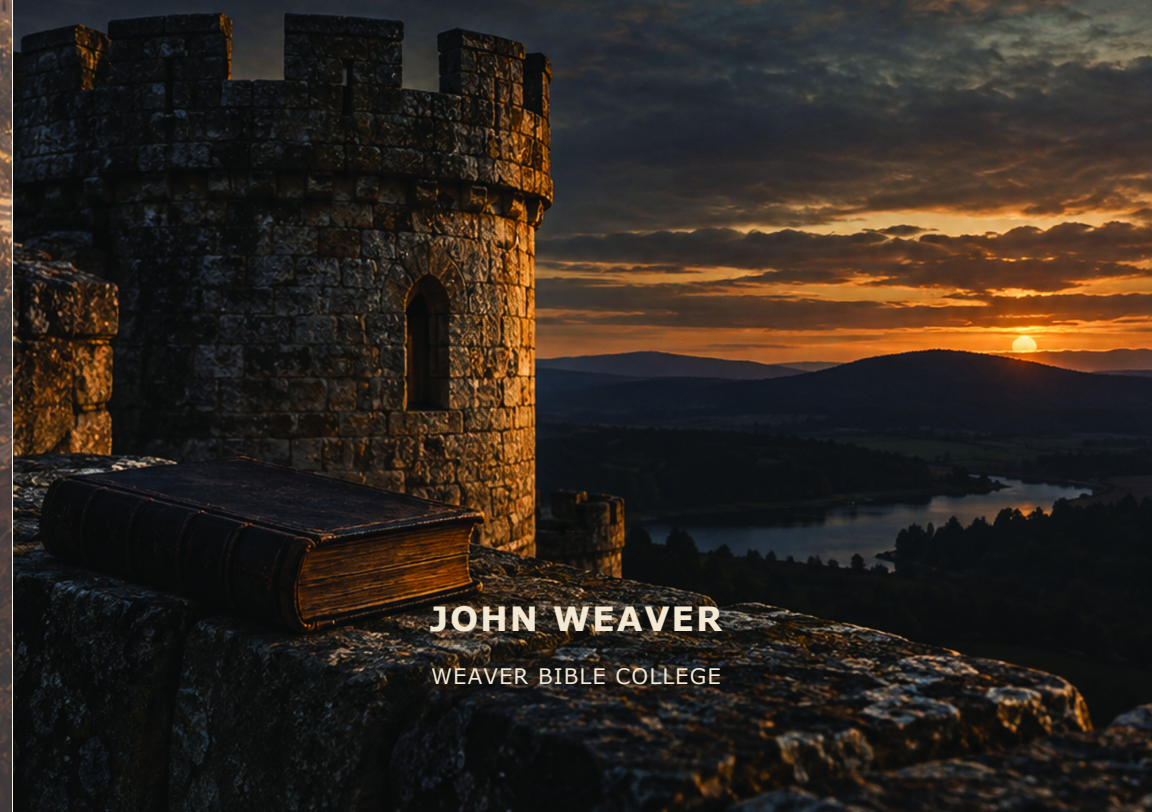
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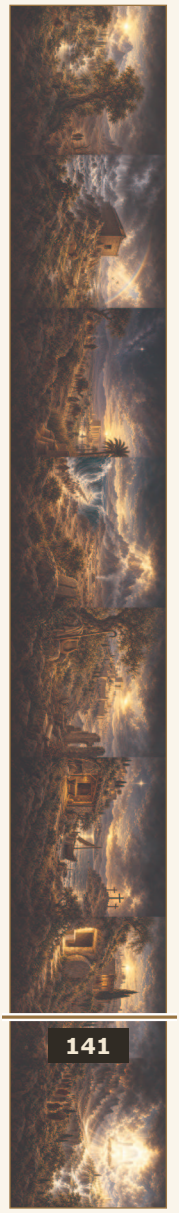
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



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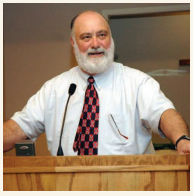
Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy.

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CHAPTER 1

Hairy Goats and Idolatry

May 2, 2004

SCRIPTURE READING - Leviticus 17:1-9 (KJV)

When I told Roy the subject of my message today, he simply said, "What?" The subject that I am going to be dealing with is hairy goats and idolatry. And yes, that is right—H-A-I-R-Y, hairy goats and idolatry. You will see why a little bit later.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and to his sons and to all the children of Israel, and say unto them, This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, saying, What man shall there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or a lamb, or a goat in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp?

"And bring it down to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation to offer an offering unto the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord. Blood shall be imputed unto that man. He has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from among his people, to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring unto the Lord, unto the door of the tabernacle of the

> congregation, unto the priests, and offer them for peace offerings unto the Lord. And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation and burn the fat for a sweet savor unto the Lord. And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils after whom they have gone a whoring.
>
> "This shall be a statute forever unto them throughout their generations. And thou shalt say to them, Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among you that offer the burnt sacrifice or offering, and bring it not to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation offered in the Lord even that man shall be cut off from among his people."

Introduction: The Curious Case of Goats in the Bible

> Let me begin by asking a question. Have you ever wondered about goats in the Bible? The answer is probably not. I am sure that the average Christian does not awaken one morning and say to himself, "Wow, I need to check out what the Bible says about goats." Usually, things like that simply do not happen. But in order to pique your curiosity, let me ask a few leading questions. First of all, why is one of the leading symbols of Satanism a goat head? Why are goats associated with idolatry? And I could also ask, why are those who are lost referred to as goats?

The theme of Leviticus chapters 17 through 22 is obvious. Israel is not to walk in the ways of the heathen, especially in the way of the Canaanites whose land they are going to possess. Israel is to walk solely in the statutes of the Lord. Therefore, from Leviticus chapter 17 through 22, God is demanding a marked difference. Israel must walk differently in attitude, disposition, and worship.

The Context of Leviticus 17–22: A Call to Distinct Worship

The key sin in the Bible is the sin of idolatry. Over and over we are warned concerning idolatry. Some scholars state that they believe the last book written chronologically is the Book of First John, not the Book of Revelation. Revelation would have been written before

First John. If that is correct, First John would be the last book and not Revelation.

There would then be an interesting scenario. Genesis 1:1 simply says, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." The Bible would begin with a declaration concerning the one true and living God. If First John were the last book written, chapter 5, verse 21, would be the last verse in the Bible: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." The Bible would begin with a declaration of the one true and living God and end with a warning against idolatry and apostatizing from the true God.

As you read through the Bible, it is amazing to find the trouble Israel had with idolatry. One would think that, after seeing the mighty works of God and experiencing His great deliverance, their hearts would have been fixed and set upon the one true and living God. But alas, it was not so. Civil rulers, priests, and even the common people fell into the same idolatries over and over again. It seems they never learned the simple truth that there is one God, and they were required to worship that one God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their mind. That is why God gave the Shema Israel in Deuteronomy 6, verses 4 and 5: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

The Prohibitions in Leviticus 17: Sacrifice Only at the Tabernacle

Leviticus chapter 17 cries out against idolatry and forbids it in several unique ways. In the book of Leviticus, God lays down the law of the atonement. That is, there is to be an atoning sacrifice made for His people. We know that that atonement, of course, is typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Passover, whom the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 5 and verse 7 has been sacrificed for us.

When we come to Leviticus 17, two prohibitions are listed for the preservation and honor of that atonement. What are those prohibitions? In Leviticus 17:1-9, first, God says that there is to be no sacrifice offered by anyone other than the priests, and that sacrifice must be offered at the door of the tabernacle. No one but God's

ordained priests could offer the sacrifice, and the sacrifice had to be given at the door of the tabernacle.

The second prohibition, which is not covered here, is found in verse 10: a prohibition against eating blood. Leviticus 17:1-9 obliged the people to bring their sacrifices to God's altar and have them sacrificed there. Understand that previously, as when you read in the book of Genesis, this demand was not necessarily made at that particular time. The individual patriarchs were allowed to build altars and offer sacrifices to God wherever God specifically and particularly made a manifestation of Himself. Think of all the times that God appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Whenever God appeared to them in a unique way, there they built an altar, and there they worshipped the one true and living God.

Patriarchal Liberty vs. Mosaic Regulation

Before the law was given, basically every man was a patriarch in his own family. For instance, look in your Bibles to the book of Job. The book of Job was written during patriarchal times. Job was the patriarch of his family, and he was the priest of his family, and he offered sacrifices. This would have been back during the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Job 1:5 says, "And it was so that when the days of their feastings were going about, that Job sent and sanctified them and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all." For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus did Job continually. So Job, as the patriarch of his family and as the priest of his household, offered sacrifices unto God himself.

Some scholars have said that, in light of Leviticus chapter 17, it is easy to see how this liberty could become an occasion of idolatry. When every man is his own priest, has his own altar, and offers his own sacrifices, it is possible for someone to become vain in his imaginations, invent gods of his own, and sacrifice to those gods. That is certainly easily understood and seen. However, I do not necessarily think that explanation fits the context of Leviticus chapter 17.

The Egyptian Influence and the Goat-Demons

When you come to Leviticus chapter 17, remember that Israel has just been brought out of the land of Egypt. The book before Leviticus is Exodus, concerned with Israel's leaving Egypt. Thus, when Israel comes to Leviticus, God is laying down the sacrificial ordinances, the priestly ordinances, and everything concerning His worship. Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy all deal with Israel in the wilderness. Since Israel had just come out of Egypt, I believe Leviticus chapter 17 deals with their recent events in Egypt and with the context of the surrounding pagan nations.

Why would God demand that every sacrifice be brought to the door of His tabernacle? Look at Leviticus chapter 17, verse 3: "What man soever there be of the house of Israel that killeth an ox, or a lamb, or a goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp, and bringeth it not to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord, blood shall be imputed of that man. He has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from among his people."

Whether the animal was killed inside or outside the camp, its blood had to be brought to God; the animal had to be sacrificed there. Look down in verse 5: "To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they offer in the open field." That is, out in the woods or in the wilderness. "Even that they may bring them unto the Lord into the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priests, and offer them for peace offerings unto the Lord."

There is some division as to the interpretation of these verses. We must ask: Is God dealing simply with animals for sacrifice, or with any animal killed for human consumption? Is the open field demanding that the blood and fat of an animal be brought there if a family is simply going to consume it? Or is He talking about some type of worship?

The blood and the fat were always to be offered unto the Lord. Both blood and fat were forbidden foods. For instance, look at Leviticus chapter 17, verse 10: “And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that he

eateth any manner of blood I will even set my face against that soul that eats blood and will cut him off from among these people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes the atonement for the soul. Therefore, I said to the children of Israel, no soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood."

Blood was absolutely prohibited to Israelites or anyone associated with them. In pagan cultures, people do eat blood. You have seen, as well as I, that there have been people in Africa, people in the Muslim countries, I suppose, and people up around Mongolia who, if they get thirsty and there is nothing to drink, simply pierce the artery or vein of their animal and drink the blood. In England, you have blood pudding. But God says you are not to eat the blood. I am not dealing with why at this point; I am simply pointing out that blood was forbidden. The fat was also forbidden.

You will find that in Leviticus chapter 3, verses 9 through 11, and also in 1 Samuel chapter 15, verse 22. Because the fat was the chiefest part of the sacrifice, it was always to be offered unto God. Thus, the blood and the fat were always given to God.

The children of Israel were by this law forbidden to kill any animal for sacrifice in the camp, out of the camp, or in the open field without bringing it to the door of the tabernacle. Some would go farther and say that they were forbidden to kill any animal, even for human consumption, without offering it unto the Lord first and foremost.

The context does indeed favor that interpretation as you read it. However, if you look in your Bible at Deuteronomy chapter 12, you will find that after the people got into the land, this ordinance was lifted. Notice Deuteronomy chapter 12, beginning there with verse 21. In fact, let us begin reading with verse 20: Deuteronomy 12, verse 20.

Deuteronomy 12:20–21 says: "When the Lord thy God shall enlarge thy border as he has promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh because I so long as eat flesh, thou mayst eat flesh whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, in the place where the Lord thy

God hath chosen to put his name there, be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock which the Lord hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat of it in thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after." Thus, after they entered the land, anything intended for human consumption did not have to be brought to the tabernacle. Certainly, animals intended for sacrifice still had to be brought there. This may have been because the tabernacle was near them during the regulation in Leviticus 17, but another reason will be given shortly: in the wilderness, anything they killed had to have its blood and fat brought to the door of the tabernacle.

Even after entering Canaan, the children of Israel had to go before the Lord in Jerusalem three times a year, for the seven annual feasts. There they sacrificed and offered to the Lord.

What, then, is going on in Leviticus 17? Why did God say, "Whatever animal you kill, you bring the blood and the fat to the door of the tabernacle"? Once the blood and fat had been offered to the Lord, the meat was given back to the individual as a peace offering, and he took it home and enjoyed it.

Consider several propositions. First, God is absolutely sovereign. Therefore, He has the absolute right to tell us what we may and may not eat, where we may eat, when we may eat, and how we may eat, because He is God. As God, He may do whatever He pleases; and whatever He pleases is right, righteous, and holy. God does have that sovereign right.

So he tells his people, "You can't do this unless you bring this to my tabernacle." Secondly, you've got to understand this: life can only be taken upon God's terms. God is the creator, sustainer, and preserver of life; therefore, he has the sovereign right to delineate upon what terms life may be taken, even the life of animals. If you hold the book of Leviticus 17 and turn in your Bibles to Psalm 50, beginning in verse 9, notice what God says.

"I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy foals. Why? For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee

why, for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof." God said, "I own everything. Everything's mine." So God says, "If you're going to kill my animals, you kill them on my terms." By the way, I hate to bring this up, but it irritates the living daylights out of me how the states claim ownership of all the animals in the states.

That's why, if you go deer hunting, the state wants you to purchase its license so you can kill its deer. But when its deer run in front of your car and do $2,500 worth of damage, they are no longer its deer. I'm simply pointing out that God says the animals are mine. Life may be taken only upon God's terms, because the animals certainly belong to Him.

Thirdly, there were indeed specific reasons for this requirement. Why was God saying, "All right, whether you kill an animal in the camp, out of the camp, or out in the open field, you've got to bring that animal to the door of the tabernacle. You give the blood and the fat to me, then you may have the meat back as a peace offering"? I believe God was doing this to teach them that there was to be a constant, continual communion between himself and his people.

Do you realize that in the Bible, eating together is not simply an act of fellowship, but an act of worship? If you were to go to the Middle East today, even to an Arab's tent, and that Arab invited you in to eat or gave you something to drink, he would then be duty-bound and honor-bound to protect your life. That's amazing. That's even true today.

So here is a union and a communion that God is saying, "You bring the fat and the blood to Me. I'm going to give you back the meat. And we're going to be having a fellowship and a communion together."

Now, all you've got to do is look at all of the offerings in the Old Testament, look at the Passover in the Old Testament, and look at the Lord's table in the New Testament, because it is called the communion of the body and the blood of our Lord. When you have communion, you are communing together. You're fellowshipping. You're worshipping together.

I hope you understand that there is a specific reason why the Apostle Paul wrote what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 31.

Let me quote it because I don't want you to turn there and lose your thought: "Whatsoever you do, whether you eat or whether you drink, do all to the honor and the glory of God."

That's essentially what he was trying to teach these people in picture form in Leviticus chapter 17, verses one through nine. He is teaching us that there is to be a constant, continual communion between ourselves and our Lord.

Fourthly, and this is what I'm going to deal with today, the main reason for this requirement is given to us in verse seven. Look at it: "And they shall no more offer their sacrifices of the devils. After whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute forever unto them throughout their generation."

God says, "Here's the main reason I'm requiring you to bring your sacrifice to the door of the tabernacle: that you should no more offer your sacrifices unto devils, after whom you've gone a whoring." Israel learned a great deal in Egypt, and all that she learned was not good.

Now, the question has got to be asked: Is Leviticus 17 and verse 7 relevant for us? God told them the reason He was requiring them to bring those sacrifices was so that they would no more offer sacrifices unto devils after they had gone a whoring. You say, "Brother Weaver, we do not offer physical sacrifices." That's true. Let me ask you a question: Is it possible for Christians to have fellowship with devils?

Now, don't answer out loud. Is it possible for Christians to have fellowship with devils? Well, let's allow the Word of God to answer that. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. I want you to see what the Apostle Paul said to these Corinthian Christians. They were abusing, misusing, and perverting the Lord's Supper. Let's begin reading in verse 14. Watch carefully.

“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.” Paul is talking about idolatry. He says, “I speak as to wise men, judge you what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh”—that is, look at Israel in the Old

Testament—“Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? That the idol is anything? Or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say that the things which the Gentiles or the pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God.”

Paul says, “And I would not that you should have fellowship with devils. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord in the cup of devils. You cannot be partaker of the Lord's table into the table of devils.” Israel after the flesh did not always sacrifice to the one living God; sometimes she sacrificed to devils. Those who eat of the sacrifices are partakers of the altar. If you are eating of the devil's sacrifice, then you are partakers with him. We may have fellowship one with the other, but we cannot have fellowship with God and with devils at the same time.

The Meaning of 'Devils' as Hairy Goats

The question must be asked: If Israel was sacrificing to devils, exactly how were they sacrificing to devils? You do not find Israel saying, “Oh, there's the devil, let's worship him. Let's give him a sacrifice.” Nor would anybody with one eye and half sense do that today. But go back to Leviticus chapter 17 and verse 7: “And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute forever unto them throughout their generation.” The statute forever is that you are not to offer sacrifices to devils. All your sacrifices are to be to the one true of the living God. Now, what in the world are the devils? The interesting thing is that in Leviticus 17:7, the Hebrew word for devils—and I am going to show it to you a little later—

The Hebrew word is literally rough, hairy goats. That is why I told you I was going to preach on hairy goats and idolatry. How can a hairy goat be associated with the devil and idolatry?

The same Hebrew word translated devil in Leviticus 17:7 is translated goat in Leviticus 4:24, and it is also translated devil in 2 Chronicles 11:15. Jeroboam was the first king of Israel of the northern tribe, Jeroboam the son of Nebat. The Bible says, “And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.” You remember that Jeroboam made

two golden calves, one in Dan and the other in Bethel? Evidently, he made more than those two golden calves; he made some devils. Here, “devils” means rough, hairy goats. The word is translated as devils in 2 Chronicles 11:15 as well as in Leviticus 17:7.

The word devil in Leviticus 17:7 translates the Hebrew word seir, S-A-I-R, which literally means a goat or a satyr. In Isaiah 13, the Hebrew word is pronounced sa-ir. God is pronouncing His judgment upon Babylon: “Babylon, the glory of the kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency. Excellency shall be is when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited. Neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. Neither shall the Arabian pits tent there. Neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.”

The passage continues, “But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there. And their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dance there, and satyrs,” that is, rough-haired goats, devils, “shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the island shall crime their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces. And her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.” Thus, he is talking about satyrs there.

Isaiah 34:14 uses the same word. Satyr means rough, hairy goat, or devil: “The wild beast of the desert shall also meet with the wild beast of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow. The street owl also shall rest there and find for herself a place of rest.”

Once again, it deals with God's judgment. What in the world were these satyrs? What in the world were these rough-haired goat devils? What were they? I am going to show you in just a moment. Turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 32, and then to Psalm 106, because I want you to see that Israel had a problem with this. You are going to think we do not, but I believe you are going to concur that we do. Look at it in Deuteronomy, chapter 32 and verse 17. God says concerning his people: “They sacrifice of the devils, not to God, to God's whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.”

What did he say they did? They sacrificed. Psalm 106:37 says, “Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils.”

Now in Leviticus 17:7 and 2 Chronicles 11:15, it is literally rough, hairy goat devils. Has anyone ever heard of the mythical god Pan? What was Pan? Half goat, half man—the goat man. It was not just the Egyptians, but many pagans who worshiped Pan, Faunus, and Saturn, whose recognized symbol was a goat.

This form of idolatry was particularly practiced in Egypt, especially in the province of Mendes. Pan was supposedly to preside over the mountainous and desert regions. Where were the Israelites for forty years? In the mountainous and desert regions. When those heathen people killed an animal, they would pour out its blood to the god of the region. It was similar to our early American Indians, who would kill an animal, thank the earth for providing it, and pour the blood on the ground to the earth god or the wood god.

Pan was supposedly the goat god of the mountains and deserts. Undoubtedly, some Israelites thought they must propitiate and worship this goat god. So God says, in effect, "I am not going to allow you to do that. Bring that blood to the door of the tabernacle. If you do not, you will be cut off from among your people. I will not put up with your idolatry."

The worship of Pan, or any of the goat gods, was extremely licentious and obscene, giving rise to the grossest impurity. Thus God says, "You shall not sacrifice to devils." The worship of goats as gods, particularly Pan, represented in the form of a goat, was the personification of the male and fertilizing principle of nature. I hope you are already making the connection in your mind.

This shows you something in our land today known as the sexual revolution. I will give you two quotes because I think this is interesting. In the Masonic religion, there is a connection with goats. Part of the initiation ceremonies for one of the degrees is called riding the goat. I will give you two quotes taken from Masons themselves. The first is from the Freemason by Michael Lawrence.

Greek mythology introduced Pan, the man-goat personage, and the early Dionysian artificers accepted this figure as the symbol of the temple builders. Temple construction was viewed by these early schools as a source of understanding the mystery and nature of God. The school produced the Ionic column, which literally held up the

temple, the symbolic home of their god. Thus, the goat became a symbol of man's quest for his god and, in conjunction with man, the supporter or cornerstone of God's home.

Eugene W. PlaWiuk, in a lecture given to the Masonic Lodge on September 3, 1991, said, "As I mentioned earlier, the boat and the goat god Pan became equated with the devil in medieval Christianity. But to medieval occultists, especially Rosicrucians, the goat symbolized the elemental energies of the earth, the sign of Saturn, and the alchemical element derived therefrom. In the tarot, it is the major arcana card number 15, the devil, who shows a goat-headed deity with a man and woman chained to him."

"The symbolism is that of people who strive for material rather than spiritual gain. The goat Mendes, or Baphomet, whom the Templars were accused of worshipping, is a goat-headed deity being formed of both male and female principles, with a caduceus of mercury for its phallus. One arm points up and one arm points down, with the Latin solve et coagula written on them." He continued, "This is not the Christian devil, but a symbol of the ancient alchemist, representing the fact that nature and nature's god is a combination and balance of male and female forces, light and darkness, moisture and dryness. Their principle is, as above, so below."

Here is the confusion of God with His creation; that is totally blasphemous. Another goat-headed deity worshipped by the ancient pagan Celtic peoples was Cernunnos, the horned god of the wood. Today, in witchcraft covens, the goat head is seen to symbolize this ancient deity. Unfortunately, to those who remain in the dark, these goat deities are seen as something evil rather than as the symbol of the earth, fertility, primal matter, and the first principle.

"Freemasonry in its past, like its predecessor, the Knights Templar, have been accused of being in league with the devil, being a satanic tool, etc. That has arisen from the fact that Freemasons, by their initiation into the light, have been eager to research and study the mystical symbols of the past and present without fear or irrational prejudice. In times past of religious persecution and superstition, the mystical Mason has treaded the path of heresy in search of the light of the truth."

Now, note what he is saying. First, he is saying that Pan only became associated with the Christian devil during medieval times, in the 1500s. We already found the hairy goat in Leviticus 17, far before medieval times, and God called him a devil back then. But the interesting thing is that, in search of truth, they follow the path of heresy.

I am simply pointing out the fact that the worship of goats, particularly Pan, who was represented in the form of a goat, was a personification of the male and fertilizing principle in nature. Therefore, the Israelites had learned in Egypt not only to sacrifice to these demons, but to participate in their worship. Therefore, look back in Leviticus 17:7. God says, "And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils or the goat demons."

"After they have gone a whoring." In other words, God says that to go a whoring after anything or anyone other than the one true and living God is idolatry. God uses the term "to go a whoring," just as it is used of someone unfaithful to marriage vows. Here is someone unfaithful to his covenantal vows to God—that He is his God and he is God's child. Therefore, God required this in Leviticus 17, so that they would no more sacrifice to rough, hairy goats.

Now, let me make some applications, because I am sure you are wondering how all this applies to us. What are some of the hairy goats of idolatry? First of all, there is the hairy goat of environmentalism. What was Pan? He was the god of the mountains and the desert.

Modern Hairy Goats: Idolatry Today

What were they trying to do? They were trying to appease him. It is true that we must respect God's creation, take care of it, and treat it with the utmost care and concern. We may use God's creation only as a stewardship unto Him, for His honor and glory, as well as for our good. However, whenever you place the land, the world, the trees, or anything above and beyond God, it is idolatry, pure and simple. Whenever you misuse, abuse, and pervert God's creation, it is idolatry, pure and simple.

I have seen bumper stickers that said, "Trees have feelings, too." So now we cannot use God's creation, which He has told us to subdue and exercise dominion over, because trees have feelings too. Here is another one: a round ball of the earth with the words, "Be kind to your mother." Earth is not my mother. I did not come from the belly of the earth. Nature is not my mother. It burns me up to hear weathermen speak of Mother Nature. Mother Nature has not fathered anybody or nurtured anybody. God is the Creator. God is the Father.

I have done a lot of preaching in the Northwest. Some environmentalists will sneak out to a timber site where timber is being cut and drive nails deeply into a tree, where they cannot be seen from the outside. When the lumberjack begins cutting the tree down, his chainsaw will hit the nail, bounce back, and cut him. In other words, they are more concerned about the tree than they are the man.

Whenever you elevate the creature above the Creator and worship the creature more than the Creator, it is idolatry. Environmentalism is nothing more than idolatry.

Secondly, what about the hairy goat of animal rights? I believe animals should be respected, and I believe God tells us how we are to treat His creation and His animals. I have taught on dealing with animals before, when I dealt with biblical law. There is something seriously wrong with someone, or with some organizations, when they will spend millions of dollars trying to save a baby whale, a baby baboon, or a baby mouse, and walk across the street to save a man. It is amazing how these same organizations that fight for the life of baby animals will fund abortions. The point is this: the rough, hairy goat god is still around.

We just do not recognize him by the name of Pan, but he is still here. Third, any occult or cult, any organization or false religion, whatever elevates animals above and beyond the Lord Jesus Christ and gives those animals the honor and glory belonging to Jesus Christ, is an idolatrous organization, no matter how respectable it is. There is also the hairy goat of the sexual revolution.

I realize it started a number of years ago, and that AIDS and venereal disease have cut down on some of it, but it is still going on. What do you call a lecherous old man? An old goat. That was associated with the worship of Pan, the goat god. The worship of the goat god is extremely licentious and wicked. The sexual revolution is part and parcel of goat-god idolatry. We may not recognize it as such, but it is.

Let me make this exceedingly emphatic: if men do not worship the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him alone, according to 1 Corinthians 10:20, Revelation 9:20, and 2 Chronicles 11:15, all they are doing is worshiping devils. Can you imagine all the churches in this country that have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof? They meet, assemble, and go through what they call a worship service, yet deny the deity of Christ, His blood atonement, and the Word of God. God says they are worshiping devils. They are not worshiping Christ. It is that simple: you either worship Christ or you worship the devils.

That is why the lost are referred to as goats in Matthew 24. If you are not in Christ, you are lost. What did our Lord say in John 8:44 to those Pharisees? "You are of your father, the devil." So you either worship Christ, or you worship the devil.

Applications for Christian Worship

Thirdly, according to Leviticus chapter 17, for the suppression and prevention of idolatry, God said these sacrifices must be given at the door of His tabernacle, under the eyes of His priest, and done only by the hands of His priest.

Let me translate an application for you. Whatever we do in word or deed is always to be done in accordance with the mandates of Holy Scripture. It is to be done biblically and scripturally, according to the mandates God has laid down.

What should happen when all the people in the camp brought whatever they killed to the door of the tabernacle, gave the fat and the blood to God, and took the meat to themselves? Would you not be meeting your neighbor there? Would you not be meeting your friend there? Of course you would. Here, then, was something designed by God to promote the unity of the brethren, to show that

we were one with each other. The Bible says in Psalm 33, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." God wants us to understand that we are to be one in Him, that we are to be brethren, and that we are to work together as well as worship together.

Although we do not offer physical sacrifices now, we do offer spiritual sacrifices. The Bible says that we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices—that is, the fruit of our lips—which is acceptable unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You say, “Brother Weaver, I don't bring my sacrifice to the door of the tabernacle.” Hebrews 13, verse 10, talks about Jesus Christ. It says we have a tabernacle. We have an altar where those who serve the physical tabernacle have no right deed. Who is our altar? It is Jesus Christ. When we offer up the spiritual sacrifice of our lips, giving thanksgiving unto God through Jesus Christ, we are coming to the door of the tabernacle, to our altar, who is none other than Jesus Christ himself.

The Bible says in Hebrews 10 and verse 25, “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another and so much more as you see the day approaching.”

Can you worship privately in your home? Yes. Can you worship while you are out in your automobile? Yes. Can you worship while you are out fishing? Yes. But although you can worship in those areas and in those ways, it does not take the place of public worship. Those Israelites were being trained. They might pray in their tents, and they might pray out in the fields, but when it came time for public worship, they had to bring their sacrifices to the door of the tabernacle. God demands public as well as private worship.

That is why he said, “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as a matter of some ease.” What you do Monday through Saturday should be preparing you for what you do on Sunday. Your private worship is to encourage you and build you up so that on the Lord's Day you may worship him in spirit and in truth and give him the glory which he deserves.

Watch out for rough, hairy goats, because they are really everywhere. You might not think they are, but they are. We need to recognize idolatry as idolatry. Does it matter the modern shape, form, or version? It is still idolatry. Any time we worship anyone or anything other than Jesus Christ, we are worshiping the devil.

Let us pray. Father, we ask that you would help us. Lord, lead us, guide us, and direct us. May we be faithful and true unto thee, and may we not be guilty of idolatry. May we always examine everything in light of the Word of God and bring everything to the door of thy truth. May we worship thee, Lord, in spirit and in truth. In thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Balaam's Bail Out

June 6, 2004

Introduction: Bailouts and the Error of Balaam

The name of the message is Balaam's Bailout. Jude, verse 11, says, "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Kor." Note the phrase, "and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward."

Second Peter 2:15 says, "Who have forsaken the right way and are going astray, following in the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Note again Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

Each of us should remember the savings and loan bailouts that occurred in the early 1990s. The savings and loan institutions had basically been ripped off through poor management, but also through fraud and dishonesty. It was the American taxpayers who bailed them out. Actually, it was the federal government who bailed them out, but the consequences of that federal bailout were passed along to American citizens in the form of taxes and inflation. The

more money the government pumps into the economy, the less our Federal Reserve notes are worth.

Many people do not remember that Silverado Savings and Loan was headed and managed by Neil Bush, the brother of President George Bush and one of the sons of former President George Herbert Walker Bush. We also remember the bailout of New York City on several occasions. Now the state of California is crying for money as well. Every state wants and cries out for federal money, and congressmen are elevated and respected to a greater degree depending upon the amount of federal money they can bring home to their respective states or towns.

What many people do not understand is simply this: in reality, there is no federal money. The only federal money that exists is that which is taken from the people through taxation or stolen by inflation or other dishonest measures. One of the issues that caused the War of Northern Aggression—the War of 1861 to 1865, commonly referred to as the Civil War—was the same issue that is going on today, when states are demanding federal money.

The South supplied 75% of the money for the national treasury. Out of all the money that the federal treasury had, the South supplied 75% of it. Most of the monies were then given to northern states. George Lutz, author of The Origin of the Late War, said, “In 1833, there was a surplus revenue of many millions in the public treasury which, by an act of legislation unparalleled in the history of nations, was distributed among the northern states to be used for public improvements.” So who got the money? It was the northern states.

President James Buchanan, who preceded Abraham Lincoln, said in his message to Congress, “The South had not had her share of money from the Treasury, and unjust discrimination had been made against her.” The South was pumping all this money into the federal treasury, and then it was being confiscated, taken, and given to the northern states, which were supplying hardly any money into the public treasury.

Very obviously, the South got tired of being stolen from, defrauded, and ripped off. There were many other reasons for that

war, but that certainly played a part in it. If each state had been able to keep its own monies and taxes, rather than send that money to the feds, then no state would have needed federal money.

Each separate state could support the federal government on a limited basis. Therefore, the federal government would be under the control of the states, just as it was originally intended to be in the Constitution of the United States. There would be no unfunded federal mandates—in fact, no mandates at all. If the states did not supply the federal government with money, the federal government could not do anything. To control the federal government, all the states would have to do is withdraw or withhold their own monies. Instead, money is being confiscated not only from citizens but from the states, and then used to blackmail the states into doing whatever the federal government wants them to do. I mention this by way of introduction to point out one simple fact: bailouts are not new. Bailouts have been going on for centuries, and they have always been for the prospering of the few at the expense of the many.

Jude, verse 11, warns us of three grave errors: “Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain.” That is one error, the way of Cain. Secondly, “and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward.” And thirdly, “and perished in the gainsaying of Kor.”

Just a few weeks ago, when I preached the message entitled “Death Wish,” I explained and elaborated upon the gainsaying of Kor and showed from Scripture that it was nothing more than stubbornness and rebellion against God and against God’s lawfully ordained authority. It is not necessarily the gainsaying of Kor, nor the way of Cain, that I want to deal with today, but basically the error of Balaam. In order to understand Balaam’s error, we have to go back to its historical context. Before turning back to Numbers 22, notice several words and phrases in Jude 11: “Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward.”

The Meaning of 'Ran Greedily' and 'Error'

First, consider the phrase “ran greedily.” The interesting thing is that the Greek word literally means to have been poured forth like a torrent of water. Just as a river or stream bursts its banks whenever

it receives too much rain, this word means to burst out of bounds, to run like a torrent of water. In other words, here is someone who recklessly does not count the cost. There is something before him that he wants, and without regard for anything—for God, for truth, or for anything else—he bursts his banks and runs after whatever he wishes.

The second word is error: “they ran greedily after the error of Balaam.” The Greek word is planē. It literally means a wandering or a straying—one who has been led astray from the right way and roams hither and thither. It also refers to a mental straying: having the wrong opinion, the wrong concept, or the wrong idea. The word demonstrates itself in action as well; it refers to a wrong way of acting. Balaam’s error was first theological, secondly mental, and thirdly practical.

Because he believed wrongly, he thought wrongly, and therefore he acted wrongly. In 2 Peter 2:15, notice the practical disobedience to the word of God: “Which have forsaken the right way and are going astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”

These two things go together: they have forsaken the right way, and they are following the wrong way. Let me put it to you very bluntly. Whenever you forsake the right way, you are always following the wrong way. The word error indicates that there is always a practical result.

Balaam's Call and Disobedience

To understand the error of Balaam, we must go back and look at the historical context in Numbers chapter 22. The story is almost like a modern-day soap opera, because it is a story of deceit, greed, and disobedience. It begins with Balaam’s call. “And the children of Israel set forward and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho. And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was sore afraid of the people because they were many. And Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was

king of the Moabites at that time. And he sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river, of the land by the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt. Behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me. Peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, that I may drive them out of the land."

"For I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand, and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak. And he said unto them, "Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me." And the princes of Moab abode with Balaam. God came to Balaam and said, "What men are these with thee?" Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which cover the face of the earth. Come now, curse me them, for peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out." And God said unto Balaam, "Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed." Balaam rose up early in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Get you into your own land, for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you."

The princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak and said, "Balaam refuseth to come with us." Balak yet sent again princes more and more honorable than they. They came to Balaam and said, "Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me. For I will promote thee unto very great honor, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me. Come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people." Balaam answered the servants of Balak, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or to do more."

Was Balaam a real prophet? He was certainly a prophet in a general sense of the word, but he was certainly not a prophet of Jehovah. In Joshua 13:22, the Bible calls him Balaam the soothsayer. Soothsaying is condemned in Scripture. The Hebrew word for

soothsayer is qasam, which means to practice divination, to divine, or to determine by use of a lot or a magical scroll.

Since God condemns magic and soothsaying, how could Balaam have been a real prophet of God? The word soothsayer is used in the Bible to denote the false prophets of all the nations, including the false prophets in the nation of Israel as well. God condemns soothsaying and magic, so there is absolutely no way that Balaam could have been a prophet of God.

Keep Numbers chapter 22, but look in your Bibles to Joshua chapter 24, verse 10. This passage demonstrates very clearly that Balaam was not a prophet of God. Look at verse 9, so that you can see that Balaam is in view: “Then Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel and sent and called Balaam, the son of Beor, to curse you.” Now look what God says: “But I would not hearken unto Balaam.”

“Therefore, he blessed you still. So I delivered you out of his hand.” Now, if Balaam was God's prophet, why would the people of Israel have to be delivered out of Balaam's hand? Very obviously, he was not a prophet of God.

Someone may object that Balaam must have been saved or must have been a prophet of God, because God used him and Balaam prophesied the truth. That is true: God used Balaam, and Balaam prophesied the truth. But God also used Balaam's ass, and the ass spoke the truth. Does that make the ass a Christian or a prophet? The answer is no. The ass spoke the truth, but that did not make him a prophet.

Moreover, the Bible shows that God sometimes uses unsaved men to declare the truth. Look in your Bibles at John chapter 11, while holding Numbers 22. There you will find a man named Caiaphas. Caiaphas was a high priest, an unbeliever, and one who helped to persecute Christ. Yet God used him to speak the truth.

“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? For this man, that is Jesus, 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. And one of them named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said

unto them, Ye know nothing at all. Nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and the whole nation perish not."

What did he say? Let us kill Christ, that the nation may be preserved. "And this spake he not of himself." In other words, he did not know what he was saying. "But being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

Was Caiaphas a believer? No. He helped to persecute Jesus Christ, yet God used him to speak the truth.

The incident in Numbers 22, 23, and 24, together with John 11, demonstrates that the sovereign God of the universe is in absolute control—even over unbelievers. God can use a crooked stick to draw a straight line. It is just that simple. Proverbs 21:1 teaches, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he pleases." If the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, and God controls the king, certainly God controls everyone and everything else. God is sovereign.

Now let us go back to Numbers 22 and consider several leading questions. Balak was the king of Moab. Sometimes these people are called Moabites and sometimes Midianites. They went to the elders of Midian, although Balak was king of the Moabites. Midian was a son of Abraham through Keturah, who went out and possessed the land; the land was called Midian, and the Moabites lived there. That is why they are sometimes called Midianites as well as Moabites.

