thanking God for life, health, sleep, rest, and allowing you to awaken, pray: "Lord, help me today not to sin against Thee, not to grieve Thee, not to quench Thee, and not to vex Thee. Help me, enable me with purpose of heart to honor and to hallow Thee." We need purpose of heart to stand straight and do what is right.

Father, help us, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. How desperately we ask Thee for purpose of heart, a holy determination to cleave to Thee, something that can be renewed daily and hourly if need be, that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 20

The Need Of The Hour

December 15, 2021

Introduction: The Lateness of the Hour

We will be looking at other verses in 1 Chronicles 12, but we are going to start with verse 32 and return to this verse several times. The Bible says, “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, the heads of them were two hundred, and all their brethren were at their commandment.”

Years ago, I preached a message similar to this and titled it exactly the same. I think I even had the same exact points, but the contents of this message are entirely different from that first message. I am preaching it again because I was reading through 1 Chronicles recently, and I was struck again by the truths of this chapter and thought how applicable it is in our day and time. Many times we have heard and even used the phrases “the need of the hour,” “the lateness of the hour,” “the present hour,” or “this very hour.”

If you take the time to read through the New Testament, you might be impressed with the use of the word “hour.” In the book of

Revelation alone, the word “hour” is used ten different times. If you read those passages, I think you can understand where we derive “the lateness of the hour,” “this very hour,” and “the need of the hour” from.

Consider Revelation 14:7: “...saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” The Bible talks about the hour of His judgment. Revelation 18:10 says, “...standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.” Revelation 18:17 says, “...for in one hour so great riches is come to nought.” In one hour. Finally, Revelation 18:19 says, “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.” So when we say the hour is late, we are not exaggerating.

It is indeed late, and the judgment of God has already begun to fall on our country. The interesting thing about God's judgment is that, if you read Amos chapter 4, you will find that when God initially sends judgment, it is a light judgment. But when that judgment is refused, unheeded, or unanswered, God always intensifies it and makes the next judgment even more severe. So judgment is indeed falling, I believe, on our country.

If you look around, I think you understand that every branch of government is corrupt and basically cares about one thing: power, staying in power, and exercising what you and I would call tyrannical control. The news media is in cahoots with the federal government. If you do not believe that, turn to all the news channels on the television, and you will hear them saying exactly the same thing. Emails and things on the Internet have shown all these news channels together, with everybody saying the same thing instantaneously. Not only that, but Big Pharma is in bed not only with the government, but also with the news media. If you believe anything that comes out of the mainstream media, you are probably wrong all the way around. The truth is that attacks are being made against truth on just about every subject whatsoever.

Those who are telling the truth are now labeled insurrectionists, seditionists, traitors, and spreaders of false information, while the spreaders of false information are in the mainstream media and the government as well. It is interesting that traitors are today calling patriots traitors. To say that we have forsaken the Word of God, biblical principles, and the law of God would be an understatement.

We as a nation, through our leaders, have become rebellious idolaters. Moloch worship, Satanism, and statism are now the norm in this country. I recently read an article printed back in the 1980s complaining that Satanism was spreading through our military, and that Satanism—not just witchcraft, but pure Satanic worship—was being recognized as a legitimate religion in the military.

So interestingly, that has been going on for a long time. But there are no concerns today for truth, character, or freedom. It is all about power and control. You remember the fellow by the name of Klaus Schwab, head of the Economic Forum, who said, "You will own nothing and you will be happy." Translated, that simply means that you will be the slaves for those who own everything. It is what it amounts to. You will have to be satisfied with whatever they give you, because that is all you are going to get.

The interesting thing about 1 Chronicles chapter 12 is this: When you read this chapter, its theme concerns the removal of the dynasty of King Saul, who was a rebellious, disobedient, murderous tyrant, and the installation of King David, a man after God's own heart. To summarize 1 Chronicles 12, it is the removal of King Saul and his wicked regime and the installation of David in a godly establishment. It should be obvious that we are in need at this very same hour, just as those Israelites were in 1 Chronicles 12.

The Need for Men Who Know What Ought to Be Done (1 Chronicles 12:32)

Clearly then, if there is no repentance in our country, there is no change. If there is no return to the Lord Jesus Christ and His truth, the hour of judgment is not only upon us; it is going to be even more fully upon us. We are in a desperate time, much like those in 1 Chronicles chapter 12. What is the need of the hour? What was the need of the hour in 1 Chronicles chapter 12? If we can see what was

needed then, we can also see what is needed today in our country and in our time. Look, then, in 1 Chronicles chapter 12 and verse 32. The need of the hour is for men that know what ought to be done. Verse 32 says, "And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, the heads of them were 200, and all their brethren were at their commandment."

There are three very clear implications in this passage, and these are very important truths. First, note in verse 32 that the men of Issachar had understanding of the times in which they lived. They knew of the wickedness of Saul and his house, the power of Abner, his commander-in-chief, and the weakness of Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, who could not hold the throne. They knew of the division and danger in which they and their country were involved at the same time. They knew that the politics prevalent at that particular time were wicked and evil.

We need men today who have understanding of the times as well. We need men who understand that the same scenario that occurred in ancient Israel during 1 Chronicles 12 is now being played out in America. So where are our men who have understanding of the times? Where are our men who know what to do? If there are men who truly do have understanding, they need to reveal themselves.

Here is the second truth in verse 32: they not only had understanding of the times; the Bible says that they “knew what Israel ought to do.” They knew exactly what was going on. Have you ever noticed that if you know what you ought to do, you really do not have a problem? When I say that, a problem is not a problem if you know what to do. If you have the answer, then you do not have a problem. They not only had understanding of the times; they knew exactly what Israel ought to do.

That was to disestablish the tyranny and reign of Saul and his sons, and to establish the reign of David, who was a man after God's own heart. In 2 Samuel 5:1, we read, “Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.” David had reigned seven years in Judah and another thirty-three years over all Israel. Judah had already made David king; now all Israel was coming to make him king. These were

the men of Israel, the men of Issachar, who had understanding of the times, knew exactly what was going on, and knew what Israel ought to do.

"Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel." In this passage, there are three qualifications or requirements listed for David to be king.

The first is found in verse 1: "Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh." In other words, they were brothers, related, the same kindred and the same people. If you read Deuteronomy 17, you will find that God forbade an alien or foreigner to be king or to rule over His people. If they were going to choose a king, they had to choose a brother, someone from among themselves. They said, "We are bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh." They were relatives.

The second truth is in verse 2: "And also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel." David had a testimony. They knew him to be a courageous man, a man of valor and honesty. Saul became upset when David returned and the women took their timbrels and sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." David had actually led out and brought back the armies of Israel. He had a testimony; they knew him to be a man of character and valor.

The third truth is that the LORD had said to him, "Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel." The Lord had designated and ordained David to be captain and ruler over Israel. He was not only of their bone and flesh, and he not only had a testimony.

It was the will of God that David become king. In verse 3, we read, “So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel.” The interesting thing is that, even though God had appointed David to be king, He did so along with the will and recognition of the people. The people chose David

because they knew that God had chosen David. David entered into a covenant with them to be God's king, and they were going to be God's people as well.

The truth of the matter is that we are in trouble in this country because we have ignored these biblical principles. We have ignored biblical law. We have chosen men to be our rulers based upon party—either Democrat or Republican—charm, money, hairstyle, race, color, or the promises they make. We no longer choose men based upon their character, their integrity, the will of God, and the fact that they are our kin and our kith and our kindred. We are in deep trouble.

Now let me show you something. In 2 Samuel 23, look at the first three verses, because here is a principle enunciated by David, and David claims direct inspiration from God for this statement. "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me," and then this sentence: "'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.'" Is that not a simple statement? "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." You cannot be just unless you are ruling in the fear of God. The amazing thing is how many times David claims direct inspiration for this one simple statement.

In 2 Samuel 23:2, David says, "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me"; that is one time. "His word was in my tongue"; that is twice. "The God of Israel said"; that is three times. "The Rock of Israel spake to me"; that is four times. Four times David claims direct inspiration for this statement: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

Clearly, then, the men of Issachar not only had understanding of the times; they knew what Israel must do. That is why, in 2 Samuel 5, they came to make David king over all Israel. Now return to 1 Chronicles 12:32, where there are three truths we need to understand. First, there were men who had understanding. Second, there were men who knew what to do. Third, the heads of them were 200. There were 200 men of Issachar who had understanding and

knew what Israel must do. Here is the truly remarkable part: “and all their brethren were at their commandment.”

Two hundred men out of the tribe of Issachar knew what Israel must do, and all their brethren were at their commandment. The rest of the people were willing to submit, obey, and follow the truth. They were not arguing over who should lead, who would have the last word, or who would receive the honor and glory. They were simply willing to obey. They understood that these men had understanding of the times, knew what Israel must do, and were therefore willing to follow them.

The problem today is found not only in the political arena, but in the ecclesiastical arena as well. Everybody wants to be the head and the chief, but nobody wants to be the Indian. I have known pastors, and still know pastors, who, if they cannot be the leader, dictate, order, receive glory and fame, or benefit—and if their church cannot benefit—will simply take their marbles and go home.

Here is a truth we must learn very, very well: God is absolutely sovereign. He uses whom He wills, when He wills, where He wills, and how He wills.

Would you be pleased and delighted if God used you? The answer should be yes. As a pastor, would I be pleased and delighted if God used me? Yes. I want to be used by God. But whether God uses me or not is His business. He may use whomever He pleases. If He is pleased not to use me, but to use a pastor down the street, I am more than happy for Him to use that pastor. I am more than happy to pray with him, help him, and support him. The only thing I am really concerned about is that the kingdom of God be advanced.

That was the attitude of these people. They could care less who received the honor and glory. All they wanted was for what needed to be done to be done, and done in a right manner. We have to learn that it does not matter whom God uses. Whomever He uses, that is whom we must support, pray for, and help. It is God's choice and God's will.

The Need for Men Who Are Able to Do What Needs to Be Done (1 Chronicles 12:14-16)

The very first thing we can say is this: the need of the hour is for men who have understanding of the times, who know what we must do, and who are willing to follow those who have that biblical insight.

The second truth is this: the need of the hour is for men who are able to do what needs to be done. Look at verses 14 and 16 in 1 Chronicles, chapter 12. Verse 14 says, "These were the sons of Gad, captains of the host: one of the least was over an hundred, and the greatest over a thousand. These are they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflown all his banks; and they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the east, and toward the west. And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David."

These were men who had the ability to do what needed to be done. They were men of valor, courage, and strength. They went over Jordan in the first month, when it overflowed its banks, and put those people to flight both toward the east and toward the west. They were real, genuine men.

They were not soy boys. They were not flower children. They were not gender-fluid, sexually confused individuals. I can assure you that none of these men wore dresses, prancing around with lipstick and earrings in their ears. No, these were men. They knew they were men, acted like men, and were not ashamed to be men.

Look back at verse 14. Some of you have marginal references in your Bibles. When it says, “These were the sons of Gad, captains of the host,” the marginal reference reads, “One of the least could resist an hundred, and the greatest a thousand.” In context, that would probably be an accurate translation as well as interpretation. These were the men who went over Jordan when it overflowed its banks—an extremely dangerous time—and still crossed over and put all those people to flight, both in the east and in the west.