Similarly, when Joseph was sold into slavery, Ishmaelites came along, but he was sold to the Midianites. How do we get these things straight? Ishmael was a man, and his descendants were called Ishmaelites, but they lived in the land of Midian, so they were also Midianites. It is like saying, "I'm a Weaverite, but I'm also a Georgite," because I live in Georgia. These Moabites lived in Midian, so they were sometimes called Midianites and sometimes Moabites. Balak, however, was king of Moab.

What did Balak specifically want Balaam to do? Why did he call Balaam? Look in verse 6: "Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse

me this people. For they are too mighty for me, peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, that I may drive them out of the land." Notice the last part of the verse: "For I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." Balak had a great deal of faith in Balaam.

In verse 11 he says, "Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which cover the face of the earth. Come now, curse me them. Peradventure, I shall be able to overcome them and drive them out." Again, in verse 17: "For I will promote thee unto very great honor, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me. Come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people."

Why did he want Balaam to come? The answer is simple: he wanted him to curse Israel so that he might prevail against them, overpower them, and overcome them. Evidently, Balaam had a great reputation as a soothsayer, and Balak believed in his power.

Twice Balak sent men to Balaam saying, "Come, curse me this people." The first time, Balaam checked with God, and God said, "Don't go. You're not allowed to go. Because I blessed the people, you cannot go." Balaam rightly told the men to return to Balak and say, "I can't come." But Balak thought Balaam was holding out for a higher reward. So he sent more princes—greater in nobility, rank, and authority—and more money, saying, "Come, curse me this people."

The first group came in verses 7 through 14. The second group came in verses 15 through 19, and that second group was greater in power and authority and probably promised more money. Balaam really wanted to go, but he already understood that God did not want him to go. In verse 12, God said unto Balaam, "Thou shalt not go with them. Thou shalt not curse this people, for they are blessed." He already knew what God wanted.

After the second group came with the promise of more rewards, Balaam answered, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of my God to do less or more." Yet he then said, "Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say to me more." In other words, he would check with God one more time to make

sure He had not changed His mind, because Balaam really wanted to go.

God came unto Balaam at night and said, “If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them. But yet the word which I shall send unto thee thou shalt do.” Notice the condition: if the men came to call him, he might go, but he was to say only what God commanded. Balaam, however, rose up in the morning, saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. He did not wait for them to come and call; he simply got up and went. Why was Balaam so eager and ready to disobey truth?

The answer is money. He valued the monetary reward more than obedience to God. As Jude, verse 11, says, he “ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward.”

In the next part of the story, God’s anger was kindled because he went, and God sent an angel to kill him. This is not only humorous, but it also points out the seriousness of disobedience: “And God’s anger was kindled because he went. And the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him.”

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 22:23-34 (KJV)

The Angel, the Donkey, and Balaam's Humbling

> Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and a sword drawn in his hand, and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field. And Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way. But the angel of the Lord stood in the path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself into the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall, and he smote her again. And the angel of the Lord went further and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam, and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times?

> And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me, I would there was a sword in mine hand, for now I would kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? And was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand.
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> And he bowed down his head, and fell on his face. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me, and the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times. Unless she had turned from me, surely now I had slain thee, and saved her life. And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned, for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back.
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> So Balaam is riding the ass, and three times now the ass sees the angel, but Balaam doesn't. When finally the ass falls down, Balaam is so irritated that he says, "I would there was a sword in my hand; if there was, I'd kill you." And the ass says, "Am not I thine ass? Have you not ridden upon me ever since you got me? Was I ever wont to do such?" And Balaam says, "Nay."

Someone asked me, "Brother Weaver, do you really believe that ass talked?" The answer is yes. I have no problem believing in the power of God. God can do whatever He wants. What baffles me in this passage is not that the ass talked, but that Balaam answered him. Can you imagine standing there carrying on a conversation with a donkey? The ass asked him, "Was I ever wont to do this?" He said, "Nay." Thus, the ass is prophesying and the prophet is naying.

God said, in effect, that Balaam had better be thankful for that dumb ass, because if she had not seen the angel, Balaam would have been dead and she would have been alive. Balaam said, "Oh, if I have displeased thee, I'll get me back." But God said, "You started out, you're going," and made him understand that he would either obey or die. Balaam chose what was in his own best interest and said, "You know, I think I'm just going to obey you."

When Balaam arrived at Balak's place, he was a humbled and subdued soothsayer. Balak went out to meet him and asked, "Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? Wherefore camest thou not unto me? Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honor?" Balaam answered, "Lo, I am come unto thee. Have I now any power at all to say anything? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak."

Balaam was not so high and mighty or haughty at this point. He said, "All I can say is what God will have me to say."

Curses Turned to Blessings

Now, I want you to note that three times God turns the curses into blessings. Three times Balak tries to get Balaam to curse Israel, and three times God changes the curses into blessings. The first instance is found in chapter 22, verse 39, through chapter 23, verse 12; the second is chapter 23, verses 13 through 24; and the third is chapter 23, verse 25, through chapter 24, verse 9. Thus, in each of these instances, each time Balak takes Balaam so that he may see Israel and curse them, Balaam blesses them. We are not going to look at them in detail. It is not my intent in this message to examine all of these blessings and all of these prophecies. They are indeed great, and they are indeed wonderful blessings.

The point is simply this: God turned the curses into blessings.

Balak’s error appears in Numbers 22:6. Balak asked Balaam, “Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me. Peradventure I shall prevail that we may smite them and that I may drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.”

Cursing and blessing are in the hands of God, not man. Balak believed Balaam could curse and bless, but that was not true. Deuteronomy 23:4–5 records God’s judgment concerning the Moabites: “Because they met you not with bread and water in the way when you came forth out of Egypt, and because they hired against thee Balaam, the son of Beor of Pethor, a Mesopotamian, to curse thee. Nevertheless, the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam. But the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto

thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee." Note the words, "the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam." Cursing and blessing are not in man's power, but in God's power. This is vitally important.

Men may castigate, condemn, despise, hate, betray, and curse us; yet all their oaths, condemnations, and efforts are useless and powerless. Only God can make a curse effectual, and only God can make a blessing effectual. None can curse whom God blesses. The hostility of men cannot overturn what God has determined.

This truth is important in Romans 8, where the Apostle Paul uses this argument to demonstrate our preservation in Jesus Christ. Only God can make a curse effectual, and only God can make a blessing effectual. Therefore, Romans 8:33 says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Now look what he said: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Then he said, "It is God that justifieth," or it is God that blesses and gives us the blessing of justification. And then he asked, "Who is he that condemneth?" Who can destroy that which God has blessed? Who can undo that which God has done? The answer is no one. "Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ?" The answer is no one, nothing. Men may hate us and despise us, but they cannot change the blessing of God upon our lives. They may pronounce all of their anathemas against us, but they are powerless and useless, because he whom God blesses is blessed, and he whom God curses is cursed. Cursing and blessing is in the hand of God, not in the hand of man.

Now, let us go back to Numbers chapter 22. What is Balaam's bailout? Balaam has blessed Balak's enemies three times, on three different occasions. He was supposed to curse them, but God turned the curses into blessings. Needless to say, Balak was unhappy with Balaam. In Numbers chapter 24, verse 10, we read: "And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together." Balak was frustrated. He said unto Balaam, "I called thee

to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore, now flee thou out of my place. I thought to promote thee unto great honour, but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour."

What did he say? "I thought to promote you, but God kept you back." I wonder if there is a little threat in verse 11: "Therefore, now flee thou into thy place." In other words, you had better get out of my sight before I change my mind. If Balak is upset and angry, and Balaam has not cursed his enemies as Balak desired, is there going to be any promotion, honor, or reward for Balaam? Obviously not. Balak was not going to pay him for blessing his enemies. Now, how in the world could it be said that Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness if he did not get any wages?

Balaam's Condemnation

Balaam's Condemnation and Counsel

I will come back to that in just a moment. Here is the second thing to see—not just Balaam's call, but Balaam's condemnation. Look in your Bibles to the book of Joshua, chapter 13. Hold Numbers; we are coming right back there. Turn to Joshua, chapter 13, and look at verse 22. Joshua 13:22 says, "Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer." The Bible called him a soothsayer. The passage continues: "Did the children of Israel slay with a sword among them that were slain by them?" What happened to Balaam? The children of Israel killed him with a sword. Now, clearly Balaam was not a prophet of Jehovah. Why? Because he was condemned to the sword as a heathen and as an enemy.

Now hold Joshua 13, but go over to Numbers 23 and verse 10. Look at one of the things that Balaam said as he was blessing Israel. Here is one of the blessings: "Who can count the dust of Jacob and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" Now look what he says: "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his." Now what did Balaam say? "Let me die the death of the righteous. Let my last end be like his." Balaam certainly wanted to die the death of the righteous, but he did not want to live the life of the righteous.

And you cannot die the death of the righteous unless you live the life of the righteous.

Consequently, he died with God's enemies and the enemies of God's people. Look back in your Bibles to Joshua chapter 13, and let us begin reading there with verse 21: "And all the cities of the plain and all the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses smote with the princes of Midian, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, which were dukes of Sihon dwelling in the country." Then verse 22 adds, "Balaam also, the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them."

So Balaam did not die the death of the righteous. He died with the enemies of God and the enemies of God's people. Everything I have preached this morning was to reach this one point. You have seen Balaam's call, Balaam's condemnation, and now I want you to see Balaam's counsel.

Look in Numbers chapter 24 and verse 14. Balaam still has a card up his sleeve. God would not allow Balaam to curse Israel, and therefore he lost his reward of divination. After Balak became angry with him and said, "You better flee to your own country before I do something I might be ashamed of," Balaam defended himself: "And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also unto thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind. But what the Lord said, that will I speak."

"And now behold, I go unto my people. You want to get rid of me? I'm going to go. Come, therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter day."

How could Balaam be said to be one who loved the wages of unrighteousness and ran greedily after reward if he never received it? Obviously, Balak was not going to pay him for blessing his enemies, and Balaam lost his reward of divination. But Balaam did not receive his cursing fee; he received his counseling fee. He got bailed out. He got his reward and his money. He did not get paid for

cursing, but he got paid for being a consultant. He had his consulting fee, his counseling fee.

How do we know that Balaam counseled with Balak and told him what to do? The answer is obvious, because Scripture tells us. Look at the word “advertise” in verse 14. He said, “Now behold, I go unto my people, come therefore, and I will advertise thee.” The word “advertise” is the Hebrew word ya'ats. It means to advise, to counsel, to give counsel, to consult, to consult together, and to deliberate and counsel together. Balaam was saying, “Balak, you come with me. I’m going to give you some consultation. I’m going to give you some counsel.” We must understand Balaam’s counsel before we can understand Balaam’s bailout. What did Balak want Balaam to do? Curse Israel. Could Balaam curse Israel? No. God stopped him. Balak wanted Israel cursed, but Balaam could not curse him.

So Balak then withheld the reward of his divination. But what Balaam could not get by divination, he could get by consultation and counseling because here's what he did. "Balak, God will not let me curse Israel. But I will teach you how to get God to curse Israel himself. What God will not allow me to do, I will get God to do himself." And that's amazing. So it is consultation he's willing then to teach Balak how to get God to curse Israel.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Numbers chapter 31. Numbers 31 verses 16 through 18. I'm going to show you he gave him this counsel. Numbers 31 verse 16.

The Counsel Executed: Israel's Sin at Peor

Now, you've got to understand in chapter 31, God has told Moses and the people to go take care of the Midianites and the Moabites. And here's why. Moses was upset because he had brought back some of the women alive and did not kill all of them like they were instructed. Verse 16, look what he says. "Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor. And there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord."

"Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him." Now look

what he said in verse 16. "Behold, these caused the children of Israel," that is these Moabites, these Midianites, "they caused the children of Israel through the counsel of Balaam to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor." So here's a plague among the people which I'm going to mention in just a moment. And that plague was because of the counseling of Balaam to Balak. How did the Midianites and the Moabites get God to curse Israel? Through the counsel of Balaam.

Let me show it to you again. Look in your Bibles to the book of Revelation chapter 2 and verse 14. Revelation 2 verse 14. Here the Lord is talking to the church at Pergamos. Revelation 2 verse 14. God says, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." What does he say? Balaam taught Balak. "Oh, Balak, you wanted me to curse Israel? I can't curse Israel. God won't let me do that. But, Balak, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll teach you how to get God to curse Israel Himself. I'll get my fee."

It just will not be through divination. What did Balaam counsel and teach Balak to do? He taught Balak to seduce the people into fornication and idolatry, because he knew that when the people did that, God would curse them himself.

Numbers 25:1 says, “And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people to the sacrifices of their gods. Look, and the people did eat and bow down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one of these men that were joined unto Baal Peor.”

“And behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And

when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, took a javelin in his hand, and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel, and those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand." In one plague, God killed 24,000 Israelites because of fornication and idolatry.

Here is the point of my entire message: What the enemy cannot control, he corrupts. If our enemies cannot overcome us, defeat us, or destroy us, all they have to do is get us to compromise and corrupt ourselves, and we will destroy ourselves. We shall not be defeated by our enemies, but by ourselves. You remember Pogo the Possum, which used to be on the water tower here in Waycross? It was a comic strip. Pogo the Possum said, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

None of our enemies can control us. Why? Because God is sovereign. God is in control. We are in His hand. But if they cannot control us, in order to destroy us, they will corrupt us.

Applications: Victory Through Obedience

Do you understand that a holy, godly, obedient life is absolutely necessary for success and victory? As long as Israel obeyed, she was blessed. Whenever she disobeyed, she was cursed. Let me spell it out in one simple sentence: Victory comes only through obedience.

Do you begin to see why our enemies want us to be unholy and ungodly? Why there is so much filth in the movies, on television, and in our magazines? An unholy, disobedient people is a cursed people, and they are not to be feared. An unholy, disobedient people is a corrupt people. They are powerless in and of themselves, and if they are unholy and corrupt, they cannot avail themselves to the power of God.

Remember what David said in Psalm 66:18? He said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." All our enemies have to do is get us to compromise, become disobedient, and corrupt ourselves. Then we destroy ourselves. We cannot avail ourselves of

the power of God as long as we are in rebellion and disobedience to Him.

Secondly, look at Micah 6:5. God says, "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." He said, "O my people, you better remember what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him."

It is vitally important. Why? That you might know the righteousness of the Lord. God is righteous, and God will not put up with sin. He will not honor our foolishness or our disobedience. In fact, His anger in Numbers 25 was nothing less than a demonstration of His righteousness. Do you remember that the Hebrew word for righteousness and the Hebrew word for justice are one and the same? It is the same word.

Whatever is right is just, and whatever is just is right. God righteously and justly destroyed those people in Numbers 25 because of their fornication and idolatry. Let me spell it out again: if we want victory, it must be on God's terms. His terms are holiness and obedience.

Now, look again at Revelation 2:14. How many of you have ever heard preachers say, "Well, it really doesn't matter how you live, just so you believe in Jesus Christ"? I have heard people say that. A lot of people may not say that, but they surely practice it. It does matter how you live, because if you truly and savingly believe in Jesus Christ, you will live biblically and scripturally. But look again at Revelation 2:14. What did God tell the church of Pergamos?

"But I have a few things against thee." What is it? "Because thou hast them there that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." What are they saying? "Well, it's all right to do what you want to do just so you believe in Christ." That's what they're saying.

This was the church at Pergamos, and they were teaching that it was all right to commit fornication and sacrifice to idols. That's like saying, "God doesn't really like adultery, but he understands." No, he

doesn't understand. He condemns it, forbids it, and punishes it. What is the error of Balaam? It is not merely desiring money; it is corrupting people and getting God to curse them—God's people. That's why he is shouting out against these people in Revelation chapter 2, the church of Pergamos.

One last application: we must grasp the importance and impact of God's cursings and blessings. You'll find them in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. I'm not afraid of man. Man can curse me all he wants, because I know that man does not have the power to make his curse effectual. But when God curses us, he can make it stick. Man may say, "I bless you," but he does not have the power to make that blessing effectual. When God blesses us, he makes it stick. Cursing and blessing are not in the hands of man, but in the hand of God. We can say to Him, "He whom thou cursest is cursed, and he whom thou blessest is blessed." If you want to be blessed, you must be obedient.

For 1 Samuel 2:30 says, "Them that honor me I will honor," saith the Lord. Remember, whatever the enemy cannot control, he corrupts. Once you're corrupted, you've destroyed yourself.

Let's pray. Father, we are thankful today for the truth of your word and for the warnings that you've given us. We pray that you would keep us from the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the gainsaying of Kor. Help us understand how important it is to live a holy, godly, obedient life. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

John McCorkle

September 25, 2005

Introduction: The Rarity of Faithful Men

This message concerns John McCorkle, Quantrill's faithful scout. There are a number of messages concerning men that most of us have never heard of in our entire life, because there are numerous biblical principles that can be learned and illustrated very clearly for us in a historical setting through their lives.

Psalm 12:1 says, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." David was surrounded by a lot of wicked people, and he continues to speak about the wicked in the rest of the verses in Psalm 12. But he cries in this prayer, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth." Then he says, "The faithful fail from among the children of men."

The word "faithful" there could also be applied to God's people, because we are called faithful and chosen in Revelation chapter 17. But it can also refer simply to faithful people as well. So one of the cries is, "Lord, please help us, because not only are the godly ceasing, but the faithful are failing from among the children of men."

The Bible declares in Proverbs 20:6, "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?" In other words, God is saying that a real faithful man is a rare find. Scripture tells us over and over that one of the attributes admired by God is faithfulness, because God Himself is faithful. In fact, that is one of the names given to God in Deuteronomy 7:9: He is called the faithful God. Over and over, God is the faithful God.

As we are reminded of God's faithfulness, it should be no surprise to find in 1 Corinthians 4:2 a passage concerning faithfulness.

God Requires Faithfulness from Stewards

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." Whatever God gives us a stewardship over, God expects us to be faithful in. There are many illustrations of this in the Bible. Numbers 12 and verse 7 tells us that Moses was faithful in all his house. When you study the life of John McCorkle, you will find that John McCorkle likewise was faithful to Quantrill.

John McCorkle was a very unique man. Not only did he have a biblical name, John, but he had a brother by the name of Jabez, which also was a biblical name. Both John and Jabez rode with Quantrill. John McCorkle was born on December the 12th, 1838, in Andrew County, Missouri.

John McCorkle's Background and Joining Quantrill

At the age of twenty-two, he joined the Missouri State Guard and served under General Sterling Price, a Confederate general. But things did not go well for General Price. Price then had to begin retreating, and when he began retreating, John McCorkle, along with a number of others, left Price. McCorkle went back home and tried to live a peaceable life. In other words, McCorkle and some of these other people simply wanted to be left alone.

He endeavored to support himself through farming. He was raised on a farm, and back then, that certainly was an agricultural area. But through a long series of events, particularly the constant harassment by federal soldiers, McCorkle was forced to make a choice. He had been robbed, persecuted, and arrested by federal

officers. Why was he arrested? He was arrested because he was overheard singing a Southern song.

That was enough to prove someone disloyal in those days. Hence, he was arrested and told that he must join the State Guard and fight for the North. He got out of jail, but although he had been told to join the State Guard and fight for the North, he held Southern sympathies and Southern views. He was certainly not going to go contrary to his convictions. He was still undecided whether to stay at home and suffer things through or to go fight. The choice was made for him when he was threatened that, if he did not join and fight for the Union Army, his cousin, Molly Wigginton, a young woman, would be arrested because he would not do what they wanted him to do.

On August 11, 1862, John McCorkle joined Quantrill's raiders. He fought at Baxter Springs, Centralia, Fayette, and many other battles. He was also with Quantrill at the payback of Lawrence, Kansas, on August 21, 1863. McCorkle was one of the few men who possessed a long-range rifle, and he was used not only as a scout but as a sniper as well.

McCorkle's Role and the Harsh Life of a Guerrilla

He was soon given additional reasons to fight feverishly for the South. Two of the young women killed in the collapse of the jail in Kansas City, Missouri, were his sister, Charity McCorkle Kerr, and his sister-in-law, Nannie Harris McCorkle. I find it amazing, as I read and study some of these history books, to consider the hardened life these men endured. John McCorkle, like most Confederates, was indeed a hardened man—not simply hardened by fighting, but by living the life of a guerrilla. He seldom bathed.

He took a vow not to cut his hair or trim his beard until the war was over. Yet he was constantly entertained in homes, and many of the young women thought he was quite handsome. He was also plagued by graybacks, like most Southern and Northern soldiers. Graybacks were lice. He had lice.

This is understandable because, according to his own words, after the war was over and he was paroled, he spent the night in a house

and a bed. Those were his exact words: that it was the first time he had slept all night in a house in three years. Today, you and I cannot conceive of sleeping outdoors, in barns, tents, and caves for three years straight. Yet that is exactly what he did.

There is a humorous yet enlightening aspect of John McCorkle's long hair and his relationship with his friend Henry Brookings. McCorkle had vowed not to cut his hair or trim his beard until the war was over. Brookings had made the same agreement and taken the same vow with him. But when General Sterling Price retreated, McCorkle went home, while Brookings went south with Price. After a year or so, Sterling Price returned to the area, and Brookings came back with him.

When McCorkle saw Brookings, his hair was neatly trimmed, and he had no beard except for a mustache. Realizing who he was, McCorkle walked up, caught him by the mustache, and said, "Henry, you lied to me. Where is your hair and where is your beard?" Brookings responded, "They would not let us wear long hair in the South. If we would not have it trimmed, they would throw us down and cut it off for us."

Remember, he had gone south like into Texas, into Louisiana. Interestingly enough, the South even then was known as the Bible Belt and did not appreciate long hair, even in the 1860s. First Corinthians 11:14 asks, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" We are just helping Brookings and some of the others live a shameless life in that respect.

The interesting thing about Quantrill and his men is that they all had federal uniforms. Many times they wore those uniforms for self-defense and for offensive moves, allowing them to get close enough to other federal soldiers to strike them. Sometimes they even carried a federal flag. Dressed in federal uniforms and carrying a federal flag, they sought to avoid detection and get close enough to the enemy to do real damage.

Quantrill's Men and Biblical Morality

On one such occasion, they had routed a large federal force and were still wearing their blue overcoats when a northern Methodist minister, hearing the shooting, rode up to them. The minister was a hypocrite, a thief, and a despicable individual. He would visit Southern homes, offer devotions and pray, insult the South in his prayers, and then demand money for his services. If the people had no money, he would steal silverware, bedding, clothing, or whatever he could. He usually worked in conjunction with the Red Legs, so he had the force of the Northern Army behind him. He had just been in the home of Judge Stanley, a prominent elderly Southern man.

In his possession were a roll of blankets, some comforters, two silk dresses, and silverware that Mrs. Stanley had been forced to give him. Earlier, he had gone to Judge Stanley's house with the Red Legs and demanded money. The old man had none. In retaliation, they took him, burned his feet, pulled out his fingernails, and beat him over the head with their revolvers until he was unconscious. When he regained consciousness, he had essentially lost his mind.

Supposing that the men in blue uniforms were Federals rather than guerrillas, the minister admitted spending the night at Judge Stanley's house and admitted doing those things. He also possessed the articles belonging to Judge Stanley and his wife. Jim Little, one of Quantrill's men, knew the minister well. He rode up to him and said, "You're the old devil we've been looking for."

"You've been going around this country praying with Southern people, and in every one of your pretending prayers, you would offer an insult to the South and demand pay. When you were refused, you would rob defenseless women and children by taking what little property they had left. Now you have blankets and dresses that belong to Judge Stanley's wife, and now we've got you."

The preacher said, "I have a right to be paid for my divine services and ought to be paid for praying for sinners."

Jim answered, "Well, you'd better be praying for yourself and get at it damn quick."

The preacher asked whether he would kill a minister of the gospel. Jim said, "No, but I'm going to kill a damn thief and an old hypocrite." With those words, Jim drew his pistol, shot the preacher and his mule, and carried the goods back to Mrs. Stanley.

On another occasion, when Quantrill's men were wearing federal uniforms near Cassville, Missouri, twenty-two federal militiamen came upon the guerrilla column. Knowing that a battle was imminent, Quantrill said, "Each one of you men ride up to the federal militiamen, engage him in conversation, and upon my signal, you pull out your pistols and kill him." They rode side by side with the twenty-two federal militiamen until Quantrill gave the signal. Then they pulled out their pistols and killed every one of them, without losing a single man. They used those federal uniforms because of absolute necessity.

Here is what John McCorkle said: "The whole country was swarming with militia. And but for the fact that every guerrilla was clad in federal clothing, the march would have been an incessant battle. As it was, it would never be known how many isolated Federals, mistaking Quantrill's men for comrades of other regiments, not on duty with them, fell into a trap that never gave up their victims alive."

Thus they deceived the Federals with their own uniforms. Many of the men who rode with Quantrill were Christian men; Paul Peterson, in his book on Quantrill, even gives the names of the churches to which they belonged. Yet even some men who were not Christians would hold to biblical morality. When Quantrill heard that two privates, Carlisle and Black, had been taking horses from farmers, telling them that Quantrill needed the horses, he ordered McCorkle to bring them in. They hid the horses until they had enough to take to Lexington, Kentucky, where they sold them at an extremely high price. Quantrill told them, "Look, here's what I've heard. Here's what you've been doing. If I ever hear of it again, you will either be shot or hanged."

"We will not tolerate theft." A couple of weeks passed, and some citizens again complained: why did Quantrill need so many horses? Quantrill sent McCorkle to find Carlisle, and he certainly found him. After some persuasion, Carlisle led him to sixteen hidden horses

intended for sale. Quantrill gave the order, a rope was slung over the nearest limb, and Carlisle was hanged as a horse thief. The horses were returned to their owners. Consequently, the horse stealing ended in Missouri at that particular time. They understood that Quantrill would not tolerate anything like that.

McCorkle's Skill as a Scout and the Battle with General Blunt

McCorkle was an individual who had extreme powers as a scout. As a scout, he was unsurpassed. On one occasion, when Quantrill and his men were in unknown territory and Quantrill was trying to get them back into Southern territory, they came upon two men who claimed to be Southerners who knew the area. Quantrill let one go and kept the other as a scout, since no one knew that area and he was going to guide them out.

You have to remember that these guerrillas often traveled at night, because they would be noticed much less. But at night, your surroundings are basically unknown to you. As this one pilot was leading Quantrill and his men, McCorkle rode up to Quantrill and asked, “Where is it you’re wanting to go?” He said, “South.” McCorkle replied, “Your pilot is not leading you in a southerly direction. In fact, your pilot is leading you to Fort Scott, where a large body of federal troops are.”

Quantrill was absolutely incensed at being duped by the pilot. He looked at John McCorkle and said, “John, you get me and my men to safety or I’ll have you shot.” McCorkle had the men counter-march until three o’clock in the morning. Finally, they reached a familiar place and realized they were on the right trail going south. Quantrill laughingly and playfully said to McCorkle, “John, you do know this country, and I’m not going to have to shoot you.”

Remember that. Quantrill was normally not a man to play around. He had told McCorkle in all earnestness, “If you don’t get me out of here, I’m going to have you shot.” A few days later, McCorkle and about thirty scouts came upon ten or fifteen federal wagons surrounded by federal troops and troops driving them. They surrounded the wagons and killed the federal troops. Before doing so, they found that an outpost was being built down the road. The

wagons were carrying supplies to Fort Blair. David Poole was in charge, and he sent John McCorkle back, saying, “You go tell Quantrill to get up here quickly because there’s a federal fort being built, and I’m going to go ahead and attack the fort.” Sure enough, when McCorkle reached the fort, it was nowhere near complete.

It was basically logs and earthworks. The Federals had posted no pickets, and most had left their weapons inside. Moreover, it was noontime, and they were sitting down eating their dinner. David Poole and the rest of the scouts came upon these men with lightning-like speed, dispatching them rather quickly. The few who were not killed instantly—one or two of them—got inside the fort, but most headed for the grass and tall trees to get out of the way.

By this time, McCorkle had gotten Quantrill and had come close to the fort. Quantrill told McCorkle, “You get most of the men away from the fort and get them in line because General Blunt is coming from the north and we're going to have to face him.” They left a few men there to pin down those who were inside the fort. Then they lined up to face General James G. Blunt.

Blunt was a coarse, unscrupulous man who was corrupt and exceedingly licentious. He often traveled with his female servants. He also made sure that all governmental contracts went to his friends who could help him politically. After the war, Blunt was a professional claim solicitor; he was so corrupt that in 1873 he was indicted for conspiring to defraud the government. He died on July 25, 1881, of syphilis. Blunt was indeed a wicked, vile man.

General Blunt had earlier adopted General Henry Halleck’s order to raise the black flag. The black flag meant no quarter, no surrender: “I'm going to kill you or you're going to kill me. We're not going to have mercy. We're not going to take prisoners. We're just going to kill everybody.” The black flag was originally raised by the North, not by the guerrillas; it was General Henry W. Halleck’s order. General James Blunt had also approved it. Concerning the guerrillas, he said, “They shall not be treated as prisoners of war, but be summarily tried by drumhead court-martial and if proved guilty be executed by hanging or shooting on the spot, as no punishment can be too prompt or severe for such unnatural enemies of the human race.”

Quantrill was now facing this man who had adopted the black flag. Quantrill and his men formed about 500 yards in front of General Blunt. Blunt initially supposed that they were federal soldiers from the fort coming to welcome him. As he got closer, he decided they might not be Federal soldiers, but then he said to his men, “Oh, it's just a few of Captain Samuel D.

Jackson's guerrillas from South Missouri. “Give them a few rounds and they'll run off to cover.” But as they kept closing in, and came within fifty yards, Blunt heard firing from the fort. He realized the fort was under attack, and that the men in front of him were not Federals, but Confederates. He gave the order to fire. By this time, however, his men were so nervous and fearful that the few rounds they discharged were ineffective. Quantrill gave the order, and his men rode through the line, blazing away with their pistols and cutting the Federals down left and right.

I'll tell you how devastating it was in just a moment. General Blunt, with the woman who was traveling with him—who happened to be another man's wife—escaped on two fine horses he had behind his wagon. A Union major named Henry Curtis did not fare so well. Major Henry Curtis was the son of Union General Samuel R. Curtis. Although Henry Curtis was on a fine horse, one that probably could have outdistanced the guerrillas, the horse was in the midst of jumping a ravine when it took a ball in the hip. Losing what little power it had, it stumbled, and Major Curtis went over its head. The horse got up and ran off, leaving Major Curtis on the ground. Peyton Long was the first to reach Curtis, and he took him prisoner. Now listen carefully. Curtis was searched, and on his body was found an order signed by his father to take no guerrillas as prisoners, but to kill them on the spot.

Peyton Long asked Major Curtis, “Did you endorse this order?” He said, “Yes, I did, by order of my superior officer.” Peyton then asked, “Would you have obeyed the order?” Major Curtis said, “Most certainly.” As he did so, Peyton Long pulled his pistol and killed him on the spot.

Now I want you to listen to this. General Curtis had issued General Orders number 30: “Whosoever shall be convicted as a guerrilla shall suffer death. They deserve no quarters, no terms of

civilized warfare. Pursue, strike, and destroy the reptiles." That was the order found on Major Curtis. This order, issued by General Samuel Curtis, brought about the death of his own son.

Biblical Principle: Sowing and Reaping

Let me show you a biblical principle. Matthew 7:12 is a very interesting and very clear verse: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." The principle is exceedingly plain. Now listen to that verse again: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." As Curtis wanted the guerrilla shot without mercy, even so it was done to him.

Curtis happened to be another Adonai Bezek. Adonai Bezek was a king who was very proud and arrogant. He had conquered seventy other kings, and once he had conquered them, he kept them alive. But he cut off their big toes and made them gather their food under his table like dogs.

I do not know if you realize this or not, but if you do not have any big toes, you cannot walk, or you can barely walk. You certainly cannot run, because the big toe is what gives you balance. When Adonai Bezek was captured by the Israelites, guess what they did to him? They cut off his big toes.

Look at what he said in Judges 1:7: "And Adonai Bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died." Once again, if you lose your thumb, can you hold a sword? No. You cannot fight, and you cannot defend yourself. He had cut off their thumbs and their great toes, and now God had brought that same thing to him.

General Curtis wanted those guerrillas killed without mercy, and his own son was killed without mercy. His own orders brought about the death of his son. As you would have men do to you, so do you even to them. What a principle. It shows the absolute necessity of doing what is right and having mercy.

I mentioned earlier that these Confederate Rangers were hardened and tough. Let me give an example of how tough they really were. John Kroger was one of Quantrill's rangers. In this same battle, while he was searching a wagon close to the fort, a Federal soldier who was still alive fired a shotgun at him from behind. It was loaded with what was called buck and ball. Buck and ball included three buckshot and a one-ounce lead ball. Some of you have seen double-aught buckshot; they are as big around as a garden pea or bigger.

The three buckshot and the one-ounce lead ball struck John solidly in the back. This was not the first time he had been shot. He already had five Federal bullets in his body from previous wounds. Yet he not only survived and recovered from all his wounds; he lived into 1913. These were hard men, tough men, men who could endure.

The battle was a great victory for the guerrillas. Of the 100 cavalrymen Blunt had, 79 were killed, not counting the wounded. Searching through Blunt's wagon, Quantrill found a bottle of brandy. As John McCorkle rode up, Quantrill thought he would play a joke on him. He called, "John, I thought you always knew that whenever a pilot led me into trouble, I always shoot him." Remembering Quantrill's words from a few days before, McCorkle pulled his pistol and earnestly said, "If you can shoot quicker than I can, go ahead and shoot."

Quantrill said, "Put up that thing, you fool. I'm going to shoot you in the neck," and handed him the bottle of brandy. It was the only time Quantrill was ever known to take a drink in his entire life.

Another lesson can be learned from this incident: death threats are no laughing or joking matter. Quantrill was playing when he said, "John, don't you always know that when a pilot leads me in trouble, I'll always shoot him?" McCorkle pulled that pistol and said, "If you can shoot quicker than I can, go ahead." But what if McCorkle had shot first and made the statement second? Quantrill would not have had time to say, "John, I'm just playing with you."

There are some things better left unsaid and undone. A man who always threatens other people, even jokingly or playfully, will sometimes find himself on the wrong end of the stick. McCorkle was

one of the few men who ever drew a pistol on Quantrill and lived. Quantrill was not only exceedingly quick, but also exceedingly accurate. Certainly he was playing, but things like that are no playing matter and no joking matter. Quantrill almost got himself in trouble by trying to play a joke like that.

McCorkle was with Quantrill when the raid on Lawrence, Kansas, occurred. Remember that McCorkle had lost a sister and a sister-in-law when that jail collapsed in Kansas City. John McCorkle said that the raid on Lawrence, Kansas, was payback for what the Union did to those women and those children in collapsing that jail. When they were killed, here is what McCorkle said, and I am going to give you the quote.

The Raid on Lawrence and Quantrill's Motives

He said, "We could stand no more. Imagine, if you can, my feelings. A loved sister foully murdered and the widow of a dead brother seriously hurt by a set of men to whom the names assassins, murderers, and cutthroats would be a compliment. People abuse us, but by God, did we not have enough to make us desperate and thirst for revenge? We tried to fight like soldiers but were declared outlaws, hunted under a black flag, and murdered like beasts."

"The homes of our friends burned, our aged sires who dared sympathize with us had either been hung or shot in the presence of their families, and all their furniture and provisions loaded in wagons, with our livestock taken to the state of Kansas. The beautiful farming country of Jackson County, Cass County, and Johnson County was worse than a desert. And on every hillside stood lone, blackened chimneys, sad sentinels and monuments to the memory of our once happy homes. These outrages had been done by Kansas troops, calling themselves soldiers, but a disgrace to the name of soldier. And now our innocent and beautiful girls had been murdered in the most foul, brutal, savage, and damnable manner."

He said, "We could stand no more." That's when Quantrill called all of his captains together and said, "My plan is to march on Lawrence, Kansas," which was the seat of Senator Jim Lane, of Jennison, and all those men who were the Jayhawkers—men who had been burning, raping, looting, and murdering. When the raid on

Lawrence, Kansas, took place, John McCorkle, along with Quantrill and a few other men, headed straight for Senator Jim Lane's house. Remember, this man was a United States Senator, but he was a notorious thief, murderer, womanizer, and scoundrel. I could tell you some of the things that he did, and it would just make you blush. Unbelievable. But when they approached Lane's house, Lane had heard the shooting already and the horses' hooves.

He jumped out of his bedroom window in his nightshirt, ran, and hid in a cornfield. That was the only thing that saved his life. Quantrill and his men, however, knocked on the door like gentlemen. Lane's wife opened it, and Quantrill, with exceeding politeness, asked whether the senator was home. She said that he was not. Quantrill simply replied, "Give your husband my compliments, madam, and tell him that I should be most happy to meet him."

McCorkle saw three grand pianos in Lane's house that he knew belonged to Southern people from Missouri. He also saw other possessions that belonged to Missouri families. Quantrill did not search the house; he simply ordered it burned to the ground. That was exactly what Jim Lane had been doing to people in Missouri. In fact, he was the man who burned Osceola, Missouri, to the ground. Of, I think, eighty-seven buildings in Osceola, only three were left standing when Lane departed.

Lane had his house burned to the ground. In other words, he received the exact same treatment he had been dishing out. What does the Bible say? As a man sows, so shall he reap. There were millions of dollars' worth of property in Lawrence, Kansas, stolen from the people of Missouri. The raiders could not carry it all back, so they made sure the Kansans could not use it either; they went around setting it on fire.

Quantrill did order that no women or children be killed in the raid. Only men were killed—men in federal uniforms and men known to be Jayhawkers. One hundred eighty-four were killed. The men were told to take all the money they could from the banks and stores. Quantrill said to Captain William Gregg, one of his men, "I want to compensate the people who divided their last biscuit with us and are still willing to do so."

Many Missourians had been made destitute by Jim Lane, Jennison, and the other Jayhawkers. Quantrill wanted to carry back all the money he could and divide it among the people of Missouri. He said, "My plan is that whatever money may be gotten in Lawrence shall be divided among the men with instructions to give to these needy people very liberally." When he raided Lawrence, his desire was to take back what he could to those who had suffered most. After the raid, he heard of a Union deserter roaming Nelson County, robbing farmhouses and claiming to be from Missouri.