What does it mean that the least could resist a hundred and the greatest a thousand? Hold 1 Chronicles chapter 12, and look back to 2 Samuel chapter 23. You need to read that chapter, because it deals with David’s mighty men. “These be the names of the mighty men

whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time." This does not mean that he threw his spear and it went through eight hundred at one time. It means that, in one battle, he took that spear and killed eight hundred men.

He was pretty close to resisting a thousand by himself. "And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil." Here was a man who fought and slew the enemy until his hand actually clave to his sword—that is, his hand tightened around it, and they had to pry his hand loose to get the sword out.

The Bible does not say how many he killed. But it does say that he wrought a great victory that day, and the people returned after him only to spoil. Then, in verse 11, we read: "And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines. But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory." Here was one man defying a whole host, and the Lord used him for a great victory.

Clearly, then, these individuals were men of might. In 1 Chronicles chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, we read: "Now these are they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war. They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow, even of Saul's brethren of Benjamin." We remember that the men of Benjamin were left-handed, but they were also ambidextrous. They could use either hand in shooting a bow or hurling stones.

In fact, the Bible says, "They could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss." Every time I read that verse, I think of my father. My

father and my mother were both left-handed. When Dad started bow hunting, he shot his bow right-handed. Later, he thought perhaps he should shoot a left-handed bow, since he was left-handed. He bought one and hunted with it for a while, but then he could not make up his mind whether he was better left-handed or right-handed. So he bought a third bow, with the arrow rest in the center, which could be shot either right-handed or left-handed. He could shoot either way; it did not bother him.

But these men were armed and could use both hands in firing bows and hurling stones. So they were indeed mighty men. In verse 8, the Bible says of the Gadites who separated themselves unto David into the hold in the wilderness: "Men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains."

They could handle a shield; that is, they could ward off swords and all kinds of blows. A buckler was something they got under when all the arrows came flying over. But notice that the Bible says their faces were like the faces of lions.

The interesting thing about a lion is that it can be very deceitful. Years ago, I was preaching in Arizona. Not far from where I was staying, there was a Vietnam veteran who had a private zoo. The pastor's son took me there, and the owner showed us around. We were the only ones there, and the zoo was not open, but he was showing me around. We came to the lion cage, and here was a docile, beautiful, big male lion. The owner reached in and petted him.

I asked, "Could I pet him as well?" He said, "Sure." So I reached in and petted that big lion. He looked just like a big kitten. A little later, while the owner was feeding the animals, we came again to that nice, pettable lion. The owner said, "Stand back. Don't even get near the cage." I asked, "Why?"

He said, "I'll show you." When he threw a big hunk of meat into the cage, that lion snarled, growled, and jumped on it, tearing it to shreds. When he snarled, all those teeth became visible—absolutely, totally terrifying. I think that is what this means when it says they

had faces like lions: they could terrify you. They were determined and ferocious.

They were men who knew how to fight. The Gadites were able to do what needed to be done. In verses 1 and 2, other men came to David from Ziklag as helpers in the war; some were even of Saul's brethren of Benjamin, that is, from the southern kingdom. But the men who were able to do what needed to be done were different from the men who had understanding of the times and knew what Israel must do.

They were of the tribe of Issachar. Thus, there were two different groups, and these men worked together to accomplish what needed to be done. They were not working against each other. They were working together.

Here is a simple truth: God uses men. He does not use committees. He does not use politicians. He does not use wimps. He uses men. The need of the hour, first, was men who had an understanding of the times and knew what needed to be done. Second, the need of the hour was someone with the ability actually to do what needed to be done. Third, the need of the hour is for men who have the ability to do what needs to be done with the right motive.

The Need for Men with Right Motives (1 Chronicles 12:17-18, 33, 38)

David went out to meet these men of Gad, Benjamin, and Judah. Saul was a Benjamite, so some of those coming were from the northern kingdom, some from the southern kingdom, and some from Saul's own tribe. David answered them, saying, "If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you: but if ye be come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it."

Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee." Then David received them and made them captains of the band.

Of Zebulun, the Bible says, "Such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart." It also says, "All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king."

Notice that Amasai said, "Thy God helpeth thee." These men were not of a double heart. They had a single heart, a single function, a single mind, and a single purpose. The Bible says in James 1:8, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." A double-minded man cannot function properly because he does not know what to do or how to act. These men had single minds and single hearts.

You can do a right thing in a wrong way. You can do a right thing with a wrong motive and be judged by God. People often act from revenge, hatred, or personal gain, whether wealth, honor, or power. All of these are wrong motives. The Bible shows many men who did things that were right, but did them with the wrong motive.

Jehu was the king of Israel. God used Jehu to destroy the house of Ahab and Jezebel and to exterminate Baal worship out of Israel. Jehu got all the worshippers of Baal into the temple of Baal and said, "Search, and make sure that there are no servants of Yahweh or Jehovah in here." When they made sure, he went outside to the soldiers and said, "If any man get out, your life for his." Kill them all.

That is exactly what he did. Jehu reformed the state or the kingdom, but he did not reform the church. He did not reform the religion, because he kept the idols that Jeroboam had made. Hosea 1:4 says: "And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel." God promised Jehu four generations on the throne.

Now God is saying, I am going to vindicate my honor. Although Jehu did some right things, he did them with a wrong motive. John Trapp said of Hosea 1:4 and Jehu: "Jehu's house is visited and his progeny extinguished in the fourth generation for Jehu's offenses. God's work must be done truly, that there be no halting, and totally that there be no halving. But Jehu, as he had not that true heart

spoken of by the apostle, but was of a double mind, like that mad Neapolitan that said he had two hearts, one for God and another for him that would, so he fulfilled not after God, or followed God not fully, as Caleb did. He did not allow or follow God's will, as did David. He served him not with a perfect heart, as did Asa."

"He reformed the state, but not the church. Or if he did something toward it, yet he was not thorough in it. He had a dispensatory conscience, for though he rooted out Baal's worship, yet the golden calves must continue." "Piety must give place to policy. Jehu seemed at first to be as zealous a reformer as Jehoshaphat, but though his fleece was fair, his liver was rotten."

"He was like the eagle which soareth aloft, not for any love of heaven. Her eye is all the while upon the prey, which by this means she spies sooner and seizeth upon the better." So he was saying Jehu did some right things, but with a wrong motive. I want you to listen carefully to this. God may use you even if you have wicked and wrong motives. But God will then turn around and judge you for doing what you did, even though it was right, with a wrong and wicked motive.

God used Assyria to judge and chastise the northern kingdom, the ten northern tribes. God sent them; there is no doubt about that whatsoever. In Isaiah 10:5, He identifies them: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation." He calls the Assyrian the rod of His anger, and the staff in their hand His indignation. He says, "The staff in their hand is mine indignation."

In verse 6 God says, "I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge." God says, I sent him and I am giving him a charge. What is his charge? "To take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets." God was sending the Assyrians to judge and destroy Israel because of their sins and idolatry.

Did the Assyrians come to Israel saying, "We're here because you've sinned against God, and we're here because we want to obey God and honor God and do that which is right"? No, no. Although God sent them and used them, verse 7 says, "Howbeit he meaneth

not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few."

The only reason the Assyrians came against Israel was that they wanted to loot, plunder, rape, steal, kidnap, and do whatever else they wanted. They did not come out of honor to God or obedience to God. God used them even though their motives were wicked and wrong. After God used them, He turned around and judged them because of those wicked motives. Look in verse 12.

"Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." Watch the pride and arrogance: "For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures."

"I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped." God asked, "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood."

"Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire." God said He would judge him because of his pride, arrogance, wickedness, and wrong motive. God had sent him, and he had done what God wanted, but not from a right motive. Motives do count.

May I remind you of Samson? God clearly used Samson in Judges, yet Samson repeatedly violated his Nazirite vow. He touched a dead body, visited harlots, intermingled with the Philistines, and did many things he should not have done. Did God use him? Yes. Did God judge him? Yes. He lost his power, his eyes, and his life. He did plenty of right things, but with a wrong motive.

Turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 16 and consider King Asa. He did some right things. Asa faced the Ethiopians and the Lubims, who had over a million soldiers, while Asa had only four or five hundred thousand. Outnumbered two to one, perhaps more, he prayed to God and trusted in Him, and God gave him victory, delivering all those Ethiopians into his hand.

When the king of Israel comes against Asa, king of Judah, Asa sends to the king of Syria for help. Israel is not anywhere near like the Ethiopians. So, in 2 Chronicles 16, beginning at verse 7, Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said, "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 Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand."

Hanani rebukes Asa for trusting in the king of Syria instead of God. Then he makes this marvelous statement and promise: "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars." This passage indicates that God is looking for men—men of ability, men with a right and pure motive—to use them. This promise is also given in a military context. Clearly, God is wanting to use men.

The need of the hour is not only for men who have understanding of the times, who know what we must do. It is not only for men of ability who can do what needs to be done. The need of the hour is also for men of ability who can do what needs to be done with the right motive. Fourth, the need of the hour is for men who will do what needs to be done in the grace, mercy, and power of God.

The Need for Men Who Rely on God's Power (1 Chronicles 12:18, 22)

In 1 Chronicles 12:18, Amasai said to David, "Peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee." Then verse 22 says, "For at that time day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God."

One of the leading names of God in the Bible is the God of hosts, or the Lord God of hosts. The word “host” refers to armies. So the Bible is teaching us that God is indeed the Captain of the armies. In other words, if we are going to fight for God, we must fight under Him according to His law and His rule, because He is the true Captain.

God ordained that Joshua lead the children of Israel into Canaan land, and the first battle was the fall of Jericho. Before that battle, Joshua saw a man with a sword drawn. “And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?”

"And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

I personally believe this is a Christophany, which is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. Joshua asked, "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" He said, "Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come." And Joshua immediately fell down and worshipped him. There is a need today, but the need is for a special kind of men, men of understanding, men of knowledge, yes, men of ability, men with right motives, but men who are willing to fight under the auspices and power of God.

Here is where we are today. The Word of God speaks of those who trust in the arm of the flesh, as well as those who trust in the one true and the living God. In Jeremiah chapter 17, you have a curse and a blessing, placed in opposition to each other. "Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD." There is a very important truth here: anytime you trust in your flesh, anytime you trust in man, your heart is departing from the Lord. Think back to Asa. That is why he was rebuked.

If you want to trust in the arm of the flesh, if you want to trust in man, here is the curse: "For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited." In other words, desolation.

But watch the blessing: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh."

"But her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." So God says, here is the choice. You can either serve the flesh, or you can serve Me in the Spirit, entrusting Me. You can either serve the arm of the flesh, or you can serve the Lord in the Spirit. One of the biggest problems we have today is that we try to do everything scripturally and spiritually in the arm of the flesh.

We always fail when we do that, and we bring ourselves under a curse. We need men who are going to fight, men who are going to stand, men who are going to do that which is right in the power and Spirit of God. The Bible says in Zechariah, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD." It is the Holy Spirit of God. That is why Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

The need of the hour is for men of understanding and knowledge who know what we really need to do; men of ability who can do what needs to be done; men of ability who can do it with the right motive; and men of ability, with the right motive, who will stand in the power and might of the Holy Spirit.

Applications and Conclusion

Let me make a couple of applications. Josiah Gilbert Holland wrote a poem, which I quoted during the series "Where Are the Real Men?" Listen to it again: "God give us men. A time like this demands strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and ready hands."

"Men whom the lust of office does not kill, men whom the spoils of office cannot buy, men who possess opinions and a will, men who have honor, men who will not lie, men who can stand before a demagogue and damn his treacherous flatteries without winking, tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog, in public duty and in private thinking, for while the rabble, with their thumb-worn creeds, their large professions and their little deeds, mingle in selfish strife, lo! freedom weeps, wrong rules the land, and waiting justice sleeps."

That is exactly where we are today. That is why he began, "God give us men." We need men of the caliber given to us in 1 Chronicles 12. Here is the second application.

The motto of the state of New Hampshire is a very short one: "Live free or die." It is on their tags. There are plenty of men who are willing to help you die, but very few who are willing to help you live free. When you think about freedom, you must understand that freedom is only in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches us in 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." There is no liberty apart from God and no freedom apart from God. That is why Galatians 5:1 says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

The more biblical, holy, and godly a nation is, the more freedom exists. The more unholy, ungodly, wicked, and rebellious it becomes, the more tyranny exists. Look around at the nations that do not serve God at all or serve a false god, and look at the tyranny. If we want to devolve into the third-world nation status where we are headed, all we have to do is continue to deny the Word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The only freedom that exists is in Him. Where the Lord is, there is liberty; where He is not, there is slavery and bondage.

God, give us men. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we pray that You would raise up men to meet the need of the hour: men who have understanding of the times, who know what we must do, and who have the ability to do it—not only to do it, but to do it with the right motive. Give us men who will act under the auspices, command, and power of the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Give

us, Lord, holy, godly men. Give us Your liberty and Your freedom. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 21

The Trumpet Call

January 17, 2022

Introduction: The Trumpet Call in Numbers 10

Look in Numbers chapter 10, the fourth book in the Old Testament. I once told a congregation in Vidalia, Georgia to turn to Numbers. A man on the front row could not find it. I said, “Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. It’s the fourth book in the Old Testament.” He kept looking, and finally shook his head. I jumped from the pulpit and asked to see his Bible. The book of Numbers was gone. It was a Sears and Roebuck Bible; they had left out the whole book of Numbers. Normally, however, it is the fourth book.

Numbers chapter 10, verse 1 says: “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps.” Trumpets were used for a multitude of purposes in the Old Testament, and they certainly played a prominent role in the lives of the Israelites. Before I end today, Lord willing, we shall also see that trumpets are relative to the New Testament and play a very important and integral part there as well.

Old Testament Uses of Trumpets

Trumpets were blown on special occasions, especially special feast days. Leviticus chapter 23 and verse 24 says, speaking to the children of Israel, “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall you have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.” Trumpets were also used in the worship of God as well. Psalm 98 and verse 6 says, “With trumpets and the sound of a cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD the King.” Second Chronicles chapter 20 and verse 2 says, “And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD.”

What I want you to see is that trumpets were used not only for calling the assembly, that is, the whole congregation, but also for calling the princes or rulers. They were used for sending out the camps by order. In other words, once a trumpet was blown a certain way, the camps on the east moved; by another sound, the camps on the west moved.

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 10:1-9 (KJV)

> In Numbers chapter 10, beginning with verse 1: “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are the heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. When you blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east part shall go forward. When you blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey. They shall blow an alarm for their journeys. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but you shall not sound an alarm. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be unto you an ordinance forever throughout your generations.”
>
> Very clearly, then, the trumpets were used on a regular basis in Israel—for the calling of the assembly, the princes, or the

setting forth of the camps. However, it is verse 9 to which I want to call your attention: “And if you go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then you shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and you shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies.”

I was reading through the book of Numbers and came to this passage. I was fascinated with verse 9 because actually there are four assumptions very clearly seen in it. First of all, he said, “if you go to war.” War is assumed in the Bible. Whether we like it or not, whether we believe it or not, whether we want it or not, it is an assumed fact.

Four Assumptions in Numbers 10:9

and it is a reality of life. You must remember that war is not sinful or evil in and of itself. It is true that usually our wars are sinful and evil because we are sinful, wicked, and depraved individuals. And usually wars are begun over wicked and wrong reasons as well. But to demonstrate the fact that war is not inherently evil in and of itself, you have to remember that in Exodus chapter 15 and verse 3, the Bible says, "The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name." Now, if war was inherently evil, then God certainly would not be a man of war. In the book of Isaiah, chapter 42 and verse 13, the Bible says, "The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war."

"He shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies." And then when you get to the book of Revelation chapter 19 and verse 11, here is one who sits on a white horse whose name is Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war. So obviously war is not inherently sinful in and of itself. In fact, I might point out again that in Numbers chapter 21 and verse 14, there is even a book of the wars of the LORD. That verse says, "Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the LORD, What he did at the Red sea and in the brooks of Arnon." Now, I pointed out in verse 9 that war is an assumed fact. If you would hold Numbers 10, but look in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy chapter 20, Deuteronomy

chapter 20 and verse 1. Here is why it is an assumed fact. Notice, if you would, this passage, Deuteronomy 20 and verse 1.

The Word of God says, "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Now, notice, if you would, in verse 1, it is said, "When thou goest forth to war." It is no longer an assumption.

It is now a reality, a real fact. When you look back in Numbers chapter 10 and verse 9, he says, “and if you go to war.” That is the first assumption in the verse: war is a reality, a fact. The second assumption is that war may be necessary in our land: “and if you go to war in your land.”

When we think of war, we normally think of foreign wars, fighting on foreign shores. Outside of the war for independence, the War of 1812, and the War of Northern Aggression from 1861 to 1865, there have really not been any wars on our land. However, we need to adjust our thinking, because Scripture says, “and if you go to war in your land.” Sometimes it may be absolutely necessary to fight not only in our nation, state, or county, but also in our community. We need to understand that war is not something that happens only to someone else, somewhere else; it can happen locally as well.

That means we need to prepare ourselves mentally, physically, emotionally, martially, and even spiritually for such a reality. In other words, we should never be unprepared. War is an assumed fact, and sometimes that war comes to our home as well.

Now look at verse 9 again, because here is a third assumption: “And if you go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you.” Here is an enemy that oppresses us. If you take the time to look up the Hebrew word oppress, you will find that it means to bind up, to shut up—in other words, to lock down, to harass, to vex, and to cause suffering and distress. Here is an enemy that oppresses, but here is the clincher: “and if you go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you.” In other words, the enemy is already in the land.

It is not an open invasion that you can see and say, “There comes a bunch of troops. They are coming off a ship. They are coming out of a plane.” No; they are already in the land.

Now, I want you to think about this for a moment and ask yourself these questions. How could there be an oppression for someone from someone that is already in our land? Think about this question: Who has the power to oppress? And who has the position to oppress? From whence does oppression arise? In other words, what is the original and general source of oppression? There is an interesting question asked in I Peter chapter 3 and verse 13: “And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?”

The Source of Oppression

I remember reading that passage and laughing out loud when the answer really hit me. Here is the question: “And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” I thought about that. In Scripture, the apostles were preaching, and it was the rulers who wanted to arrest them and make them cease preaching.

When you read through the Bible, usually the oppression always comes from the government. If you do not believe that, let me show you a couple of passages. In Ezekiel 45:8, speaking of the prince, the Scripture says, “In the land shall be his,” that is, the prince’s, “possession in Israel.” Then it says, “and my princes shall no more oppress my people, and the rest of the land shall they give to the house of Israel according their tribes.” Notice: “my princes shall no more oppress my people.” In other words, oppression normally comes from those who have the power and the position of power.

Then look at James 2:6. Here is another question, and you can put these two things together. It says, “But ye have despised the poor.” And here is the question: “Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?” Is not that interesting? Have you ever thought about what George Soros is attempting to do? How about Bill Gates? How about the Clinton Foundation?

I am simply pointing out that usually oppression comes from the powers that be or from the rich and the powerful. Usually it is the

rich and the powerful—your congress critters, the judges, and somehow the executive branch—who are oppressing the people. We are not necessarily oppressing each other.

If we did, that too would be sin, that too would be wickedness. But once you begin to look around, read the Scripture, and observe what is going on, you are going to discover that division, strife, and oppression usually stem from anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Scripture, anti-freedom, and anti-liberty rulers and rich who are trying to consolidate power to themselves in order that they may control every avenue of our lives. In seeking to control, they are actually destroying our nation.

Here is a quote from James Madison, found in the Federalist Papers. James Madison is known as the father of the Constitution because he was secretary at the Constitutional Convention. Listen to what he said: "The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced as the very definition of tyranny." He said that once an individual, a group of individuals, or a party controls the judiciary, the legislature, and the executive branch, that is indeed the very essence and definition of tyranny.

So, in Numbers chapter 10, you have these three assumptions so far: first, war is a fact and reality; sometimes war is in our land; and, thirdly, war oftentimes stems from those in power and positions of power. Here is the fourth assumption, also found in verse 9: "And if you go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then you shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and you shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies." Everyone wishes to be saved from their enemies. It does not matter whether a person is saved or unsaved; everybody wishes to be saved from their perceived enemies.

But let me make this statement, and I'll show you why I'm making it. Christians should, in reality, be very aggressive in wanting to be saved from our enemies. Why? Hold Numbers 10, but turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 2. Note verses 1 and 2. The Apostle Paul says, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men."

We may pray for all kinds and classes of people. But look at verse 2. He now becomes very specific: “for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” I have asked people before, why should we pray for our rulers? Inevitably, someone answers that we need to pray for them that they should be saved, or might be saved. My response is that, according to Deuteronomy 17, 2 Samuel chapter 23, and numerous other passages, if they are not already saved, they should not be rulers, because the Bible forbids an alien and a foreigner from ruling over God’s people.

But here is why the Apostle Paul requests prayer for our rulers and those in authority. It is not for their benefit, but for ours: “...for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” We should pray for them in order that we may be left alone, live our lives, and worship our God and serve Him unmolested and unoppressed. Our prayers for them are not for their benefit, but for our benefit as well.

In the blowing of the trumpets, those trumpets had implications both Godward and manward. As far as manward is concerned, whoever heard the trumpet—whether it was a calling of the assembly, calling of princes, setting forth of the camps, or whatever the sound was—should prepare himself for it. There were alarms for war, and if you heard that, you must prepare yourself for war as well.

But there was also an implication Godward, because God said that when He heard those trumpets, His people would be remembered before the LORD and saved from their enemies. The blowing of the trumpets signified that we are openly saying our trust and confidence are in God. It was an appeal to heaven. It signified that the battle is the LORD's, that He is the one who must help us. We need and desire His divine help, and we recognize that He is the only one who can give us victory.

The Trumpet as an Appeal to Heaven

Let us consider two illustrations. The first is found in Numbers chapter 31. We will not read all of this, but you can read the chapter and see the mighty victory that God gave, beginning with verse 1 through verse 6: “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge

the children of Israel of the Midianites. Afterward thou shalt be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the LORD of Midian. Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and with the trumpets to blow in his hand."