As he robbed one farm, he tortured the old man by mashing the ends of his fingers with the butt of his pistol. He told the old man that if he reported him, he would come back and kill him and his wife. McCorkle heard the story from a neighbor and went to Quantrill, telling him about the Union deserter claiming to be from Missouri, robbing and torturing people, and threatening them. Quantrill said, "Well, why don't you go and get him? And make short work of it." He went on to say, "We do not rob people, and I swear no man can accuse us of such hellish acts as this and live."

Within two days, McCorkle had found the thief, terrorist, and deserter, and dispatched him very quickly. Quantrill would not put up with thievery in any shape, form, or fashion. Toward the end, when it was evident that the war was lost, Quantrill planned to take his men into Virginia and surrender there with Lee's army. All of the guerrillas knew that to surrender in Missouri meant instant death. But before Quantrill could reach Virginia, Lee had already surrendered at Appomattox.

Quantrill's End and McCorkle's Surrender

So they decided to push on into Kentucky and try to find an honorable way to surrender on honorable terms. As they traveled through federal-occupied Kentucky, they wore their federal uniforms. They stopped at one man's house and asked him to provide them with breakfast. The old gentleman had two sons and two daughters. They later found out that the two sons had been in the Confederate service, but the old farmer decided he would fix breakfast for these men.

He had no idea who they were, because they wore federal uniforms. During breakfast, the young ladies asked question after question, endeavoring to discover who their guests really were. Seemingly, they saw through the federal uniforms and understood that these men were Southerners. After breakfast, the men mounted their horses and began to bid them farewell. As they were about to ride off, one of the young ladies said, "Gentlemen, from your manners we take you for Southern men. And while I do not know who you are, if you are Southern soldiers, I wish you all the happiness and success that could possibly come to anyone. But if you're Federals, my heartfelt wish is that you will be in hell before night."

Quantrill's men could not stand it any longer, and they began to cheer and let out a rebel yell. Quantrill sternly turned and said, "Gallant," but, taking off his hat, he bid farewell to the young ladies who knew that they were really Southern soldiers.

There are numerous interesting incidents that happened in Kentucky. One of them involved Federal soldiers who had gotten into the rear of Quantrill and his men as they were going down a lane flanked on each side by log rails. The Federals saw this group of men in front of them and began firing, though they did not know who they were. They suspected they might be Southerners.

One trail of these men could not turn and form because of the rails, so the only thing they could do was skedaddle down the road as fast as they could. Quantrill looked at McCorkle and said, “You run on ahead and you take down some rails so we can get in and form and face these men.” McCorkle successfully did so. He got down the road ahead, took down the rails, and Quantrill and his men turned, went in, and then went over a little rise. Just as McCorkle was mounting his horse, the Federals arrived, firing at him. He made it over the rise, where Quantrill and his men were formed.

As the Federals came to that rise, Quantrill and his men came right into their midst, blazing with their pistols and emptying Federal saddles. The Federals turned and ran off as fast as they could.

McCorkle had moved the rails so they could pass right by the house of an old black man. When the Federals went to the right, Quantrill and his men went to the left to get away. The Federals stopped at the old black man's house and asked who the strangers were. The old black man said, "I don't know who the strangers were, but my advice, Master, would be not to follow them men any further. Because, before God, they had more pistols on than any men I've ever seen before in my life." The wise thing to do, therefore, would be to stay away.

It was in Kentucky that Quantrill, and this is another story in itself, was shot and killed with a few other guerrillas by a group of Federals. John McCorkle and others had faithfully served the South and Quantrill to the end. They had gone as far as they could go, and when the end came, they sought honorable terms because they were honorable men.

With Quantrill dead and Lee having surrendered already, John McCorkle, his cousin George Wigginton, and a few others attached themselves to a regular Confederate command and surrendered. They were honorably paroled and returned to their homes. John McCorkle returned to his home in Andrew County, Missouri, and worked on a farm belonging to one of his relatives. It was there that he was converted to Christ. He lived a faithful, exemplary life, both in the church and in his dealings with others. All who knew him admired and respected him, vouched that his conversion was real and genuine, and saw the fruits of the Spirit in his life.

McCorkle's Conversion and Faithful Life

Let me read to you what our Lord said in Luke 16, verses 10 through 12: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

Conclusion: The Greatest Ability is Dependability

I want you to know what our Lord said: He that is faithful in that which is what? Least, is faithful also in that which is much. God does not dump everything on us at one time. God proves our faithfulness, and if we can be faithful in that which is the least, God says that he is going to give us the much.

If you are faithful in unrighteous mammon—that is, money—you may have the true riches committed to you. But if you are unfaithful in unrighteous mammon, who will commit to you the true riches? And then watch this argument: If you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? I have heard people say, “Well, it's not mine, I don't care.” But if you understood biblical law and Biblical principles, you would understand this: If you will not take care of that which belongs to another man, you will not take care of that which belongs to yourself. Why in the world would God give you anything if you would not be faithful in that which is least?

McCorkle was faithful, and God did indeed give him the true riches. He converted him by the grace of God. McCorkle died on January 14, 1918, at the age of 79, and was buried on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River in Lexington, Missouri. He lived to 1918.

Captain William Gregg, Quantrill’s adjutant, wrote concerning Quantrill and his men:

“Quantrill and his men have been unjustly slandered by the people of the North, a people who even to this day know nothing of them except what they have read in irresponsible books and newspapers. It is not enough that their valor is recognized. It is not enough that their honesty be confessed. We ask of our northern brother. We ask of all mankind and all womankind a recognition of their patriotism, their love of country and of liberty. We cannot remain silent so long as any aspersion is cast by the pen of the historian or the tongue of the orator upon their patriotic motives or the loftiness of their purposes throughout that mighty struggle. We make no half-hearted apologies for their acts.”

"It is justice for which we plead, and not charity." They simply wanted to be recognized for what they had done out of patriotism, loyalty, and honesty. Colonel R. H. Hunt, a Union officer who fought against Captain Gregg, said after the war that, insofar as his memory served him, Gregg's statements could be depended upon absolutely. He was a man who would not willfully misrepresent anything.

Do you realize that God is faithful, and that God demands faithfulness from us? One of Dr. Bob Jones Sr.'s favorite sayings has stayed with me for many years: "The greatest ability is dependability." You may not have talents, riches, wealth, or fame, but by the grace of God, you can be faithful. You can be depended upon. You can be a dependable person in the work and kingdom of God.

The characteristic we must genuinely strive to develop in our lives is faithfulness. We must learn to be faithful even in that which is least if God is going to give us that which is much. There is a store in our hometown with a signboard displaying various messages. One sign says, "If everybody has to be first, who will be last?" I smiled when I read it and thought, I'll be last. Why? Our Lord says, "The last shall be first, and the first shall be last." Here is dependability and faithfulness even if we are last. What does our Lord say to those whom He lets in? "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Faithfulness counts. The greatest ability is dependability. Be faithful and loyal in whatever you do, and make sure it is right, honest, and biblical.

Father, we are thankful for Jesus Christ, for His truth, and for His love and mercy to us. Lord, we pray that You would make us faithful. We sometimes see unconverted men who have the characteristic of faithfulness; yet when You convert them by Your grace, You improve upon that character and make them more faithful and obedient. Give us that grace today, that we may be faithful in all things and honor You in everything. For the honor and glory of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Why the South Must Rise Again

January 15, 2006

Introduction: The Call to Rise Up

In Psalm 94:16, the message is entitled, “Why the South Must Rise Again.” God asks these questions: “Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?” Here are two very pertinent questions that really and truly must be answered. Number one: “Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?” Number two: “Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?” At one time, the South as a whole stood for Christ and His Word, as the South opposed northern rationalism, humanism, and centralism. I submit to you today that the South must rise again and take the same stand as she did in days gone by. Everyone has heard the adage and seen the old bumper sticker, “Save your Confederate money, the South shall rise again.”

The adage indicates that the Southern people have never really given up hope of restoring the liberties and freedom that they possessed under the original Constitutional Republic. There is a

popular bumper sticker that many of you have also seen down here in the South. It pictures an old Confederate soldier holding a battle flag in one hand and a musket in the other hand, and the bumper sticker says, “Dern Tootin', I'm a rebel and I ain't forgettin'.” The problem in the South today is that too many have forgotten, or have never known to begin with, what real, genuine freedom is and what it is about.

The Loss of Genuine Freedom

Let me submit a statement to you for your consideration: The generation that is alive today has never experienced real, genuine freedom. Stop and think about that. The generation that is alive today has never experienced real, genuine freedom. Those of us who are in our 60s and 70s probably tasted the last little bit of freedom that existed in this country.

If you ask the average American, “Are they free?” the answer is going to come back “yes.” But the truth of the matter is most people believe they are free simply because they have been told that they are free. They've never really experienced real, genuine freedom. I submit to you once again that those of you who are alive today in the 60s and 70s enjoyed the last little bit of real freedom.

Probably about fifty-something years ago, many of us still had never understood what happened in this country. Do you realize the War of Northern Aggression changed our confederated union of states into a nation which has now become an empire? Northern historian James McPherson said concerning the War of Northern Aggression, “The war changed the United States as thoroughly as the French Revolution changed France.”

The War Changed the Nature of Government

That is a very provocative statement. Stop and think about it. Karl Marx, who was alive during that war and worked for the New York Tribune, wrote to his friend Engels, “The war would be the beginning of a world-transforming revolutionary movement.” It certainly was the beginning of a world-transforming revolutionary movement in the United States, because that war changed our Constitutional Republic into a centralized democratic bureaucracy.

Horton, in his history book, said, “The war changed the entire character and system of our government, overthrew the rights of the states and forced amendments against the action of the people which made those amendments unconstitutional.” Here are historians admitting that there was a drastic change in the nature and system of our government. We lost our Constitutional Republic under the reign of Lincoln. Many of you know that Lincoln confessed to and acknowledged violating the Constitution in six specific areas.

He tried to cover his trail by blackmailing Congress into validating his unconstitutional acts after the fact, which Congress did not do so. It was Abraham Lincoln who basically killed our Constitution. Mildred Lewis Rutherford, in her book, The Truths of History, lists seventeen specific violations that Lincoln made against the Constitution of the United States. All the presidents who followed Lincoln carried on his work of destroying the Constitution and following in his footsteps. Do you realize it was Abraham Lincoln who violated the Constitution, to use his words, “in order to save the Union”? How in the world can you save a confederated Union if you destroy the Union itself?

The answer is obvious: you cannot. Do you realize it was Abraham Lincoln who began the use of executive orders? It was Abraham Lincoln who evaded Congress, invaded the South, and ignored the Supreme Court rulings, all without constitutional authority.

When our modern-day politicians talk about the Constitution, they tout that document as if it were important. It is even displayed and shown on certain anniversary dates, yet practically everything our politicians do is absolutely contrary to and in contradiction to the Constitution of the United States. In other words, for all practical purposes, the Constitution is a dead letter.

Have you ever heard of a recent politician who received a bill that he wanted made into law, examined it in light of the Constitution to make sure it was constitutionally correct before voting for it? Have you ever heard of a politician refusing to vote for a bill because that bill is unconstitutional?

The Constitution as a Dead Letter

The answer is absolutely no. You must remember that most of our politicians are lawyers. Did you know that an individual can go to law school, graduate from law school with honors, pass the bar exam, become a practicing attorney, and never have one course in constitutional law? That is a fact.

Why is it that in our land today, those who profess to be our rulers have turned from the Constitution? Here is why: we are no longer a constitutional republic, and law no longer matters to them. We are now a nation ruled by an elite who make up their rules as they go. They may use the guise of democracy or majority rule, yet it is an elite that governs this country. They do so contrary to the Constitution, and they give the people the candidates that they choose.

If you have a choice between Socialist A and Socialist B, you are getting Socialism no matter what party you vote for. It is just that simple.

The Bastion of Biblical Theology

The proposition that I am going to submit to you today is this: the South must rise again. Why must it rise again? Let me give you the first reason: it was the bastion of biblical theology. The South did not get the nickname “the Bible Belt” for nothing. Why were we called the Bible Belt? Because the leading theologians in America were in the South.

First Reason: The South as Bastion of Biblical Theology

Think of Robert Louis Dabney, James Henley Thornwell, Benjamin Palmer Morgan, J.P. Boyce, and Broadus. These men were noted theologians, and they led the people in truth against Northern Unitarianism and Rationalism.

I hope you understand that the North, especially back in the 1800s—and it still continues today—has tried to characterize the people of the South as backward, ignorant, and uneducated. Yet there were many literary giants in the South in those days: doctors,

lawyers, and men in the Confederate army who could read, write, and speak Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. How, then, can the North call us a backwards and an ignorant people? Here is why: the South still held tenaciously to the Word of God. We believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and that the Bible was the inerrant and inspired Word of God.

In the North, it was the Unitarians who held sway. They denied the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and practically every other major doctrine in the Bible. What they followed was their own rationalistic thinking. They said that their thoughts transcended the Bible; they did not need the Bible. Consequently, because we did not reject the Bible in the South but believed it, we were labeled a backward and uneducated people. The North then wanted to remake the South into the kind of people, culture, and society that it thought we should be.

Most Southern theologians viewed the war of 1861–1865 as a religious war. They saw the crux of the matter. Georgia politician, Presbyterian, and Confederate General Thomas Cobb said concerning secession, "the revolution has been accomplished mainly by the churches." How could he say that it was mainly the churches that got the South to secede? Because the churches understood that there was a theological war going on between the North and the South.

Southern Presbyterian theologian James Henley Thornwell said this. Thornwell died, I believe it was in 1862. He said, "The parties to this conflict," talking about the war, "are not merely abolitionists," those in the North, "and slaveholders," those in the South. "They are atheists, socialists, communists, Red Republicans, Jacobins on the one side," the North, "and friends of order and regulated freedom on the other," the South. Here was a leading theologian who understood that this was indeed a theological war.

On the one hand were the socialists, Red Republicans, and communists; on the other hand were the friends of regulated order and freedom. Southern Methodist leaders proclaimed that the maintenance of pure Christianity on this continent depended upon Confederate victory. What were they saying? If the South lost, then there would not be pure Christianity; there would be paganism.

Basil Manley, another Baptist pastor and chaplain to the Provisional Confederate Congress, viewed secession not merely as rebellion, but as a Christian reform movement. He said that what they were doing was withdrawing from the heathen and reforming the government the way it ought to be reformed. There was an overarching theme in the religious military press in the South during the times of 1861 and 1865. That overarching theme was that the war was a religious war, a war against infidels, "a war to free God's chosen nation in order to implement God's plan in the universe." That was the religious military press during that war. Many Yankees viewed Jeff Davis as the arch villain and as an enemy of God simply because he was the President of the Confederate States.

But Southern preachers did not necessarily view the North in a beautiful light either. Many of them, especially Pastor Jesse Cox from Tennessee, considered the Yankee Army the beast described in the Book of Revelation. In 1861, Dr. George Todd, an ardent secessionist and brother-in-law to Honest Abe—Abraham Lincoln, whose wife was Mary Todd Lincoln—put it more bluntly.

In a lecture, he declared that the war was between the children of the devil and the children of the Lord, and he left little doubt as to who the children of the devil really were. According to Dr. George Todd, it was the North.

I am simply pointing out that the churches and preachers in the South understood that this was a theological war. They stirred the people to resist tyranny and wickedness so thoroughly that one Yankee critic said he believed “the most unmitigated set of villains they have in the South are the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian preachers all talking secession, drinking mean liquor, and advocating the cause of Jeff Davis and the devil.” The critic knew the preachers were stirring people up because they understood it was a theological war.

William Nelson Pendleton was an Episcopalian pastor and chief of Robert E. Lee’s artillery in the Army of Northern Virginia. Early in the war, he named his four howitzers Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. When battle raged, he would shout to his men, “Aim low, and may God have mercy on their misguided souls.” Here was a pastor in charge of Lee’s artillery. Every officer of one Texas regiment was a

Methodist preacher. So many Southern Methodist clergy enlisted in the Southern Army that denominational leaders were concerned about vacant pulpits, because the pastors were joining the fight.

Let me ask this question, because I want to show you the theological implications of this war. You say, "Brother Weaver, how could this war have a theological basis?" I have just told you that the North was mainly Unitarian. They were rationalists. That is not saying there were no Christians in the North. Surely there were Christians there. A lot of Northern people sympathized with the Southern people and helped the South. They were known as Copperheads.

I am trying to show you the great diversity between the North and the South. Here is how the war could be reviewed as a religious war and the battle for the Bible. Take, for example, the Unitarian Julia Ward Howe. She is best known for her unscriptural, unbiblical, and ungodly song, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." In one of these days, in the not-too-distant future, I am going to bring you information concerning that song and take it apart for you, just to show you that it is indeed unbiblical and ungodly. It is a Yankee marching song that was to be sung as the South was destroyed. Who in the world was Julia Ward Howe?

The Unitarian Influence and the Battle Hymn

Like all Unitarians, she believed that man, by nature, was characteristically good and fully able to redeem himself by his own merits without a savior. She rejected biblical truths like hell and the devil, saying, "I threw away once and forever the thought of a terrible hell which appears to me impossible." She did not believe in hell or the devil; moreover, she did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. She also refused the plain teaching of the Bible when Jesus Christ said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Here are her own words: "Having rejected the exclusive doctrine that made Christianity and special forms of it the only way of spiritual redemption, I now accept the belief that not only Christians, but all human beings, no matter what their religion, are capable of redemption. Christianity was but one of God's plans for bringing all

humanity to a state of ultimate perfection." So what is she saying? It does not matter if you are a Hindu, a Buddhist, or a Muslim; we are all going to be saved.

That's why she was a Unitarian. She believed in universal redemption and that Christianity was not the only way to God the Father through Jesus Christ. Everybody was going to be saved. Moreover, to Julia Ward Howe, the real work of Christ, meaning salvation, was incomplete. It was up to men, through civil government, to bring about a free utopian society. Only government could do this. Here are her words: "Not until the Civil War did I officially join the Unitarian Church and accept the fact that Christ was merely a great teacher with no higher claim to preeminence in wisdom, goodness and power than any other man."

Christ, according to her, was just a man, no better than anyone else. These are the same fallacies and heresies espoused today by the religious and academic liberal establishment. The political correctness of today was the rationalism and Unitarianism of the 1860s. Julia Ward Howe, like all Unitarians, basically believed in salvation by government.

That is why the North, according to their song, was marching to make men free: salvation through government. Government must make man free; government must supply man's needs; government becomes his savior. In the thinking of the North as a whole, the thought was, We do not need Christ. We do not need the Bible. We have ourselves and civil government; therefore, we are able to redeem ourselves and bring in a perfect utopian society. Let us kick God out, Christ out, and the Bible out.

What have we done today? What we have in our government and political-correct system today is exactly what the Unitarians and Rationalists advocated in the 1860s. What we must do in the South is this: We must rise up with our ancestors and proclaim that Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is salvation, and that the Word of God alone is our objective standard by which we are to order and regulate our lives.

It amazes me that so many people can talk about Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Jeb Stuart, Richard Stoddard Ewell, and even

Forrest, and say, "We would love to have their character, courage, and faith." How can we ever get their character, courage, and culture if we reject the very foundation upon which they stood—the Word of God, and that Jesus Christ alone is salvation?

Listen to what Robert E. Lee said when he issued orders requiring a day of fasting in August of 1863. Everyone knows that Robert E. Lee was an undaunted Christian. Here is what he said: "Soldiers, we have sinned against Almighty God. We have forgotten his signal mercies and have cultivated a revengeful, haughty, and boastful spirit. We have not remembered that the defenders of a just cause should be pure in his eyes and that our times are in his hands. And we have relied too much upon our own arms for the achievement of our independence. God is our only refuge and strength. Let us humble ourselves before him. Let us confess our many sins and beseech him to give us a higher courage, a pure patriotism and more determined will. That he will convert the hearts of our enemies. That he will hasten the time when war with its sorrows and suffering shall cease. And then he will give us a name and place among the nations of the earth."

Would it not be wonderful today if we had any leader, military or governmental, who would call upon us to repent and turn back to God? Why do we not have politicians and military leaders today who call on us to repent as a nation and turn back to God and the Bible?

Because of the messianic nature of government. Government thinks it is God, and it does not want you turning to the One True and Living God. It wants you turning to itself as God. That is why, whenever there is a Katrina, tsunami, flood, or drought, people do not cry out to God for help; they cry out to the federal government—the messianic nature of government.

If the South will not rise up and stand for the inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of God, what section of the country will? If the South will not rise up and proclaim that Jesus Christ alone is the only way of salvation, what section of the country will? If the South will not rise up and say that Jesus Christ is Lord, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and stand up for the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, what section of the country will?

Do you know the battle cry of our forefathers? “No king, but King Jesus.” It is time to repent, to return, to turn from the politically correct sham that we have today, and to come back to Scripture and to Jesus Christ.

Why must the South rise again? Because the South originally was the bastion of the biblical faith, and we must come back to that. Secondly, the South was the citadel for the Constitutional Republic.

Second Reason: The South as Citadel for the Constitutional Republic

Let me make a statement. The North as a whole—and I know there were exceptions, but I am talking about the North as a whole—hated the Union and the Constitution. How can I say that? I have the evidence to back it up. Several years ago, I preached a two-hour message entitled “The Confederate Battle Flag: A Symbol of Hate?” In those two hours, I showed you quote after quote from Northern leaders and from Southern leaders: the Northern leaders hated and despised the Constitution and the Union, while the Southern leaders were pleading for the Constitution and the Union. I am going to give you a few of those quotes today, because I want you to know that it is a fact that the North as a whole hated the Constitution and the Union.

It was ardent abolitionist Wendell Phillips who said: “The Republican Party is in no sense a national party. It is a party pledged to work for the downfall of democracy, the downfall of the Union, and the destruction of the United States Constitution. The religious creed of the party was hate of democracy, hate of the Union, hate of the Constitution, and hate of the Southern people.” That was by a Northern abolitionist. He was talking about the party of Lincoln. He was talking about the party of George Bush. He was saying that it was not a national party, but a sectional party, set up to destroy the Union, the Constitution, and the South.

Senator Stephen Douglas, in a letter to Mr. Hayes, December 27, 1860, said: “Many Republicans desire a dissolution of the Union and urge war as a means of accomplishing the dissolution.” He wrote again on February 2, 1861: “The leaders of the Republican Party are

striving to break up the Union under pretense of unbounded devotion to it.

"Hostility to slavery on the part of the disunionists is stronger than fidelity to the Constitution." In other words, they did not care what happened to the Constitution.

Honest Abe—and I hope you know that Honest Abe was called Honest Abe for the same reason you call a six-foot-four, 250-pound man "Tiny": just the opposite. He was not honest; he was dishonest. In his speech before Congress in 1861, Abraham Lincoln said: "The states have their status in the Union, and they have no other legal status. If they break from this, they can only do so against the law and by revolution."

It ought to boggle your mind. In one sentence, Abraham Lincoln denied states' rights and the sovereignty of the states, and basically proclaimed himself dictator over the Union, over a centralized, federalized bureaucracy. He was saying that the states had no right to exist outside the Union. The federal government was not made for the states; the states were made for the federal government. According to Mr. Lincoln, the United States Constitution was not written to limit and bind the federal government. It was written to limit and bind the states.

Do you realize this is exactly the same stance that the politically correct federal government has today? It is the federal government that claims to be sovereign over the states, the overseer of the states, and to have all authority and power as it mandates the states.

In case you have never studied history, let me say it very clearly and pointedly: the federal government did not create the states. The states appointed a federal government and gave it limited power and limited authority. But what has happened now is that it has been reversed. The states and the people were the possessors of all powers not given to the federal government, according to the Tenth Amendment.

I want you to understand how Honest Abe changed his views when he got to the White House. In a speech before Congress in 1847, Abraham Lincoln said: "Any people, whatever, have a right to

abolish the existing government and form a new one that suits them better."

What did he just say? He said any people have a right to abolish the existing government and get another one that will suit them better. In other words, he was advocating the right of secession and the right of withdrawing from a tyrannical form of government. He goes on: "Any people that can may revolutionize and make their own of so much of the territory as they inhabit." Once he says that people can do what they want to do, they have that power.

So, in 1847, Lincoln agreed with and consented to state sovereignties and state rights. But in 1860, he changed his mind. He was the forerunner of our modern-day politicians. He said one thing and practiced another. It was John C. Calhoun, that ironclad southerner from South Carolina, who pointed out the source of the problem. Listen to what John C. Calhoun said: "The error is in the assumption that the general government is a party to the constitutional compact. The states form the compact acting as sovereign and independent communities." The general government or the federal government was not a party to the Constitution. The states were the parties in the Constitution. When you try to make the federal government a part of the Constitution, he said, that is the error. The federal government was created by the states and was to operate solely upon the authority and the limited powers that the states gave to it.

Those powers were reserved to the states and the people respectively. In short, the states were to be the master and the federal government the servant. But this has been turned upside down: the federal government has become the master, and the states are the servants.

That is why, when President Jefferson Davis spoke before the provisional Confederate Congress about secession and why the South left, he said: "President Davis had actuated solely by the desire to preserve our own rights and promote our own welfare. The separation of the Confederate States has been marked by no aggression upon others and followed by no domestic convulsion. We have changed the constituent parts, but not the system of our government. The Constitution formed by our fathers is that of these

Confederate states. In their exposition of it, in the judicial construction it has received, we have a light which reveals its true meaning. Thus instructed as to the just interpretation of the instrument, and ever remembering that all offices are but trusts held for the people, and that the delegated powers are to be strictly construed."

What did Jefferson Davis just say? When we left, we took the United States Constitution basically for our Constitution. The reason the South left the Union was to preserve our constitutional rights and liberties, not to destroy the Union. We did not leave the Union to destroy it, but to preserve our rights.

What has happened? We have lost our Constitutional Republic and are now controlled, governed, manipulated, and enslaved by a federalized, centralized bureaucracy that will stop at nothing to control every aspect of life in this country.

Modern Erosion of Liberties

If you think I am exaggerating, listen to this Associated Press article from November 29, 2005. The headline reads, "Miami police take new tack against terror," by Kurt Anderson, Associated Press writer, Miami. Miami police announced that they would stage random shows of force at hotels, banks, and other public places to keep terrorists guessing and remind people to be vigilant. Deputy Police Chief Frank Fernandez said officers might surround a bank, check the IDs of everyone entering and leaving, and distribute leaflets about terror threats.

"This is an in-your-face type of strategy. It's letting the terrorists know that we're out there," Fernandez said. The operations will keep terrorists off guard. Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups plot attacks by putting places under surveillance and watching for flaws and patterns in security. Police Chief John Timoney said there was no specific credible threat of any imminent terror attack in Miami, but he said the city had repeatedly been mentioned in intelligence reports as a potential target.

May I ask you just a couple of leading questions? Whatever happened to the Fourth Amendment, that the people have a right to

be secure in their persons and their papers? Whatever happened to the Fifth Amendment? Whatever happened to the fact that you cannot stop and question somebody without probable cause? What if you do not carry ID?

I have a cartoon on my desk at home. It shows a police officer looking at a man and saying, "What is your name? Tell me who you are." The man just stands there. In the next picture, the policeman says, "If you don't give me your name, I'm going to have to arrest you for failing to provide identification." The man just stands there. In the next picture, the police put handcuffs on him, saying, "You have a right to remain silent."

I'm simply saying, what has happened in this country? People have gone stark raving crazy. You know why? We have forgotten what it was like before our captivity. We have forgotten the principles for which the South stood. We have forgotten the truths. We have so turned from freedom that we are now expected, according to our political leaders, to give up all our rights and liberties just so we can be protected.

Let me spell it out for you: I'd rather have my rights and liberties. I'll protect myself. Thank you. I submit to you that we should not speculate as to whether or not the South shall rise again. We must understand that the South must absolutely rise again. If the South will not rise up and restore our liberty and freedom under the Constitutional Republic as it was handed down from our forefathers, what section of the country will?

Third Reason: The South as Bulwark for Economic Freedom

The South was the bastion for biblical faith and the citadel for our Constitutional Republic. Thirdly, the South was the bulwark for economic freedom.

While it is true that the South capitulated and fell into the paper money trap, it is equally true that the South had very little specie—that is, silver and gold. Most of the specie was in northern banks. In one sense, the South was almost forced to print paper money because of its lack of specie.

However, one of the leading causes of the war was indeed an economic cause, specifically the high tariffs, or high taxes, that the North wished to impose upon the South. The tariffs of 1828, 1832, and 1833 were violations of the Constitution. Congress had power to levy taxes, but according to the Constitution, taxation must be uniform throughout the land. The tariffs were sectional because they only penalized the South. The South had only one-third of the votes but paid two-thirds of the custom duties. The cotton states particularly suffered. Before the war, southern cotton sold abroad totaled 57 percent of all American exports; 57 percent of all exports was southern cotton.

The South was willing to have a 10 percent tariff, but the North wanted 40 to 60 percent. Thomas Hart Benton was a senator and representative from Missouri. He served as aide-de-camp to General Andrew Jackson, was a colonel of a regiment of Tennessee Volunteers from 1812 to 1813, and was Lieutenant Colonel of the 39th United States Infantry from 1813 to 1815. He moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where he became editor of the Missouri Inquirer. He was the father-in-law of John C. Fremont, a Yankee general, and brother-in-law to James McDowell, also a Yankee general. Thus, he was associated with the North and had Northern relatives high up in the powers that be. Yet he said, “Under federal legislation, the exports of the South have been the basis of federal revenues.” Most of the money that went to the federal government came from the South.

Under federal legislation, the exports of the South had been the basis of federal revenues. Everything went out, and nothing was returned to them in the shape of government expenditures. The expenditures flowed north. This was the reason wealth disappeared from the South and rose up in the North. No territories yet included Georgia, Virginia, and the two Carolinas except to increase the burdens imposed upon them. The political economists of the North—Cary, Eliot, Kettle, and others—who had studied the source of national wealth in America said, “Mr. Benton is right in his explanation given of the sudden disappearance of the wealth from the South.” So here was a man who said one of the problems was that the North was raping the South economically.

A war almost broke out in 1832 because South Carolina called a convention to nullify the tariffs of 1828 and 1832, known as the Tariffs of Abomination. Thankfully, a compromise was reached that averted secession and possibly war as well. The North favored protective tariffs for its manufacturing industry. The South, which exported agricultural products and imported manufactured goods from Europe, favored free trade, or very low tariffs. The higher the tariff, the more money went to the North, and the more harm was placed upon the South.

A Northern-dominated Congress enacted laws similar to Britain's Navigation Acts to protect Northern shipping industries. After the 1828 Tariff Law, the South almost seceded. In 1840, the South paid 84 percent of the tariffs, rising to 87 percent in 1860. Nearly 90 percent of the money the federal government had came from the South. The South paid 83 percent of the $13 million in federal fishing bounties paid to New England fishermen. A million then was a million in gold. It also paid $35 million to Northern shipping interests, which had a monopoly on shipping in Southern ports. The South, in effect, was paying tribute to the North. The Republican platform of 1860 called for higher tariffs.

That was implemented by the new Congress in the Morrill Tariff of 1861, signed by President Buchanan before Lincoln took the oath of office. It imposed the highest tariffs in U.S. history, with over a 50% duty on iron products and 25% on clothing; rates averaged 47%. These were passed in March, and you know what happened in April of 1861.

Shortly after Lincoln's election, Congress passed these highly protectionist Morrill tariffs without the southern senators and representatives, because the South had basically already seceded. They raised the tariffs in the South to 47 percent. The Confederate Constitution is nearly identical to the United States Constitution, except that it outlaws protectionist tariffs, outlaws business handouts, and mandates a two-thirds majority vote for all spending measures. It was also the first Constitution to outlaw slavery. You see, when the South seceded, what does that mean?

It meant the North was not going to get that money. Lincoln was determined to make sure those tariffs flowed into the Federal

Treasury. That is why the battle was over Fort Sumter. Whoever controlled Fort Sumter controlled the shipping industry at Charleston, South Carolina. If Lincoln could get his hands on Fort Sumter, then he would still be in charge and still make the South pay.

I want you to listen carefully. I am going to give you a quote from James Madison. James Madison is known as the father of the Constitution because he was the secretary of the Constitutional Convention and took down all the notes.

James Madison's Warning and Modern Parallels

You talk about a man who could see in the future. Listen to what he said: "If Congress can employ money indefinitely to the general welfare, and are the sole and supreme judges of the general welfare, they may take the care of religion into their own hands." Why do you think we've got hate laws? Why do you think we've got thought crimes today? They may take the care of religion in their own hands.

“They may appoint teachers in every state, county, and parish, and pay them out the public treasury.” That is public schools. “They may take into their own hands the education of the children, establishing in like manner schools throughout the Union. They may assume the provisions of the poor,” and that is why we have welfare, food stamps, WIC, and everything else. “They may undertake the regulation of all roads and other post roads. In short, everything from the highest object of state legislation down to the most minute object of police would be thrown under the power of Congress. Were the power of Congress to be established in the latitude contended for, it would subvert the very foundations and transmute the very nature of limited government established by the people of America.”

Did the man know what he was talking about? What has Congress done? Everything that James Madison warned against. Today we are in the same situation our forefathers were in. We have a government that is out of control. It has thrown off the shackles of the Constitution, broken the bounds of common sense, and arrogated to itself unlimited powers. The government under which we live demands that we pay taxes, in whatever amount it demands, to support programs it deems best for us.

What we the people want or desire does not matter. The Constitution does not matter. As President George W. Bush said recently, after taking God's name in vain, "the Constitution is just a piece of paper." Does it matter to them? Do you realize that many of the problems Georgians experienced in the 1860s are the same problems we experience today? Georgians then complained about "oppressive federal government that seeks to intervene and dominate in every area of life, high taxes, and a growing government unwilling to listen to law-abiding citizens." Does that sound familiar? I want to end with a quote from Alexander Hamilton Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy. Listen to what he said.

Conclusion: The South Must Rise Again

"The only hope in my view for the maintenance of constitutional liberty on this continent is that another like cry should hereafter be raised and go forth from hilltop to valley, from coast to the lakes, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The cause of the South is the cause of us all." He continued: "The only hope, in my view, for the maintenance of constitutional liberty on this continent is that another like cry should hereafter be raised and go forth from hilltop to valley, from the coast to the lakes, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The cause of the South is the cause of us all." What was he saying? He was saying the only hope for a constitutional liberty on this continent is that people would awaken and realize what had happened because of the War of Northern Aggression, much like what happened in the Boston Port Bill.

When the colonists were fighting against George III, he sent his navy to blockade the Port of Boston. He passed a bill that nothing could go in or come out until tribute was given. The other colonists said, "The cause of Boston is the cause of us all. If Boston goes under, we go under." All the other colonists got together to make sure George III never starved the Bostonians out. They took everything those people of Boston would need to sustain and nurture them during that siege.

If constitutional liberty is to be maintained on this continent, there has to be a cry going out all across this nation: "The cause of the South is the cause of us all." We have to realize what we lost in

the War of Northern Aggression. If we do not realize that, there will never be an awakening in this country. As Steve Wilkins said very aptly, “The war of 1861 to 1865 did not end slavery. It merely enlarged the plantation. We are now all slaves.”

There is no alternative. The South must rise again and seek to restore our liberties, our rights, our constitution, and our common sense. We must once again become the bastion of the biblical faith, the citadel for our constitutional republic, and the bulwark for economic freedom. “Who will rise up for me against evildoers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?”

We must rise, and we must stand. He is the one true and living God, and beside Him there is no other. Let us pray.

Father, we ask and pray in the name of Jesus Christ that You would awaken us. Cause us, Lord, to understand from where we have fallen and what we have lost, and that we must be awakened and aroused to reclaim our biblical faith, our constitutional republic, and our economic freedom as we submit all to Thee and to Thy Word. May we stand, Father, for Thy truth. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 5

I Will Call Upon the Lord

January 6, 2008

Introduction and Review

Psalm 18, and we're going to read the first six verses. Now, let me encourage you that if you have not heard the first two messages on this Psalm, that you would please listen to those. The first two messages are entitled, "I Will Love Thee, O Lord," or "I Will Love the Lord," part one and part two. Today, I'm going to come to part three. And the title of this message is "I Will Call Upon the Lord." And right now, it's just part three. There may be a part four. I'm not sure just yet with that same title, but I'll probably go down through Psalm 18 for a while. But notice Psalm 18 beginning there in verse one, David said, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer."

"My God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, so shall I be saved from mine enemies. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about. The snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the Lord,

and cried unto my God, He heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears."

Now, let me take just a few moments to review the first three verses that I've dealt with. First of all, I pointed out David's determination. David's determination is revealed in verse one when he says, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." And I told you that David's determination to love the Lord was first and foremost a response to God's love. No man can love God first. We love him because he first loved us. And then I showed you what real biblical love is. First of all, there are three aspects of it. There is attitude, affection, and action. I pointed out how that real, genuine love is always demonstrable. The Bible says that we know that He loved us. Why?

Because He laid down His life for us. So when the attitude is right, there will always be a right affection. And when those two things are right and biblical, there will always be, thirdly, a biblical action. And I pointed out how love is obedience because Romans 13, verse 10 says, love is the fulfilling of the law. And then I pointed out in part two the reasons for David's determination. He says in verse one, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength."

And then he begins to show everything that God is. He calls God his strength, his rock, his fortress, his deliverer, his God, his strength, his trust, his buckler, the horn of his salvation, and my high tower. And so I went over each one of those and showed how many were just simply names of God as well as some were just attributes and manifestations of God's character. But with a protection like that and with God being everything like that, certainly you'd want to call upon the Lord. It's important to remember not only who God is, but also how he delivers.

The Sin of Forgetting God

Now, let me begin today by pointing out that one of our greatest sins as Christians is the sin of forgetting God. Do you realize over and over in Scripture we are warned concerning this very regrettable sin? If you would hold Psalm 18 and look back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 8 and verse 11, and I'm not going to multiply scriptures here, I could, but I think this passage is extremely

self-explanatory. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 8 and verse 11. Look what God says, and I want you to see the essence of forgetting God. Deuteronomy 8 verse 11, God says this, "Beware." So here's a warning. "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God."