When they went to war, they blew those trumpets because they wanted to be remembered before the LORD and wanted the victory. If you read Numbers chapter 31, you will find not only the victory God gave them, but also all the goods and booty gathered from the Midianites.

The second illustration is found in 2 Chronicles 13. There is about to be a war between Judah and Israel. Abijah is king over Judah, and Jeroboam is king over Israel. "And Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men." Judah has four hundred thousand men of war. "Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valor." Judah is outnumbered two to one.

"And Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which is in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel; Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt? Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord."

"And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them. And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David; and ye be a great multitude, and there are with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods. Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the

manner of the nations of other lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods?"

"But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto the LORD, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business: And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him. And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper."

You can read the rest of the chapter. Jeroboam tried to set a trap and put his men behind Abijah, but God delivered Israel into the hands of Abijah and Judah. Abijah was saying, “We’re doing this according to God’s law; we’re blowing the trumpets, and we’re blowing them against you.”

Oftentimes Christians went into battle singing psalms and making all kinds of shouts of praise unto the Lord. John Trapp, one of the old Puritans, wrote this: “So at the siege of Montauban, the people of God, using daily humiliation as their service would permit, did sing a psalm after it, immediately before sallying forth,” that is, before going out to face the enemy. “With this practice, the enemy became acquainted. And ever upon the singing of the psalm, after which they expected a sally, they would so quake and tremble, saying, ‘They come, they come,’ as though the wrath of God had been breaking out upon them.” Oliver Cromwell led his army into battle singing psalms.

Everyone should be familiar with the rebel yell that the rebels used during the War of Northern Aggression. Even the Indians oftentimes would give a loud whooping noise as they went into battle. There are psychological reasons, as well as martial reasons, for doing so.

But I can hear the wheels turning in your mind, and I know what you're thinking. The objection to what I've just told you is this: "But I don't see how the blowing of the trumpets could be relative to us. That is in the Old Testament, and we no longer have priests and we no longer have trumpets."

New Testament Priesthood and Our Trumpet

My response would be, "Ah, but you are wrong. Very wrong." Revelation 1:5–6 says, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth; unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." What has he done? He's made us kings and priests. Revelation 5:10 says, "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." So the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the great high priest, has made his people kings and priests.

There is in the Bible, and we teach, the priesthood of every believer. As a priest, you are to offer a daily sacrifice. What is that sacrifice? Hebrews 13:15 says, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." So we are required to give a daily sacrifice. That daily sacrifice is the sacrifice of praise. It is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

You say, "All right, pastor, we're priests. I understand that. But what about the trumpets? I can't even play the radio. I surely can't blow a trumpet." Well, you can. 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." "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet." Our voice is our trumpet, and we are to use our voices to cry to our sovereign and holy God.

Just as trumpets gave a certain specific sound, we must also give a certain specific sound. There was one sound for the calling of the assembly, another sound for the calling of the princes, another sound for the setting forth of the camps, and another sound for an alarm for war. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 14:8, "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the

battle?" So if our voices are our trumpets, then we must give a specific sound if we want to be delivered in the time of war, in the time of danger, in the time of oppression.

So what are we to cry? He said, "lift up your voice like a trumpet and cry." What are we to cry? We should look in Psalm 7, beginning with verse 6. Several passages show what we should be using on a daily basis. Look in Psalm 7, and notice verse 6.

Specific Cries for Deliverance

The Word of God says, "Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded." "Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself." In other words, David is asking God to stand up, get up, and do something.

As a boy, I saw my father angry, upset, mad, and ready to fight only two times in my whole life. One time there was a great controversy among the farmers. I have no idea what it was, because I was only eight or nine years old. All the farmers met at the courthouse in auditorium seats, like seats in a theater, and the county agent was down front behind a lectern speaking.

We were all sitting there. I remember that county agent referred to my father and called him a liar. My dad never said a word. He just stood up, got out of his seat, and started walking straight for that county agent. When he got about three feet in front of him, the county agent said, "No, no, let me correct this. Mr. Weaver did not lie. I'm the liar. I lied." Dad just turned around, came right back to his seat, and sat down.

This is what David is saying: "Arise, O LORD, in thine anger." In other words, get up and do something. Look in your Bibles to Psalm 7 and verse 9. Here is one that we should be able to cry every day: "Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins." That's a wonderful cry. You can blow the trumpet all day long on "let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just." Look in Psalm 35 and verse 23: "Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord." Stir up

thyself. Think about this. Get upset with those who are opposing me. Awake to my judgment. Look in Psalm 59 and verse 5.

There is a multitude of these; these are just a smattering. "Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors." Awake to visit the heathen, don't be merciful to them, take care of them. He's actually asking them to wipe them off the face of the earth. That's what it amounts to. And he does that a multitude of times.

If you will look in your Bibles to Psalm 68 and verse 1, one of my favorite passages, look what the Bible says: "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him." Now stop and think about this. I want you to look at the next four verses, or the next three or four verses, in light of this. Watch: "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire. So let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him." Wow. Yeah, that's a good cry to lift up your voice as a trumpet.

Then, if you will look in Isaiah 51 and verse 9, notice what the Scripture says: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" So here Isaiah is asking God to awaken, to put on strength. Just as He delivered His people from Egypt and wounded them and destroyed them, do it again.

When God says, “Lift up thy voice like a trumpet and shew my people their sins and their transgressions,” and cry unto Him, He says that if you cry, you will be remembered before the LORD. Scripture places the responsibility of crying upon us. It is astounding to consider what happened to Israel in the Old Testament, especially in the book of Judges. Those people waited until the very last moment to cry out to God. When they were in deep straits and trouble, then they would cry. The wise thing would be to start crying

before you ever get into that state, but that is the way people are; that is the way sinners are.

Everybody asks, “Why are not God’s people in this country crying out right now?” Here is the answer: We do not have our backs against the wall quite yet. We are not hungry enough just yet. We are not sick of tyranny just yet. We still want the benefits of socialism and fascism, while refusing to repent of our sins. When we get into the position Israel occupied, we may end up crying as well. But here is the general principle: If we do not cry, God is not going to deliver.

The Urgency of Persistent Prayer

Look in your Bibles to Luke chapter 18. Here is a parable our Lord gave concerning prayer, followed by a tremendous application. “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.” Here is an unjust judge who cared nothing about righteousness, justice, or holiness. He did not fear God and had no regard for man. The only reason he wanted to give this woman justice was that she kept irritating him. Finally he said, “If I don't do something, she'll wear me down. I'm going to give her what she wants just to get her out of my hair.”

Now look at the application: “And the 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?” Or shall he find that kind of faith? What kind of faith? The faith that cries day and night, asking God to intervene, to deliver, to save, to do something that will destroy the wicked and establish the righteous. If our voices are trumpets, how serious is our cry? What are we going to say to the Lord?

Turn back in your Bibles to Joel, and look first at chapter 1, beginning with verse 13. The Word of God says, "Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly." How would you call a solemn assembly in those days? With a trumpet. "Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD."

Now chapter 2, verse 1: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain." Then verse 12: "Therefore now also saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly."

He goes on to say in verse 17, "...gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar." Here is the cry: "...and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people."

Call a solemn assembly, blow the trumpet, weep before the porch and the altar, and say, "Spare thy people, O God, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them." We are priests, and we do have a trumpet, and our trumpet is our voices. It is our word, and we need to use those voices for God's honor and glory and the establishment of His kingdom.

The trumpets were always blown in a time of danger, trouble, or war. I would tend to think that we are in a time of danger, trouble, and war, and the average Christian is just as fast asleep as he can

possibly be. We need to use our voices and cry with I Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 34, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not.” We need to cry with Ephesians 5 and verse 14, “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Awake thou that sleepest. If we do not awaken, if we do not learn to blow our trumpets and cry to God, we are going to be in such serious trouble in this country that you and I cannot even possibly envision.

Applications: Dependence, Responsibility, and Awakening

In times of conflict, our being remembered and saved is not by reason of our own fighting. It depends not upon our ability, but upon the power and blessing of the Lord. The sounding of the trumpets was a sign and symbol of dependence upon God. We are not delivered by our own hand, power, or strength. We are delivered by His grace and mercy. As Zechariah says, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD.”

Here is what Matthew Henry said: “God will take notice of the sound of the trumpet and be engaged to fight their battles. Let all the people take notice of it and be encouraged to fight His battles, as David, when he heard a sound of a going upon the tops of the mulberry trees.” Not that God needs to be awakened by the sound of a trumpet any more than Christ needed to be awakened by His disciples in the storm. But where God intends mercy, it is His will that we should solicit it. Ministers must stir up the good soldiers of Jesus Christ to fight manfully against sin, the world, and the devil by assuring them that Christ is the captain of their salvation and will tread Satan under their feet. Whenever God intends to bestow mercy, He stirs up His people to solicit, ask for, and beg for that mercy.

Psalm 44 says, “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.” We have heard how God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt and brought them across the Red Sea. We have heard what He did to Jericho, its inhabitants, and the inhabitants of Ai. We know what He did to Og and Sihon. That is why they said they had heard all these

wonderful things. Then verse 2 says, “How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them;” that is, His people; “how thou didst afflict the people,” that is, the heathen, “and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.”

Then he says, “Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.” In other words, Lord, we have heard what You did in time past. You are still the same King. Do it again, Lord. Do it again. Verse 4 is a cry for divine intervention. We are not delivered by our own strength, but by the grace, mercy, and power of God. Here is the third application.

Men are responsible to hear the sound of the trumpet: the call to war, the call to fight, the call to pray, the call to worship, and the call to proclaim the truth. There is an interesting passage in Jeremiah 6:14: “Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.” When you refuse to hear the sound of the trumpet, you are indeed assuring your own destruction. Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to Ezekiel 33, and let us begin reading with verse 1.

Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

All this time, he has been talking about a watchman and blowing the trumpet. Now observe the application in verse 7: “So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel;

therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." What was Ezekiel's trumpet? It was his voice. He was crying out. The Lord set forth the principle of the blowing of the trumpet in verses one through six, and then said, "Ezekiel, you are my trumpet, your voice. You should lift up to God and cry for deliverance."

If you think that trumpets have no place in the New Testament, consider two passages. First Corinthians 15 and verse 52 says: "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." First Thessalonians chapter four and verse 16 says: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." The last trumpet to sound will be the trumpet of Jesus Christ, when he raises his own from the dead and returns in power and glory. Until that last trumpet sounds, we must keep playing our own trumpets. We must keep lifting up our own voices. We must not play with an uncertain sound, a confused sound, or off key.

Conclusion: The Final Trumpet

We must keep crying out of truth and righteousness and holiness. And when you stop and think about this, when we die, or when our Lord returns, our trumpets are ceased. We can't warn anymore. We can't cry anymore. We can't plead anymore. We can't pray anymore. It's over for us. You follow that? So God has promised, if we have blown the trumpet, that we would be remembered before Him, and we would be saved from our enemies.

Would it not be absolutely wonderful once again to have a Christian republic? For liberty and freedom are given to us under the authority and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is King of kings, Lord of lords, God of gods. The trumpet call right now is ours. But when he returns, the trumpet call will be his, and it will be the full and final trumpet call.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before thee. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. We thank you, Father, for the responsibilities, duties and obligations that you've

given us. Help us, Father, to indeed lift up our voice like a trumpet, and show our people their sins and their transgressions, and call upon them to repent and turn in faith to thee, the one true and the living God who's revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

And may we be delivered from our enemies. And may we learn to pray, "Oh, that the wickedness of the wicked would come to an end; but establish thou the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins." Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned. Quicken us, and we shall call upon thy name. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. We thank you, Father, for the responsibilities, duties and obligations that you've given us. Help us, Father, to indeed lift up our voice like a trumpet, and show our people their sins and their transgressions, and call upon them to repent and turn in faith to thee, the one true and the living God who's revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 22

Walking By Faith In The Dark

August 24, 2023

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Corinthians 5:7; Jeremiah 32:5-15 (KJV)

Introduction: The Principle of Walking by Faith

2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

Jeremiah 32 and verse 5: "And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD. Though you fight with the Chaldeans, you shall not prosper. And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. So Hanameel thine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of the Lord, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin. For the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine. Buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of

> the Lord. And I bought the field of Hanameel, my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open.
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> And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel, my uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land."
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> The title of the message is, "Walking by Faith in a Time of Darkness." "For we walk by faith, not by sight."
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> Now this text gives us a very clear principle. That principle is that we as Christians need to walk by faith and not by sight.

The Context of 2 Corinthians 5

The context of this statement involves a Christian view of death and the afterlife. The circumstances of our life and, in one sense, the circumstances of our death really do not matter, because we believe and know that there is a resurrection and life after death.

In verse 4, the Scripture says, “For we that are in this tabernacle, or this body, do groan, being burdened. Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” Notice that he says, “For we that are in this tabernacle, or in this body, do groan.” If you do not believe that you groan, wait until you get older. Joshua, you are going to find out. I have one good friend who is a few years younger than I am. He always asks me,

"Why did you not tell me that getting old had all of these problems?" I said, "Well, I just wanted you to find out for yourself."

It is true: our bodies wear out. Certainly there is going to be a new body, a resurrected body, a glorified body. Now look, if you would please, in verse 8. He says, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."

Walking by faith in the context of 2 Corinthians chapter 5 is walking by faith in view of our death and our resurrection. This is not only true in that area; it also holds true in every area of life. It is much easier to walk by faith when everything is going right, when there are no problems, persecution, or prosecution, and when you have everything you need. It is easy to trust the Lord and thank Him for all of

Walking by faith is exceedingly more difficult when times are dangerous, when you are being persecuted or chased, when you are doing without, and when you do not have everything that you need. Yet that is when you need to literally walk by faith even more.

When you stop and look around at the situation we are in in America today, it seems as if we are walking on eggshells just to avoid exacerbating the difficult positions we find ourselves in week by week. We are facing an economic collapse, food shortages, tyrannical governments, moral decay, and a host of other things.

Current Dark Times in America

I want to give you one paragraph from an article I read this past week. It was written by Gary D. Barnett, and the title was "A Dose of Reality, Can You Handle It?" He wrote: "Where does one begin attempting to prepare an accounting of all the real terror, tyranny, warmongering, torture, poisoning, fatal injections, financial manipulations, government and media race-baiting, insane transgender promotion, depopulation efforts, police brutality, deadly animal experimentation and slaughter, monetary destruction, and the digitization of an entire economy by the ruling class and its government?"

"Is there any amount of dictatorial oppression and felonious corruption that will cause the common man to even blink? How

much will this proletariat take until they actually say no and do something about this heinous and evil state's totalitarian attempts to control all of society?" He goes on to expound upon these exceedingly difficult situations, but he always ends by stressing that each of us is responsible for our own lives, our own freedom, and our own liberty.

In other words, if we do nothing individually, we will be totally and completely enslaved. The principle of walking by faith is true, and even more so when we are walking in a time of darkness. It is very difficult because many people are afraid, and fear is the opposite of faith. Sight would also be the opposite of faith.

Someone wrote this years ago, and I certainly have found it true: "If you want to be depressed, look within. If you want to be discouraged, look without. If you want to be delivered, look up." That certainly is true. You are going to discover that it is not only true now, but the darker it gets, even the truer it is going to seem to you.

Before I get to the message I want to share with you today, I want to remind you of a message I preached many years ago, entitled "Knowing the Will of God." If you have not heard that message recently, I would encourage you to listen to it, because I give five principles on how to know the will of God in every situation. I am going to give you those five principles right now. The reason I am reminding you of this is that I am going to show you in the book of Jeremiah how God brings this truth to Jeremiah by using one of these five means.

Five Ways to Know the Will of God

How do we know the will of God? I am not talking simply about reading the Scripture, although certainly we should be reading the Scripture, because the will of God is indeed revealed in the Scripture. Let me give you these five ways.

Number one, you may know the will of God by God's promise. He said in John 7 and verse 17, "If any man will to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine," and he goes on. Notice what he said: "If any man will to do his will, he shall know." I have heard some people say

it is so difficult to know God's will, but that is not really true. God is more interested in us doing His will than we are interested in doing it. God has said that if you really, truly want to know His will, He will show it to you.

The only problem most people have is that, when it comes to God's will, they come to God and say, "Lord, show me Your will. If I like it, I'll do it. If I don't, I won't." God is never going to show you His will like that. But you have His promise that if you genuinely, truly want His will, He is going to give it to you.

The second way you can know the will of God is by His providence. The Word of

God tells you in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 8, "Behold, I set before you an open door, which no man can shut." And, of course, you know Romans 8 and verse 28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Many times God is going to open a door and we walk in it. Sometimes we are planning things and God just shuts the door. When God slams that door in your face, stand still for a moment and start looking around, because there is going to be another door open somewhere.

You can always know God's will, number one, by His promise; number two, by His providence; number three, by His principles. He said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." If I were to ask Joshua, "Joshua, I want you to pray for me because I'm thinking about going out and getting drunk tonight," Joshua would say, "I don't have to pray about that. God says don't do it." That is a principle. I could say, "Steve, pray for me. Gary has a cow that I want, and I'm thinking about stealing that cow because Gary won't sell her to me." Steve could say, "I don't have to pray about that. God says, 'Thou shalt not steal.'" These are principles that God has revealed in His Word. God can lead us by His promise, by His providence, and by His principles.

Then there is prayer. John 14:13 and 14 says, "If you ask anything in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I'll do it." So there is prayer.

And here is the fifth one: peace. Colossians 3 and verse 15 says, “And let the peace of God rule your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

Here are five ways that you can know the will of God: by His promise, by His providence, by His principles, by prayer, and by peace. God may lead us by any one of those five ways, any two of them, any three, any four, or all five if He chooses.

But listen: if whatever you start to do contradicts one of those five things, it is not God's will. If it violates His promise, or you do not have a promise, it is not His will. If His providence does not open the door, it is not His will. If it violates a principle, it is not His will. If there has been no prayer, if it has not been bathed in prayer, it is not His will. If there is no peace, it is not His will.

God can lead you in one of these ways. God led Jeremiah in one of these ways during what you and I would call a very exceedingly dangerous time. I am going to confess, and I really believe, that we are living in exceedingly dangerous times. It is always best to know the will and the Word of God so that we may weave our way in and out of the darkness by knowing His will.

There are some people who think, "Well, you really do not need to know God's will. You do not really need to know His Word. You simply need to know how to act and go ahead and do what needs to be done." But the truth of the matter is, if you are a real Christian, you do not really know what needs to be done unless you know the Word of God, because His will is revealed in His Word.

I would much rather know the will of God in advance, before I get into an exceedingly dangerous situation, than get into that situation and try to figure out what the will of God is. So it is like I tell people when it comes to self-defense.

I would much rather know how to defend myself, be able to do so, and never need it than to find myself in an extremely dangerous situation, needing that knowledge and unable to act. It is too late to try to figure it out then.

In Jeremiah 32, God told Jeremiah to buy a field from his uncle Shallum. Buying a field is no great task for anyone who has the money, and property is usually a good investment, generally speaking and most of the time. But consider the circumstances in

which God placed Jeremiah, the circumstances in which Jeremiah found himself, when God instructed him to buy this field.

First of all, you have to understand that Jeremiah was a prophet, and consequently he was hated—not only by the false prophets, but by his own people. He was hated by the people of the city in which he had been raised. You must understand these circumstances before considering what God commanded him to do.

Jeremiah's Dangerous Circumstances

He says, “Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum, mine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is thine to buy it.” Jeremiah was from Anathoth himself. Jeremiah chapter 1 and verse 1 says, “The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin.” So here he is, hated and despised by his own people. You remember, I trust, that passage in Mark chapter 6 and verse 4 where our Lord said that a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house.

The men of Anathoth hated Jeremiah. They despised him. They refused to hear his word and wanted to devise things against him. They wanted to murder him. Jeremiah chapter 11 reveals their plans. “For the Lord of hosts that planted thee hath pronounced evil against thee,” that is, in the house of Judah. Then verse 18 says, “And the Lord has given me knowledge of it, and I know it.” Then, “thou showest me their doings.”

Watch carefully: “But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter, and I knew not that they devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof. Let us cut him off from the land of the living.” That is, they would murder him. “And that his name be not any more remembered. But, O Lord of hosts, thou judgest righteously. Thou triest the reins of the heart.”

Jeremiah continues, “Let me see thy vengeance on them, for unto thee have I revealed my cause.” Then the Lord says, “Therefore thus saith the Lord of the men of Anathoth that seek thy life, saying, Prophesy not in the name of the Lord, that thou die not by our hand. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will punish them.

The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by the famine, and there shall be no remnant of them."

"For I will bring evil upon them in Anathoth, even the year of their visitation." Jeremiah's own people were seeking to destroy him, to slay him, and to cause his message to cease.

The false prophets not only hated Jeremiah; they were preaching exactly the opposite of his message. Jeremiah was saying, "Look, there's gonna be death. There's gonna be disease. There's gonna be destruction." But the false prophets were saying, "No, no, no, there's gonna be peace. There's gonna be prosperity. And those who are already in captivity, well, God's gonna bring them back, and Nebuchadnezzar is not going to do one thing."

Jeremiah 14:13 says: "Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name. I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them. They prophesy unto you a false vision and a divination, a thing of naught, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land. By sword and famine shall these prophets be consumed. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword, and they shall have none to bury them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters, for I will pour their wickedness upon them. Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them, Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease, for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, and with a grievous blow."

These prophets were prophesying lies, and the people were believing the false prophets instead of Jeremiah. The people of Anathoth hated him, the people to whom he preached hated him, and the false prophets were contrary to him. Here is the third thing: Nebuchadnezzar was knocking at the door. He had already defeated the defense cities of Judah and was now attacking Jerusalem. He's only attacking

Jerusalem. Jeremiah already knows that the city is going to be given into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. He knows that the city is going to be destroyed, that there is going to be a seventy-year captivity, and he understands this. In Jeremiah 25, verses 11 and 12, it says, "This whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years. And it shall come to pass, when 70 years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and I will make it perpetual desolations."

Now go back momentarily to Jeremiah chapter 32, and look again at verses 6 and 7: "And Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum, mine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is thine to buy it."

"So Hanameel, mine uncle's son, came to me in the court of the prison," he was already in prison, "according to the word of the Lord, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin, for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord."