"in not keeping his commandments and his judgments and his statutes which I command thee this day." Now, what is forgetting God? Is forgetting God, oops, Lord, I just didn't think about you today? Oh no, it's far more than that. Forgetting God is when you fail to obey God. You may have God on your mind, but as long as you disobey Him, you've still forgotten Him. So he says, "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping His commandments."

Now I'll come back to this verse a little bit later. I do want you to turn over to Psalm 77. And look if you would please at verse 10. Psalm 77 verse 10. I'm just simply pointing out that one of our main sins is that we forget God. In Psalm 77 and verse 10. David had committed this sin, and I'll point that out a little bit later, but he makes this statement in Psalm 77 verse 10. Actually, this is Asaph, not David. Asaph wrote Psalm 77, but in Psalm 77, Asaph says this in verse 10, "And I said, this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. This is my infirmity, but I will remember."

In other words, he had forgotten. He says, “This is my weakness, my failing, my failure. I will now remember.” We do not forget God, but we forget His tender mercies and blessings as well. The interesting thing is that when we forget God, God has a way of reminding us who He is and what He does for us.

God's Methods of Reminding Us

Do you realize that God knows exactly what it takes to put our backs against the wall, where we can go no further and must recall who God is, what He has done for us, and our desperate need of Him? Usually, God does that in one of two ways. Sometimes He does it in judgment; sometimes He may simply use conviction.

Let me show you what I mean in Deuteronomy 24:9. You remember how Miriam and Aaron complained against Moses. What

did God do? God smoked Miriam with leprosy. In Deuteronomy 24:9, God says, “Remember what the Lord thy God did to Miriam by the way when you were come forth out of Egypt.” God says, in effect, “Call to mind what happened to Miriam.” I judged her; I did not let her get away with her sin. When leprosy came upon her, she wanted to call upon the name of the Lord, repent, and do what was right.

Then there is the passage in Luke 17:32, where our Lord simply said, “Remember Lot’s wife.” Why? Do you remember what Lot’s wife did? She turned and looked back.

She had gotten out of Sodom, but Sodom had never gotten out of her, and God turned her into a pillar of salt.

In Revelation chapter 2 and verse 5, God says to the church, “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first work; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place.” Notice what God says: “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent.” He tells us that we must remember and repent. Otherwise, He will remove the candlestick. There is judgment.

Then, in Psalm 42 and verse 4, we find a verse speaking of conviction. Conviction is sometimes an awful lot easier than judgment, but not necessarily always. David says, “When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.” He remembers these things, but what things? He says, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?”

Psalm 42 was written when Saul was chasing David, and David could not get back to the house of God. He was in the wilderness. He was cut off. When David remembered what he had with the Lord, when he worshiped Him publicly and openly, and now, because of anxiety, distress, and persecution, could not get back there, he said, “When I remember these things, when I’m convicted about them, I pour out my soul within me.”

Now, in Psalm 18, we come to the second point: David's distress. The first point was in verse 1, David's determination. In verses 4, 5, and 6, we have David's distress. David now reveals what drove him to remember the Lord at his great deliverance. In verses 1, 2, and 3, David resolves to call upon the Lord, who has proven Himself over and over. David said, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock."

David's Distress Described

"My fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength and whom I trust, my buckler and the horn of my salvation and my high tower." Then David says, "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, so shall I be saved from mine enemies." David is recounting all the times God delivered him in the past. God's past mercies and deliverances give us hope and encouragement for present and future problems. If God has delivered us in time past, we may still call upon His mercy and grace to deliver us from present problems and distresses. When we are in distress, the surest way to recover is to remember the Lord, His deliverance, and His grace.

Someone has said it aptly: If you want to be discouraged, look around you. If you want to be depressed, look within you. If you want to be disappointed, look at others. If you want to be delivered, look up. That is certainly true.

In Psalm 18:4, we see the depth of David's distress: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid." The sorrows of death describe the same predicament David faced in 2 Samuel 22:5, where the expression may be translated "the waves of death." This means, literally, the breakers of death. The word is translated that way in Hosea 13:13, where it speaks of the breaking forth of children.

We have all witnessed mighty waves breaking against rocks and shorelines. Those who have been in the Pacific Northwest, and often in California as well, have seen huge waves come in and break upon the rocks. They look as if they will crush them. They are gigantic and powerful, and are often simply called breakers. These waves whip, lash, and break with deadly force and violence. Huge ships have been tossed against the rocks by such waves.

David is simply saying the sorrows of death, or the waves of death. This same word, sorrows, which is translated waves, could also be translated as cords: the cords of death compass me. The allusion, therefore, would be to malefactors being led forth to be executed. They are bound with cords; they cannot escape. Their death is certain and sure. Thus, when you read the sorrows, waves, or cords of death, all are pictures showing the absolute sureness and certainty of death. Just as a man bound with ropes cannot escape, so the man dashed against the waves is filled with sorrow.

David uses the same expression in Psalm 116:3: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." Literally, in Psalm 18:4, David is saying that death, like a cruel conqueror, seemed to twist around him with the cords of pain.

David was environed and hemmed in with threatening deaths of the most appalling sort. He was like a mariner driven by the waves upon the rocks, in fear of being crushed by the white and powerful foam. Bound by the cords of death, his struggling was useless. He could not escape or get away. Matthew Henry, in 1634, wrote these words; listen carefully.

He said, "It is heaven's peculiar to the land of the living. All this life is at most but the shadow of death, the gate of death, the sorrows of death, the snares of death, the terrors of death, the chambers of death, the sentence of death, the savor of death, the menstruation of death, and the way of death."

When you stop and think about what he wrote, you might say, "He was very pessimistic, wasn't he?" No. He was speaking in reality. The moment we are born, we begin to die. That is what aging is. Physical death is inevitable. When David was being chased by Saul, he realized that Saul was set on destroying him, although Jonathan did not want to believe it. David told Jonathan, "There's but a step between me and death." Stop and think about that: "There's but a step between me and death."

One would think that the reality of death, with each of us facing it, would cause us to do everything within our power to prepare for it. But alas, such is not the case. Even though we know we are going to

die, and although we know that death is real and genuine and that we must pass that way, most of us have to be awakened, disturbed, and overwhelmed with the sureness and immediacy of death before we become concerned.

The younger you are, the less you think of death. The older you get, the more you realize the brevity and shortness of your time. If I live only as long as my father lived—which I hope to surpass him—that is only thirteen more years. In the context of Psalm 18, David says that the sorrows of death compassed him about: the waves and cords of death compassed him about. The thoughts, sureness, and almost certainty of David's death prompted him to call upon the Lord.

No one is prepared to live until he is prepared to die. There was at least one time in David's life when he truly thought he was going to die. I am sure there may have been other times as well, but this was one of those occasions when not only did David think he was going to die, but some of his men thought so as well.

In 2 Samuel 21:15, we read, "Moreover, the Philistines had yet war again with Israel, and David went down in his servants with him and fought against the Philistines, and David waxed faint."

So he became very weak. Ishbi-benob, one of the sons of a giant, whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass, being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David. But Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, succoured him, smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, "Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel."

David waxed faint. Ishbi-benob thought he had killed him, but Abishai helped David and then killed the giant. Here was a real-life instance in which David probably thought he was about to die. Since he was in battle, it probably happened more frequently. Thus, in Psalm 18:4, David describes his distress: "The sorrows of death compassed me." He continues, "and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid." The Hebrew word for floods indicates rivers, floods, or torrents.

In other words, when you see a swollen, raging stream or river, that is the word being used here. The floods, the torrents of ungodly

men made David afraid. David had many enemies surrounding him. It was not simply the multitude of his enemies that troubled him, but their relentlessness. If you have an enemy and can get a little rest now and then, a little breather, it does not bother you. But David was surrounded, and they kept coming at him over and over. David said, "The floods of ungodly men made me afraid."

The phrase ungodly men literally means sons of Belial, sons of the devil. Belial literally means that which is useless, worthless, and unprofitable. When David calls these individuals sons of Belial, remember Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's two sons, who were extremely wicked and vile; they were called sons of Belial as well. These were worthless, useless, unprofitable men—men who were lawless, without faith in the One True and the Living God. The floods of these men had made David afraid.

A godly man is restrained by God's law and God's Word, but an ungodly man has no regard for God's law and God's Word. An ungodly man will do what a godly man would never even think of doing. David says it was these floods, these torrents of ungodly men, that made him afraid.

Look back in Psalm 12, since you are close there. David's cry of distress is seen in verse 1: "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men." We had better learn to cry this prayer in this country. What is left? Ungodly men. "They speak vanity every one with his neighbor, with a double heart do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips and the tongue which speaketh proud things, who have said, With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us?" He goes on to speak of how they oppress and destroy. Who are these sons of Belial? They are wicked, ungodly, lawless individuals who fear not God.

David says in Psalm 18:4, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid." His cry shows the snares laid for his life, the danger of death he faced, and the anxiety he possessed because of it. He further clarifies his distress in verse 5: "The sorrows of hell compass me about. The snares of death prevented me." It is not only the sorrows of death, but the sorrows of hell.

The Sorrows of Hell and Snares of Death

The Hebrew word for hell is Sheol, which occurs in the Old Testament sixty-five times and is rendered grave thirty-one times. Our King James Bible renders it hell and presents it as the place of disembodied spirits. According to Proverbs 21:16, the inhabitants of Sheol are the congregation of the dead. Sheol is also noted as the abode of the wicked in Numbers 16:33, Job 24:19, and Psalm 9:17.

In the New Testament, Hades is the Greek word with the same scope and signification as Sheol in the Old Testament. Hades is a prison with gates, bars, and locks, according to 1 Peter 3:19 and Matthew 16:18; it is downward, according to Matthew 11:23. Thus David says, "The sorrows of hell compass me about." These sorrows could also be translated literally as "the cords of the grave," indicating the power under which David was restrained for a period of time.

John Gill, one of the Baptist commentators of the 1700s, said this verse could allude to the way the Hebrews normally buried their dead. In ancient Israel, when a person died, he was wrapped, bound hand and foot, and placed in a grave. Lazarus was wrapped this way in John 11. Our Lord called, "Lazarus, come forth," and the Bible says, "he that was bound in grave clothes, hand and foot, came forth." Then our Lord said, "Loose him, and let him go." Our Lord was wrapped that way as well, as shown by the linen napkin over His face, which was found in a separate place. Gill was pointing out an possible allusion to ancient Hebrew burial practices.

Literally, David is saying that the sorrows of hell, or the cords of the grave, have compassed him about. He was as surely dead then as he would be in the future. It appeared that there was no escape.

Look again at verse five: "The sorrows of death compass me," not "The sorrows of hell compass me about; the snares of death prevented me." The word snares is the Hebrew word for snare, trap, or gin, and refers to being ensnared or trapped.

When David says, "The snares of death prevented me," the word prevented is often misinterpreted. When we hear prevent, we think of avoiding something. In the 1600s, however, it meant to precede or go before. Literally, David says, "The snares of death went before

me." They were in front of him; they preceded him; they were beforehand. The snares had been previously laid for him. David was like a man walking through a minefield, where every step could mean sudden and instant death. He is describing the distress in which he found himself.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon gives a beautiful comment on this verse: "The sorrows of hell compassed me about. From all sides the hell hounds barked furiously. A cordon of devils hemmed in the hunted man of God. Every way of escape closed up."

"Satan knows how to blockade our coasts with the iron warships of sorrow. But blessed be God, the port of prayer is still open, and grace can run the blockade bearing messages from earth to heaven and blessings in return from heaven to earth. The snares of death prevented me. The old enemy hunts for his prey, not only with the dogs of the infernal kennel, but also with the snares of his deadly craft. The nets were drawn closer and closer until the contracted circle completely prevented the escape of the captive." Then he adds this couplet: "'About me the cords of hell were wound, the snares of death my footstep bound.'"

He continues: "Thus hopeless was the case of this good man, as hopeless as the case could be, so utterly desperate that none but an almighty arm could be of service. According to the four metaphors which he employs, he was bound like a malefactor for execution, overwhelmed like a shipwrecked mariner, surrounded and standing at bay like a hunted stag, and captured in a net like a trembling bird. What more of terror and distress could meet upon one poor defenseless head?"

But listen to what he said. David was so utterly desperate that none but an almighty arm could deliver him. That is why David says in verse 3, "I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised. So shall I be saved from my enemies."

It is extremely sad, but happily true, that most people ignore the Lord until they are in desperate straits. I have known people who constantly and consistently ignored God, His Word, and the preaching of His Word, yet in the time of their crisis and in the time of their peril cried mightily unto the Lord and expected immediate

attention and immediate deliverance. It is as if they were saying—and they are actually saying it by their actions, although they would never say this in words—“I may safely ignore You and Your Word because I do not need You. But You can depend upon me; the minute I need You, I will call upon You, and You can help me then.”

Such an attitude is utterly blasphemous. But I am going to tell you something. Having preached for nearly forty-three years, I have seen people whose child was dying—people who had not been in church, had not read their Bible, and could care less about preaching—call upon this preacher: “Preacher, come pray with us. Pray that God will heal my child. If God will heal my child, I will serve Him; I will be in church.” When God healed that child, yes, they were in church for at least one or two Sundays. You talk about using God!

The sad thing is this: it is not just the ungodly who use the Lord. Unhappily, it is the godly as well. Hold Psalm 18, but turn to Jeremiah chapter 2 and look at God's charge and complaint in verse 32. In fact, look at verse 31: "O generation, see ye the word of the Lord." Then God asks, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness?" No, God has not. God revealed Himself.

"Wherefore, say my people, we are lords. We will come no more into thee." In other words, Lord, we do not need You at this time. Watch verse 32: "Can a maid forget her ornaments?" Can she forget her jewelry? "Can a bride her attire?" Can she forget her wedding gown? Yet, says God, "my people have forgotten me days without numbers." Is it a sin to forget God? Yes. Is it a sin to ignore God in His Word? Yes. Is this a sin that is committed constantly? Yes. God says, "my people have forgotten me days without number."

The Purpose of Distress

How in the world do we recover from such a wicked sin? God must awaken us. God must give us grace to repent and to seek Him. God often uses distress to get our attention. He puts our back against the wall, and all of a sudden the bell goes off and the light comes on: We remember, hey, wait a minute, I need the Lord. Only He can deliver me.

We never think that the source of our problems, dilemmas, anxiety, and distress may be that we have forgotten the Lord, and that the Lord is reminding us that we need Him. Without Me, you could do how much, our Lord? Nothing. Could it be that in our anxiety, distress, trouble, sorrow, and persecution, the Lord is using the proverbial two-by-four against our heads?

The answer is yes. Go back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 8, while holding Psalm 18. Look at verse 5: "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." I remember as a child that when I was disobedient, my father had a unique way of getting my attention. Does God have a unique way of getting our attention? Yes. He chastens us.

Look in your Bibles to Psalm 50, verse 22: "Now, consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." God says, "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you into pieces." My father had an expression, probably yours did too, which I even use with my children: I warned them that if they did wrong, I would tear them up. That is what God says: You forget God, and He will tear you up, and there will be none to deliver. Nothing can stop Him.

Go back in your Bibles to Job, chapter 34. Elihu is speaking for God in this chapter. Beginning at verse 23, he says, "For he that is God will not lay upon man more than right, that he should enter into judgment with God." In other words, whatever God does to you, it will be right, and you will have nothing to complain about. "He shall break in pieces mighty men without number and set others in their stead." God knows how to replace us. "Therefore, he knoweth their works. And he overturneth them in the night so that they are destroyed. He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others, because they turned back from Him and would not consider any of His ways."

Have you thought about it before? God knows exactly what size to use, and He knows where best to apply it. Now, when you go back to Psalm 18, understand something: I am not saying that, in the instance of Psalm 18, David was ignoring and forgetting God. But we do know that David ignored and forgot God at other times.

The context does not prove that right here. But let me remind you of Deuteronomy 8:11: “Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping his commandments.” Did David forget God in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah? Yes. Did David forget God and fail to discipline his children? Yes. There were times when David forgot the Lord. That is true.

The point is that this could have been part of David’s distress. I do not know. I would imagine David’s distress in Psalm 18 was the fact that he was surrounded by his enemies and thought he was going to die. There are numerous reasons why we get into distress. We can get into distress based upon our own ignorance.

How many of you have ever done something absolutely stupid and afterward thought, “That was stupid. Why did I do something like that?” We do things without thinking. We had a good friend who was a builder and could do anything. He had a swimming pool in his backyard and was drilling into concrete beside it with an electric drill. When the bit became hot, he dipped the tip into the pool to cool it off. It burst his heart, and he was killed instantly. It does not take but a second.

We can ignorantly or stupidly do something and get ourselves in more trouble than you can shake a stick at. That doesn’t count sin, Satan, the flesh, and the world. That is enough in itself. I have heard Christians say, “Satan’s really attacking me.” I usually tell people that he does not usually have to attack them; we are ignorant enough to bring most of it on ourselves. When you read Galatians 5, drunkenness, adultery, and all those things are sins of the flesh, not sins of the devil.

There is another source and cause of distress: the sovereignty of God. We can understand God’s sovereignty in the sense that, when we do wrong or continually ignore and forget Him, He can bring judgment upon us. That is an aspect of God’s sovereignty. But hold Psalm 18 and turn to John 9. I want you to see this. I love this passage in John 9.

It's one of my favorite passages. But I want you to look at this and understand what I mean by the sovereignty of God. Sometimes you and I can be in a stressful state, not because of our ignorance, sin,

Satan, the flesh, or the world, but simply out of the sovereignty of God. Look in John 9, verse 1.

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from birth." You don't have to sin when you're born blind. You don't have to have an attack of Satan. It's not the flesh, and it's not the world. "And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" What is the cause of this? "Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." And what did Jesus do? He healed him. Did the man sin to be born blind? No. Was Satan attacking him? No. Was it the flesh, the world, or self? No. Our Lord said this man was born blind for the purpose that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

The point is this: It truly does not matter what the cause of our distress is. It does not matter whether it is self, sin, Satan, the flesh, the world, or the sovereignty of God. God uses it to get our attention. He truly got David's attention in Psalm 18. David says, "in my distress."

David's Cry and God's Response

"I called upon the Lord. And I cried unto my God. He heard my voice out of his temple and my cry came before him even into his ears."

The word for distress refers to trouble, anxiety, affliction, and sorrow, and is also used for the persecution of the enemy. David, according to Psalm 18 and many other times in his life, was on the very precipice of destruction, on the edge of death. That's why he said, "the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The snares of death preceded me. The sorrows of death got hold upon me."

No matter how serious or dangerous the situation, nothing can stand in the way of the believer and prayer to his Heavenly Father. There is no calamity so great, no trouble so oppressive, and no persecution so horrible that it can deter us from prayer. The child of God never has an aversion to prayer.

There may be times when we do not feel like praying. I am going to tell you, I have been down with sinus so bad, I was so low I would have to reach up to touch bottom. I could not think or control my

thoughts. That was just from sinus. There may even be times when we do not want to pray.

Yet we should never have an aversion to prayer. We know we need to pray; it is a duty, a privilege, and a necessity. David, hemmed in and hunted by the hounds of death, prayed. When we do not feel like praying and do not want to pray, that is when we need to pray. Look at what David said. In verse six, David said, "in my distress, I called upon the Lord," and then, "and cried unto my God."

Notice the progression in intensity and vehemence. The more David recognized and realized his danger, the more he cried. The Hebrew word is shava, translated "cried," "cried out," "to cry aloud," and "to shout." David said, I called, and then I cried. I shouted unto my God.

Hold Psalm 18; I am coming right back there, but turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 14. Let me give you an illustration of what I am talking about—crying and shouting. There have been times in my life when I have cried, shouted, and screamed—not out of anger, but out of absolute helplessness. Look, if you would please, in Matthew 14. You know the story. Let us begin reading in verse 24: "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. 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, 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?"

Do you think that when Peter was walking on the water, saw the waves boisterous, and heard the wind howling, he very calmly muttered an inaudible prayer? Is that what Peter did? I want to tell you what I believe he did. I believe he cried as loud as he could, "Lord, save me!" You have got to remember, there was the wind and

the waves. He wanted to make sure the Lord heard him. What made Peter cry? He realized that if the Lord did not save him, he was a goner.

The Importance of Consistent Prayer

It's all over for me. Do you know what made David cry? He realized he was in a desperate situation. If God did not help him, he was a goner. He said, "I called and I cried."

Look at Psalm 18, verse 6: "In my distress, I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God." He heard my voice out of his temple. A thought came to me when I read that. I would really like to preach a whole message on this sometime. Here is my question: Does God recognize your voice? David said, "He heard my voice." Have you called, cried, and prayed often enough that God knows your voice?

You know how David prayed? Hold Psalm 18 and look in your Bibles at Psalm 55. I know that you can be in prayer innumerable times a day. I pray; I try to pray without ceasing. I try to pray all day long. That does not mean I am down on my knees all day long. When I am driving, I pray. When I am sitting, I pray. When I am studying, I pray—just wherever I am. Look at what David said in Psalm 55, verse 17: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice." David said, at least three times a day, I am going to cry aloud, and God is going to hear my voice. He is going to recognize my voice.

I know that God is omniscient. I know that God hears and knows everything. But I still want to be like David. I want Him to recognize my voice and say, "That's my son down there. I recognize him. I want to stop and listen to him, because he needs me." Look again at Psalm 18, verse 6: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears."

Let me tell you how to pray effectively when you are in trouble: be used to praying before you get into trouble.

I'll give you Scripture for that. You remember old Daniel in Daniel chapter 6? When those presidents had that writing signed that whoever offered any prayer to any god but the king for thirty days

would be thrown into the den of lions, listen to Daniel 6:10: "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, his windows being opened in his chamber toward Jerusalem, and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before God, as he did aforetime."

He was used to praying before he ever got into trouble. Therefore, he could pray effectively when he got into trouble.

David said, "My cry came before him, even unto his ears"; God heard him. You don't have to turn to these passages, but I would encourage you to write them down. I love Jeremiah 33:3: "Call on me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Call unto me, praise God, and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.

Write down Isaiah 65:24: "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

I do want you to turn to 1 John 5. Look at this last passage, beginning with verse 14: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hears us, we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him."

If you and I genuinely believe that God answers prayer as David believed, we need to learn to cry to Him daily, yea, even hourly if need be. We need to learn to pray as we ought. Are you listening? Distress will not distress us if we know how to pray. Three quick applications.

Applications and Conclusion

The first one is this: God often uses stressful incidents to impress upon us our need of Him and of His grace. When we forget God, God has ways of reminding us that we need Him. To be honest, I'd rather remember Him on my own than have to be reminded that I need Him.

God is a God who hears and answers prayer. It should encourage us to pray when we realize that we have such a God, who is ready to supply our needs, hear our prayers, and take care of us.

David said, “and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.” We should know that we are surrounded by floods of ungodly men in this country. We are in danger. Neither life nor property are safe when such men of Belial are in control of this country. We need to realize the danger in which we are and, in that sense, become distressed so that we will cry unto God for deliverance. David said, “the sorrows of death compassed me. Oh, yes. And the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of death, the sorrows of hell got a hold upon me.”

“And in my distress, I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God. And he heard my voice out of the temple.” David’s prayer came into Him and entered into His ears, and God delivered David. God will deliver us if we cry for deliverance.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we do bow to Thee this day. We are so thankful that You have delivered Your people in times past. Give us faith and trust in Thee. Make bare Thy mighty arm, O God. Show Thyself strong on behalf of Thy people. May we not forget Thee, but obey Thee and bring our lives into greater conformity to Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 6

The Impossibility of Christ Remaining in the Grave

January 4, 2009

SCRIPTURE READING - Acts 2:22-36 (KJV)

Introduction: The Question from Acts 2:24

> Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.
>
> For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

> Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 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.

That phrase grabbed my attention. When I looked at it again in verse 24, it said, "because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." Then I asked the question that perhaps you are asking in your own mind right now: What exactly made it impossible for death and the grave to hold Christ?

Christ's Conquest of Death

Death and the grave have a power over all of us. But Jesus Christ was and is unique. He could not be held. He could not be bound. He could not be imprisoned by a grave or death. He conquered both of them. Death could not retain Him, and the grave could not imprison Him.

In Hebrews 2:14–15, there is a specific purpose stated concerning the work of Jesus Christ: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Notice especially

verse 14. Through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject unto bondage. Jesus Christ came into flesh and blood, and through death He accomplished this work.

Jesus Christ is indeed the mighty conqueror. He came to destroy death. He came to die in order that He might destroy death. Revelation 1:18 says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." In other words, Jesus Christ has effectively destroyed death. He has effectively destroyed the devil. Jesus Christ has even taken the keys away from him. He now is the one who has authority over the grave, over death, and over hell.

So let us ask the question found in Acts 2:24. When Scripture says very clearly, "because it was not possible that he should be holden of it," speaking of the grave and death, why was it impossible for the grave and death to hold Jesus Christ? Our text in Acts chapter 2 gives us three very explanatory answers to that question.

The Power of the Sovereign God

Reason 1: The Power of the Sovereign God

Death and the grave could not hold Christ for three reasons: because of the power of the sovereign God, because of the promises of the Scriptures of God, and because of the person of the Son of God.

The first answer is that death and the grave could not hold Christ because of the power of the sovereign God. Acts 2:24 says, "Whom God hath raised up." That phrase is a declaration of the power of the sovereign God. The Bible says in Psalm 62:11, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." Do you understand that God is omnipotent? God is all-powerful? Power is in God inherently and intrinsically. There is not a creature on the face of the earth that has any power of himself, except that which God delegates.

If God does not give you power, you do not have power. You do not even have power to take the next breath if God does not give it to

you. You do not have the power to speak if God does not give you that power. Power is in God inherently, intrinsically.

Stephen Charnock defined the power of God in this way: “The power of God is that ability and strength whereby he, God, can bring to pass whatsoever he pleases, whatsoever his infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of his will may resolve. As holiness is the beauty of all of God's attributes, so power is that which gives life and action to all the perfections of divine nature. How vain would be his eternal counsels if power did not step in to execute them. Without power, his mercy would be but feeble pity, his promises an empty sound, his threatenings a mere scarecrow. God's power is like himself, infinite, eternal, incomprehensible. It can neither be checked, restrained, nor frustrated by the creature.”

God's power is that ability to bring to pass whatever He pleases and to do whatever He pleases, whatever His infinite wisdom may direct and the purity of His will may determine.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said it this way: "God's power is like himself, self-existent, self-sustained. The mightiest men cannot add so much as a shadow of increased power to the omnipotent one. He, God, sits on no buttressed throne and leans on no assisting arm. His court is not maintained by its courtiers, nor does it borrow its splendor from its creatures. He is himself the great central source and originator of all power."

Stop and think about that. There is not one man who can add one iota of power to God. God is not dependent upon anything outside of himself for his own power.

The power of the sovereign God of heaven and earth is made manifest in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If I were to read Scripture after Scripture speaking of the fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is attributed to God the Father, we could sit here for a long time. Let me give you a smattering of them. In Acts 3:15, the Bible says, "And they, the wicked, killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead." 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." Romans 6:9

says, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." First Thessalonians 1:10 says, "And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he, God the Father, raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

God, then, is the sovereign omnipotent of the universe. In Genesis 18:14, God asked Abraham, "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" Is anything too hard for the Lord? In Jeremiah 32:27, God says, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" When you stop and think of the fact that God is absolutely omnipotent, He is all-powerful, nothing exists that He cannot do, and there is no function that He cannot perform. God is absolutely all-powerful.

Hold Acts chapter 2, but turn to Ephesians chapter 1. Notice, if you would, Ephesians 1 and verse 15. I want you to see how this mighty power was exhibited in Jesus Christ when God raised Him from the dead.

Paul is praying for the saints, and he says: “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.”

Let me stop there for a moment. Paul is praying that God will give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Now watch verse 18. Here is the additional prayer request: “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Here is the exceeding greatness of God's mighty power which He exercised in Jesus Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand.

There is absolutely nothing that is too hard for the Lord. There is absolutely nothing that can thwart Him, hinder Him, or deter Him. In Isaiah 46:10, God says, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” No one can stop Him, thwart Him, hinder Him, confound Him, or confuse Him. He will do all His pleasure—whatever He pleases. Why? Because He is God.

Daniel 4:35 is one of my favorite passages. There the Scripture says, “all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.” Think about that. Take the mightiest of all the inhabitants of the earth, and not just the mightiest, but all the inhabitants of the earth put together; they are reputed as nothing. The Scripture continues: “and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”

If every individual who has ever lived, who is now living, and who shall live in the future rose up in rebellion against God, it would cause Him no uneasiness. No one can stay His hand, and no one can say, “What doest thou?”

I want you to understand that the sovereign, omnipotent God decreed an eternal decree concerning Jesus Christ. Ephesians 3:11 says, “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” God said, “My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure.”

The Bible tells us that God has an eternal purpose, which he purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord. That eternal purpose, which he purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord, was that Jesus Christ would be the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Lord of Glory, and the Savior. In order to save us, he not only had to die for our sins, giving us a basis, ground, and foundation for forgiveness; according to Acts chapter 2, he also had to be raised from the dead, that he might be Lord of all and actually give us forgiveness. Forgiveness is a gift from God. God then has an eternal purpose.

I want you to think about this. If the grave or death could hold Jesus Christ, then death and the grave would be stronger than God the Father. If death and the grave could hold Jesus Christ, then they could thwart, hinder, and stop the eternal purpose of the sovereign God. Have you ever thought about this? If there is any power outside of God that is over and above God, over which God has no control, then that power is God, and God is not God.

You see, the truth of the matter is this: God alone is sovereign, for God alone is God. He said in Isaiah 45:5, "I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me." God is indeed the sovereign.

If you look back in Acts 2:24, there is an interesting statement: "whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death." Having loosed the pains of death. Let me tell you how the word "pains" is translated and how it is used. It usually speaks of travail or pains in childbearing. In other words, there is the pain and travail that a woman goes through in having the baby.

Once those pains are loosed, the child is born. Here God has loosed the pains of death. It is speaking figuratively of the resurrection. If you take the word literally, you can think of the resurrection as a new birth from the womb of the grave. Death and the grave could no more hold Jesus Christ than the womb of a woman can hold a child that is about to be born. God loosed the pains of death and the grave, and Jesus Christ had to come out of the grave and forth from death, because neither death nor the grave nor hell has power over God. God has power over them. He is God alone. No one can thwart, nothing can stop, and nothing can hinder the power of God. Why was it impossible for death and the grave to hold Jesus Christ? The first answer is because of the power of the sovereign God. God spoke, and it came to pass.

Reason 2: The Promises of the Scriptures of God

Secondly, there are the promises of the Scriptures of God. "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance."

"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."

The exact passage Peter is quoting is Psalm 16:8: "I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Peter quotes this passage in Acts chapter 2 as a promise of Scripture demonstrating that Jesus Christ was literally raised from the dead. Peter is taking this passage as a promise of Scripture, and his purpose is to demonstrate the reality of Christ's resurrection. He will later refer to Psalm 110 and Psalm 2, but although he is quoting David, he makes it exceedingly plain that David is not speaking concerning himself. In verse 25 he says, "For David speaketh concerning him." David is particularly speaking of Jesus Christ, not himself. If David is included in Psalm 16, he can be included only as a believer in Jesus Christ. David is not speaking of himself; David is speaking of Jesus Christ.

Peter demonstrates this again in verse 29: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." David could not possibly be speaking of himself; he still died and remains in the tomb. His body is still there. David was not raised from the dead. Then, in verse 34, Peter says, "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."

Thus Peter proves that Psalm 16, verses 8 through 11, deals primarily with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Acts chapter 13, we have not only the testimony of David and Peter, but also the testimony of the Apostle Paul. In Acts 13:35, referring to Psalm 16, Paul says, “Wherefore he saith also in another psalm,” referring to Psalm 16.

"Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, that is he died, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but he, whom God raised again, that is Jesus Christ, saw no corruption." Psalm 16, then, is a promise and a prophecy of the Scriptures that Jesus Christ would be raised from the dead.

In Psalm 2 and verse 7, the Word of God says, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." That phrase was not said of David. It could not be said of David, nor could it be said of any man. It was not even said of angels. Psalm 2:7 also is a promise of Scripture dealing with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Psalm 2:7 is quoted three times in the New Testament. Acts 13:32-33 says, "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Psalm 2:7, then, is a promise and prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures.

Hebrews 1:5 says, "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" In other words, Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is the subject of Psalm 2:7. Hebrews 5:5 says, "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee."

In other words, God raised Jesus Christ from the dead and set him at his own right hand. When you read the phrase, "this day have I begotten thee," you must understand that it speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, it is not to be interpreted as

meaning that somehow the resurrection made Jesus Christ the Son of God. No. Jesus Christ was already the Son of God.

His sonship had been witnessed to by the Father, by angels, by men, good and bad, even by the devils themselves. When Jesus Christ would go, the demons would cry out, “We know who thou art, thou Son of God.” Even the Jews themselves had to acknowledge this because His teaching was very clear in John 19:7. They were going to kill Him. Why? “Because thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” Jesus Christ was already the Son of God.

What did the resurrection do? The resurrection openly declared Him to be the Son of God. Romans 1:3–4 says, “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” He was declared, manifested, pointed out, and evidenced as being the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. In other words, if Jesus Christ had been an impostor, would God have raised Him from the dead? Of course not. The very fact that God the Father did raise Him from the dead, according to the promises of Scripture, demonstrates that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Now I want to show you a picture given to us in the promises and prophecies of Scripture concerning Jesus Christ. Turn to Genesis 22 and Hebrews chapter 11. Genesis 22 is a passage with which most of us are familiar, but I want to take the time to read it because there is an important point that I wish to make. Let us begin with Genesis 22:1.

SCRIPTURE READING - Genesis 22:1-8 (KJV)

> "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and

> saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."
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> There's a couple of things here that I believe are exceedingly important. First of all, I want you to look at verse 8. Many times we misread this verse. Let me read it the way it is usually misread. And see if you can pick up on it, OK? Verse 8, "And Abraham said, My son, God will provide for himself a lamb for a burnt offering. So they went both of them together."

What word did I add? “For.” That word is not in there. “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.” God will give God to be the true lamb. That is why Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus Christ is very God of very God. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:16, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”

Now note something else. In verse 5, “And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.” What did God ask Abraham to do? To offer his son as a sacrifice. If Abraham slays Isaac on the altar, how is Isaac coming back?

Isaac was a son of promise. In Hebrews 11:17-19, the Bible says, “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”

God had promised Abraham a son and promised that through Isaac he would have a great seed. Abraham was willing to sacrifice

his son because, for God to keep His promises, He would have to raise him from the dead. “From whence also he received him in a figure” means that Isaac was a type of Jesus Christ, an illustration who prefigured Christ’s resurrection. Abraham told the young men, “You just stay right here. I and the lad will go yonder and worship and we will come again.” If he had to slay his son, God would raise him up. God symbolically raised Isaac by sparing him. When Abraham raised his hand, God stayed his hand and said, “Don’t slay your son.”

Genesis 22 and verse 13 tells us, “And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.” Now, wait a minute. What did he say in verse 8? “My son, God will provide himself a lamb.” I hope now you understand what John the Baptist said in John 1 in verse 29 when he saw Jesus: “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

Now, I want you to go back to Acts chapter 2, because I am showing you the promises of Scripture. The Bible tells us that Scripture cannot be broken. We not only have the power of the sovereign God as the first reason why Christ could not be held by the grave and death; we also have the promises of the Scriptures of God. I want you to notice this. Look in verse 33. Who can tell me what is happening in Acts chapter 2? What day is it? The day of Pentecost. Peter is preaching. Thousands were converted. What happened on the day of Pentecost? God sent His Spirit. Notice, if you would, in verse 33, Peter gives this explanation: “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, that is, Jesus is there, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”

The promises of Scripture testify to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; therefore, the grave could not hold Him, and death could not hold Him. In John chapter 15 and John chapter 16, notice John chapter 15, verse 26. Look what our Lord 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 Greek word is parakletos, one called alongside to help.

What did Christ promise to do? He promised to send the Holy Spirit. In John 16:7, Christ said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came, is proof positive that Jesus Christ was raised bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God. Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit exactly as He said He would.

So why could the grave not hold Christ? Why could death not hold Him? Not only because of the power of the sovereign God, but because of the promises of the Scripture of God. Scripture cannot be broken. Do you remember what God said in Psalm 138? "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." He has set His Word above His name. If God's Word can ever be broken, God would cease to be God. Scripture shall be fulfilled to the letter.

Reason 3: The Person of the Son of God

Here is a third reason why the grave could not hold Christ: the person of the Son of God. In verse 32, he says, "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."

The same Jesus who was born of Mary, whose father was Joseph—the same Jesus whom they hated, despised, and crucified—is now raised from the grave, seated at the right hand of God, and openly declared not only to be the Son of God, but also the Lord and Messiah. Dr. Henry Morris wrote, "The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the crowning proof of Christianity. Everything else that was said or done by Christ and the apostles is

secondary in importance to the resurrection. If the resurrection did not take place, then Christianity is a false religion."

If it did take place, then Christ is God and the Christian faith is absolute truth. Death is our greatest enemy, and it has conquered all men but Christ. No man is wise enough to outwit death, wealthy enough to purchase freedom from death, or strong enough to vanquish death. The grave always wins the victory, and every person sooner or later returns to the dust, with the exception of Jesus Christ.

In Romans 1, verses 3 and 4, we read: "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Jesus Christ was pointed out as the Son of God. He was determined to be the Son of God by the bodily resurrection from the dead.

As you read through Scripture, you usually find the resurrection of Jesus Christ attributed to God the Father. Over and over in the New Testament, God raised Him from the dead. Would it surprise you to learn, however, that sometimes the resurrection is also attributed to God the Son? It is true that God the Father raised Him from the dead, but it is equally true that He could raise Himself from the dead, because He is God.

Look in your Bibles to John chapter 10, verses 17 and 18: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

Notice what He says: "Therefore doth my Father love me." Why? "Because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Then He says, "This commandment have I received of my Father." Did Jesus Christ have the power to raise Himself from the grave? Yes, because Jesus Christ is God.

In John chapter 11, Lazarus has died, and Jesus has come to raise him from the dead. Martha runs out to Jesus Christ. "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."