Jeremiah's Obedience and God's Providence

Would you be interested in buying a piece of land when you knew that death and desolation was knocking at the door? When you knew that disease was going to be rampant, that famine was going to be stalking the land? Would you be interested in buying a piece of land when you knew that most of the people are going to be taken into captivity or murdered? Would you be interested in buying a piece of land when you knew that it was going to be at least 70 years before you could either see it or use it, if you could live 70 more years? Wow. I want to show you something.

Remember the five ways by which you can know the will of God. In verse 6, Jeremiah said, "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying..." God told Jeremiah that Hanameel the son of Shallum would come and ask him to buy the field in Anathoth. Then, in verse 8, Hanameel, his uncle's son, came to him, just as God had said.

Jeremiah continued, "Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord." How did he know it was the word of the Lord and not some figment of his imagination?

The answer is that the providence of God opened the door and brought it to pass. Jeremiah knew the will of God not only by the promise and Word of God, but also by the providence of God. In verse 9 he said, "And I bought the field of Hanameel, mine uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the evidences of the purchase, both that which was sealed, according to the law and custom, and that which was opened. And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel, mine uncle's son, in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison."

“And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.”

Now here is something that I have to point out and really emphasize: walking by faith equals walking according to the Word of God. Walking by faith is not some nebulous instinct or quirky feeling. Walking by faith is when you walk in obedience to the Word of God, doing that which you know is right based upon the Word of God, and then trusting God to work everything out for you.

Faith Is Walking According to God's Word

It is absolutely astounding to me that Jeremiah is in prison, and here comes his uncle’s son, his cousin, saying, “Buy this piece of land.” Jeremiah knew everything that was going on; he knew all of the circumstances. And did he buy the land? Yes, he bought the land.

Now I am going to show you something else from the Bible. Walking by faith does not mean that you understand everything.

Walking by faith does not mean that you never have any questions. Walking by faith does not mean that you grasp the end and the results instantly. No.

So let us look in Jeremiah 32, verse 16. I am going to read almost the rest of this chapter, and then come back and point something out to you. Listen carefully. “Now when I delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the Lord, saying...” The deal is done, and now Jeremiah makes this prayer. “Ah, Lord God! Behold, thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm.

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 32:17-29 (KJV)

> There's nothing too hard for thee. Thou showest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them. The great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name, great in counsel and mighty in work. For thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings. Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men, and hast made thee a name as at this day, and hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt, with signs and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, and great terror. And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear unto their fathers, to give them a land full of milk and honey.
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> And they came in and possessed it. But they obeyed not my voice, neither walked in my law. They have done nothing at all that thou commandest them to do. Therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them. Behold the mounts that are coming to the city to take it, and the city is given to the hand of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword and the famine and the pestilence. And what thou hast spoken is come to pass, and behold, thou seest it. And thou hast said unto me, O Lord God, buy the field for money, and take witnesses, for the city is given to the hand of the Chaldeans. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for me? Therefore

thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He shall take it. And the Chaldeans that fight against this city shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink-offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth. For the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the Lord. For this city has been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day, that I should remove it from before my face. And because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they,

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 32:32-44 (KJV)

their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face, though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them. Yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. But they set their abomination in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which were in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind that they should do this abomination to cause Judah to sin.

And now therefore thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence. Behold, I will gather them out of the countries whither I have driven them in mine anger and in my fury and in great wrath. And I will bring them again into this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. And they shall be my people, and I'll be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from

> them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them for good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.
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> For thus saith the Lord, Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And the fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast, it is given in the hand of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, the cities of the valley, and the cities of the south, and I will cause their

"Behold the mounts, they are coming to the city to take it, and the city is given in the hand of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword and the famine and the pestilence. And what thou hast spoken is come to pass, and behold, thou seest it. And thou hast said to me, O Lord God, buy the field for money and take witnesses, for the city is given in the hand of the Chaldeans." Do you see what he is saying? It is almost as though he is asking, "Lord, how can this be?"

Everybody hates me. I am in prison. Everybody is speaking against me. Everybody is trying to murder me. Nebuchadnezzar is coming into the city. The whole people are going to be either slain or taken into captivity. And look, You want me to buy a field? Stop and think about that. How insane does that appear?

And yet what God was saying was, "Jeremiah, look, it is not just about you. It is about My promises, about My covenant. After 70 years, I am going to bring these people back, or at least some of them. I am going to give them a new heart, and they are going to know Me. They are going to follow Me. They are going to obey Me. And what you have just done is going to picture exactly what I am going to do." So Jeremiah's purchase seemed ridiculous at the time.

Jeremiah knew that it was going to be 70 years. "For thus saith the Lord, that after 70 years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit

you and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return in this place."

Walking by faith is walking in belief. It is walking in trust. It is walking in obedience to the Word of God. Faith is not blind. Faith is not feeling. Faith rests upon that which is absolutely solid, which is the Word of God. The truth of the matter is this: Hebrews 11 verse 1, most of you can quote it: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is a substance.

Faith Defined and Applied

That means faith is real, genuine, and substantial. What is the substance of faith? It is the Word of God and the promises of God. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. The Greek word for evidence actually means a title deed. A title deed means something that is yours. You may not have it in your possession, but you have the deed to it.

Suppose Steve told me that he had a new four-wheel-drive pickup truck that he wanted to sell me at a good price. I agreed to buy it, but he said, "There's only one problem. The truck is in Alabama, and I can't get it to you until next week." I could give him the money, receive a receipt, and, since he had the title, have him sign it over to me. I would have the title deed. I might not have the truck yet, but it would be coming within a week or so.

This is what faith means. Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. It is the title deed to the fulfillment of the promise. You remember the passage in the New Testament that says, "These all died in the faith, not having received the promise." They had the promise; that means they had not received its fulfillment. They knew it was coming.

Faith is indeed a title deed. It has substance. Faith believes in spite of situations and circumstances. Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in the heavens." Psalm 138:2 says, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." That is the substance of faith. We are not yet in the exact same situation in which Jeremiah found himself.

But we may be getting pretty close. Nuclear war is being threatened. Putin and his prime minister said if Britain sends those depleted uranium bombs over there, they're going to take care of England. Stop and think about that. Look at our food supply that's being poisoned. Look at our economy that's crashing. All I'm telling you is this: we're living in dangerous times. We're living in darkened times. We're not back in the 50s any longer. We need to learn to walk by faith in the dark. We need to learn to really trust in the promises of God, in the Word of God.

The first application is that we cannot walk by faith unless we walk according to the Word of God. What we think we know or what we believe we know may not be true. I'm not talking about the Scripture, but about the way people have been taught and raised all their lives. Look at the Roman Catholics, the Muslims, and professing Christians raised in churches where there's been really no truth taught and no doctrine delivered. People believe all kind of crazy things. Just because you've heard something all of your life does not mean it is true. Believe me.

I've had people ask me some of the silliest questions. One individual asked me, "Pastor, where is it in the Bible that it says every tub has to stand on its own bottom?" That's not in the Bible. It may be an application of certain principles, but that's not in the Bible. We've heard so many things all of our lives and fail to search them out and see, "Is that really the Word of God? Is that really true?"

If you're not walking by faith, then the alternative is that you're walking by sight. That means you are walking based upon what you think, what you believe, what you see, and what you feel. I hate that word because we say it all the time: "Well, Gary, how do you feel about this?" No. "Gary, what do you think about this?"

What is your perception about this? Feelings have nothing to do with it. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 3, verse 5, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding.” Walking by sight is leaning to your own understanding. In verse 7, He says, “Be not wise in thine own eyes.” Walking by sight is walking in your own fleshly wisdom, being wise in your own eyes. You are either going to walk by faith—that is, believing God and trusting

God—or you are going to walk based upon what you think and perceive. It is just that simple. The only alternative to walking by faith is walking by sight.

There may be times in the darkness when we are not absolutely sure of the will of God because we do not know what we do not know. After preaching for 58 years, I have thought, “I have faced just about every imaginable scenario in these 58 years of preaching.” But that is not true. I have not. I could face something that I know absolutely nothing about. I would not be prepared for it because I never thought about it; it never entered my mind, and I never studied it out. I would have no idea what was going on.

Walking in Darkness Without Full Light

So what do you do when you are in the dark and have absolutely no idea what is happening or what you should do? Here is the answer: I do not know everything, but I know some things. I can live by what I do know until God shows me more light and gives me better understanding.

I cannot live based upon what Gary knows. I have to live based upon what I know. I cannot direct my actions based upon Steve’s understanding. I have to direct them based upon my understanding. That means I can obey God in the area in which I know I can obey God, and trust Him to work it out until He gives me more light and understanding.

I want you to turn to Job 23 and Isaiah 50. We will look at the book of Job first. Consider this question about Job: Did Job know what was going on? The answer is no. He knew he was not the sinner his friends were accusing him of, but he did not know what was going on.

He had no idea of the test. And here is what he said in Job 23:10: "But he knoweth the way that I take. When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." He knoweth the way that I take. In other words, I may not know what I am doing, but God knows what I am doing. He knows whether or not I am doing it to the best of my ability, according to the truth that I do know and based upon the

understanding that He has given me. Job said, "He knoweth the way that I take, and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

Isaiah 50:10 gives us a wonderful passage: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light?" That is a pretty good question. You do not understand. "Let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God." When you are walking in darkness and do not have light, do what you know you are supposed to do and continue to trust in Him until He gives you the light. It is just that simple.

When our oldest daughter was two or three years old, she was afraid of the dark, as many children are. I taught her a passage from Isaiah: "I will trust and not be afraid." Sometimes we would wake up during the night, and she had gotten up and was walking to the light switch. You could hear her saying, "I will trust and not be afraid. I will trust and not be afraid," over and over until she hit that light switch.

That is exactly what God expects of us when we are walking by faith in the dark. We will trust and not be afraid. We will live according to the light that we have, obey the truth that we have, and trust Him to work it out. We will stay upon our God.

What is coming down the pike? I don't know, but I can assure you this: unless God intervenes, it does not look good. And we better prepare to walk by faith in the dark until God miraculously and marvelously intervenes.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your Word. Lord, prepare our hearts; make us holy as thou art holy. Give us wisdom and understanding. Above all, help us trust in thee, lean upon thee, stay upon thee, and uphold thy Word. Give us your grace, we pray in Christ's holy name. Amen.

CHAPTER 23

The King as a Lion

January 5, 2026

Introduction: The King as a Lion

The Bible says, “The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul.”

When the word “lion” is mentioned, usually a mental picture is formed in our minds, and we immediately see or imagine a huge male lion standing and roaring. He is strong and frightful. In fact, Proverbs 30:30 tells us that one of the four things God says is comely in going is “a lion, which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away from any.”

We know that there are animals larger than a lion and stronger than a lion in the sense that we could talk about elephants, a hippopotamus, or something like that. But the truth of the matter is that the lion is usually referred to as the king of the beasts or the king of the jungle.

Biblical Pictures of Lions

We do not know too much about lions here in the South, except for the few that are in zoos, because thankfully there are no lions around here. Consequently, we probably have never really considered all of the pictures given to us in the Bible, especially in reference to a lion. Probably the only truth we know about a lion is that Jesus Christ is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Although most people may know that, they probably would not know where to find it.

It is found in Revelation 5:5: “And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” When I was looking through the Bible at the word “lion,” I was absolutely astounded and amazed at how many times the word “lion” or “lions” is used. If you would do a word search on the word “lion” or “lions,” you would probably be amazed too. There are many pictures given to us in the Bible in reference to lions. We are cognizant of the fact that our main enemy is classified as a lion.

What most of the time we do not realize is that our secondary enemies—what you and I would just refer to as our regular enemies—are called lions as well. Psalm 22 is a Messianic Psalm. It has reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at the pictures given to us concerning the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 22, verse 11: "Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round."

"They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Now look in verse 16: "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the

unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee."

There are several pictures here given to us of our Lord's enemies. They are called bulls. They're called ravening and roaring lions. They are called dogs and even the lion's mouth.

David said the same thing concerning his enemies. In Psalm 57 and verse 4, he said, "My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." So he is referring to these wicked men as lions.

They are ready to devour and destroy, just like a lion. The Apostle Paul gives us the same picture in 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 17: “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”

Yes, our enemies are referred to as lions. Concerning our main enemy, 1 Peter chapter 5, verses 8 and 9, says: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” The Bible tells us that our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks around seeking whom he may devour.

Interestingly, since our enemies are referred to as lions, certain individuals in the Bible are referred to as lion-like men. In 2 Samuel chapter 23, we read about Benaiah. I want to preach on this man. He was a tremendous believer and a tremendous warrior. Verse 20 says: “And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lion-like men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in a time of snow.” So now we are reading about two lion-like men.

So he slew them, and then he did something exceedingly dangerous. He went down into a pit where he could not get out, and there he was facing a lion. Notice that it was in a time of snow. That means there was probably snow in the pit, and that means his feet would not necessarily be steady and sure in slippery snow. And so he

killed the lion in that dangerous situation, but he also slew two lion-like men.

Lion-like men are men known for their ferocity, their strength, and their violence. Just as a lion would tear its prey into pieces, and just as the lion would use its teeth and claws to rend them asunder, so these lion-like men—men who have the nature of a lion—are willing to kill. They are willing to destroy and rejoice in the fact that they have done so. These men are violent by nature, and they think absolutely nothing of taking life.

Lion-like Nations and Wicked Rulers

The Word of God says, "The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin." The lion tore in pieces for his whelps; in other words, he provided for his offspring. He also strangled for his lionesses, for however many were in that pride. The holes were filled with prey, and the dens with ravin. In other words, he killed more than they could eat at that particular time. He was a natural-born killer.

When I was much younger, my sister and her husband somehow got hold of a baby fox and raised it. You could pet the fox; it would be in the house. If you have never heard a fox laugh, you are in for a treat, because it sounds just like a human. They fed that fox raw meat—I mean, that is what foxes eat. But when the fox grew up, although he had a full stomach, he would still kill all the chickens simply because it was his nature to kill. That is exactly what the Bible is saying about these lion-like men.

Not only are there lion-like men, and not only does the Word of God speak of the wicked as lions, but there are also lion-like nations. You have to remember that a nation is made up of individuals, and individuals have families. Just as there are families that are violence-oriented, there are nations that are violence-oriented.

If you will turn in your Bibles to the book of Joel—Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos—look at chapter 1, beginning with verse 6. Joel 1:6: God says, "For a nation"—not an individual now—"for a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the

teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. He hath laid my vine waste,"

That is, he destroyed the vineyard—"and barked my fig tree." Barking a tree means that you cut the bark all the way around it. Once you cut the bark all the way around it, the tree is going to die. He says, "He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white"—that is, they are dying. Notice again in verse 6: "a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion."

There are nations, just like there are individuals, that simply want to destroy. They want to destroy merely for the fun or the desire to conquer, and they are willing to destroy just to destroy. It does not matter whether they are destroying people or property.

In Judges chapter 6, we read about the Midianites and the Amalekites and what they did to Israel: “And so it was, when Israel had sown”—that is, they had planted—“that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; and they encamped against them”—that is, against Israel—“and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude. For both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.”

The Midianites came in with the Amalekites, and they destroyed everything. They took what they wanted. What they left, they destroyed so that Israel could not use it. Thus Israel, the Bible says, was greatly impoverished. This was not merely an effort to take Israel’s possessions. Their purpose included destroying what they could not take, leaving no sustenance behind. The result was that Israel was greatly impoverished, and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

The Righteous as Bold as a Lion

Unsaved men and nations in the Bible are likened unto lions because of their fierceness, ferocity, and violence. There are also plenty of pictures and truths in the Bible that relate to Christians in the picture of a lion. Proverbs 28:1 gives a very clear picture: "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion." The wicked flee when no man pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion. Isn't that interesting? Boldness, then, not only comes from a clear conscience, a good conscience, a true faith, and a trusting heart.

Now, the Hebrew word for "bold" in this passage is the word "batach." It means literally to be bold, to be trusting, to be secure, having confidence, being confident, and being safe. So look at it again: "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are as bold"—or as confident. Look at that—"as a lion." They are as confident as a lion. Listen to this quote from John Gill on Proverbs 28:1, in reference to the righteous being as bold as a lion: "They are confident as the lion, as the word may be rendered."

They are confident of the love of God, of their interest in Christ, of the grace of God in their hearts, and that all things work together for their good, and that it is and always will be well with them, let things go how they will go in the world. They are bold and undaunted, both before God and men, before God in prayer, knowing Him to be their covenant God in Christ, having in view the blood and righteousness of Christ and being assisted by His Spirit.

They are undaunted before men. If the righteous man is a minister of the Word, he speaks it boldly, as it ought to be spoken, fearing the faces of none, knowing it to be the gospel of Christ, the truth as it is in Him, and the power of God unto salvation. And if he be a private Christian, he is a public professor of Christ, His Word and His ordinances, which he is not ashamed to own before all the world. In short, the righteous are bold in life and in death—and will also be in the day of judgment.

And it is their righteousness which makes them so, from which they are denominated righteous, not for their own, but for the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And so Gill is saying there are many

ways in which a righteous man, a Christian man, may be bold and confident, not just before God, but before man as well.

This boldness is also pointed out very clearly in the New Testament. In Acts chapter 4, Peter and John have healed a man, and the Pharisees, priests, and Sadducees bring them in. Peter tells them, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Then we read: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”

When the Bible says they perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, all that means is that they were not trained in the law as were the scribes and the Pharisees. They were fishermen and were considered ignorant. But when the rulers saw their boldness, they marvelled and took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus Christ.

The disciples had been let go, and now they were in a prayer meeting, making prayer to God. In verse 29 they said, “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.”

The word “boldness” is the Greek word “parrhesia,” and it literally means freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, being frank, honest, and straightforward, saying what needs to be said in a fearless and confident manner. There are many implications in the Bible of saints being compared to a lion for boldness. However, this is not the picture I want to develop today. What I want to share with you is the king as a lion. First, you have to consider in the Scriptures the king as a lion.

The Fear of an Earthly King

Here is our text in Proverbs 20 and verse 2: “The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul.” The fear of a king is as a roaring lion, especially when the king is provoked.

You have to make sure that you distinguish in the Bible between God’s kings and ungodly kings. God’s king, or a godly king, was a covenant king. He was in covenant with God, and therefore he submitted to and obeyed His law. That is why Deuteronomy chapter 17 said the king should have his own copy of the law and read therein every day. A godly king would be an obedient king. But an ungodly king was a man who was a law unto himself. He believed that he was as a god, and therefore had the right to determine who lived and who died.

It was just that simple. King Nebuchadnezzar threw the three Hebrew children into the burning fiery furnace because they would not bow to his gods. You could either bow or die. When you stop and think about Pharaoh, he executed his baker just because it was his birthday, and he also ordered that all the male Israelite children be murdered when they were born.

In other words, he was determining who lived and who died. When you get to Sennacherib, the Assyrian—and you can read all about this in Isaiah 36—the Assyrian kings boasted of their depravity, cruelty, and violence. Oftentimes they would leave hundreds of men crucified as a sign to other cities: “Don’t resist us. If you resist, you die.” Sometimes they would decapitate people and have whole piles of heads, declaring, “We’re the ones who determine who lives and who dies. You either submit to us or you die.” It was just that simple.

Matthew Henry, speaking of these wicked kings, wrote: “How formidable kings are, and what a terror they strike upon those with whom they are angry. Their fear, with which, especially when they are absolute and their will is a law, they keep their subjects in awe, as the roaring of a lion, which is very dreadful to the creatures it preys upon and makes them tremble so that they cannot escape from him. Those princes that rule by wisdom and love are like God himself and

bear his image, but those that rule by terror and with a high hand do rule as a lion in the forest with brutal power." Then he gives a Latin term: "Let them hate, provided they fear." An ungodly king does not care whether he is loved or hated, provided the people fear him, submit to him, and obey him.

Matthew Henry is pointing out that wicked kings were like that. How unwise, then, would it be for you and me to quarrel with such a king, so wicked and vile that he could care less whom he killed and whom he spared? If we provoke such an individual, we are basically sinning against our own soul.

In Proverbs chapter 16, verse 14, the Bible says, "The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it." Listen to that again: "The wrath of a king is as messengers of death," because he is going to send someone to take you out; but it says, "a wise man will pacify it."

Here is an illustration of this truth. Turn back in your Bibles to the book of 2 Samuel, chapter 16. It concerns a man named Shimei. Shimei was a Benjamite, and David, of course, had slain the house of Saul, but he had spared Mephibosheth for sure. Now, in 2 Samuel chapter 16, David was being driven off the throne by his own son Absalom, and he was having to flee from Jerusalem. As David and some of the men with him were fleeing, Shimei ran along beside them, cursing them and saying all kinds of ungodly things.

Look in 2 Samuel 16 and verse 13. The Bible says, "And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust." He was upset with David. He was throwing stones at the king and throwing dust at the king as well.

Now Joab defeated Absalom and his army. After Absalom was dead and the army was defeated and scattered, David came back to Jerusalem. What about Shimei, the man who had cursed David, thrown stones at him, and cast dust at him? Look in 2 Samuel chapter 19, verse 15: "So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan. And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of

Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David."

Shimei began to talk to David: "Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart." Oh, don't take me seriously. I really wasn't serious. But yes, he was. Notice that he said, "For thy servant doth know that I have sinned." He does know it, because David is coming back as king. "Therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king."

Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered, "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?" David said, "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?" Therefore the king said unto Shimei, "Thou shalt not die." And the king sware unto him.

It looks as if Shimei has gotten away with cursing the king, throwing stones and dust at him. But this is not really the end of the story. David does not kill Shimei because David has given him his word, and he is not going to break it. In 1 Kings chapter 2, David is dying and gives sound advice to his son Solomon, who will follow him on the throne. He says: "And, behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword.

Now look what he tells Solomon: "Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood." In other words, David says, you take his life. So David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David.

What Solomon did was very wise. Solomon summoned Shimei and told him that he deserved to die, but he would not put him to death at that time. He commanded him to build a house in

Jerusalem and stay there. He warned him that on the very day he left Jerusalem, he would die. Shimei built a house and lived in Jerusalem for three years.