Notice again Martha's words: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Jesus said, "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha answered, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life." I like what Lester Roloff used to say: "The resurrection just walked into town." If Jesus Christ is the resurrection, and if Jesus Christ is the life, could He raise Himself from the grave? The answer is yes.

The grave could not hold Christ. Death could not hold Christ because of the power of the sovereign God, the promises of the Scripture of God, and the person of the Son of God. Jesus Christ is the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory, the Great I Am. Jesus Christ is life. Jesus Christ is the resurrection. The earth that He made cannot hold Him. The elements that He created cannot bind Him. Death cannot destroy Him, for He is life incarnate.

Scripture tells us in Colossians 1:17 that He is before all things, and by Him all things consist and have their being. He is the mighty conqueror, and the mighty conqueror cannot be subdued. The little couplet goes like this: "But thou hast burst the grave, risen art thou, death could not be enslaved, death had to bow." Why could death and the grave not hold Jesus Christ?

The Power of the Sovereign God

Because of the power of the sovereign God, because of the promises of the Scriptures of God, and because of the person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ came to abolish death. In dying, He did exactly that. Because He was then raised from the dead, He became the

surety for His people. He made full satisfaction for our sin, and out of justice He must be raised again. And He was.

Application: God's Power for Believers

In light of the power of the sovereign God exhibited in the resurrection, Arthur W. Pink made this observation: “If God were stinted in might and had a limit to his strength, we might well despair. But seeing he is clothed with omnipotence, no prayer is too hard for him to answer, no need too great for him to supply, no passion too strong for him to subdue, no temptation too powerful for him to deliver from, no misery too deep for him to relieve. ‘The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?’ And then he quotes, ‘Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.’”

If God were not omnipotent, we would have cause for despair. But God can answer any prayer, subdue any temptation, and overrule all persecution. The power God exhibited in the resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that nothing is too hard for the Lord. Secondly, the resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees our resurrection.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Corinthians 15:12-23 (KJV)

Application: Our Resurrection Guaranteed

The scripture says, “having loosed the pains of death.” When God raised up Jesus Christ, He not only raised up Christ; He raised up all of those who were in Christ. Do you realize the hold, the power, the chains of death have been dissolved by Jesus Christ? Christ cannot be holden of grave and death, and we who are in Him cannot be holden by grave or death. We are in Him. He is our head. We are His body. His death was our death. His resurrection, our resurrection. His ascension was our ascension.

Since God has raised our head from the grave and death, do you think God is going to leave the body in death and in the grave? No. I can assure you, if God has raised the head, he will raise the body. Look how the Apostle Paul argues:

> “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”

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 ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. God raised us up, the Bible says, in Christ.

Remember that John 17 is the high priestly prayer of our Lord. Does God the Father hear the prayer of Jesus Christ? Yes. Have the prayers of Jesus Christ ever been unanswered? No. He said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hearest me always." In John 17:24 He prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." If Jesus Christ prayed that his elect, his believers, his body would be with him wherever he is, do you think God is going to answer that prayer? Do you think we'll be left in the grave? Do you think we'll be left in death? The answer is no.

The Apostle Paul said, "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? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

So what can we say? "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" We can say it because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His resurrection guarantees our resurrection. It was not possible for death and the grave to hold Jesus Christ, and it will not be possible for death and the grave to hold any of those who believe in Jesus Christ. He is our head. We are His body.

As God raised Him from the dead, so God shall raise us from the dead bodily, for we are in Him. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ for Your grace and mercy. We pray that You would teach us, help us rejoice in Thee, build us up in the most holy faith, and give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 7

Did You Lose Something?

February 10, 2013

Introduction to the Four-Part Message

This message is actually four distinct messages based upon Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. If you look in Mark chapter 4, let us read verse 14: “The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.”

Each one of us has lost something from time to time. In fact, we may lose articles and not even realize it. Articles sometimes slip from our fingers and disappear into oblivion. Years ago, Alice lost a watch I had given her. She had it with her; it was in the automobile. Then it was gone, and it was never found. She has no idea, no clue to this day where that watch went. It simply disappeared.

The Reality of Losing and Having Stolen

Occasionally, it is something of value that we lose, and we really regret losing it. At other times, we may value something very greatly,

but it is not necessarily lost; it is stolen from us. Have you ever stopped to think that when you do not use articles frequently and they are stolen, it sometimes takes a great deal of time to figure out that they have really gone missing? Then, of course, when something does go missing, you wonder, Did I lose it, or was it really stolen?

I am sure that you remember the woman in Luke chapter 15 who lost a silver coin. Our Lord said it like this in verses 8 and 9: “Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.” Obviously, this woman had lost a piece of silver. It was something extremely valuable, and she literally lit a candle and swept the house until she found it.

It is one thing to lose something insignificant, or even something of value that could eventually be replaced. However, to lose something, or to have something stolen, that can never be replaced is exceedingly painful and, at times, very costly. Look again in Mark 4 and verse 15 at this particular statement.

Satan's Names and His Activity

Our Lord says, "And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts." Now, I want to call your attention, first of all, in verse 15, our Lord says, "Satan cometh." The word Satan means adversary. He is the arch enemy. We're told in 1 Peter 5 and verse 8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." So here he is called Satan. Notice, if you would, in Matthew chapter 13—I'm sorry, Matthew 13 and verse 19. Matthew 13 and verse 19. Because here is another term that relates to the evil one. Matthew 13, verse 19: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside." But notice if you would, Satan in this passage is just simply referred to as the wicked

one, which literally means the evil one or the one who is evil consummately.

So he is here called the evil one or the wicked one. If you would look in the book of Luke chapter 8 and verse 12, you'll find another name that is used here. Luke 8 and verse 12. Our Lord says this: "Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." So here the word is devil, and the word devil refers to the accuser or the slanderer.

Now, I want to put these together for you. I want you to watch this. In Mark 4 and verse 15, scripture says Satan takes away the word. In Matthew 13 and verse 19, the wicked one catches away the word. And in Luke 8 and verse 12, the devil taketh away the word. Now I want to give you two thoughts. First of all, in Mark 4 and verse 15, the passage that we read, and in Luke 8 and verse 12, when the Bible says he takes away the word, the Greek term for takes away literally means to lift up, to carry away, and to take away. So it's as if something is lifted up from you and it's taken from you, just like a pickpocket will come along and take your valuable out of your pocket. However, when you get to Matthew chapter 13 in verse 19, there's a totally different word that is used. It's the Greek word harpazo, which, listen, it means to seize, to snatch away, to carry off by force and to claim for oneself eagerly.

So in this passage, it is more like a mugger or a robber—someone who knocks you over the head, steals your possession, and then leaves. It means literally to take away by force.

It does not matter whether you look in Matthew 13, Mark 4, or Luke 8. When the Bible says that Satan, the devil, or the wicked one takes away or catches away the Word, it is a present active indicative. All that means is that something is happening in the present time and continues to happen. The present tense of the Greek verb denotes continuous action, or action in progress. It is something happening now. The mood, or mode, simply indicates the reality of the action; it is really, truly happening.

The interesting thing in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8 is that, in each instance, it is Satan who catches away or takes away the

Word of God. Hold Mark 4, and turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 2, and look at verse 1. Hebrews 2:1 gives us a warning. Look at this warning carefully.

The Warning to Give Earnest Heed

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” What is that warning? “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard.” He is talking about the Word of God. “Lest at any time we should let them slip.” The word slip literally means to flow by, to flow over, to fall, or to flow away. It is much like a river, as the water simply flows by you and flows away from you. It glides away; it escapes from you, much like a thief does in stealth.

Each one of us has used the expression, “It slipped from my mind. I forgot it.” Have you ever wondered why things slip from our minds? The answer is that we do not dwell upon them, concentrate upon them, or think about them regularly, continually, or often enough. They simply glide away. That is the warning given to us in verse 1: “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”

The Parable of the Sower as Foundational

I have read from Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8 that Satan catches away or takes away the Word of God from us. So here is an important question, and one that you should ask yourself: How does Satan take away or steal the Word of God from us? How does he steal it?

In order to answer that question, you have to know something about the parable of the sower. Our Lord was speaking to His disciples when He said in Mark chapter four and verse 13, "Know ye not this parable? How then will ye know all parables?" In other words, the parable of the sower is foundational. You must understand this parable in order to understand the rest of the parables.

Luke chapter eight gives our Lord's interpretation of this parable. I am reading from Luke chapter 8 instead of Matthew 13 and Mark 4 because they all say essentially the same thing, and Luke gives the interpretation in this passage. Beginning with verse 11, our Lord says: "Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

The interpretation that our Lord gives in Matthew and Mark is exactly the same as the interpretation that He gives in Luke chapter eight. Notice verse 11: "Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God." I have read this passage so that you could see this for yourself. When the sower sows the seed, he is sowing the Word of God.

In Mark 4:24, our Lord says, “Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.” In Luke 8:18, He says it somewhat differently: “Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.” Our Lord has told us that we need to take heed what we hear. We need to make sure that we are hearing the pure, unadulterated Word of God. He also admonishes us to take heed how we hear.

Our Lord tells us that this parable is exceedingly important because you cannot understand the other parables unless you understand this one. In this parable there are four types of hearers. Four types of hearers. Each of these four types was present in our Lord’s day, and each is also present in our day. The truth of the matter is this: everyone who hears the Word of God responds to the Word of God in one of these four ways. Let me say that again:

everyone who hears the Word of God responds to the Word of God in one of these four ways. Obviously, I will not be able to cover all four ways today; that is why there will be four parts to this message.

First, our Lord says there is the wayside hearer. Some seed fell by the wayside, so that is a distinct type of hearer. Secondly, some seed fell upon stony ground, and there is another type of hearer. Thirdly, some seed fell among the thorns; that is a third type of hearer. Finally, some seed fell upon good ground.

Each of these hearers responds to the Word of God differently. Today, we are only going to cover the wayside hearer. There is another name for the wayside hearer: he could also be called a hard-hearted hearer because of the soil of his heart.

The Wayside Hearer: Hard-Hearted and Unprepared

Although this parable is known as the parable of the sower, it could also correctly be known as the parable of the soils, because the Bible teaches not only about the seed that is sown, but also about the different types of soil into which the seed falls.

So, let us consider the wayside hearer. First of all, our Lord said that some seed fell by the wayside. The Greek word for the wayside is hodos, which literally means a road—something that is well traveled. When you look at a road that is well traveled, the very first thing you understand is that the ground is packed absolutely firmly. It is hard. It is pressed down.

Observe the fields today. Every field, regardless of its size, has an access road. You have to get into the field to prepare the soil, so there is an access road.

That road is for the tractors, the combines, and the heavy machinery. When the farmer goes to prepare the field, he always uses that access road. When he plants, inevitably, invariably, some of the seed falls on that road. The point is that when the seed falls on that road, it is impossible for it to penetrate the ground. The birds come and devour that seed, or it simply lies there and rots.

Our Lord gives both a statement of this truth and an interpretation of it. In Matthew 13, verses 3 and 4, He says, “And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower

went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up." In verses 18 and 19, He gives His interpretation: "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside."

Mark, chapter 4, gives the same account concerning the sower, the seed, and the wayside hearer. In verses 3 and 4, our Lord says, "Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up." Then, in verses 14 and 15, He explains: "The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts."

Luke, chapter 8, also records the statement and interpretation. In verse 5, we read, "A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it." Then, in verse 11, our Lord says, "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."

Having read these three different passages, let us glean some principles from the Word of God in order that you might understand the wayside hearer. First of all, it should be evident, according to our Lord, that when the Word of God is preached, there is a present activity of Satan to thwart and to hinder the Word of God. Let me point that out very clearly. It should be evident after reading these passages that whenever the Word of God is preached, there is a present activity of Satan to thwart and to hinder the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

Now, there are many people who deny the existence of Satan. Some try to say that Satan is nothing more than a mere force or a power. I have read some authors who said that Satan is none other than the state. I understand, and I know, that Satan uses many, and for all practical purposes, most politicians and civil servants are

none other than Satan's servants. Many civil rulers seem to be evil incarnate.

Satan's Present Activity in Hindering the Word

However, when you look at Luke, since you are there, look in Luke chapter 10 and verse 18. Look at what our Lord said. He is talking to His disciples. In fact, let us read verse 17 so you can see it in the context. Luke 10, verse 17: "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." And He said—our Lord said—"I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Now, here is my question: Did the Lord behold a force fall from heaven, or the state fall from heaven, or did He behold a being that fell from heaven?

You remember that passage I quoted earlier in 1 Peter 5 and verse 8, where the Scripture says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." So he is our adversary, and he seeks to devour. Now let me ask you a question. I want you to think about this. If Satan is nothing more than a force, if Satan is nothing more than an abstract concept such as the state, how do you overcome a force? How do you overcome an abstract concept? An abstract force or an abstract concept cannot really be defeated or overcome. But when you look in Romans 16 and verse 20, the Apostle Paul writes to the Roman Christians and says, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." Notice, if you would, "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." If he is a being, he may be defeated. He may be destroyed; but if he is an abstract concept, how in the world can you destroy an abstract concept? You remember that passage in Revelation 12:11? The Bible simply says this: "And they overcame him"—that is, the devil—"they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." They overcame him, not it. They overcame him, which is a being.

When you read in Matthew 13 and the other passages that some seed fell by the wayside and the fowls came and devoured it, that

phrase is explained by our Lord in the other passages as Satan coming immediately and taking away the word that was sown in them. In other words, our Lord is teaching the direct, destructive power of the enemy, which hinders the entrance of and the preaching of the Word of God.

So many people have vainly and wrongly thought that whenever the Word of God is preached, or whenever the saints gather for prayer, Satan flees. I have heard all my life, and probably you have as well, this little saying: Satan flees whenever he sees the weakest saint upon his knees. You ever heard that? I have heard it all my life. The only problem with it is this: it just ain't so. It's just not true.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Zechariah, next to the last book in the Old Testament, before the book of Malachi. Look at Zechariah chapter 3. Joshua is the high priest. Verse 1 says: "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Here is Joshua the high priest standing before the Lord, and Satan is standing at his right hand to resist him—to fight against him. Obviously, when the weakest saint is upon his knees, Satan does not flee. The truth is, Satan would be busiest whenever the Word of God is preached and whenever true prayer and true worship are being given to our Lord. He is the adversary, the one who will do everything he can to distract the mind, devoid the worship, and destroy the Word of God.

Do you remember what the Bible says in James 4:7? “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

The word resist literally means to oppose, to withstand, to set oneself against, or to fight against. God tells us that we must resist him. What most people do not understand is this: we must fight for truth—not only to maintain the truth, but to be able to receive the truth. Scripture clearly teaches that whenever there is present preaching and teaching of the Word of God, there is also a present activity of Satan to hinder and destroy it, seeking to steal the Word of God. When you stop and think of all the wandering minds,

vagabond thoughts, and undisciplined minds that exist under the preaching of the Word of God, that is prime hunting ground for Satan.

Have you ever noticed how easily we are distracted? I have seen hundreds of times a church building packed, and one little kid up front stands up and walks to the back to go to the bathroom, and everybody follows him, just as if they had never seen a kid go to the bathroom before. People look out the windows, watching the birds. There is no discipline, no concentration, and no thinking upon what is being preached and said. When you have wandering minds, vagabond thoughts, and things that simply pop into your mind, and you do not have the discipline to put them out of your mind and redirect your focus upon the Word of God, it is very easy for him to lift up, take away, and steal that which has been sown.

You had better understand this: whenever the Word of God is being preached, whenever there is true worship and true prayer, Satan is always present, or at least his adversaries, to hinder, thwart, and destroy. The second principle is this: unless our hearts are prepared, it will do no good to have the Word of God sown in them.

The Necessity of Heart Preparation

The wayside hearer has another name: the hard-hearted hearer. The wayside is packed hard. The hard-hearted hearer is like that wayside, having a heart that has not been tilled, prepared, or softened. There is not an individual in this room who would go out in a few weeks, take a handful of seed, cast it on open, packed, hardened ground, and then return to the house expecting a full harvest in sixty days. It simply will not happen. Neither will anyone receive the Word of God unless his heart is prepared.

The Bible says in Proverbs 16:1, “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.” Mark it down: if our hearts are ever prepared, God must prepare them. If we are ever prepared to pray, God has prepared us to pray. If we are ever prepared to witness, God has prepared us to witness. If we are ever prepared to receive God’s Word, God has prepared our hearts that we may receive it. The preparations of the heart in man are from the LORD.

However, I do want you to turn back in your Bibles to the book of Hosea, because I want to show you a parallel truth as well. Look in Hosea, chapter 10 and verse 12. Although we understand that the preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord, here is another truth that we must hold alongside it. God says, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.”

“Wait a minute, Brother Weaver. You just told me the preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord, and now you show me this verse where we are responsible to break up our fallow ground and seek the Lord.” There is no conflict. Proverbs 16:1 talks about ability; Hosea 10:12 talks about responsibility. It is our responsibility to seek the Lord and prepare our hearts. It is our responsibility to come to Him and acknowledge that our hearts are hardened, that we do not necessarily love the Word of God, or are inclined to hear it; that He must incline us and order our hearts.

The truth is, unless our hearts are prepared to receive the Word of God, we will never receive it. The fault is not in the Word of God; the fault is in us, in the soil. Many are careless, forgetful hearers, and consequently receive no good at all from the preaching of the Word of God. It goes in one ear and out the other. No heart will ever benefit from the Word of God unless it is prepared to receive it.

There is an application here for Christians. We must have our hearts prepared, just as the unsaved must have their hearts prepared. Have you ever stopped to think that this could be one reason why so many Christians are dull, dumb, and deformed theologically? Their hearts have never been prepared for truth. Consequently, they cannot receive it.

Our Lord said to his disciples, "I have many things to say to you, but you're not able to bear them now." The Bible also says that He spake the word of God unto them as they were able to receive it. Your heart must be prepared to receive truth. The more prepared your heart is, the more truth you can receive.

The Negligent Hearer and the Call to Be Doers

The truth being emphasized is this: unbroken and unprepared hearts are not fit soil for saving truth. They may hear truth and speak of the truth, but they will never understand or comprehend it. It does not penetrate the hardened soil of their heart. It does them absolutely no good and makes no impression upon them. The seed, therefore, which is the word of God, lies loosely on the surface of the heart and is easily picked up, snatched up, and carried off by the evil one. An unprepared heart never receives any benefit from the preached word of God.

Here is the third truth: it should be evident that this wayside hearer is a negligent hearer. The reality is that he cares absolutely nothing for the Word of God. Where did the seed fall? The answer is: on the road, a hard-packed surface. Do you realize that seed is very easily found on a hard-packed surface? It does not get down in little crevices; it is simply lying on top.

What does this hard-hearted or wayside hearer do? He tramples it down. He ignores it. He could have picked up the seed and saved it, but he did not. He was not interested in saving, transplanting, or preserving the seed. He simply walked over it and stomped it down, just like so many others do. The heart of the wayside hearer is unreceptive and unresponsive to the Word of God.

It finds no lodgment there. Let me show you why. Turn in your Bibles to James, chapter 1, and look at verse 21: “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” In order to receive the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls, first of all you must lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness. That is, you must get rid of the sin and wickedness in your life. Secondly, in order to receive it savingly, you must receive it with meekness.

This hard-hearted hearer, this wayside hearer, had no meekness, was not willing to repent, and consequently ignored it and went on his way. We are responsible to hear the Word of God and receive the Word of God correctly and in the manner God has ordained it. Let me quote once more Hebrews 2 and verse 1: “Therefore we ought to

give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." If you do not give earnest heed to it, it is going to slip away. It will flow away.

You remember I quoted earlier from Mark 4 and verse 24, where our Lord said, "Take heed what ye hear." Then He also said in Luke 8 and verse 18, "Take heed therefore how ye hear." Do you realize that you are responsible to hear the Word of God correctly? You are responsible to hear it, retain it, apply it, and obey it? Turn in your Bibles to James, chapter 1, beginning with verse 22. What does the Scripture say? God says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." So let me give you an illustration.

You've got a very important meeting. Maybe, for the single guys, it's your girlfriend; for those of us who are married, perhaps it's a business deal. You get up in the morning and run in there to look in the mirror. Your hair looks like mice nested in it all night, your face is dirty, and you see that you have not trimmed your beard or shaved. You think, "Before this meeting, I need to correct this." But you get busy, get dressed, and go to the meeting with your hair still a mess and your face still dirty.

What is our Lord saying? If you can look in a mirror, forget what you look like, and never do anything to correct it, that is the way you are when you hear the Word of God, and God tells you what you look like, but you never do anything to correct it. You are a forgetful hearer. You have not taken heed how you hear.

Our Lord said that the wayside hearer, when he hears the word, understands it not. Did you realize that you are responsible to understand the Word of God? Stop and think. You are responsible to understand the Word of God. I have had many people tell me, "Well, I just don't understand the Bible." That is probably either because you are unconverted, or, if you are converted, because you have not really studied, read, prayed, or asked for help or instruction.

It is your responsibility to understand the Word of God. For an unsaved man, spiritual things are foolishness, and he does not have the ability to understand them. But it is equally true that he has a responsibility. As Christians, we must understand that truly understanding the Word of the Lord is obtained from God alone.

Do you know what Job cried in Job 34 and verse 32? This should be our prayer: “That which I see not teach thou me.” Lord, that which I do not understand, teach me, show me, and help me. Give me the ability to understand.

None of us are going to understand the Word of God perfectly. But we can continue to increase in our knowledge of the Word of God and in our ability to understand it. You know what the Bible says in Psalm 25 and verse 9? Listen, here is His promise: "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." When we are proud, arrogant, and haughty and think we know it all, we are not going to be taught anything. But when we humble ourselves and come before God, He has promised to teach us.

Wherever there is no humbling of the heart, there is not going to be any understanding. And where there is no understanding, as our Lord said, Satan cometh immediately and catches away that which was sown in their hearts. The truth of the matter is, we have no one but ourselves to blame. We lost it. Have you lost something? Have you lost the Word of God in your life? Have you lost the understanding? We have heard the Word of God so frequently and so often. Each one of us should be scholars and theologians. But I am afraid we have let a lot of things slip because we have not maintained our concentration upon those important items.

Applications: Value the Seed and Anyone Can Sow

Let me make a couple of applications today. The first one is this: the wayside hearer does not value the seed. It is on the road. He can see it, but he does not pick it up. Why does he not pick it up? It has no value to him. It is not precious to him.

I want you to think. Let us pretend for a moment that there is only one grain of corn left in the entire world, and we let it rot. Nothing man could do could ever reproduce that corn. It is gone. It is lost.

Likewise, there is no substitute for the Word of God. When it is lost, it is lost. When it is gone, it is gone. I cannot help but think of 1 Samuel 3 and verse 1. The Bible says, "And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision." In other words, there was no open preaching or open teaching of the Word of God. Why was the Word of God considered so valuable in those days?

The answer is because of its scarcity. The reason gold is so valuable is because of its scarcity. I have not found any where I live, and you have not found any where you live. The Word of God is valuable, and it becomes more and more valuable when you realize its scarcity. Amos 8:11 says, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD."

During a famine, you learn to value food. During a drought, you learn to value water. When there is a famine of the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, you learn to value it. It is scarce. What you and I need to do is learn to value the Word of God, prize it, and possess it before the famine. If you knew that we were going to go through a depression greater than the Great Depression, would you not want to put up a little food and a little implement or two? Of course you would. If you know there is going to be a famine of the Word of God, would it not be wise to read, study, grasp, understand, and apply all that you can while you can?

Secondly, there is no emphasis in this parable laid upon the sower. The sower is insignificant. Undoubtedly, anyone can sow seed, even a child. All of our children and grandchildren used to help plant in the garden, sometimes having their own little spot where they planted a tomato plant or their seed. Anybody can plant a seed. You do not have to be a trained theologian, nor do you have to be called into the ministry, in order to plant a seed.

I want to read to you Charles Haddon Spurgeon's account of his conversion. When Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers that ever lived, was converted, the preacher was not there. He went to the church building for the service, but there was a tremendous snow, and the pastor could not get there because he was snowed in. So an ignorant man—one whom you and I would call ignorant—stood up

and preached. Spurgeon says, "I turned down a side street and came to a little Primitive Methodist chapel. In that chapel, there may have been a dozen or 15 people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache.

But that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved. If they could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache. The minister did not come that morning. He was snowed up, I suppose. At last, a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker or tailor or something of that sort, went into the pulpit to preach.

Now, it is well that preachers should be instructed, but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text because he had little else to say. The text was, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There I was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text.

The preacher began thus: “My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says look. Now, looking don’t take a great deal of pains. It ain’t lifting your foot or your finger. It’s just look. Well, a man needn’t go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool and yet you can look. A man needn’t be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look, even a child can look.

“But then the text says, look unto me. I,” said he in the broad Essex, “many a year looking to yourselves, but it’s no use looking there. You’ll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No. Look to Him by and by. Jesus Christ says, look unto Me.”

Some of you say, “We must wait for the Spirit’s working.” You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. The text says, “Look to Me.” Then the good man followed up his text this way: “Look unto Me. I’m sweating great drops of blood. Look unto Me. I’m hanging on the cross. Look unto Me. I’m dead and buried. Look unto Me, I rise again. Look unto Me, I ascend into heaven. Look unto Me, I’m sitting at the Father’s right hand. Oh, poor sinner. Look unto Me. Look unto Me.”

When he had gone on about the length and managed to spin out about ten minutes, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at

me under the gallery. With so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. Fixing his eyes on me as if he knew all my heart, he said, “Young man, you look miserable.” I did, but I had not been accustomed to remarks from the pulpit about my personal appearance.

However, it was a good blow struck right home. He continued, “You will always be miserable, miserable in life and miserable in death if you don’t obey my text. But if you obey now this moment, you will be saved.” Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted as only a Primitive Methodist could, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look, look, look. You have nothing to do but to look and live.”

I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said. I did not take much notice of it, being so possessed with that one thought, like when the brazen serpent was lifted up: the people only looked and were healed. So it was with me. I had been waiting to do 50 things. But when I heard that word, “look,” what a charming word it was to me. Oh, I looked until I could have almost looked my eyes away.

There and then the cloud was gone. The darkness had rolled away. In that moment I saw the sun. I could have risen that instant and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the precious blood of Christ and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that someone had told me this before. Trust Christ and you shall be saved. Yet it was no doubt all wisely ordered. And now I can say, “E’er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme and shall be till I die.”

And so Charles Haddon Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers that ever lived, was converted under the preaching of a man who had no more than ten minutes in him and could not even pronounce the words correctly. I have one scripture. I want you to understand this: anyone can plant a seed. Let me read 1 Corinthians 3, verses 6 and 7. This one passage explains it all.

Paul said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." God can take a crooked stick and draw a straight line. God can take the simplest,

most ignorant, most foolish individual that ever lived and use him for his honor and his glory. Anyone can plant a seed. We need to be planting the word of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your love and Your grace and Your mercy. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, what a blessing it is to know that we must look only to Jesus Christ. Give us grace, we pray, Lord, to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen. This program was produced by Dominion Ministry.

CHAPTER 8

When God Fights

January 5, 2014

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 21:1-14 (KJV)

The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, when King Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur, the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah, the son of Maaseah, the priest, saying, “Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us; for Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, maketh war against us. If so be that the Lord will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.” Then said Jeremiah to them, “Thus say you to Zedekiah. Thus said the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city.”

“And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand, and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast. They shall die of a great pestilence. And afterward, said the Lord, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from

> the pestilence, and from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life, and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword, he shall not spare them, neither have pity nor have mercy. And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence."
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> "But he that goeth out and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey. For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the Lord. It shall be given in the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. And touching the house of the king of Judah say, Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of David, thus saith the Lord."

When God Fights

"Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it because of the evil of your doings. Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley and rock of the plain, saith the Lord, which say, Who shall come down against us? Who shall enter into our habitations? But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doing, saith the Lord, and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about."

Introduction: The Reality of God as a Warrior

When we think of God, we primarily think of his holiness and his love, and therefore we do not even contemplate the idea of God fighting. Moreover, we have been taught by pietistic and pacifistic pastors and preachers that all fighting is wrong and wicked. We have been conditioned to think that anyone who engages in fighting or war is practically evil and wicked in and of themselves.

Of course, such thinking is not only unbiblical, but also ungodly and impractical. God not only fights, but he also demands that we

fight. If we do not resist evil, then evil prevails. There is an old adage that states, "All that is necessary for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing." While that adage is undoubtedly true, the truth is that God commands us to fight and to stand against wickedness. He said in Psalm 97:10, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." Then he asked in Psalm 94:16, "Who will rise up for me against the workers of iniquity? Who will stand for me against the evildoers?"

You must remember that the Apostle Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:12 to "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." He also told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

Right before Paul's death, he said in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." If we understand Paul's statements, then we also should understand that the entirety of our Christian life is a fight. It is indeed spiritual warfare. We cannot escape combat, because we are called to be Christian soldiers and Christian warriors. We are not only to engage in spiritual warfare, but at times we may be called, and it may be necessary, to engage in physical combat as well.

Biblical Evidence that God Fights

The very fact that the Scriptures call God a warrior should tell us something about Him. The God of the Bible is not the God of the average professing Christian, because the average professing Christian somehow thinks of God as a senile old man in heaven, in a rocking chair, who does not like sin, transgression, and wickedness, but understands them and therefore leniently winks at our sins and indiscretions. The truth of the matter is this: God is a warrior. He is not only a warrior, but He is holy, just, and righteous. The Bible says in Exodus 15:3, "The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name." So when men sin against God, trespass against His law, blaspheme Him, and disobey Him, in reality they have no idea who they are messing with. They really do not. For God is a holy, righteous, and just warrior.

He told His people in Exodus 14:14, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." In Deuteronomy 1:30, Joshua told the

people as they entered Canaan, "The Lord your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in the land of Egypt before your eyes." Obviously, God does indeed fight. David, who was a mighty warrior, learned all of his martial skills from God Himself. For he said in Psalm 144:1, "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight."

God does fight. He is a warrior.

In case some want to deny this truth and divide it by saying, "Well, all this is in the Old Testament," remember that the same truth also occurs in the New Testament. We have one Bible, not two, and one God, not two. In James 4:6, the Bible says, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." In 1 Peter 5:5, you have the same truth: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." In James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5, the word "resisteth" is used. It is exactly the same Greek word that occurs in both passages.

The word is antitassomai, which literally means to resist, to oppose, to set oneself in battle against. Thus, it means that God rises up in battle against the proud. You have to remember Revelation 19:11, where, in reference to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible says, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." Obviously, our Lord is indeed a warrior. He is a man of war. He fights.

What I want you to see in Jeremiah chapter 21 is a few truths concerning the reality of when God fights. That is an awesome thought: when God fights. The occasion of Jeremiah chapter 21 is this: King Zedekiah sent an embassy to Jeremiah and asked him to pray for Jerusalem and for the people of Judah, because Nebuchadnezzar and his armies were beginning to assemble around Jerusalem. He asked Jeremiah, as verse 2 says, "Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us. For Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, maketh war against us. If so be that the Lord will deal with us according to his wondrous works, that he may go up from us."

The Occasion of Jeremiah 21: Zedekiah's Request

He was asking Jeremiah to pray, to inquire of the Lord, to see whether the Lord would have mercy upon them and send Nebuchadnezzar away. Jeremiah's answer was basically this: It is too late to pray. We should realize that there is a time when prayer will not avail, when it is literally useless to pray. Do you realize there is even a time when God is angry with the prayers of His people? The psalmist asks in Psalm 80:4, "O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?" There is not only a time when it is useless and in vain to pray; there is a time when God will even be angry with the prayer of His people.

The problem is that most people think they can pray at any time and in any way, and somehow God is obligated to hear them. That is the farthest thing from the truth. God is not under any obligation to hear us, especially when we are in rebellion against Him. David said it like this: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18.

If you tend to think that you can pray any old time, any old way, and God is going to hear you, that is not the case. Jeremiah told Zedekiah that it was too late to pray. Proverbs 1:28 says, "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer. They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. Why? For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would have none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore, said God, they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

What did He say? "They shall call upon me, but I will not answer. They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." God said He was not going to listen to them. They could pray, but it would not do any good.

Jeremiah 11:11 says, "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them." There is a time when prayer is useless. There is a time when God will not hear prayer.

Zedekiah wanted Jeremiah to pray and inquire of the Lord, to see if the Lord, by His wondrous works, would turn Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army around. Jeremiah answered, No, it is too late to pray. Zedekiah wanted a miracle. Zedekiah wanted deliverance. Zedekiah wanted mercy. What God gave him was justice. When God fights, all those whom He fights against receive only justice.

Let us look in Jeremiah chapter 21 and find several principles concerning when God fights. First of all, the first principle we discern as to when God fights is found in the reality of His spurned grace and mercy. What puts God in a fighting mood? Spurning His grace, His mercy, and His goodness.

Principle 1: Spurned Grace and Mercy Provoke God to Fight

Very few people have ever really seen me angry, or seen me really wanting to fight. I can remember only two times in my life when I truly wanted to fight. One was when a man driving a semitruck tried to pull the entire truck over Alice and me. We could not go anywhere; he was upset and angry because he was in a traffic jam, and we were barely moving.

A semitruck could have run over us and four or five others. I told Alice, “If I can stop him, I’ll either whip him or he’ll whip me. It’s just that simple.” Those are the only two times I can remember that I really wanted to fight, and most of us have never seen such a time. But God really wants to fight. Have you ever stopped to think about this? When is God ready to fight? Let me show you.

I want you to hold Jeremiah 21, but turn in your Bibles to the book of Romans chapter 2 very quickly. We've got a lot of scripture to cover, but I want you to look at Romans chapter 2 at verses 4 through 6 and what God says. Romans chapter 2 verses 4 through 6. He's laying down a very excellent principle for us. Romans chapter 2 verse 4, look what God says to these wicked people, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous

judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds." Now look what God says. God says, you despise the riches of my goodness, and then what happens? My forbearance comes into play. Then you despise my forbearance, and what happens? Then my longsuffering comes into play. Finally, he is saying, there comes a time when my longsuffering ends, and all you're doing is gathering up and treasuring up in yourself wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

He says, you're getting yourself in a position for me to fight against you. You have to understand that when you disregard God, in essence, you despise him. And this is what happens in the book of Jeremiah. God had sent his prophets. God had sent his preachers. God had sent his Word. And over and over, the people refused to hear God's Word. They despised God's preachers. They refused to repent. I want you to look in Jeremiah chapter 8, if you would. We'll look at several passages just to set the stage and show you what these people were really like. Look in Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 6. Remember now, Jeremiah's been sent to them. He's preached to them. Jeremiah 8:6. Look what Jeremiah says, "I hearkened and heard, but they," that is the people, "spake not aright.

“No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.” Nobody listened to Jeremiah. Nobody would turn from their sins and wickedness. In fact, they took the attitude, “I haven’t done anything. I don’t see anything wrong with it. What have I done?” They just kept going the straight as they were going.

Zedekiah and the Judahites were refusing to walk according to God’s law. They had refused to worship God and had turned to idolatry. They had reached the point where God’s goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering toward them had been absolutely exhausted. Look in Jeremiah 9, verses 13–16: “And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. I will scatter them

also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them."

God is saying, "I'm going to wipe them out." There is a time when God will no longer bear with the sins and iniquities of a people. Look in Genesis 15. God suffered the Amorites for 400 years. The children of Israel went into Egypt for 400 years. Have you ever wondered why? Genesis 15:13 says, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years."

"And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." He tells Abram, "And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again." Why did God send the children of Israel into Egypt for 400 years, and why would they come forth again in the fourth generation? Here's why.

"For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." The Amorites lived in the land of Canaan. Guess what God did when he brought the Israelites out of the land of Canaan? He put a sword in their hand and said, "Kill every one of them." You know why? His longsuffering had come to an end. You know, the same is true of his dealings with Israel. I want you to look in Jeremiah 44 and look at verse 22. Jeremiah 44 and verse 22. I want you to see the exact words that God gave to the children of Israel. Notice, if you would, Jeremiah 44 and look in verse 22. Jeremiah 44:22, look what he says, "Because you have burned incense—"

That's verse 23, verse 22 is what I want: "So that the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as it is this day." Look what he said, though, in verse 22. "So that the Lord could no longer bear," and he forbore as long as he could. But now he can no longer bear their sin and their rebellion, and thus he's going to destroy them. Now, I want you to understand something.

It is not just the wicked that are at times consumed in God's righteous anger. Sometimes even Christians lose their lives because of their continual and constant disobedience. Listen to what I'm about to tell you. The truth that the Apostle John enunciated in 1 John 5:16 has never really dawned upon most Christians. I'm going to show you that verse in just a moment. But all that I want to point out right now is John said,

"There is a sin unto death." Then he's talking to Christians. I want you to turn there to 1 John chapter 5. I want you to see it in the context. Look in 1 John chapter 5. And let's begin reading there with verse 13. 1 John 5:13. Here it is. Watch what he says. 1 John 5:13. Just so you can see, this is being written to Christians. He says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God."

That ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God—that is a Christian. This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. If we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. That is a Christian.

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. There comes a time when God will no longer endure the disrespect and dishonor of a person or a people. There is indeed a sin unto death.

In fact, we will read about it a little later today. God did take the lives of a number of Christians in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Verse 30 says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Many sleep—sleep refers to death. Many sleep; that is, many have their lives taken because of their sins.

Now, if God will judge his people—and he will, for we read that judgment must begin at the house of God—if God will judge his people, do you not think that God will also judge the wicked? Of course he will. Psalm 7:11 tells us that God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

One may arrive at the point where he is beyond the reach of prayer. Zedekiah and the people of Judah reached this point. Go back to Jeremiah and look, beginning in Jeremiah chapter 7. I want to take you very quickly through three passages. I want you to see what God tells Jeremiah.

He is so intent on destroying the Judahites. In Jeremiah chapter 7 and verse 16, you remember Jeremiah as the weeping prophet. He wanted to pray for these rebellious, wicked people. So God tells him, "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee." God says it does not do you any good to pray for them, Jeremiah, because I am not going to hear you.

Look at Jeremiah chapter 11 and verse 14, because Jeremiah still wanted to pray for the people. Again, God tells Jeremiah, "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble." God says, "Jeremiah, I am not going to hear you if you pray for them, and I am not going to hear them if they pray for themselves."