Then one of his servants ran away. Stupidly, instead of sending someone after his servant, Shimei went himself, reclaimed the servant, and brought him back.

This is in 1 Kings 2, not 2 Kings. After Shimei had gone and retrieved his servant, notice what happened, beginning with verse 42: "And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the LORD, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die? And thou saidst unto me, The word that I have heard is good. Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the LORD, and the commandment that I have charged thee with? The king said moreover to Shimei, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head; and king Solomon shall be blessed,"

“And the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever. So the king commanded Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.” So Shimei got killed after all, because he refused to keep his oath to the LORD and the commandment of Solomon as well. Shimei wisely pacified the anger of Solomon for three years, and then he unwisely violated his oath and his covenant and suffered death.

God's Wrath Compared to a Lion

So the king's favour is to be more desired than his wrath, for his wrath is as a roaring lion. Proverbs 19:12 says, “The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass.” Notice that he said, “The king's wrath is as a roaring lion.” Wicked rulers, as well as wicked men, in the Bible are compared to lions and to bears. Proverbs 28:15 says, “As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.” As a roaring lion and as a ranging bear, he is going to destroy everyone and everything. It is just that simple.

I hope you can look around and look at our own country and see the wicked rulers who have destroyed our country, destroyed probably most of our wealth, and certainly destroyed our liberty and our freedom. This is what he is talking about.

Wicked men, like wicked rulers, lie in wait as lions. Proverbs 10:9 says, "He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net." What is he saying? A wicked man lies in wait as a lion would lie in wait, just waiting for the prey to come within pouncing distance, and he draws him into his net. The wicked man does not merely wait in the open; he lies secretly in his den, catches the poor, and draws him into the net. Psalm 17:12 says, "Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places." Just as that young lion lurks around seeking his prey, and as a lion greedy of his prey, he hides and pounces upon his prey where it cannot possibly escape.

All of these pictures are given to us in Scripture. Proverbs 20:2 says, "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul." Here is a question that I want you to consider: I do not care, in one sense of the word, how wicked a ruler is, how wicked a king is. He could be the most wicked ruler in the entire universe. But every wicked ruler, every wicked king, is limited by the fact that he is a man. He may be a wicked man, but he is still limited by the fact that he is a man. If Scripture tells us that the fear of the king is as the roaring of a lion, and that whoever provokes him to anger sins against his own soul, then it is unwise and not beneficial for you and me to provoke such a wicked king and sin against our own soul. And remember

That wicked king is limited in power, limited in authority, and limited in scope. If that is true—and it is true—how much worse is it to provoke the sovereign God of heaven and earth, who is unlimited in power and authority? Do you realize that the anger and the wrath of God in the Bible are compared to a lion?

God says in Hosea 5:14, "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him." When God exercises His anger and righteous wrath, He comes as a lion. When

He tears and goes away, no one will take His prey from His mouth. No one will stop Him. Hosea 5:14 tells us that God will come as a lion.

Hosea 11:10 says, “They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.” Note this: He shall roar like a lion, and when He shall roar, the children shall tremble. The Scripture does not merely say that He will speak; it says that He will roar, and when He roars, the children will tremble.

Years ago, I was preaching in Arizona and staying with the pastor, who had several children. One of his sons asked me whether I would like to go to a zoo. I said yes, but asked how far away it was. He said it was half a mile, just down the road.

I discovered that the zoo was owned by a Vietnam veteran. It was not provided for by the state or anyone else; this veteran simply went around to stores and restaurants gathering scraps, or whatever people would give him, to feed all the animals. He loved animals.

They had a huge male lion in a cage. When we reached the cage, the owner walked up, the lion came to the bars, and the owner reached over and began petting the lion on the head. A huge male lion. I looked at the owner and asked, “Would it be all right if I petted him?”

He said, “Sure, go ahead.” I stuck my hand in there and patted that lion on the head. We went around and saw all the animals. By the time we finished, it was time for him to feed, so we came back to the lion’s cage. He said to me, “Now preacher, stand back. Do not get near that lion’s cage.” He had a huge chunk of raw meat, and the lion was standing probably ten or twelve feet away. When he threw that meat into the cage, the lion roared like you would not believe. Then he pounced upon it and tore it to shreds. I thought, I am glad my arm was not in there at that particular time.

So this is what God is saying: He is going to roar like a lion. He is going to take care of the situation. In Hosea chapter 13, verse 7, God says again in judgment, “Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart,

and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them." God says, "Here is my judgment. I am taking it out."

The point I want to make right now is this: the lion is the king. Most individuals have absolutely no idea with whom they are messing. They do not know the one true and living God. They do not understand that He is the sovereign God of heaven and earth, that He has all power and all authority, or that their souls are in His hand. He holds their soul in life. In other words, they want to rebuke Him, reject Him, and do everything against Him. And you know what the Bible says? Let me quote it from Nahum chapter 1, beginning at verse 3: "God is jealous." Now listen: "God is jealous."

"The LORD revengeth, the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." But notice what the Bible said: God will in no wise acquit the wicked. The wicked want to act like lions against God's people. They want to destroy, they want to tear up, they want to take for a prey. God says, fine. You want to act like a lion? I'm going to be a lion to you.

In Amos 3:4, the Bible says, "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?" When the lion roars, he has the prey. God says that's what I'm going to be doing. I'm going to be roaring. Verse 8 says, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" When the lion roars, it's over. Verse 12 says, "Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch." God says, look, you might take it away from a physical lion. But you're not going to take it away from me. When I judge, you are going to be judged.

The major prophets use this same picture. Jeremiah 4:7 says, "The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an

inhabitant." The lion is come up out of his thicket. Jeremiah 49:19 says, "Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her."

"And who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? For who is like me? And who will appoint me the time? And who is that shepherd that will stand before me?" No one is going to stand before the Lord. No, no. God is going to come up against His enemies like a lion. In fact, you remember that passage I quoted not more than a week or two ago from Ezekiel chapter 22 and verse 25, where the Bible says, "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey."

Christ: Lamb at First Coming, Lion at Second

Here you have wicked men, wicked nations, and wicked preachers compared to a roaring lion, and now God Himself is compared to a roaring lion. Wicked men have sought to destroy God's heritage, destroy His church, and harm His bride. They have acted like a lion, as though they had all power. God said, I have news for you: You want to act toward me as a lion? I will act toward you as a lion as well.

This is known as the law of retribution. It is also known as the law of sowing and reaping. It is also called the lex talionis. That is where God makes the punishment fit the crime. They were acting like a lion. God said, I will be a lion to you.

Now, here is the thought that entered into my mind. I want to quote Proverbs 20 and verse 2 again. Listen carefully: "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion." Now watch the latter part of this verse: "Whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul." God says it is unwise to provoke a king to anger. If you do so, you are sinning against your own soul.

Now turn to Proverbs chapter 8. There you have wisdom personified, and wisdom personified is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. When you get to 1 Corinthians chapter 2, the Bible tells us that He is made unto us wisdom. Our Lord is our wisdom; He is wisdom personified. Note what our Lord says in verses 35 and 36:

“For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.” Whoever finds Jesus Christ finds life and obtains the Father’s pleasure, mercy, and favor. But look at verse 36: “But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.” Remember Proverbs 20 and verse 2: “Whoso provoketh

He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death. Now I would remind you of something. When Jesus Christ came the first time, He came as a lamb. In fact, Isaiah 53 in verse 7 says this concerning our Lord: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Do you know what happened to Jesus Christ when He came the first time? He came as a lamb. And a lamb is defenseless. They did to Jesus Christ whatever they pleased. They hated Him. They refused Him, they rejected Him, they mocked Him, and they ridiculed Him.

When Jesus Christ was before Pilate, he kept asking, "Whom shall I release unto you, Barabbas or Christ?" Barabbas was a murderer. He was an insurrectionist. They, of course, wanted Barabbas released. So we read in Luke 23:25: "And he"—that is, Pilate—"released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired"—that is, whom they wanted—"but he delivered Jesus to their will." Stop and think about this: He delivered Jesus to their will. What did they want? What did they will to be done to Jesus Christ? They willed that He be beaten. They willed that He be mocked. They willed that He be crucified.

They hated Him and despised Him, and they did to Jesus Christ as they willed. Are you listening to me? What is the world doing today to Jesus Christ? Whatever they will. They can hate Him. They refuse Him. They despise Him. They reject Him. They refuse to honor Him. They will not worship Him. Turn over in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Acts chapter 2.

This happens to be the day of Pentecost, and Peter is preaching. He makes an astounding statement, and I want you to see the response of these people. Remember now, he delivered Jesus Christ to their will. In Acts chapter 2, verse 32, we read: “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the

right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool."

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now look at verse 37: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

What is the intent of their question? Why did they ask, "What shall we do?" Peter had just told them, "You crucified the Son of God. You were the ones that rejected Him, hated Him, and despised Him. You crucified Him. Now this Jesus, whom you crucified, God hath raised from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand. He has made Him Lord." He has made Him boss, owner, master, and sovereign over them and over everything.

All of a sudden, it begins to dawn on them: He was in our hands, and look what we did unto Him. Now we discover that we are in His hands. What will He do to us? It is amazing what happens to the consciences of men when they really realize who Jesus Christ is and how they have sinned against Him. God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. He is the boss, the owner, the sovereign, and the Messiah.

Now turn very quickly in your Bibles to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. They asked accurately, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Here is where most people fail to see the truth: Jesus Christ came the first time as a lamb. He is coming back the second time as a lion, ravening the prey.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints,

and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

How is our Lord coming back? He is coming back from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is coming back as the roaring lion.

He will destroy His enemies. He will destroy those who hate Him, who despise Him. He will destroy those who attack His people and hurt His people. Men did to Jesus Christ as they pleased. He was in their hands. Now they are in His hands, and He may do with them as He pleases. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the real Lion King.

Application: Kiss the Son

Here is the application: If you do not wish to be devoured, if you do not wish to be destroyed, then you must follow the command of Psalm 2:12, where it is said to all those rulers, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." And then he says, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

What does "Kiss the Son" mean? Throw down your weapons of warfare. Quit fighting against Him. Submit to Him. Kneel to Him. Bow to Him. Worship Him. Recognize that He is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods, that He is the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Recognize that. Kiss the Son. Do not fight against Him.

Proverbs 20:2 says, "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul." Proverbs 8:35–36 says, "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." So if you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, if you do not kiss the Lord Jesus Christ, if you do not submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a lover of death.

The King as the Lion

When our Lord returns as a lion, He will devour His enemies, because He is King of kings, the Lord of lords, and God of gods. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He said in Matthew 28 verse 18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Submit to Him. The Lord Jesus is the Lion King.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and for the truth that Jesus Christ is indeed the true King and a Lion King. Give us, Lord, confidence in Him, trust in Him, and faith in Him. May we worship and adore Him as the Lion King, King of kings, Lord of lords, and God of gods. We give Him praise and worship Him. Thank You, Father, for sending the Lord Jesus Christ to be the propitiation for our sins, and for sending Him to be the Lamb who died on our behalf. Thank You, Father, for sending Him again as the Lion who will roar against His enemies. In the name of Jesus Christ, we give Thee praise. Amen.

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