If you look in Jeremiah chapter 14 at verses 11 and 12, finally God consents to allow Jeremiah to pray for the people. But notice what God tells him to pray: "Then said the Lord unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry. And when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence." What did God say? "Pray not for this people for their good." In other words, Jeremiah, if you want to pray for them, I will let you pray. But here is what you pray: you pray that I will destroy them, because that is exactly what I am going to do.

God is gracious, kind, merciful, and longsuffering. But there comes a time when His longsuffering ends. And when His longsuffering ends, He will fight. The very first thing you learn from Jeremiah 21 is that when God fights, it is when His goodness, mercy, grace, forbearance, and longsuffering have been spurned and neglected.

Principle 2: Ineffectiveness of Human Weapons When God Fights

They refuse to acknowledge Him. They refuse to bow to Him, worship Him, and obey Him. He reaches the point that He will fight. When God fights, we discern that His fighting is found in the inability of warriors and the ineffectiveness of their weaponry.

Look at Jeremiah 21:4. After Zedekiah sends to Jeremiah and says, “Pray for us,” Jeremiah says, in essence, “No, too late to pray.” Here is what Jeremiah tells Zedekiah: “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city.” What did he say to Zedekiah and all the men of Judah? “I will turn back your weapons. You will not have any fighting ability. Your weaponry will be ineffective.” Moreover, He said, “I will bring Nebuchadnezzar into the gates.”

Have you ever experienced days when absolutely nothing went right? What about days when everything you worked for and everything you endeavored to accomplish failed and fell through? Do you remember how frustrated, discouraged, downhearted, and depressed you became because nothing worked?

Suppose, in one of those days, that your life, the life of your family, and the life of your friends depended upon your effectiveness and abilities. Do you realize that if God can defeat us so easily, it is just as easy for God to defeat an entire army? The truth is, it is God who makes our weaponry effective, and it is also God who renders our weaponry ineffective.

How do you think David overcame Goliath? Goliath was much larger, stronger, and more experienced. He had all the combat armor, the sword, the spear, and the shield. David had nothing but a little sling. We tend to think that because someone is powerful and strong and has modern-day, or even secret, weaponry, he is bound to win the battle. That is not necessarily the truth. Solomon tells us in Ecclesiastes 9:11, “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.” Proverbs 21:31 tells us, “The horse is prepared against the

day of battle: but safety is of the Lord." Do you realize how easily David killed Goliath? All God did was make David's sling effective and Goliath's weaponry ineffective. Just that simple.

It is simple and easy for God not only to overthrow our plans, but also the plans of entire armies. Just because you have what you think is the best military plan available unto man, that does not mean that you're going to win anything.

The Syrians had conquest on their minds. They had surrounded Samaria. If you went out of Samaria, the Syrians would kill you. If you stayed inside Samaria, you were going to starve to death because famine stalked the city. Pestilence was in the city. You would die either way. How did God get rid of the Syrian army? I want to show you what he used. This is how he totally frustrated the military plans of the Syrian army.

In 2 Kings 7:6, the Bible says, "For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their lives."

What did God do? He just allowed them to hear a noise, and they interpreted that noise as the great host coming against them. All of their military plans were instantly crushed. Our sovereign God may easily turn back the weaponry and the plans of those whom he is against.

In Job 34:24, the Bible says, "He shall break in pieces mighty men without number." In Psalm 76:5, it says, "The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands." In Isaiah 3:25, it says, "Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war."

God's going to kill them. Jeremiah 51:25 shows how easy it is for Him to destroy the might and effectiveness of men and their weaponry. Here He is speaking about fighting against the Babylonians: "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out

mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain."

This is what God is going to do. Notice how He does it. In verse 30, concerning the mighty warriors of Babylon, He says, "The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight. They have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken." What did God do to the mighty Babylonian host? He turned them into women—not literally, but He made them afraid and weak. They would not even get out of their places of protection to fight. God did not merely defeat their weapons; He made the warriors unable and unwilling to use them.

While it is true that God oftentimes gives His strength and protection for battle, it is equally true that when God fights, He turns the effectiveness of the weapons of those against whom He fights back against them. They cannot function. They cannot fight. They cannot be effective.

In our modern day, multitudes fear the power of our enemies. It is true that we have great and powerful enemies, and that they have great and powerful weapons. They hate Christ, and they hate His followers. However, we have to remember this: the greatest power of all is the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Amen. As the Apostle John wrote in 1 John, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

King Abijah of Judah gave stern words of warning to King Jeroboam of Samaria. His words are recorded in 2 Chronicles 13:12: "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." It is useless and vain to fight against God.

He is capable of turning back every weapon, and he is capable of turning back every warrior. In light of his great power, there is indeed a special promise that God gives to those who obey him. You ought to want to be more righteous than ever. This promise and blessing show how powerful God is:

"In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

This is the heritage of those who have their righteousness in him, those who obey him. I am glad God is capable of turning back every weapon the enemy has. When God fights, he makes them ineffective, and he makes them all tremble.

Here is the third principle. When God fights, he fights either mediately, immediately, or both. Look again in Jeremiah chapter 21, verses 4 and 5. I will explain that distinction, but notice what God says: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city."

Principle 3: God Fights Mediately, Immediately, or Both

"And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath."

When God fights, he may fight mediately, immediately, or both.

Theologically speaking, "mediate" refers to the use of means. "Immediate" or "immediately" has no reference to time; it refers to the fact that God acts directly and personally without the use of means. Creation was therefore an immediate act of God: He spoke the world into existence and did not use means.

Providence may be an immediate act of God, such as when He gave manna from heaven, or it may be mediate, when God uses individuals to supply needs. When God sent Nebuchadnezzar against

the Judahites, it was a mediate act; He was using means. Providentially, He gave victory to the Babylonian Empire. When God destroyed the Judahites who fled to Egypt after Nebuchadnezzar had already destroyed Judah, He did so by giving Egypt into Nebuchadnezzar's hands.

In Jeremiah 44:30, God says, "Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life." God used Nebuchadnezzar; that was a mediate act of God. He used means.

When those Judahites fled to Egypt against the word of God, God told them, in effect, that because they were afraid of the king of Babylon, He would send him down to Egypt to conquer Egypt and take care of them there. When God used hornets to drive the Canaanites, the Amorites, out of the land, that also was a mediate act of God. God said in Exodus 23:28, "And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee."

So theologically speaking, that was just simply a mediate act of God. Now, please understand this. Mediate acts of God are still acts of God. He just simply used means. So it means when God fights, he just uses men, or nations, or countries, but it is still that it's God that is doing the fighting. Look in Jeremiah 22, if you would, in verses 7 through 9. I'm going to show you this. It's still God that's doing the fighting. Look in Jeremiah chapter 22, and here it is in verses 7 through 9. Jeremiah 22:7. Look what God tells the people, "And I will prepare destroyers against thee." God will. "I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire.

And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this great city? Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them." Notice what God said. God said, "I will prepare destroyers against you." And then he said, "Men's going to pass by

and say, 'Why has the Lord done this?'" Now, God used men. But it was God who did it.

In Jeremiah 46:15-16, listen to this. "Why are thy valiant men swept away? they stood not, because the Lord did drive them." When God uses means, it means that God is just simply fighting mediately. And when God fights immediately, it is still God's fighting. For instance, if you look very quickly in Jeremiah 47, and I love this passage, look in Jeremiah chapter 47. And notice, if you would please, verses 6 and 7, because God is using means. And the Bible says this, Jeremiah chapter 47, beginning there with verse—fifteen? Jeremiah 47:15? Well, Jeremiah 47—no, pardon. I said Jeremiah 47, it's not Jeremiah 47, is it? Hmm. Well, I can quote the scripture.

I've got it right here. It may be Isaiah, but it doesn't matter. "O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still." And then the question is answered. "How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it." So once again, God says, no, it's not going to be quiet. It is God's sword that he has raised. God says it's not going to be quiet and it's not going to be put back in the scabbard until I'm finished with it. So it's still God's work.

God used the Assyrians to destroy Samaria, the northern empire of Israel. Notice what God says in Isaiah 10:5-6: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets."

God calls the Assyrian the rod of His anger and the staff in their hand His indignation. He says, "I will send him," and, "I will give him a charge." God sent the Assyrians, and God sent the Chaldeans. The Assyrians destroyed Samaria and conquered the Israelites easily. Likewise, Babylon did the same to Judah and Jerusalem. The hornets did a fine job on the Canaanites.

But here is my question: If God uses means so successfully when He fights mediately, and those whom He sends cannot be defeated,

cannot be overthrown, and cannot be turned back, how do you think one will fare when God rises up to fight against him personally?

I do not know about you, but this is scary. Look in Jeremiah 21:5. What did God say through Jeremiah to Zedekiah and the people of Judah? He said, "And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath." God said, "I myself will fight."

What does it mean when God says he is going to fight against you with an outstretched hand and with an outstretched arm? Consider Exodus chapter 6 and verse 6. God was going to deliver his people out of Egypt, destroy the Egyptians, and destroy Egypt. He told the children of Israel, “Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments.” “I will redeem you with a stretched out arm and with great judgments.”

When you go back to Jeremiah 21, God says, “I'm going to fight against you,” in verse 5, “with an outstretched hand and a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath.” You have to remember that it was that outstretched arm that was God's great deliverance and redemption, which he wrought in delivering the children of Israel out of Egypt. He fought against the Egyptians and brought the children of Israel out. He fought against Pharaoh and all of his false gods. He destroyed them. He drowned Pharaoh and all his soldiers in the Red Sea. His great power was used in delivering his people.

But now God says, “My great power is going to be used to destroy you. You can expect no aid. You can expect no help. You can expect no mercy. You can expect no grace. You can expect no quarter. Because I wholly and completely and absolutely intend to destroy you.” We have to understand that God is a warrior. He is an implacable warrior. And when he fights, he fights.

The Certainty of God's Victory

Deuteronomy 32:39 says, “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither

is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever."

"If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy." What did God say? If I have to draw out my sword, if I have to fight, I'm going to destroy you.

When God fights, he will make an end. Do you remember what he told Samuel when he was going to fight against the house of Eli in 1 Samuel 3:12? He said, "In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end." He said in the book of Nahum 1:9, "What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end. Listen, affliction shall not rise up the second time." God says, When I fight, I will not need a second blow. One is quite sufficient because he is the sovereign, powerful man of war, God of gods and King of kings.

It should be obvious that when God fights, victory is absolutely certain for God, and defeat is absolutely assured for his enemies. Who can resist God successfully? The answer is no one. He said in Isaiah 42:13, "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." He will go forth like a mighty man to battle and prevail against his enemies.

Applications: Cry to God, Submit, and Speak Truth

If we believe that God is a God of war, and that he fights as he said in his Scripture, why do we not cry to him to fight against his enemies now? Why do we not cry as David did in Psalm 68:1, "Arise, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered. Let them drift away as smoke before the wind"? If we believe that God fights, why do we not cry upon him to fight against his enemies and our enemies?

Secondly, God has power to preserve and defend, but God also has power to destroy. If we wish to secure God's protection, we must not

become His enemies. We must submit to Him and obey Him at all times.

The third application is this: God's faithful servants, like Jeremiah, must always speak according to God's Word and according to truth, no matter how difficult that truth is. Jeremiah did not look at Zedekiah and say, "Everything's going to be all right; you just trust." No! He said, "God's going to kill you and everybody surrounding you. That's what God says." False prophets may speak smoothly and prophesy smooth things, but God's men must proclaim the truth, no matter how difficult or hurtful it is. God's Word and God's truth separate God's preachers from false prophets. As God says, "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?"

God is a warrior, and He fights. Make sure you do not spurn His mercy, grace, goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering. Make sure you are not His enemy, on the receiving end, so that He fights neither against you mediately nor immediately, for the Lord is a man of war.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank Thee for Thy love, mercy, truth, goodness, and grace. We are thankful that Thou art fully and absolutely capable of destroying all Thy enemies and our enemies, and absolutely capable of protecting Thy people. Thou hast given us this wonderful promise, that no weapon that is formed will prosper against us. Give us grace to trust Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

The Rebel's Prayer

March 7, 2012

Introduction: The Lord's Prayer as the Rebel's Prayer

Matthew 6 and Luke 11 record the prayer considered here. In Matthew 6:10 we read, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” Luke 11:2 records it this way: “And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.” Years ago I preached a brief series on this prayer.

Naturally, this passage is referred to most often as the Lord’s Prayer or the Disciples’ Prayer. This prayer could also be called the Kingdom’s Prayer or the Kingdom Prayer. But it could also be called the Rebel’s Prayer, which I will explain a little later. Actually, this is not the Lord’s Prayer. Our Lord’s Prayer is recorded in John 17. This is where the Lord is teaching His disciples to pray.

He not only teaches them in thoughts, but in words as well. For instance, in Matthew 6:9 He states, “After this manner therefore pray ye.” In Luke 11:2, “And he said unto them, When ye pray, say…”

Obviously, He is giving us words that we are to say. You must understand that words have meanings, and it is the meanings of the words that are most important. You may repeat these words without understanding their meaning and receive little encouragement, little help, and little understanding. However, when you understand the meaning of the words and the implications of the words, there is a vast, great benefit derived therefrom. Thus, there are major implications in each of these petitions, each of these adorations.

Addressing God as 'Our Father'

I am not going to deal with all of these petitions, but I am going to single out just one: the petition, “Thy kingdom come.” In order to single out that petition, I must make some cursory remarks concerning some of the petitions and adorations that surround that one particular petition. Notice Luke 11:2: “And he said to them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.” When we begin to pray, we are to address the one true and living God as our Father.

The term "Father" emphasizes not only a relationship, but also our devotion to Him, because it reveals an intimate, loving, gracious fellowship that we enjoy as we pray and worship before Him. Arthur W. Pink wrote concerning the phrase "Our Father":

"These words, 'Our Father,' not only signify the office that God sustains to us by virtue of the everlasting covenant, but they also clearly imply our obligation. They teach us both how we ought to dispose ourselves toward God when we pray to Him, and the conduct that is becoming to us by virtue of this relationship. As His children, we must honor Him even more than our human parents, be in subjection to Him, delight in Him, and strive in all things to please Him.

"Again, the phrase 'Our Father' not only teaches us our personal interest in God Himself, who by grace is our Father, but it also instructs us as to our interest in our fellow Christians, who in Christ are our brethren. It is not merely 'my Father' to whom we pray, but 'our Father.' We must express our love to our brethren by praying for them."

How much is included in these two words, "Our Father"? If He is my Father, there are other children as well, and we should remember their needs. He is our Father by election, by regeneration, by conversion, and by faith. Moreover, He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In John 20:17, Jesus Christ said to Mary, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." God the Father is also the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, in Ephesians 1:3 we read: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

When we understand that God the Father is the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, it gives us other implications. We have been adopted into the family of God. Our God is indeed the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which means that He is not only our Lord, our Savior, and our Redeemer; He is also our elder brother, and therefore we have an inheritance in Him.

Our Lord said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven." When we use the expression "which art in heaven," it indicates the sovereignty, majesty, greatness, and glory of God. We know and understand that God is omnipresent. That means He is everywhere at once in the totality of His being.

The Majesty of 'Which Art in Heaven'

Psalm 139 makes that exceedingly clear. It is not that part of God is in China, part in America, part in Russia, and part in Mongolia, and that, when all these parts are put together, we have one God. No, that is not it. That is heresy. The omnipresence of God means that God is everywhere at once in the totality of His being. There is no place in which God is not.

When Solomon dedicated the temple, in 1 Kings 8:27 he said, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built?" Obviously, God is omnipresent. Thus, when He says, "Our Father which art in heaven," we are talking about the greatness, majesty, and superiority of God. The fact that we say "Our Father

which art in heaven" indicates that heaven is the place where His majesty and glory are preeminently manifested.

In Isaiah 66:1 He said, "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." If heaven is His throne, that is where His majesty and glory are particularly and peculiarly manifested. Stop and think: "Our Father which art in heaven." The realization of this truth should fill us with the deepest awe and reverence, because our Father who is in heaven is sovereign, in absolute and total control of everything.

Psalm 115:3 says, "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." He is not only the sovereign God of heaven and earth; He is also our Father. Can you imagine for one moment the implications of knowing and understanding a relationship with the Divine Being who is not only your Father but also has absolute and total control over everything?

That surely ought to encourage us to pray and to carry every problem and every burden to Him, because He is divinely sovereign. He said, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." When we say, "Hallowed be thy name," we are asking that God, who is the most holy and most glorious, enable us not only to acknowledge His holiness and His honor, but also to make us and enable us to continue to hallow and honor His name. Thomas Manton, an old Puritan, said of this petition, "In this petition, the glory of God is both desired and promised on our part. For every prayer is both an expression of a desire and also an explicit vow of our solemn obligation that we take upon ourselves to prosecute what we ask."

Hallowed Be Thy Name: A Vow of Honor

Manton's statement is also given in the source as an implicit vow or solemn obligation that we take upon ourselves to prosecute what we ask. Thus, when we say, "Hallowed be thy name," we express not only a desire for God to be honored and glorified, but also a solemn obligation on our part to honor and glorify His name. Manton continues, "Prayer is a preaching to ourselves in God's hearing. We speak to God to warn ourselves, not for His information, but for our edification." That certainly is true.

Our primary duty in prayer, then, is to disregard ourselves and give God the preeminence in our thoughts, desires, and supplication. This petition, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name," necessarily comes first. Why? Because the glory of God is the end of all things. All other requests in this prayer are subordinate to it. We are to sanctify and honor God's name above everything in our lives. That is why Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The Kingdom Has Come, Is Here, and Is Coming

The message today is not dealing with the Lord's Prayer in general, but specifically this petition: "Thy kingdom come." When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," there are several very obvious implications. The first one is simple: God does have a kingdom. The second obvious implication is that we want that kingdom to come in its fullness. This is not a detailed exposition of the kingdom of God, but we can say three things about it very quickly: the kingdom has come, the kingdom is here, and the kingdom is coming.

How can we say the kingdom has come? We can say the kingdom has come because the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, has come. What did our Lord say in Matthew 12:28? He said to the scribes and Pharisees, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

So the kingdom of God was here when Christ was here. He said, "The kingdom of God is come unto you." Colossians 1:12–13 shows us not only that the kingdom of God has come, but that it is here: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

The kingdom has come because Christ has come. The kingdom is here because we are now in the kingdom. And the kingdom is still coming; that is, it is going to come in its fullness and fruition. The Bible tells us in Revelation 11:15, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

When we are talking about the kingdom, then, we know that the kingdom has come, the kingdom is here, and the kingdom is coming. We are looking particularly at this one simple petition: "Thy kingdom come."

A Personal Petition

A Personal Petition: Submitting to Christ's Reign

Look again at Luke 11:2: “And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.” “Thy kingdom come.” Have you ever really, genuinely thought about the implications of this petition, “Thy kingdom come”?

There are four things to consider very quickly. The first three are very interconnected. Actually, all four are interconnected, but you may not see the impact of the fourth one until we come to it. First of all, it is a personal petition. Our Lord is teaching us to pray, and after He teaches us to say, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name,” He gives us this petition: “Thy kingdom come.”

It is personal in the sense that you are asking for the kingdom of God to come in its fullness, while at the same time asking that you might be submissive and obedient in that kingdom yourself. Why in the world would you seek for the kingdom of God to come if you did not want to be a part of it and participate in it? In this petition, you are asking Christ to reign everywhere, and that certainly includes your heart, your soul, and your life.

When you say, “Thy kingdom come,” you are acknowledging that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods, and that He deserves to be honored and worshipped. So very obviously, this petition, “Thy kingdom come,” is personal.

Now go to 1 Chronicles 29 and look at verse 11. I want you to see what King David said. This is a summation of the kingdom of God. Look at what he said.

"Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art

exalted as head above all." When we say, "Thy kingdom come," that is exactly what we are saying. We are saying that God is the greatest—His power, His majesty, His glory, and His victory—and that He is King of all the earth.

Thus, "Thy kingdom come" is a personal petition. What you are asking is that Jesus Christ would be exalted in your life, in every area and every sphere. You are acknowledging Him as your King, your Sovereign, your Head, your Guide, and your Lord. No one would pray this petition if he did not personally desire the kingdom of God on earth. This petition expresses a personal desire for God's rule, not merely an acknowledgment that He possesses the kingdom.

What David said in 1 Chronicles 29, what our Lord taught us to pray in Matthew 6 and Luke 11, is the same as what the prophets prophesied. Isaiah 11:9 says, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." Here is what is meant by that comparison: how much of the sea is covered by water? All of it. Therefore, when we pray, "Thy kingdom come," what are we asking? We are asking for God's kingdom to extend totally, completely, and absolutely in every area, every corner, and every sphere of life.

A Practical Petition: Conquering Sin and Confusion

Habakkuk, one of the minor prophets, says in chapter 2, verse 14, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." The same image appears again: the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as completely as the waters cover the sea.

When we are taught to pray, “Thy kingdom come,” it is a personal petition. We are personally seeking God’s glory, grace, majesty, superiority, and sovereignty over every area and sphere of our lives, the lives of others, and the world. We are asking for the appointed time when the fullness of the Lord’s kingdom will arrive.

It is also a practical petition. In Luke 11:2, Jesus says, “When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.” We are practically petitioning the Father not

only to prepare our hearts, but the hearts of others as well. We are asking Jesus Christ to go forth as conqueror.

John Calvin said it this way: “He is said to reign among men when they voluntarily devote and submit themselves to be governed by Him, placing their flesh under the yoke and renouncing their desires. Such is the corruption of the nature that all of our affections are so many soldiers of Satan who oppose the justice of God and consequently obstruct or disturb his reign. By this prayer we ask that he may remove all hindrances and bring all men under his dominion and may lead them to meditate on the heavenly life.”

This is done partly by the preaching of the Word of God and partly by the secret power of the Holy Spirit. It is God’s will to govern men by His word and voice, but the Holy Spirit must make that word effectual. If the Holy Spirit does not apply the word of God, no one really hears. Augustine expressed it this way: “I heard the gospel all of my life, and then one day I heard it.”

Years ago, a preacher came to our church in Jessup and preached all week on the doctrine of election. It was a wonderful week. One of our faithful men came to me and said, “Pastor, this is so great, this is so wonderful, but I have one question: Why haven’t you been preaching this?” I asked him, “Why have you not been listening?” I had been preaching it; he simply had not heard it. That week, he heard it.

The kingdom of God is opposed to all disorder and confusion. God is not the author of confusion. How much confusion exists in civil government, in the churches, in homes and families, and in our own individual lives?

Think of all the vain thoughts, wrong desires, impure motives, bad attitudes, wicked dispositions, pride, arrogance, unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, and disobedience that remain in each one of us. That creates nothing but confusion in our lives. Do we want those sins conquered? Do we want those sins defeated? Do we want our sins controlled? Do we want the totality of our lives to be brought into conformity to the Word of God and submission to Jesus Christ?

We need to learn to pray this prayer because it is a very practical petition: “Thy kingdom come.” Your kingdom come in my life. God is

not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Let me put it to you very plainly: Where confusion exists, so do sin, strife, and wickedness. James 3:16 says, “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”

You can mark it down: Wherever there is envying, wherever there is strife, wherever there is confusion, there is every evil work. So when we pray, “Thy kingdom come,” we are asking that Christ conquer us, reign over us, subdue us, submit us, surrender us, and control us in every aspect of our lives.

I believe the Apostle Paul understood this, and that this was partly what he had in mind when he prayed this prayer. We always hold him up on a pedestal, yet he says clearly in Philippians 3:12, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” Paul said, “I hadn't arrived. I'm not perfect. But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

What did the Apostle Paul say? “Forgetting those things which are behind.” How many of us can go back and undo things that we did in our previous years? Not one. We can't.

A Providential Petition

But by God's grace, we can repent and then go forward. You can't do anything else. That's what the Apostle Paul says. He can't go back and unlive what he lived or undo what he did, but he can repent and go forward. That's exactly what he's saying. So when we're praying this petition, "Thy kingdom come," it's not only a personal petition; it's a very practical petition, because Paul desired to have his life totally conquered by Jesus Christ. He said, "I press toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

A Providential Petition: Gathering the Elect

Thirdly, this petition, "Thy kingdom come," is a providential petition. Let me explain what I mean by that. Our Lord is teaching us

to pray, and this petition is "Thy kingdom come." I've pointed out it's a personal petition and a practical petition; now it's a providential petition. By that, when we pray "Thy kingdom come," we understand that the kingdom is brought into fullness and fruition by God's grace, power, and mercy, and in His time. We may long for it. We may want it. We may work for it. We may pray for it. We may seek it. We may desire it, but the truth is, it is only going to come in its fullness in the time that He ordained.

In this petition, we are praying for the success of the gospel: "Thy kingdom come." We're praying for the conversion of God's elect. We're praying that Christ would indeed save His people.

Matthew Henry said it like this: "Let thy kingdom come. Let the gospel be preached to all and embraced by all. Let it be brought to subscribe to the record God has given in his word concerning his Son and to embrace him as their Savior and Sovereign. Let the bounds of the gospel church be enlarged, the kingdom of the world be made Christ's kingdom, and all men become subjects to it and live as becomes their character."

Have you ever thought about all the things that the Apostle Paul went through and suffered, and why he went through and suffered them? You remember how he gives, in 2 Corinthians, that he was beaten with rods, received forty lashes a number of times, was in the deep, and suffered all of these things. Why? In 2 Timothy 2:10, he says, “Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

Paul understood that our Lord has a people. He said, “I'm going to endure all of these things. I will keep going, that I may reach them.” So this petition, “Thy kingdom come,” teaches us to pray for, to witness, and to seek, and to reach all those for whom our Lord is a sacrifice and a substitute.

We know that Christ has His sheep. What did He say in John 10:14? “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.” In John 10:27 He says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” You cannot deny the fact that God

does indeed have His sheep, wherever they are and whoever they are.

One thing I know is this: When I preach and teach, I know not everyone is going to be saved, but I know some are. I know that not everybody is going to be blessed, but I know that some are, because He has His sheep, and they hear His voice, and they follow Him. When we pray, “Thy kingdom come,” we are asking Christ to gather His sheep from all the nations, wherever they are scattered, and bring them safely into His fold. John 11:52 says that the high priest prophesied that Christ should die, “not for that nation only, but also that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”

Moreover, God the Father has declared that the gathering together of all things in Christ is an aspect of His eternal purpose. Ephesians 1:10 says, “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”

I can say this unequivocally and dogmatically: in God's ordained time, everything will work perfectly according to God's eternal purpose. All of His sheep, all of His people, will be gathered in. I do not know when that will be. I would love to see it in my time, but I may not. I have no idea when it will occur, but I know it is going to come to pass.

So what I have to do is keep praying, "Thy kingdom come." It is a personal petition, a practical petition, a providential petition, and lastly, a political petition. How in the world can I say that the petition, "Thy kingdom come," is a political petition?

A Political Petition: Advancing Christ's Government

You have been taught and have heard all of your life that politics and religion do not mix. Two things you never talk about are politics and religion. If you talk about them, you simply do not mix them because they do not mix. But who said they do not mix? When people say that politics and religion cannot be mixed, they do not understand the concept of the kingdom of God, nor do they understand the concept of politics.

First, let me point out that all government is religious. It may be the Christian religion or a pagan religion, but it is still religious. All law is religious. It may be Christian law or pagan law, but it is still religious because behind every law is a determination of good and evil, right and wrong. Someone's religion determines good and evil, right and wrong; each of these concepts is guided by an understanding of religion. It is impossible to have government without religion or law without religion. The question is not whether you will have government or law without religion, but whose religion it will be: God's religion or man's religion?

Even if someone says, “Well, I’m an atheist. Therefore, my law is not religious,” that’s hogwash. You know what atheism is? Theism means God. Put an “A” on it: atheism, no God. When you say, “My religion is atheism,” or, “I don’t have religion; I’m an atheist,” what you are saying is, “I’m a secularist humanist with a religious secularist humanist worldview.” It is still religious. Because you do not believe in the living God, you have established yourself as God. It is man’s religion. It is autonomy. You cannot have government, and you cannot have law, without religion. Period.

Secondly, consider the word “politics.” It comes from the Greek word which literally means “of a citizen”—politikos, of a citizen. What does that have to do with “Thy kingdom come”? Look at Acts 21:39. Paul was going to address the people who were trying to kill him. Speaking to the centurion who had rescued him, before giving his testimony in chapter 22, Paul said: “But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.” He said, “I am a citizen of no mean city.” The word “citizen” is polites. In other words, Paul was a citizen of a very great city.

Now look at Philippians 3:20: “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” The word “conversation” is a very interesting word. It is the Greek word politeuma. Ah, politeuma, politikos. The word refers to the administration of civil affairs of a commonwealth, the constitution of a commonwealth, a form of government and the laws by which it is administered, a state, a commonwealth, a commonwealth of citizens. Paul could literally have said, “For our citizenship is in heaven; from

whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” We have a citizenship. We have a political view, a worldview, a Christian view that is biblical and scriptural.

Yes, politics and religion do mix. Because if you are a citizen of heaven, you have a political view, a political understanding, a biblical law of a Christian worldview, and you express it. So when I pray, "Thy kingdom come," it is a political petition.

I'm a southerner and a citizen of the state of Georgia. I do not care one thing for any game that has a ball in it. I don't care if football or baseball—I just don't care for it. But although I care nothing for a game with a ball in it, if I hear that Georgia is playing Kentucky, I automatically want Georgia to win. Why? I'm a citizen of Georgia. I don't want Auburn to win.

If I hear Kentucky is playing New York, I want Kentucky to win. Why? I'm a southerner. If I hear America is playing Russia, I want America to win. Why? I'm an American. If I want Georgia to win, although I don't care anything about ball; if I want the South to win, although I don't care anything about ball; if I want America to win, although I don't care anything about ball—don't you understand that as a Christian, I automatically want King Jesus to win?

I want His kingdom. I want His will. I want His word. The kingdoms of sin and Satan and man are all opposed and contrary to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those other kingdoms are darkness and disorder and confusion and consternation. Jesus Christ has the kingdom of light and truth. When I pray, "Thy kingdom come," it is a political petition, a political prayer that the kingdom of Jesus Christ would be advanced, that the kingdom of sin, Satan, and man would be destroyed, and that Jesus Christ would rule and reign supreme.

The Rebel's Prayer Against Tyranny

The Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it like this: "In the second petition we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it and kept in it, and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened." So when we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we're asking,

"Lord, hasten the day that you defeat Satan and his host and let them be completely and totally vanquished. Let Thy people be done with sinning forever."

“Let Christ see the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and let King Jesus triumph over everything.” It is a political petition, an expression of prayer that God may reign everywhere, that His laws may be obeyed, and especially that the gospel of Christ would be advanced everywhere, till the world shall be filled with the glory and fullness of God as the waters cover the sea. “Thy kingdom come” is a prayer and petition for the defeat of Christ’s enemies, for the overthrow, defeat, and spoil of all those who oppose Him and hate Him.

David recorded a conversation between the Father and His Son in Psalm 110:1: “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” That verse is repeated several times in the New Testament. Matthew 22:44 says, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Hebrews 10:13 says that Christ sat down on the right hand of God, “from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” In other words, our Lord shall subdue all His enemies.

Philippians 2:10–11 says that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” He will conquer, and His enemies will fall.

Psalm 2 declares the Father’s decree to the Son: “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” In other words, He has established Him and set up His kingdom. Then the Father says, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” To the kings of the earth, God says: “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”

"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." When we pray this petition, "Thy kingdom come," we're asking that the earth may become obedient to the will of God and be in subjection to Jesus Christ. We're asking that God the Father will subdue all the wicked, all the reprobate, and all the ungodly, bringing down those that oppose King Jesus. When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we're declaring and acknowledging that we hate and regret whatever we perceive to be contrary to the will of God, and we long for its utter destruction—not only that He may rule all of our affections, but that we may yield ourselves to Him without reserve, with all cheerfulness and gladness. We learn to pray with David in Psalm 7 and verse 9: "Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just."

Isaiah 9:6-7 says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." What will God the Father do? He will establish His Son, Jesus Christ, and of the increase of His government, there shall be no end.

Now, I titled this message "The Rebel's Prayer" for a reason. The truth of the matter is this: As God's people, we are not rebels. In reality, the rebels are those who oppose our Lord Jesus Christ and His kingdom. However, down through history, all of those who have ever resisted tyranny and despotism through the ages have been labeled rebels. George Washington was a rebel. Thomas Jefferson was a rebel. Even in the War of Northern Aggression, the Southern people were called Rebs or rebels.

It was not the South who was in rebellion to the law; it was the North that was in rebellion to the law. If you resist the new world order or fight against tyranny, you are not only called a rebel, you are now labeled a terrorist. Isn't it amazing that only those who seek to stand for what is right and true and biblical and constitutional are now called rebels and terrorists? We must remember that rebellion

can only be to lawful authority. If there is no lawful authority, there is no rebellion. It is only resistance.

If I came by and said, "I just passed a law that everyone has to turn in their weapons by tomorrow at two o'clock, and if you don't do it, you're rebellious," would you be a rebel if you did not turn them in? No, because I have no authority to ask you to turn in your weapons. Neither does the federal government, nor does the state government. If you resisted, you would not be rebellious; you would just be resisting evil, tyranny, and wickedness. Rebellion can only be against lawful authority. So if there is no lawful authority, there is no rebellion.

The truth of the matter is this: The true rebels are those who are in rebellion against Jesus Christ and His law. Those who want to be submissive to Christ are not rebels, although they are listed as rebels.

I want to read something to you. The impetus of this message came from a friend of mine, Dr. Brooke Stockton. I do not know whether what Dr. Stockton wrote was original with him or whether he simply sent it around, but since it came from him, I am going to give him credit. Here is the one brief paragraph that really got me to thinking about this message. Here is what he wrote:

"Our precious Lord taught us to pray, 'Thy kingdom come.' It is part of the Lord's Prayer, a.k.a. the Disciple's Prayer. Positively, it is a plea that all men and all man's institutions would surrender to be ruled by God's law. Negatively, it is a coup d'état against ungodly authorities and de facto officials. This is the rebels' prayer, a revolutionaries' cry against the immorality of this age and the promotion of wickedness by men in rebellion against their Creator. The prayer is God's permission to resist evil, to take the high road and to swim against the stream. It allows men to shout, 'No king but King Jesus.' It is permission to adopt the motto, 'One nation under God and one absolute law.' It is a prayer against the belief that man is God, that government is God, that man's laws or their constitutions are absolute. It is a prayer against the status quo where ambitious men seek to advance the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. It is a prayer against abortion, oppression, homosexuality, pornography, and greed."

It is a prayer against secularism, atheism, humanism, socialism, Marxism, and every other ism wherein secularists seek to build a city where man is the measure of all things. It is against rulers in rebellion against the Lord and His anointed, and governments that enslave and control men through coercion, intimidation, and fear; governments hostile to the maxim that the Bible is the source of all law; and governments that break their own laws.

It is against unjust laws and legislators who do mischief through law, creating man-made statutes and codes that enslave their citizenry, seeking through law to create a new world order, promoting alien laws, and undermining the Ten Commandments and the virtues they advance: faithfulness, justice, and mercy. It is against those who defraud others, rulers who steal from their people through the color of law, unlawful taxation, and the transfer of power from the family to the state. If you are angry at the godless politicians, this prayer and this petition is for you.

Conclusion: The Ultimate Victory of Christ

"Thy kingdom come." Because when His kingdom comes, all of that will vanish.

Turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. I want to show you the implication of "Thy kingdom come." If you are genuinely tired of corruption, fraud, tyranny, despotism, and abuse of authority, then learn to pray daily, yea, even hourly, this petition: "Thy kingdom come." You say, "What good will that do?" Let me show you. Second Thessalonians chapter 1, beginning with 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; 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."

One day, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Every enemy of

the kingdom shall be cast out. God shall reign supremely, sovereignly, and absolutely, and by His grace and mercy, we will be subjects in that eternal kingdom. He is on the throne, and our Lord taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come." When it comes, all of man's kingdoms will vanish and disappear, and Jesus Christ alone will be magnified in that day.

Father, in Thy name we bow to Thee. We ask You for Your mercy, grace, and strength. Teach us to understand the implications of "Thy kingdom come." Help us to seek it, pray for it, long for it, desire it, and live as though we are in it now, in obedience to Thee in every area of our life. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

Who Much Is Given, Much Is Expected

June 9, 2017

Introduction and Context of Lamentations

It is a joy to be here, and I am thankful for the opportunity. Good to see each one of you. Glad to have Pat and Audrey Goden—I guess those are grandkids coming in with you? Grandkids are God's reward for not killing your own kids, and that is a fact. I love them and appreciate them. Our oldest granddaughter is 29. When she was two years old, she and I were lying in bed waiting on Alice to come to bed. Alice was standing within earshot, and Renee—she called herself Nay—rolled over to me, patted me on the chest, and said, "Nay and Papa are tender, but Granny Alice is a tough old bird." So I keep telling her after all these years, treat me gently because I'm tender. But somehow she doesn't really believe me, and I don't know why.

Open your Bibles tonight to the book of Lamentations, chapter 4, right after Jeremiah. Jeremiah not only wrote the book of Jeremiah, but also wrote Lamentations. I want to bring a message tonight that

tries to put together everything I've taught you this week. The message deals with the greater the responsibility, the greater the culpability. Notice Lamentations 4:6: "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her."

Everyone knows that Jeremiah is the weeping prophet, and Jeremiah saw the destruction and fall of Jerusalem. The book of Lamentations was written as he viewed that fall and destruction. The word Lamentations comes from the ancient custom of composing and singing lamentations over deceased friends and loved ones. For instance, David composed lamentations over Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel chapter 1, and over Abner in 2 Samuel chapter 3. In early times this habit of singing lamentations over fallen loved ones or friends was then extended over cities and countries as well.

Let me quote one. In the book of Amos, chapter 5 and verse 1, God says, "Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel." So in Amos, God is taking up a lamentation against the house of Israel. In Jeremiah chapter 7 and verse 29, God says, "Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath." So God was forsaking and rejecting the people of Judah at that particular time. In Jeremiah, chapter 9 and verse 9, just to set the stage, notice what he said: "Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" So we're talking about the nation of Judah, Jerusalem the capital. Now skip down to verse 17. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come: and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation. For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and

the young men from the streets. Speak, Thus saith the Lord, Even the carcases of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather them." So here God is saying Jerusalem is going to be destroyed and they are indeed to take up a lamentation against Jerusalem because God will indeed remove.

The Book of Lamentations is a memorial dirge written upon the destruction and humiliation of Jerusalem—a cloudburst of grief, a river of tears, a sea of sobs, an elegy written in a graveyard. Its five chapters are each an individual poem about the fall of Jerusalem. Chapter 1 shows the effects of sin: the people in captivity, acts of oppression, starvation, tyranny, and scoffing. Chapter 2 presents the destruction of Judah as an act of God's wrath against the sins of the people and their impotency to avert that wrath—it is going to come, they cannot stop it. Chapter 3 reveals the deep spiritual sufferings of God's people in the midst of their general distress, and at the same time their ability to perceive not only the compassion of God but the justice of God as well. Chapter 4 shows the punishment of the sins of the people as well as their rulers. Chapter 5 entreats the Lord to remove the distress from His people and the disgrace as well.

What caught my eye a long time ago was verse 6 of Lamentations chapter 4. Jeremiah wrote, "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her." He is talking about Jerusalem now. Jeremiah says very plainly that the destruction and humiliation of Jerusalem and the judgment that Jerusalem received was far greater than the judgment that Sodom and Gomorrah received.

Jerusalem Called Sodom and Gomorrah

So you're going to have to ask yourself this question. Why was Jerusalem judged so strenuously? We certainly know the wickedness, the perversity and the depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah, those cities of the plain. We also know that they deserved exactly what they received. That is utter destruction. But then you have to ask this question. Was Jerusalem as wicked and as vile as Sodom? And the answer comes back. I shall show it to you from

scripture that Jerusalem was actually more vile and more wicked than Sodom and Gomorrah. Wow. I want you to turn in your Bibles, hold in Lamentations for we're coming back there. But I want you to turn first of all to the book of Revelation chapter 11 and then we're going to go back to the book of Deuteronomy. We'll look in Revelation chapter 11 if you would please. And notice, if you would, what God says concerning Judah and Jerusalem. So in Revelation chapter 11 and verse 8, he's talking here about the two witnesses that have been killed. Revelation chapter 11, verse 8, the Bible says, "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." Well, where was our Lord crucified? Jerusalem. And I want you to pay close attention to the fact that God called Jerusalem spiritually Sodom and Egypt. Egypt was known as an enemy of God and an enemy of God's people, and Sodom was known for its depravity and its wickedness, and God says, "This city is now called Sodom and Egypt." I want you to go back in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 32, then we're going to go back to Isaiah, but look in Deuteronomy chapter 32, if you would please, just to show you this is no passing reference to Judah and Jerusalem. And Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 32. God is still talking about Judah and Jerusalem. And look what he says. Deuteronomy 32, verse 32, "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter." So he says their vine is of the vine of Sodom and the fields of Gomorrah. Wow. So God is now talking about Jerusalem and he's still calling it Sodom and Gomorrah.

If you look in your Bibles to the book of Isaiah chapter 1, beginning with verse 8, God is still showing what He is saying about Judah and Jerusalem. Watch carefully in this particular passage God makes it exceedingly clear. Isaiah 1 verse 8: "And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." And now notice what God says to them. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah." Wow. And if you'll go back to verse 2, He says, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O

earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." So he's calling his own people here Sodom and Gomorrah. Look in Isaiah chapter 3, beginning with verse 8 so that you can see who is in the context. Verse 8: "For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory. The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." But notice in verse 9, He says, "The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not." So just like Sodom was proud, arrogant, and open with their sin and rebellion, so it says Judah and Jerusalem were proud and arrogant and open about their sin and their rebellion as well. So in a multitude of passages, God still refers to Judah and Jerusalem as Sodom and Gomorrah. If you'd look in the book of Jeremiah chapter 23 and verse 14, just over a few pages, Jeremiah 23, notice verse 14. Look what God says, Jeremiah 23 and verse 14. Now I'm trying to remind you that God said through the prophet Jeremiah, that the punishment of Judah and Jerusalem was worse than the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Notice Jeremiah 23:14: God says, "I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah." So God is saying all the people in Jerusalem are unto him as Sodom and Gomorrah. Jerusalem not only committed physical sins, but also spiritual sins. In one sense, spiritual sins are far greater than physical sins. All sins are against God. We can quote Psalm 51:4, where David confesses, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." But did he not sin against Bathsheba? Did he not sin against Uriah, against his family, her family, against the nation? Yes. Yet in Psalm 51:4 he is saying, I understand that primarily my sin is directed against God. Now all sin is directed against God. However, some sins are specifically directed against God. For instance,

idolatry, blasphemy, hypocrisy, and a host of other spiritual sins are really and truly directed especially against God. In idolatry, you're denying that the one true and the living God is God. In blasphemy, you're cursing the one true and the living God. In hypocrisy, you're pretending that God cannot see and God does not know. So all of these sins are directed specifically against God.

Jeremiah said that the punishment of Jerusalem was worse than the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah. Do you really and truly know what the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were? You're going to say, yes, their sin was sodomy—that is where we get our word sodomy from the sodomites who lived in Sodom. That is true, that was certainly their sin, but hold Lamentations chapter 4 and look in your Bibles to Ezekiel chapter 16. We're going to read beginning with verse 44. Hold this passage because we will come back to it probably just a little bit later. But I want you to see what God says. He's talking about Judah and Jerusalem in this passage. Ezekiel 16 and verse 44: "Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter." And of course, you and I understand that proverb because daughters usually look like mothers, act like mothers, develop the same habits and attitudes and dispositions of their mothers.

So that's where this proverb originated. And so here's what God says to Judah and Jerusalem: "Thou art thy mother's daughter, that lotheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which lothed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite. And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters." So here is Jerusalem; if you're facing like this, Samaria is here and Sodom is here. God says, these are your two sisters, talking to Judah and Jerusalem: Samaria on the left hand, Sodom on the right hand. And look what he says in verse 47: "Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters." What an indictment. We tend to think of the awfulness of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, and yet God is saying here that

the sins of Judah and Jerusalem were far worse. I want you to recall in your mind Lamentations 4 and verse 6, where Jeremiah said, "the punishment of the daughter of my people was greater than the punishment of Sodom. No hands stayed upon her."

The Sins of Sodom and Gomorrah

Now, what was Sodom's sin? Most everyone is going to say sodomy, and certainly that was part and parcel of it. But may I tell you that Sodom had far more sins than sodomy. In fact, there was a reason why that was one of her sins, just like there's a reason in this country why it is growing by leaps and bounds. If you look in your Bible, so Ezekiel chapter 16, beginning with verse 49, God tells you specifically what the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were. He says, "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good." Notice if you would please, the committing the abomination before him actually came last. What came first was pride. Then he said, fulness of bread. You know, the Bible says pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Scripture says he that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. So there was not only pride and arrogance, there was fulness of bread. They had an absolute abundance. They had plenty. And then he goes on to say, and abundance of idleness.

You've heard the old adage that an idle mind is the devil's workshop. Idle hands are the devil's workshop as well. We're living in a day when people complain about a 40 hour work week and now want a six hour work day. I think of our founding fathers and early colonial farmers: up before daylight, working all day, coming in at night so dead tired you really wanted to go to bed. One of the problems we have today is indeed an abundance of idleness, especially when we have a government that is socialistic and Marxist to the core that wants to give everybody everything without working. Notice: pride, fulness of bread, idleness, and then God goes on to say, "Neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." In other words, there was no generosity. It was just total selfishness. I'm in it for me. I'm going to get what I can get. I'm going to get me

and mine. And that's it. And I don't care about you. Then God says arrogance or haughtiness. And then they committed abomination before me. They had all this time to contemplate and think about all their wicked deeds and what all they could do. And they did it. And God said, because they did it, I took them away as I saw fit. God did indeed punish Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain. That is true. But the Bible still says in Jeremiah chapter 4 and verse 6 that the punishment of the daughter of Jerusalem was far greater than that of the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah. And then he said it like this: "It was overthrown as in a moment. No hands stayed on her." So let me show you. Go back in your Bibles to the book of Genesis chapter 19. Let me refresh your mind on this. Here is where God is destroying Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain. Genesis chapter 19, beginning with verse 12. Watch carefully.

SCRIPTURE READING - Genesis 19:12-23 (KJV)

"And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place." I have a message. Well, I've got several messages on this passage. One of them is titled, "Lingering Lot." And of course, they had to take Lot by the hand and snatch him out of the city. But I have another message, and I tried to answer the question, why did Lot settle and stay in Sodom and Gomorrah? Wow. That will boggle your mind, but it shows you exactly where we are today. But notice if you would, "the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him:

> and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

The Nature of Jerusalem's Punishment

Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. Notice: just the time Lot got clean away, just the time he entered into Zoar, God sent fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah. You remember what Jeremiah said? "They were overthrown as in a moment. No hands stayed on her." The overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah was sudden and sure. One moment they were alive, maybe enjoying their sins and their substance, thinking all was well; the next moment they were dead, standing before a righteous holy God. It was instantaneous. However, Jerusalem's punishment was not like this. That's why Jeremiah said, "the punishment of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were overthrown in a moment and no hands stayed on her." Turn in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 52, because I want to show you exactly what Jeremiah is talking about. Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, who attacked Jerusalem twice. The first time, in 605 B.C., he merely defeated the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem, took many prisoners, and made them a tribute city. Then

he installed Zedekiah as king, and Zedekiah ruled about eleven years until he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. So when Nebuchadnezzar came back in 586 B.C., he was determined to make sure no one would rebel against him in that city again. He destroyed the wall, the temple, and the people—killing them and taking prisoners. Watch it: Jeremiah, chapter 52, beginning with verse 1. "Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah."

And he did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. For through the anger of the Lord it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night. Here is the utter overthrow and defeat of Judah and Jerusalem. But note that Nebuchadnezzar came in the ninth year of his reign, and the siege continued until the eleventh year. For two years, Jerusalem was surrounded by their enemy—human hands, wicked hands. Not only were people slaughtered, but disease, starvation, and all of these things took care of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In Ezekiel chapter 14, verse 21, God talks about his four sore judgments: "For thus saith the Lord God; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?" God says, I'm going to use all four of these in destroying Jerusalem. For two years, God used these. Notice in verse 21, he says, "How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword," and notice the next one, "and the famine." So you had the Babylonian soldiers without, and you had famine and disease and pestilence within. Listen to me, the famine inside Jerusalem was no ordinary famine.

Let's look back in our Bibles to Lamentations chapter 4, beginning at verse 6. Jeremiah says, "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her." Now Jeremiah gives information concerning famine and starvation in Jerusalem during this siege. In verse 7 he says, "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire." Then in verse 8, "Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick." So here are people inside Jerusalem that are walking skeletons, actually starving to death. Their body has turned upon itself and is basically eating itself. In fact, look at verse 9. The famine was so horrible. He said, "They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field." Being killed with a sword is at least over with quickly. He is saying that being killed with a sword is a whole lot easier and better than starving to death. How bad was that famine? Well, look in verse 10.

"The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people." Women killed, cooked and ate their own children. His four sore judgments. Famine was one of them. Famine, cannibalism and devastation stalked Jerusalem. The destruction of Sodom was over instantly, but not the destruction and devastation of Jerusalem. Two years, two years Nebuchadnezzar fought against that city.

Now let me ask you a question. Why? Did Jerusalem suffer more than Sodom? Jeremiah proclaims that fact, that they did. "The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom." So the question is, why then did they suffer more?

Why Jerusalem's Sins Were Greater

Now, go back in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Ezekiel chapter 16. I told you that we'd come right back there, but I want you to look at this again. I want you to notice what the scripture says.

This is going to answer why Jerusalem suffered more than Sodom and Gomorrah, at least gives you part of it. Notice, if you would, Ezekiel, Chapter 16, 47 and 48. Look what he said. Talking about Judah and Jerusalem, "Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters." Wow. So God is saying that Judah and Jerusalem sinned far more greatly than Sodom and Gomorrah. So we can answer the reason that Jerusalem was punished more was that her sins were greater.

But now that doesn't help me particularly because anyone that can read can pick that up. Here's the question. Why were her sins considered greater? You know, I've heard Christians say, well, sin is sin. All sin is sin. Well, it's true that all sin is sin. And it's true that all sin is wicked, vile and abominable. But you and I both know there are some sins that are worse than others. There are.

God does not demand the death penalty for theft. He demands restitution. Murder, it's far greater than theft. And God demands the death penalty for that. So while it is true all sin is sin, it is also true that there are some sins that are greater than other sins. And so here is the question that you have to ask. Why then were the sins of Judah and Jerusalem considered greater than the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah?

So let me answer it for you. Here's the principle. The greater the responsibility, the greater the culpability.

The word culpability is from the Latin, and it denotes that someone deserves censure or condemnation. The greater the responsibility, the greater the culpability. The greater the advantages, opportunities, and blessings that you have, when you ignore and despise those, the greater is your condemnation. Jerusalem had far greater advantages, blessings, and obligations than did Sodom and Gomorrah. What Jerusalem and Judah did was sin against light, truth, and understanding.

Suppose you get up in the morning and open your newspaper and read where two men robbed the local bank. You look at it and say, I

don't even know him, and you kind of ignore it, saying they're bank robbers all the time. But if you begin to read your paper, and it says, the two bank robbers were caught, they were Nelson and B.J. O'Donnell. What? Those were well men. Now wait a minute.

It's bad when just anybody violates God's law. But it's even worse when someone who is supposed to be upholding the law violates God's law. But let's suppose you pick up the paper in the morning and instead of you reading Nelson O'Donnell and B.J. have robbed the bank, you read, the bank was robbed by Pastor John Weaver and Pastor Cliff Christman. What? These men have taught for years thou shalt not steal.

When you read Leviticus chapter 4, and I would encourage you to read it when you get home, there are different sacrifices to be offered for sin based upon the office, the lot, or the responsibility of the people there. The argument is what you and I would call from the greater to the lesser. In Leviticus chapter 4 and verse 3, when a priest sinned, he had to bring forth a bullock, a young ox. He couldn't bring forth anything else. When you get down to verse 13, when the whole congregation had sinned, again it had to be a bullock. When you get down then to verse 22, if a single ruler sinned, he had to bring a kid of the goats. Not a bullock, a kid of the goats. And then when you get down to verses 27 through 32, when an ordinary, everyday person sinned, they could bring either a kid of the goats or a lamb, and it didn't matter whether it was male or female.

So it starts with the priest. Why did he have to have a bullock? Because he had a greater responsibility. He had more blessings. He had more advantages. He had more privileges. What about the whole congregation? That would be the rulers in it all together. Once again, it had to be a bullock, but if it was a single ruler, it had to be a goat and it had to be a male, but when it's an ordinary individual, anything would do, goat or lamb. It didn't matter. So God then was requiring a greater sacrifice from those who were in positions of responsibility.

The Principle of Greater Culpability

So let me put it to you again. The greater the privileges, the greater the responsibilities and the greater the opportunities, the greater the

sacrifice for sin. And here's why. Because people who have more light and more knowledge are more culpable. They demand a greater condemnation or greater censure. I'm going to prove that to you from Scripture. James chapter 3, verse 1. In fact, go ahead and look there. I can quote it, but I want you to see it because there's another passage in James that I want you to see. Look in James chapter 3, Hebrews, James, James chapter 3. Notice if you would please verse 1. Look what he says. James 3, verse 1, "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." What? If I'm standing up here telling you tonight that I'm your teacher and your pastor stands up and says, well, I'm your teacher, guess what?

God is holding us more accountable than he is you. We will get a greater censure and a greater condemnation because we have a greater responsibility. Look in James 4 and verse 17: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Why? Because you are sinning against light, knowledge, understanding, blessing, and advantages.

Years ago, Alice and I had some dear friends, older than we were, with three sons. They kind of adopted us, and we always called them Mama and Papa Marsh, though we were not related. Papa would come to our house and play the saxophone. I'd have to say, "Papa, please stop playing that saxophone just long enough for Alice to cook supper, and then you can come back and let her play the piano while you play the saxophone." And he played it beautifully—there's no two ways about it.

But I stopped at their house, Alice and I did, because they were having a little family reunion and we were counted as family. I had just come back from a week of preaching and had to stop just for a few hours before I headed home. By the time I got in the house, his daughter-in-law began to ask me questions, one right after the other, and I was trying to answer them.

Finally, Papa looked at her and said, "Francis, why don't you shut up and leave him alone? Can't you see he's tired?" And Francis said, "Well, Papa, I don't know the answer to these questions and it bothers me." I never will forget what Papa Marsh said: "Huh? It's not those things I don't know that bothers me, it's those things I do

know. To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Look in your Bibles to Luke chapter 12. Our Lord says, beginning in verse 40: "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Did you hear what our Lord said? That servant who knew his lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did that will, will be beaten with many stripes. The greater the privilege, the advantages, the blessings, the opportunities, the greater the censure and condemnation you will receive. For he said that man who didn't know and did shall be beaten with few stripes. Then he said, "of whom much is given, much is required."

Now, folks, there's a vast difference between a sin of ignorance and a sin of presumption—between doing something without even thinking and doing something that you thought through and said, yeah, I'm going to do it regardless. Look back in your Bibles to Numbers chapter 15, beginning with verse 29. God says, "Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance,"

Both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them—one law for him that sinneth

through ignorance, who didn't know what he was doing. Verse 30: "But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him." Here is an answer as to why Judah and Jerusalem were punished so strenuously—why their punishment was far greater than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. They sinned against the light, against knowledge, against blessings and advantages and opportunities. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 4, beginning at verse 5: "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

Do you understand that Israel, and especially Judah and Jerusalem, had a tremendous advantage over all of the other nations? Romans chapter 3, beginning with verse 1, should answer your question: Why did God judge Jerusalem so much more than he did Sodom and Gomorrah? "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." The Assyrians didn't have the law of God. The Ammonites didn't have the law of God. The Moabites didn't have the law of God. The Egyptians didn't have the law of God. Israel had the law of God. God gave it to them. When you get to the book of Ephesians chapter 2, verses 11 and 12, God says, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth"

Only Israel had God's oracles. God gave it to them. What did they do? They sinned against light. They sinned against their advantage.

They sinned against their opportunity. They sinned against their blessing. When you stop and think about Judah and Jerusalem, may I remind you that it was in Judah at Jerusalem that the tabernacle and later the temple were located. It was in Judah at Jerusalem that God revealed himself in the Shekinah glory. It was in Judah and Jerusalem where the priests and the Levites were. It was in Judah and Jerusalem where the law was and the ceremonies and the rituals and everything that God had revealed. And they sinned against light.

Their sin was no sin of ignorance. It was a sin of presumption. They basically took the attitude, I don't care what God says. I don't care what God has given us. I don't care. We will do what we want to do. We will act the way we want to act. We will live the way we want to live. Have you ever wondered why David in Psalm 19 verse 13 says, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me." What he's praying is don't let me do anything deliberately and willingly that I know better that is wicked and wrong and ungodly. So it's one thing to sin in ignorance. It's quite another thing to sin willingly and presumptuously. You shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, he that is born in the land and the stranger through the land, but he that doeth ought presumptuously, sinneth against his own soul.

Application to Believers Today

He shall bear his iniquity. What for? He hath despised the Lord. That's why James said, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Here's the point of everything that I've said. Do you realize as the people of God how blessed you are? To have the word of God. How blessed you are to hear the preaching of his word? How blessed you are to have light? It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. It is the Lord's mercies that he opened our eyes and gave us understanding. It's the Lord's mercy that he revealed to us the Lord Jesus Christ and his so great sacrifice and his so great salvation. It is the Lord's mercies that he's given us everything that we have. And then for you and I to turn our backs upon God and His truth, His word, is a sin of presumption. In Mark 4:24, our Lord said, "Take heed what ye hear." You have a responsibility to make sure that you hear truth.

You have a responsibility to make sure that you hear things that are virtuous and praiseworthy and good and honest, like the Bible demands.

But in Luke 8:18 he says the same thing a little differently: "Take heed how ye hear." You better not come to church with easy come, easy go. If I listen, I'll be fine; if I don't, I can pick up. No. God said take heed how you hear. Make sure you hear, and make sure what you hear. In Hebrews 10 he called it despising the Spirit of grace and trampling the Lord Jesus Christ under our feet. God has given us tremendous opportunities. Sometimes my mind is overwhelmed with the goodness and mercies of God. Who am I? Not only to have experienced the grace of God and be saved by his mercy, but to have understanding and be able to preach and proclaim his truth. Who am I? And what am I? Yet God chose us before the foundation of the world. Isn't that amazing? Doesn't that astound you? How then can we treat everything so flippantly, like it doesn't really matter? It does matter. Turn to 2 Thessalonians 2. See that it matters because sins against light, knowledge, conscience, truth, advantages, blessings, and opportunities merit far greater condemnation. Look at 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, beginning with verse 10.

"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." People did not receive the truth. They did not love the truth. Watch verse 11. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Wow. Don't tell me it doesn't matter how you respond to truth. It does matter.

You remember that passage in 2 Kings chapter 5, where Naaman the leper came before Elisha. And Elisha just said, "Go wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean." He went away angry. Finally, his men said, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" So he went and dipped in the Jordan River seven times and came out clean. And he came back to Elisha, and he wanted to give him money. He wanted to give him changes of garments. Elisha said, "No, I don't need anything. Don't

want anything. Take it and go." But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, who was there, who heard what Elisha said, after Naaman had gone a good way off, he said, "My master spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him."

So he ran after him and caught him. He looked at Naaman and he said, "My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments." And he did. And his servants brought them back. When Gehazi got them and hid them, he went and stood before Elisha. And Elisha said unto him, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" And he said, "Thy servant went no whither." And he said unto him, "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever." What did Gehazi do? He sinned against the truth because he heard exactly what Elisha said. And I'm going to tell you something, folks. You can take this for whatever it's worth. I believe a lot of our physical ailments, our physical sicknesses begin with our spiritual sins and wickedness against God. You cannot, you cannot thumb your nose at God. You cannot despise the truth of God. You cannot refuse to obey God and expect to escape his chastisement.

Conclusion and Prayer

That's quite a statement. It may be, but read 1 Corinthians chapter 11, that passage about the Lord's table. They were eating it wrongly. Paul said, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." They had physical sickness and death because they abused the truth of God. We who have the truth must not dare turn from the truth. The greater the opportunities, the greater the blessings, the greater the advantages, the more deserving you are of condemnation if you sin against that light. Jeremiah said, "the punishment of the daughter of my people was greater than the punishment of Sodom that was overthrown in a moment. No hands stayed on her." But for Jerusalem, hands stayed on her for two years

until she was destroyed. If we do not want destruction, we must stand with the truth and for the truth and apply the truth in our lives. And if you've been delivered by the grace of God, God expects you to obey. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before thee. We thank thee for your love, your grace, your truth, your mercy. Show us, Lord, the importance of this principle, that the greater the responsibility, the greater the culpability. Help us, Lord, to obey and apply. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask, amen.

If you've been delivered by God's grace, God expects obedience. Father, in Jesus Christ's name, we bow before thee. We thank thee for your love, grace, truth, mercy. Show us, Lord, the importance of this principle: the greater the responsibility, the greater the culpability. Help us, Lord, to obey and apply. In Jesus Christ's name we ask, amen.

CHAPTER 11

Circumstances Change, Problems Remain

January 30, 2013

Isaiah 9:12–17 declares: “The Syrians before, the Philistines behind, and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush in one day. The ancient and the honorable, he is the head, and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and they that are led of them are destroyed. Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall they have mercy on the fatherless and widows. For everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.”

Introduction: The Nature of Problems

I have often said that I never have a problem with problems. Every problem has an answer; every problem has a solution. I do not have

problems with problems. I have problems with people. It is people who must change in order to resolve problems. If there is no change, the problem remains.

The biggest problem in dealing with problems is getting the people involved to do what is right and biblical in order to resolve them. The problem in ancient Israel is exactly the same problem we have today. How can we apply what happened in ancient Israel so many years ago to what is happening in America today? The answer is simple.

God Demands Changes in People, Not Circumstances

God does not demand changes in circumstances. God demands changes in people. When people change, circumstances change and problems can be resolved. But problems do not disappear; they must be resolved in a biblical manner. If they are not, problems do not vaporize, disappear, or go away. They remain. Therefore, a problem must be resolved.

The Old Testament as Our Example

This principle is true whether applied to individuals, families, churches, or nations. Romans chapter 15 and verse 4 specifically tells us that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Everything in the Old Testament was written for our benefit. Moreover, 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 6 says plainly, speaking of Israel, "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." In light of these two passages, we may safely and legitimately apply every lesson concerning ancient Israel to our present-day circumstances.

Isaiah 9: Comfort and Condemnation

The Word of God is never outdated. It is always vibrant, always right, and always applicable.

Isaiah chapter 9 is a continuation of the prophecy begun in chapter 7 and continued through chapter 8. When you read Isaiah 7,

8, and 9, you find that this prophecy is composed of mingled threats and promises. There are rays of light thrown into the midst of shades of darkness. Chapter 9 promises comfort and deliverance while denouncing the sins of the nation and assuring Israel that God's anger is not turned away and His hand is stretched out still—that is, stretched out still in judgment.

Adam Clarke gives this summary of chapter 9: "This chapter contains an illustrious prophecy of the Messiah. He is represented under the glorious figure of the sun or light rising on a benighted world and diffusing joy and gladness wherever he sheds his beams. His conquests are astonishing and miraculous, as in the day of Midian, and the peace which they procure is to be permanent, as denoted by the burning of all the implements of war. The person and character of this great deliverer are then set forth in the most magnificent terms which the language of mankind could furnish. The extent of the kingdom is declared to be universal, and the duration of it eternal. The prophet foretells the awful calamities which were ready to fall upon the Israelites on account of their manifold impieties."

Thus, chapter 9 contains glorious promises of deliverance, but at the same time it contains destruction. It comforts the people on the one hand, and on the other declares the punishment to be inflicted upon their ungodly nation by their enemies.

The comfort prophesied in Isaiah chapter 9 centers upon Christ, the Messiah—His rule, His reign, His kingship, and His dominion. Isaiah 9:6-7 says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

The comfort that is promised is promised only to those who receive Christ as He is fully and freely offered in the Gospel. Submission to His Lordship and submission to His rule are definite requirements. One cannot simply mouth submission; one must live

submission. The comfort and deliverance promised in Isaiah chapter 9 center upon Jesus Christ.

The condemnation or judgment in chapter 9 centers upon Israel's rejection of Christ—His appearance, His Messiahship, His rule, and His government. God sends His word to Israel, and they spurn and reject it. In verse 8 He says, "The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel." God sent His word, and it lighted upon them. Yet what did they do? They spurned and rejected that word.

Not only did ancient Israel do that; modern-day Israel, God's people, are doing exactly the same thing. Consequently, the circumstances have changed, but the problem remains. We are not in the land of Palestine; we are in America, and yet we are experiencing exactly the same problems that ancient Israel experienced.

Isaiah 3:10-11 provides an excellent summary: "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." The righteous are going to eat the fruit of their doings, and the wicked are going to eat the fruit of their doings as well.

History Is Linear, Not Cyclical

These concepts are true individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally. No one, no entity, and no nation will ever escape the righteous judgment of God. When we read Isaiah chapter 9, we tend to think, "History is repeating itself." History does not repeat itself. History is linear, not cyclical. Cyclical interpretation of history is pagan.

History has a definite beginning: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." God began everything. It also has a definite ending, when heaven and earth shall be no more in that sense of the word. It may look as if everything is going around in circles, but history is not cyclical. It looks cyclical because sinners and nations keep committing the exact same sins, revolting and rebelling against God, and God keeps sending the exact same judgments. History is linear, but people do not listen and learn.

Here is why we have exactly the same problems today. Psalm 7, verses 11 through 13, says, “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death. He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.” God judges the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If the wicked does not turn, God has prepared for him instruments of death and destruction.

In Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 25, the Word of God says, “Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them. And the hills did tremble, and their carcases were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.”

Can you imagine how God has smitten and destroyed these people, and yet they refuse to listen? He says, “For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” When I read this verse, I immediately thought of someone in a fight. Here is a man fighting another man: he hits him, beats him, and knocks him absolutely unconscious.

And then what does he do? The man's lying on the ground unconscious, and he jumps on his chest and continues to beat him. And you think, what's the point? He's already out. Well, God had knocked these people out, and yet they refused to heed, and "his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." You're talking about people who are gluttons for punishment.

Unless there is biblical repentance, our nation will face the same or identical national judgments that Israel faced in Isaiah chapter 9. Now I want to show you two main problems that existed in Isaiah chapter 9 that exist in America today. Unless these two main problems are taken care of, we're going to face exactly the same judgment of God.

The Problem with the People: Pride and Refusal to Repent

We are already under the judgment of God in this nation. It's not quite as severe as it's going to be, but we're already under the judgment of God. But what are the problems that remain? Remember, circumstances may change, but the problems remain. First of all, if you'll look in verse 13 of Isaiah chapter 9, I want you to see the problem with the people—the problem with the people. I told you in the beginning it's a people problem, so here it is. Isaiah chapter 9, verse 13. In fact, read verse 12 in light of it.

"The Syrians before, the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth." They're gulping them down. "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." Why? "For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts."

I know I've quoted this a hundred times, but I love it. Pogo the possum said, "We have met the enemy and he is us." And that's the truth. We do have a people problem. We, the people, need to repent and seek the Lord. The problem is that we do not even think that we need to repent and seek the Lord. Consequently, we're going to face His judgments.

And so you can ask the question, what in the world is wrong with us? Here's what is wrong with us. We do not think that we are sinners, and we do not think that our sins are bad. Nor do we think that our sins deserve the righteous judgment of God. I want you to turn very quickly to Jeremiah chapter 8. Let me show you. Turn right over—Isaiah, Jeremiah—Jeremiah chapter 8, and look, if you would, in verse 6, and then we'll go to Jeremiah 16. I want to show you the attitude of these people in Jeremiah's day, in Isaiah's day, as well as in our day. Jeremiah chapter 8, look, if you would please, at verse 6.

He said, "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." I may be, you know, a little bad, but I'm not really wicked. What have I

done? Have you ever noticed that we never judge our lives in light of the Word of God? We always judge our lives by someone else.

"Well, look at what so and so did. I'm not as bad as he is." You could be the best person in the world, still die and go to hell. Being the best person does not save anybody. Jeremiah 16:10 says, "And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? Or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?"

You are talking about ignorance—ignorance of God and ignorance of His Word. Here is the problem with the people: pride, arrogance, and haughtiness. One of the main sins that keeps people from coming savingly to Jesus Christ is their pride. They do not like to admit, confess, or acknowledge that they are sinners and that they need a Savior, that they really, genuinely need saving.

Look at the pride and stoutness of heart of Israel in Isaiah's time. Isaiah 9:8 says, "The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones. The sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars."

Ephraim is another name for Israel because Ephraim was the principal tribe. Samaria was the capital of Ephraim, or the capital of Israel, the northern kingdom. Thus, what God is saying here is that the entire people of the northern kingdom were full of pride and arrogance.

The northern kingdom did not need the Lord, or at least that is what they thought. They believed that they were capable, self-sufficient, and able in and of themselves. God sent His word, and the word lighted upon them, but in the pride and stoutness of heart they said, "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars." Their attitude was, "So what if the judgment of God comes along and destroys some of our houses and some of our cities?"

“It doesn't matter to us. Let the bricks be torn down. We will rebuild with hewn stones. Let the sycomores be rooted up and all the houses made of sycomore torn down. We don't care. We'll plant cedars and we will rebuild with cedars.” Israel's country was in a ruinous and dilapidated state, but they maintained their self-assurance that they would be able to repair all the evils and restore their nation not just to its former magnificence, but even above that.

Do you know what the attitude in America is today? “We'll do it ourselves. We can do it. Yes. It doesn't matter. Let Helicopter Ben print all the money he wants to print. Let the Marxists and the Communists take over the White House and the Congress, which they already have. But somehow, we're going to come out of this. We don't need the Lord.” These words in Isaiah chapter 9, verses 9 and 10, are words of men who are obstinate, stubborn, rebellious, and who despised the calamity and the judgment of God that had fallen upon them.

They did not profit from God's chastisement. They did not profit from God's judgment. They did not really consider His hand upon them or His hot displeasure against them. In their arrogance, pride, and haughtiness, they said, basically, “We don't care what God does. We can rebel. We'll make it.”

John Gill, in his commentary on Isaiah 9, says this concerning verse 10: “Houses made of bricks which were without the cities besieged and destroyed by the Assyrians, of which the haughty Israelites made no account, looking upon such a desolation as a little or no loss at all. But we will build with hewn stones so that the houses will be better and stronger and more beautiful and more durable. The sycomores are cut down which grew in the fields and outer parts of the cities and which were but a mean sort of wood and which the Assyrians cut down to serve several purposes in their siege. Of this sort of trees we will change them into cedars. That is, we will plant cedars in place of them. Trees tall and large, very delightful to look at, of great worth and usefulness and very durable. Though this may regard not so much the planting of them as the use of them in building, as the sense would be agreeable to the former clause, that is, instead of bricks they would build houses with hewn

stone, so instead of sycomore wood that would be not so substantial and durable and fit for building, they would make use of cedar, which is both beautiful and lasting."

Since Israel claimed to be God's people, where was their fear of the Lord? Why did they not profit from God's chastisements? Why did they not profit from God's judgments? Isaiah gives you the answer. Here is why Israel did not profit, and here is why America does not profit. Isaiah 30:9 says, "That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord. Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us."

What was their attitude? We don't want to hear any true preacher. We don't want to hear the Word of God. We don't even want God. Notice the Democratic Convention, how they booed God. That's the attitude. We don't want the Word of God. We don't want the truth of God. We don't want people telling us we're sinners, and we don't want people telling us we must repent, and we don't want people telling us what God's law demands.

When men are the enemies of God, they refuse to listen, they refuse to hear, they refuse to consider, and they refuse to repent, no matter how severe and how awful the judgments of God. It is true that righteous men will learn from God's judgments, but that does not necessarily mean that wicked men will learn from God's judgments.

Isaiah 26:9 says, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." When God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

Calvin wisely comments on this verse: "By chastisements, men are taught to fear God. In prosperity, they forget Him, and their eyes are, as it were, blinded by fatness. They grow wanton and petulant and do not submit to be under authority. And therefore, the Lord restrains their insolence and teaches them to obey. In short, the

prophet confesses that he and others were trained by God's chastisements to yield submission to His authority, and to entrust themselves to his guardianship."

God's Judgments Increase in Severity

"Because if God does not with uplifted arm claim his right to rule, no man of his own accord yields obedience." Isaiah says, "when thy judgments are in the earth," "Then the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." That is true in regard to righteous people. The wicked will not necessarily learn from those judgments unless God mixes grace with His judgments.

Amos chapter 4 shows that God sends His judgments, but people are not listening or learning. "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." So God sent famine.

" And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." He sends drought. He had already sent famine; now He sends drought.

"I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." God said, "I have smitten your crops. I have destroyed them."

You haven't paid any attention to Me. "I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." So God sent diseases. God sent war. It did not get their attention. "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord."

Here were supernatural judgments that you could not deny. Yet He said, you haven't returned unto Me. All of these judgments are piled one upon another. When you refuse to learn from one judgment, the next judgment increases in severity and intensity. When you refuse to heed all of them, God says, “Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”

In the context, here is what He is saying: You won't listen. You won't return. You won't repent. I'll just kill you. “Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel,” I will take you out. As men refuse and reject the judgments of God, they continue to grow in severity and intensity. The continual rejection of these judgments always leads to death and destruction. Unless God mixes grace with these judgments, however, they will not profit us.

Severity and intensity do not necessarily make men sit up and pay attention. Revelation 16:11 says, “And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.” What did they do? God put heavy judgments upon them, and what did it cause them to do? Just blaspheme God even more.

Revelation 6:15-17 likewise says, “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide”

They know. But what are they doing? Repenting? No. Seeking mercy? No. They are seeking to hide. Unless God mixes grace with His judgments, those judgments will only harden men in their sin and rebellion, just as Pharaoh was hardened, and just as those men in Revelation 16, despite all their pain and sores, still blasphemed God.

What is the problem that we have with our people in America? It is a problem of pride, arrogance, and haughtiness. The solution is really simple: We must seek God for repentance, submission, and obedience. We must turn from our sins and learn to honor Him, obey Him, and worship Him in every area and sphere of our lives.

Our deeds have to be real and genuine. They cannot be hypocritical or feigned. The average church and the average Christian have such a facade; it is not real. The problem that existed with the people in Israel in Isaiah 9 is the same problem we have today with the people in America. Our circumstances may have changed, but the problems remain.

Now go back to Isaiah chapter 9, because I want you to look at the second problem that we have—not with the people here, per se, but with the politicians. Look in verse 16: "For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed." The leaders of this people cause them to go astray, to go out of the way, and those who are led by them are destroyed. Leaders may lead, but if they do not know where they are going, or if they choose the wrong path, those who follow them will always go astray and be destroyed.

The Problem with the Politicians: Leading Astray

Today, as in ancient Israel, if you follow the politicians, you are headed in the wrong direction. If you follow the government or depend upon the government, you are headed in the wrong direction. Our dependency must absolutely be on the sovereign God of heaven and earth. If you are following anyone or anything other than Him, you are wrong.

It is impossible for an ungodly man to lead in the right direction, for he is unable to discern it. In 2 Samuel 23, David proclaims a truth and claims direct inspiration from God for it. He says, "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," that is one time. "And his word was in my tongue," that is twice. "The God of Israel said," three times. "The Rock of Israel spake to me," four times. He claims direct inspiration for this one simple sentence: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

If one does not rule in the fear of God, he does not and cannot rule justly. If one does not rule in the fear of God, he is a tyrant. Calvin, commenting on Isaiah 9:16, where the leaders lead the people astray, said: "He means that the rulers and the magistrates whose duty it was to restrain the people within the limits of decent behavior,

allowed all to indulge freely in crimes and wickedness. On this account, they ought to justly be reckoned seducers and corruptors, for corruption flows from them to the whole body of the people, as from the head to the members.

“Magistrates and pastors are appointed in order to restrain the waywardness of the people, to enjoin them what is good and right, and especially to defend the honor of God. If they neglect these duties, they ought to be reckoned imposters and not rulers, for they give rise to miserable confusion.”

"Now when everyone does what he pleases, and the reins of government are nowhere to be found, can there be anything but this most terrible result? When the common people are thus punished on account of their faults, no lighter vengeance awaits the rulers, because they have neglected the duty entrusted to them, and of occasion, so many evils." What does Calvin say? When a ruler does not rule justly, when he does not rule rightly and biblically, he ought to be called a seducer, an imposter, a corrupter.

How do the leaders lead the people astray and cause them to be destroyed? Well, there are many answers to that question. However, we could say they lead the people astray and cause them to be destroyed by their example. Stop and think. Do you realize most of our politicians are whoremongers, and adulterers, and fornicators, and liars, and thieves? There's a few honest ones but not very many. They lead people astray by their counsel, by their bad laws, by their anti-Christ, anti-God, anti-Bible attitude that's always manifest in their laws.

Isaiah 52, verse 5: "Now therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord; and my name continually every day is blasphemed." They that rule over them make them to howl. How many of you have been howling? How many of you just love all of these taxes that are being piled on us every day? How many of you just love all of these laws that destroy our liberty and our freedom? How many of you just really love governmental interference in your personal life? Look what he says: he makes his people to howl, and my name continually every day is blasphemed. Who is it blasphemed by? By the leaders.

Hosea 7, verse 1: "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria. For they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without. And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness."

"Now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face. They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies." Wicked rulers encourage wicked people, and wicked people encourage wicked rulers. It works both ways. If we are wicked and corrupt, are we going to challenge wicked and corrupt leaders? No. We do not expose our own sin or corruption.

Hosea 8:4 says, "They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off." The first part is what I want: "They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not." This is not a denial of God's omniscience. Certainly God knows everything. Rather, they did not consult Him, nor did they follow the qualifications He laid down in His Word for rulers.

No wonder our rulers are leading us astray. No wonder we are being led into destruction. What have we done? We have chosen rulers that are unbiblical, ungodly, and reprobate. Is it any wonder that we are being led down the primrose path to destruction? We are in exactly the same position today that ancient Israel was in Isaiah's time. Nothing has changed. We are still committing the same sins, reaping the same consequences, and facing exactly the same problems over and over because we refuse to listen and refuse to learn. Politicians have not changed and will not change. They are proud, arrogant, and self-willed, exactly like the people are. They lead, but they lead wickedly and tyrannically. Such politicians are the enemies of God and His law.

That is a bold statement. How can I say such? Turn to Psalm 94 and look at verses 20 and 21. I tell you, such politicians are the enemies of God and God's law. Psalm 94:20 says, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" Notice that it is a throne, so it deals with civil government. It is a throne of iniquity, an evil civil government. Shall an evil civil

government have fellowship with God when it frames mischief by law—that is, when it makes sin legal?

The next verse says, "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood." God says He is not in fellowship with wicked politicians who make sin legal. Do you think God expects us to agree and submit to rulers who want to make sodomy the law of the land, and adultery and fornication the law of the land, and Marxism and socialism the law of the land? God never established those civil rulers. They are enemies of God and enemies of His law. God condemns the wicked people and the wicked politicians.

Go back to Isaiah chapter 9, beginning with verse 12. God says, "The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth." In other words, God said, I am sending them one after the other. Their mouth is open; they are going to eat you alive.

"For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and the honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed. Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows."

"For every one is an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

In other words, they would destroy one another. Calvin made this comment: "His anger is not turned away. This is the severest of all and beyond everything else ought to have terrified the ungodly, that if they had suffered much, they have much more to endure, and that new punishments continually await them, because by going on in their obstinacy, they inflame still more the wrath of God. Men take this as an incentive to be more obstinate and determined in wickedness, that having suffered some punishments, they think they have nothing more to suffer, and become more hardened."

"They do not even believe that they are any longer exposed to the judgment of God, who has already spent His rods, as if they were altogether out of His power, they give themselves greater indulgence and shake off every yoke. But His hand is stretched out still. What we have now stated is the reason why Isaiah threatened that the hand of the Lord is still stretched out, that they may not think that they have escaped that hand."

"Now this is not said for the purpose of instructing, but of accusing. Though the threatenings also have a tendency to make doctrine better understood, but as he had to do with obstinate men on whom no chastisement produced any good effect, he therefore announces that the chastisements are not yet at an end, and that although God has for a time discontinued those chastisements, still he has not disposed with them, and his hand is lifted up to inflict a new wound."

The Solution: Repentance and Obedience

What he's saying is more is coming. The same problem that Israel had, we have. Let me make some applications. Our problems are multitudinous and complex. However, the solution to all of our problems is very simple: repent of our sins, return to God and His Law, submit to His yoke, and understand and apply His Word to every area of our life. Isn't that simple? Just stop and think. If everyone did that which was right and holy and according to God's Law, we wouldn't need policemen; we wouldn't need government as such. Everybody would just do what was right. Do you realize that if husbands and wives who are having problems would each do what's right, it would work out?

But you say, “Pastor, therein lies the problem.” Listen carefully. The majority of the people and of the politicians will not repent and return to the Lord Jesus Christ. They will not submit to Him, and they will not obey His law words.

Personal Application: Will You Repent?

I understand that. But the question is, will you? You see, we can't expect anyone else to do that which is right if we're not willing to do that which is right ourselves. You say, “But there are so many that are wicked.” I understand, but I'd rather be one light in a wicked land than to walk in darkness with a multitude. And you better remember Isaiah 3, verses 10 and 11: “Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.”

I got news for you, folks. God knows exactly how to spare the righteous and deliver the ungodly to judgment. When God sends His righteous judgments one upon another, I'd much rather be a righteous man than a wicked man. I want to show you one last passage. This passage should put the fear of God in us. Look how Isaiah describes Israel, and look at this application to America today: Isaiah 42, verse 22.

Conclusion: A Call to Hear and Obey

“But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come? Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers?” Well, of course, God did.

“Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.” We are being burned in this country. We are being destroyed, and we do not

even realize it. God asks, “Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear?”

Now is the time to listen and obey. We have two problems: the people and the politicians. You may not be a politician, but you are a people, and God requires you to do what is right if nobody else does. May God give us repentance. We need to be turned, and God has to do the turning. If we do not turn, the righteous judgments of God will destroy this nation just as they destroyed ancient Israel. The people and the politicians have the same solution: repentance, faith, and obedience.

Father, help us, we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. We ask for Your will, Your Word, Your grace, and Your mercy in our lives. Give us grace that we may turn from our sins and embrace Thee and Thy Word fully, totally, and completely in our lives, and that we may serve and honor Thee. If it please Thee, overthrow the wicked, deliver Thy people, and help us, Lord, to serve Thee through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

Safety and Self-Defense

June 18, 2017

Introduction and Text

Proverbs 21:31 says, “The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord.” Everyone should be interested in safety and self-defense.

All, except the foolish and the naive, will actually be concerned about their health and their welfare. It is normal, natural, and biblical to desire to live safely and also to prosper. It was the desire of John the Apostle that his children and his people would all be blessed. He said in 3 John 1:2, “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”

As I talk about Proverbs 21:31 and about safety and self-defense, I am referring to self-defense. I am not talking about a Matthew 5 situation. Anytime the subject of self-defense comes up, someone will say, “Our Lord said, If someone smites you on the right cheek, then you turn to him the left also.” In other words, they bring up the subject of turning the cheek.

Matthew 5 has absolutely nothing to do with self-defense. It is basically teaching us how to deal with what we would call insults and inconvenient things that happen to us in our lives. For instance, if I am facing Gary, and since most men are right-handed, if I am going to knock his block off, I will come around with a haymaker. I ball my fist up, draw back, and hit him; my right hand will land on his left cheek. That is all there is to it.

If I hit him on the right cheek, all that means is that I have back-fisted him or used the fingers of my hand. I have insulted him, but his life is not in danger. It is like the old-timers when they would challenge someone to a duel. They would take a glove and slap him on the cheek. That has nothing to do with self-defense.

The Lord is saying, “Do not get bent out of shape over insults.” It does not amount to a hill of beans.

The next thing He said was, "If someone sues you for your coat, give him your cloak also." In other words, this is something insignificant and not worth getting upset about. Then He said, "Whosoever compels thee to go a mile, go with him twain." What difference does it make if you walk one mile or two miles? All our Lord is doing in that passage is teaching us how to deal with insults and things that are inconvenient to us. He is telling us that we are not to get bent out of shape over them.

However, when you talk about safety, if you really believe that your safety is important, then you have to put a high price on what you and I would call self-defense. It is impossible to remain safe if you are unconcerned with your self-defense or if you will not defend yourself.

Two Caveats from Proverbs 21:31

Now, I want to give you two caveats, or two warnings, based upon Proverbs 21, verse 31. "The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord." First and foremost, Solomon is telling us that safety comes from the sovereign God of heaven and earth. If God does not protect us, if God does not keep us safe, all of our preparations, endeavors, plans, training, and means will fail.

Psalm 33 gives us a passage that is almost parallel, presenting basically the same truth in a different format. "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host." In other words, might does not do it. "A mighty man is not delivered by much strength." A powerful man is not the one who always wins and succeeds. Then he says, "An horse is a vain thing for safety, neither will he deliver any by his great strength." We could paraphrase verse 17 by saying that a pistol, a rifle, a machine gun, a plane, or a tank is a vain thing for safety, and neither will it deliver any by its great firepower.

What the Bible is teaching us is that means are useless and worthless unless the sovereign God of heaven and earth protects us. Our protection is in Him. That is why it is said in Psalm 127, verse 1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." If safety does not come from the Lord, all else is basically hopeless.

Scripture confirms that if you and I desire His protection, then we must be obedient to His law. He said in Leviticus chapter 25 and verse 18, “Wherefore you shall do My statutes, and keep My judgments, and do them, and you shall dwell in the land safely.” So God says, if you want to dwell in the land safely, you obey Me. You keep My law; you do My judgments.

There is a second caveat, or a second warning. Proverbs 21 and verse 31 says, “The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord.” The Bible is also very clear on this point: we must understand that God is not going to fulfill our responsibilities for us.

It is true that He is sovereign. It is true that He is omnipotent. Yet He will not do for us that which we refuse to do for ourselves. Stop and think about this. God is not going to pray for us. God is not going to repent for us. God is not going to study for us. God is not going to think for us. God is not going to train for us. The man that will not use the means that God has provided will never ever be able to protect himself. God has given us certain responsibilities. Yes, safety, first and foremost, is of Him, but God is not going to fulfill our responsibilities for us.

So we have to keep these two truths in proper perspective. First, we have to remember that safety, first and foremost, is of the Lord; and secondly, that God requires you and me to be responsible and to use the means that He has ordained. For instance, Samson was a mighty man of God, and God certainly empowered Samson. But Samson reached down and picked up the jawbone of an ass and slew a thousand Philistines. Samson had to pick up the jawbone of an ass. Samson had to fight. The power and the blessing of God were upon Samson, but Samson had to fight. God did not fight for him. God also gave David power and the ability to use a sling against Goliath, but He did not throw the stone for David. That was David's responsibility.

Biblical Examples of Fighting with God's Help

In 2 Samuel 23, there is a listing of David's mighty men. Consider these two verses concerning Eliezer: "And after him was Eliezer 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."

There wasn't anybody around except these few. What did Eliezer do? He arose and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword. For the Lord wrought a great victory that day, and the people returned after him only to spoil. Eliezer fought the Philistines until his hand was so weary that it actually locked around the sword. They had to come up and pry his finger off so he could drop it.

The Bible says the Lord brought a great victory. It is true that God protected Eliezer, gave him strength, gave him power, and gave him the victory. But God did not swing the sword for him, and God did not fight for him.

War and Fighting Are Not Inherently Evil

War and fighting are not necessarily evil in and of themselves. Usually, war and fighting are evil, but they do not have to be evil. The truth is that God has used, and He still continues to use, war and fighting. It may surprise you to discover that the Bible teaches that God Himself is a man of war. In Exodus chapter 15, verse 3, the Bible

says, "The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is His name." In Exodus chapter 17 and verse 16, it says, "Because the Lord hath sworn that he will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." God is a warrior, and He has sworn that He is going to have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

Isaiah 42 and verse 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." God is going to stir up Himself like a man of war; He is going to cry, yea, He is going to roar, and He shall prevail against His enemies.

Neither war, nor fighting, nor warriors, are evil in and of themselves. The calling of a warrior is indeed a holy calling if that warrior fights for God and in accordance to His law. God does not raise up antinomian warriors. He does not raise up men who fight contrary to His law and contrary to His Word. Those who fight for God must fight according to His law.

Someone is going to say, “I don’t think there’s any place for a warrior in Scripture. I just don’t think that any man should fight.” In that case, you probably would have a controversy with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Revelation 6:1 says, “And I saw when the Lamb 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.” Verse 2 continues: “And he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer.” Obviously, this is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Some eschatological schools try to say that this is the Antichrist. There is a great deal of symbolism in Revelation, but the symbolism is consistent. Revelation 19:11 identifies the rider: “And I saw heaven open, and behold, a white horse. And he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True. And in righteousness doth he judge and make war.”

That is Jesus Christ. His eyes were as a flame of fire, on His head were many crowns, and He had a name written that no man knew but He Himself. He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is faithful and true, in righteousness doth judge and make war.

Let me spell it out for you: It is not a sin to fight. It is a sin to fight unbiblically and needlessly. It is not a sin to defend yourself. It is a sin to not defend yourself.

There are so many passages in the Bible concerning war and fighting. I have messages on the biblical doctrine of war, "The Lord Teaches Us to Fight," and total warfare. The point is this: whenever we are called upon to fight, we must learn to trust in the Lord and fight according to His Word, while trusting Him to make all the means effectual. If He does not make them effectual, everything is absolutely worthless. With these two thoughts in mind, first of all, safety is of the Lord.

Mental Training and Situational Awareness

Three Requirements for Safety and Self-Defense

Secondly, God has given us a responsibility to defend ourselves, and God is not going to do that for us. How, then, do we begin to live safely? How do we develop a mentality that we must protect ourselves and our families? I want to answer that in three ways. Although these points can be enunciated individually, they are intertwined. They work together, and you really cannot have one without the other and end up being successful. You must have all three.

Mental Training: The Combat Mindset

First of all, there must be mental training in order to possess a combat mindset. Colonel Jeff Cooper, now deceased, a retired United States Marine Corps colonel, said, "A gun is good. A knife is good. A stick is better than nothing at all. And your hands, arms, legs, and muscles are all to be relied upon when nothing else can be."

"But without your brain, without thinking, without cognizant awareness, you're little more than an animal fighting for survival in a dangerous situation." What he is saying is that you had better learn to use your brain and your mind. The beginning of a combat mindset is what you and I would call mental awareness, or situational awareness. The truth of the matter is that most people are hopelessly unaware.

Their minds are off in la-la land, planning their next adventure. Most people are so addicted to their cell phones, computer games, and laptops that they have absolutely no idea who is next to them, where they are, or what is happening. Alice and I often fly on a plane. I will get up and go to the bathroom and look. Practically everybody is looking down at a little cell phone or a little computer, playing a game, with no idea who is sitting next to them or across the aisle. They are totally and completely unaware.

Probably you read this past week about the 67-year-old woman who was walking down the sidewalk texting and fell into the basement of a building. The doors were open, and they were 14 to 16 inches high. She tripped over them and went over. The video showed her being carried out on the litter, totally and completely unaware. Most people could be approached, and someone could do whatever they wanted to them, and they would never even know it.

A combat mindset simply means that you have developed the ability to be aware, to be alert, and to act effectively and ethically under adversity, stress, and extreme pressure. It was Colonel Jeff Cooper who came up with what we know as the color code of mental awareness. They teach it at Front Sight, and many other schools teach it as well, but it began with Colonel Jeff Cooper.

He gave four different conditions. First is condition white. Condition white is when an individual is unaware and unprepared. If you are attacked in condition white, basically the only thing that will save you is the ineptitude and inability of your attacker. In other words, you are totally caught off guard: “What? What is happening? This can’t be happening to me.” You are absolutely surprised. It is like the recent incident in which three teenagers slipped up behind a man, hit him over the head, and tried to rob him. Some of them had a pistol, and they beat him; he ended up killing two of them. He happened to be an off-duty border patrol agent. He was simply walking down the street, not paying attention, when they came up behind him and began hitting him on the head. That is condition white.

Condition yellow simply means that you have a relaxed state of alertness. You are aware of your surroundings and your situations. When you go into a restaurant, look around and find the exits. Look

at people and try to determine who is packing and who is not packing. Do the same thing at a motel. You would be surprised at the crimes and murders that happen at motels and convenience stores. I just read yesterday about an off-duty guard who was murdered in a convenience store. It is wise, especially in convenience stores, to stop and look inside before you go in and see what is happening. Condition yellow means, "I'm aware; people could be here, and things could be happening that I don't want to get involved in." In relaxed condition yellow, you are saying, "I'm just going to be on my toes. I'm going to look out. I'm going to watch out." Then, of course, thirdly, there is condition orange.

That is a specific state of alertness. Your mind is being prepared. You have already identified specific issues and potential threats. What you are saying is, "I may need to do something here. I may need to take action. It may be one, it may be two, it may be three." In this situation, you want to make sure that you do not have tunnel vision: there is Lorraine, that is the threat right there, when the threat could be over here or over here as well.

Condition red is when you actually know that you are involved, have to fight, and must be ready at that particular moment. All your threats have been assessed; you just have to do it. This color code is indeed helpful, but if your mind stayed consistently in what we would call condition yellow, most unsafe conditions could be avoided. The greatest position of safety is avoiding unsafe circumstances.

If you see danger coming and have the ability to leave, do so, especially if you are not able or prepared to defend yourself. Get out of the way of trouble. The best way to survive an attack is to avoid one. Do not get attacked. Stay out of places where it is likely to happen. So, color codes or no color codes, whether you agree with condition white, yellow, orange, or red is immaterial. The truth is that you have to be aware of what is going on, see these dangerous situations, and avoid them.

When you see danger, there are normally four different responses, and each one of us will react in one of these four ways. There is fight, there is flight, there is fright, and there is freeze. When you get into danger, you are either going to fight, run away, become so frightened

and scared that you do not know what is going to happen, or absolutely freeze up, much like a deer in the headlights that stands there waiting for the vehicle to hit it.

Someone has said, and we use this phrase all the time, “I was scared to death.” Being scared to death usually can result in your death. You have to understand that you are going to respond in one of these four ways to danger. A combat mindset will enable you to fight effectively under stress and danger. It means that you have prepared your mind to the extent that you do not panic, freeze, or become helplessly frightened.

You simply do what needs to be done. A combat mindset, for a Christian especially, has already determined what course could be taken and should be taken from a biblical standpoint.

So here is a good question: Do you know what God allows in the act of self-defense? Do you know under what circumstances, according to the Word of God, life may be lawfully and legitimately taken? How far can you go in defending your life and the lives of others? What exactly does God command?

Each of us knows the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." That is a negative. You have to remember that every negative has a positive. The positive of "Thou shalt not kill" is "Thou shalt preserve life." Therefore, you have a duty, obligation, and responsibility to preserve life. That means preserving your life and the lives of others. God is not going to keep that duty and responsibility for you. If you are attacked and someone is trying to take your life, you must defend yourself, stop that attack, and stop that threat.

If you can stop the threat without taking life, wonderful. If you cannot stop the threat without taking a life, then you have to do what must be done.

Many people erroneously think, "I don't even want to think about this. I'll just cross that bridge when I come to it. This is too painful for me. I just do not want to think about it." But when it comes to a life-and-death situation, if you have not thought about it and worked it out in your mind already, you will not know what to do. It will be too late because it will happen in an instant. If you hesitate, you're going to be the victim. That's all there is to it.

Now is the time to find out what the sovereign God of the universe allows you to do in self-defense. You have to learn that the God who gives life and sustains life also tells you in the Bible why life may be lawfully taken on His terms. If you do not possess a combat mentality, if you are not ready to fight and defend yourself, you will not do so.

A combat mindset does not mean that you become a hunter, begin looking for trouble, or itch to take someone's life. It means that you will not allow anyone to take your life, the life of your family, your loved ones, or your friends and neighbors. A combat mindset is this: "I will fight and I will do whatever is necessary to protect my life and the life of my family." If you are going to live safely and be able to defend yourself, you must possess a combat mindset.

Physical Training: Muscle Memory and Skill

Secondly, there must be physical training that will make that combat mindset effective. You will fight the way you train. You may say, "But I do not train." Fine. You will not fight, or at least you will not fight long, and you certainly will not fight effectively. If there is no muscle memory to enable you to function when your fine motor skills are unavailable, you will be defeated. If you do not practice and develop muscle memory to the point of doing it instinctively, or at least without thinking, you will not be able to defend your family, and you will certainly not be able to defend yourself.

Most people will buy a pistol and a box of ammunition, place them on the nightstand by their bed, and think that, in a home invasion, they will somehow be able to get the pistol, load it, and save their family members. That is the furthest thing from the truth. It would never happen because you are not trained to use that weapon. You have no confidence in it, and you will usually end up dead.

Calvin was right when he said that all the skillfulness and art in training men for war, in the use of armor, in marshalling armies, in forming sieges, and in all other military tactics are from God. That was certainly so in the life of David. In Psalm 144, verse 1, David said, "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, who teacheth my hands to

war and my fingers to fight." Where did David learn his martial skills? The answer is, from God.

We are talking about physical training. David did not set out to learn how to use the sling when he met Goliath. He already knew how to use a sling. He had already been taught, and he had practiced and practiced. He knew exactly what he could do. He probably could sling stones in his sleep, and the shot to Goliath's forehead was not a lucky shot. David knew what that sling would do and where that stone would go, because he trained himself.

When you know what you are able to do, you will have confidence in yourself and in your weapon. Without training, without muscle memory, all you can do is hope that your inability and ineptitude are not as bad as the inability and ineptitude of the attacker. I have heard men say, "But I shot expert when I was in the Army." And yes, you did.

Probably thirty to forty years ago, and that was on the range with no one shooting back at you. Besides that, most men have not shot consistently since they were in the military. I know military men and law enforcement officers who cannot shoot. Some have stated that publicly to us. One admitted to Alice and me that he simply could not shoot, though he had been in law enforcement for years. I know for a fact that many cannot shoot because I have seen them.

I remember when my youngest grandchildren were about twelve and fourteen. We took them to Front Sight, where five deputies stood side by side with my two teenage, or nearly teenage, grandchildren. Those two grandchildren outshot the five deputies—not just once, but consistently over four days. The deputies simply could not function.

The point is that military or law-enforcement experience does not mean someone can shoot. The worst student I have ever had in all my years of training was a former law-enforcement officer. He could not shoot, would not listen, did not know how to function, and thought he knew it all. He was a danger not only to himself but to everyone around him. Bad training is worse than no training. So many people think they can function without the necessary training. It is impossible.

Years ago, when my pastor friend first invited me to Front Sight, I thought, “What can they teach me about shooting? I have been shooting since I was seven years old. I started hunting with a little single-shot .22.” I thought it would be a waste of time, but I went. After my first day, I discovered how absolutely stupid, dumb, and ignorant I really was. It is just as they say: you do not know what you do not know.

Someone is going to say, “But I’ve been in the military, and I’ve shot. I’m somewhat of a decent shooter. I can hit.” Yes, on the range. But remember the 50% rule: you are half as good under pressure as you are on your best day at the range. If you cannot function under stress, pressure, and danger, you will not function in a real fight. You will become a victim. There is a vast difference between target shooting and defensive handgun shooting.

Most men have trained with a rifle and can shoot one fairly well, but most men do not walk around with a rifle slung over their shoulder. Pistols are usually carried because they are portable and concealable. In reality, it does not matter how great a shot you are if you cannot get your weapon out quickly and get it on target; you perish.

Accuracy is necessary and desired, but it will not help if you are slow or have no muscle memory. If I had to choose between accuracy and speed, certainly I would take accuracy. But with proper training, I can have both. Accuracy will not help if you cannot get to your weapon, if you keep it under lock and key, or if you cannot get on target quickly.

Just in the last month or so, a store owner and his son were murdered by three robbers. The owner was carrying a concealed pistol, but he had no round in the chamber. When one robber turned his head away, the owner drew his pistol and tried to slingshot it, putting a round in the chamber, but his fingers slipped. The robber turned, saw it, shot him, and then shot his son. As the owner went down, he was still trying to do this until he died.

He could have been the best shot in the entire state, but if you cannot get your weapon out and get it on target, your accuracy is absolutely worthless. I am talking about physical training. I have

heard every excuse under the sun why people do not train: “It’s too hot.” July and August are really hot, I can tell you that. “It’s too cold.” I do not like cold any more than anybody else, but I will tell you this.

One of the coldest classes I ever taught was in Oklahoma. It was 20 degrees, with the wind blowing and snow and ice on the ground. Yet 25 to 30 folks stayed with me for two days, including about 10 women. The second day was warmer than the first, but it was still 20 degrees with the wind blowing and snow and ice on the ground.

We find time to go on vacation, hunting, fishing, or to do whatever we desire, and we will find time to die. Weather should not bother you. I normally tell folks, jokingly, when they are concerned about the weather, "There's no extra charge for actual combat conditions." Alice and I were at Front Sight one year in the middle of May. The first day was 105 degrees, the second was 106, the third was 107, and the fourth was 51, raining and snowing. We just kept shooting.

You have to remember this simple truth: If you are attacked, you do not get to pick the time, place, or weather conditions. Your adversary does that. He is not interested in choosing a time, place, or weather that is advantageous or convenient for you. He is going to choose all of it for himself. If you do not know how to function in any of those conditions, you are going to be behind the curve and become the victim. You are going to end up losing. You cannot protect your family if you are concerned about the weather.

Somebody said, "But look at the money. I don't need to waste my ammunition. The ammunition costs money." Let me tell you something: I know that travel costs money. I know that ammunition costs money. I know that equipment costs money. Most of us do not have a sufficient amount of money. I understand that, but you also have to remember that emergency rooms, doctors, hospitals, and funerals cost money as well. I would rather spend a little money on the former and sacrifice so my family would not have to spend all their money on the latter. That is for sure.

Proper training and proper practice should allow you to acquire muscle memory. Such training will automatically lead to what you and I would call instinct, or point shooting, which means that you

could shoot accurately without your sights from five to ten yards. If you refuse to train, you will never acquire a combat mindset, never have a biblical martial spirit, and therefore never possess that mindset.

Thirdly, there must be a willingness to use your mindset and training in order to safely defend yourself and your family. If you are unwilling to act upon your training and apply what you have learned, you will be the victim. The one who has already made up his mind and will not hesitate is the one who is going to win the fight. There is a vast difference between action and reaction. Action always beats reaction.

The Will to Act

The biggest difference between a target shooter and a defensive shooter is the will to act, and to act speedily and readily, with the grit and determination necessary to accomplish your self-defense. One of the greatest lines in a movie that I ever heard was uttered by Clint Eastwood in "The Outlaw Josey Wales." They were being attacked, and here is what he said: "Now remember, things look bad, and it looks like you're not going to make it. Then you've got to get mean. I mean plum, mad dog mean. Because if you lose your head and you give up, you neither live nor win. That's just the way it is." That is an absolute truth. If you don't become mad dog mean and are unwilling to apply what you have learned, you will lose.

You must have the will to act. Dave Spaulding, retired law enforcement, has a wonderful book called "Handgun Combatives." He writes, "I have spoken with many a student who has come to me and said, 'Oh, I will never shoot anyone. I'm just going to use the gun to scare them away.' Well, let me tell you something. This technique seldom works. If you can scare them away, that is great. However, over the last several decades of law enforcement, I have learned that criminals, a.k.a. human predators, can tell when someone has the resolve to end a fight versus someone who is just trying to fake their way through a situation."

I spent seven years of my 25-year law enforcement career working in the county jail and dealing with inmates on a daily basis. When my shift was slow and my bookends were few, I would take the

opportunity to get some of these human predators out of their cells, sit them down in the officer's dining room, and talk to them about their criminal behavior. It was amazing, for a few moments of freedom, a bologna sandwich, and a can of soda, what information these individuals would share with me. I never ceased to be amazed by the amount of street intellect that these individuals possessed.

Their ability to size up people is uncanny. Without a doubt, criminals, human predators, and even those people who live and breathe the street can tell when someone is willing to fight and someone who is only posturing. I would caution anyone who buys a firearm with this intention to rethink his or her solution. They have about a 75 to 80 percent chance of failure in the event they brandish a firearm without the will to use it. As a 25-year law enforcement officer said, if you don't have the will to use it, you're dead.

If you do not think that the will to fight is necessary, think about David. In 1 Samuel chapter 17, Goliath came out and challenged the soldiers, and everyone was afraid. Then David said to King Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Thy servant will go out and fight this Philistine." David had the means to fight. He had the blessings of the Lord upon him, but he also had something none of those other soldiers had: the will to fight. He said, "I will fight. I will do it." Without the will to fight, all the mental training and physical training are worthless and a waste of time. If you're not going to fight, you will be the victim.

God's Will to Fight and Our Martial Spirit

It is never wrong to emulate our Heavenly Father. In Jeremiah chapter 21, God is dealing with Judah and Jerusalem, and He has to ask Jeremiah to pray that the Lord would turn the Babylonians back. Of course, God is not going to do it because of the sins of Judah and Jerusalem. So watch what God says. Jeremiah 21:4: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them in the midst of this city."

God says, "...and I Myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand, and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury,

and in great wrath, and I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast, they shall die of a great pestilence." God said, "I will fight."

Did you know our Lord said the same thing? In the book of Revelation, chapter 2 and verse 16, our Lord is talking to the church, and He says, "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with a sword of my mouth." "I will fight against thee," He said, "with a sword of my mouth." Now, if you do not think that God has a resolve to fight, I would challenge you to do something: rebel against Him and wait and see.

If you'll look in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 7 and verses 9 and 10, the Bible says, "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him, and keepeth 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." God has the will to fight, and He will fight His enemies. The problem is that we do not understand that, basically, we are in a war.

There is a sheriff here in Florida, Sheriff Wayne Ivey, out of Orlando, who understands the situation we are in. I read an article about Sheriff Ivey this week. You can look it up on the Internet or YouTube by typing in "Sheriff Wayne Ivey." There is a brief message titled "We are at war." Listen to Sheriff Ivey's words. When he says war, he does not mean a massive battle fought with ballistic missiles and nuclear bombs, but rather a war against mass shootings and deranged lunatics who are out to destroy human life.

Consider what happened in New Mexico. A grown man, probably in his forties, murdered his stepfather because they argued over a pickup truck. Then he shot his mother as she pleaded with him not to shoot her; she was in critical condition and would probably die, according to the article. He left, then shot and killed three other individuals, saying that he killed them for fun.

Sheriff Ivey says that when he speaks of war, he means a war against mass shootings and deranged lunatics who are out to destroy

human life. "What's next is to fully understand that this is war, and you'd better be prepared to wage war to protect you, your family, and those around you if attacked," he argued. He emphasized that shooters feed off fear and depend on people running and hiding rather than standing tall and fighting back. "What they don't count on is being attacked themselves, having to become defensive to save their own lives," he said.

What he is saying is that you had better have the means and the will to fight, or someone like this is going to die. It is like the lunacy in England, where jihadists took knives onto London Bridge, slashing and killing people.

The authorities came out and said that, in order to counteract this, you must run, hide, and tell. I prefer draw, aim, and shoot. That is absolute lunacy. At least Sheriff Ivey is saying that we must determine to defend ourselves and possess the will to fight. We must acquire a combat mentality, obtain proper training, and have the will to apply that training.

A combat mindset, proper training, and the will to use that training do not mean that you are a hunter, looking for trouble, or seeking to take someone's life. It means that you are going to defend your life, your family, and those whom God has given you the responsibility of protecting. That is all it means. Thomas Jefferson said, “A strong body makes the mind strong. As to the species of exercises, I advise the gun. While this gives moderate exercise to the body, it gives boldness, enterprise, and independence to the mind. Games played with the ball and others of that nature are too violent for the body and stamp no character upon the mind. Let your gun therefore be your constant companion in all your walks.”

Now let us make some applications. We are talking about safety and self-defense. One of the greatest weaknesses of Christians, one of the greatest weaknesses in the people of God, is that we have lost our martial spirit. Most churches today will not even sing “Onward Christian Soldiers, marching as to war.” Our men, both young and old, have been feminized, sanitized, and neutralized.

If you will not stand for something, you are going to fall for anything. Most people today will not fight temptation in their lives,

their family lives, their church life, or their national life. We are not only afraid to fight; we do not know how to fight, and we do not have the will to fight. Taylor Caldwell said this; it summarizes our generation.

He 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 learn to pray that God would raise up men and give us men like Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, who combined godliness with martial skill.

The principles of warfare apply both to physical and spiritual warfare. Those who do not know how to fight physically may not understand how to fight spiritually, since there is a correlation between attitude and action. If we are unwilling to fight in order to defend ourselves and others, will we not also be unwilling to fight and defend ourselves spiritually? A man who is quickly, easily, and readily overcome with evil and the corrupt demands of evil men is not going to fight against sin and temptation in his own personal life. Spiritual warfare is far greater than physical warfare. If you do not have a fighting mentality physically, you are certainly not going to have it spiritually.

Chad Cooper has Infidel Body Armor. The reason he called it Infidel Body Armor is because it is a Christian organization: Muslims call all Christians infidels. Usually on his blog, after stating, “Be a warrior and be ready for whatever comes,” he lists five simple statements:

Practical Admonitions and Conclusion

1. Nobody is coming to save you. Stop and think about that. You sign and call 911, and they will get there thirty minutes after the fact, just in time to use chalk to draw where your body lies and write a report on how you got killed. Nobody is coming to save you.

2. Everything is your responsibility. Think about that. Everything is your responsibility.

3. Save who needs to be saved.

4. Kill who needs to be killed.

5. Always be working.

Some will say, “I have problems with number four. I do not want to kill anybody. I do not even want to hurt anybody.” But the man who was shooting the Republican congressman in Arlington, Virginia, was stopped by being killed—he was shot. If someone is shooting at you or your family, and the only way you can stop him is to take his life, he needs to be killed. That is exactly what it means: nobody is coming to save you; everything is your responsibility; save who needs to be saved; kill who needs to be killed; always be working.

You'll never understand those things without a combat mentality. If you develop a combat mentality, you will want physical training, and with both, in all probability, you will develop the will to fight if you have to. Let me tell you this: I'll soon be seventy-three years old, and I have not had a fight since junior high school. Even then, it was tussling, not a real fight as such.

Alice and I both are second-degree black belts in jiu-jitsu. Back in my fifties, perhaps my early sixties, when I was in tip-top shape, a young man threatened to physically jump on me and whip me. I laughed and said, "Son, if you ever jumped on me, it would be the worst mistake you've ever made in your entire life." I didn't want to whip him.

I could have, but why would I? I don't have to prove that I can whip him; I already know I can. Three or four days later, he returned and apologized. He said, "I understand if I had jumped on you, it would have been the worst mistake I'd ever made." Just because you know how to fight does not mean that you have to fight. But if you have to fight, you know how, you know what you can do, and that gives you confidence in whatever means you use to defend yourself.

You need mental awareness, a combat mindset, physical training, and the will to put that training into effect whenever it is needed. Without that, you cannot be safe or defend yourself.

Let's pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, and that which You know and have revealed for us, for our learning and admonition. I pray, Lord, that You would help us to be safe and able and willing to

defend ourselves and our families. Give us the grace and mercy we need to serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

What Is In Your Heart

August 20, 2017

What Do You Have in Your Heart?

In 1 Chronicles 29, beginning with verse 17, David is praying: “I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things. And now have I seen with joy Thy people which are present here to offer willingly unto Thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee. And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build a palace for the which I have made provision.”

Introduction: The Importance of the Heart

And David said to all the congregation, “Now bless the Lord your God.” And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the King.

Most of you know that one leading credit card company has an advertisement that goes like this: “What do you have in your wallet?” The more important question is not what you have in your wallet, but what do you have in your heart? Our hearts are indeed the most important aspect of our beings.

I have been asked in times past, having preached nearly 53 years now, which I consider the most important message I have ever preached for Christians. Without hesitation, I have always answered that I believe the most important message I have ever preached for Christians is from Proverbs 4:23, on keeping the heart. The Scripture says that we are to keep our hearts with all diligence, for out of the heart are the issues of life.

It is not my intent to preach that message today. However, if you have not heard it, I encourage you to listen to it. If you have heard it in time past, I encourage you to listen to it again. I think it is so important because, to be absolutely honest, I preach that message to myself practically every day.

I do have a series on heart preparation, and I believe those messages are important as well. But I believe the message on keeping the heart is absolutely fundamental and an absolute requirement for every child of God if we understand—and we should understand—that everything begins in our hearts.

Biblical Definition of the Heart

Your heart is your mind. It is your understanding. A heart is not some physical organ that God is talking about. When He says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," obviously, He is not talking about the physical organ, because one of these days it is going to stop. And there is absolutely nothing you can do about it. I do not know about you, but I am quite thankful that I do not have to lie awake at night saying, "Pump, heart, pump, beat, heartbeat." It just does it. It just keeps going. One day it will stop, and I cannot hinder it from stopping.

So when he says, "Keep thy heart," he is literally talking about keeping your mind. The Hebrew word "lev" there is translated "mind" and "understanding" twenty times in the Scripture. When

you look in 1 Chronicles chapter 29, verses 17 through 20, the Hebrew word here for heart is translated in their Bibles as heart, mind, and understanding. So it refers then to the thought life, the inner man, the mind, the soul, and the understanding. In reference to our lives, we are told in Proverbs 23 and verse 7, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Simply stated, our actions, our conduct, and our behavior are nothing more than the outworking of our thoughts and our affections. So the same truth is repeated in the New Testament. If you would hold 1 Chronicles, I am coming right back there, but I want you to look in the book of Luke chapter 6 and verse 45. Notice what our Lord says, and I think you can get a good grasp of what I am trying to share with you. Luke chapter 6 and verse 45. Our Lord says it like this: "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil. For of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

New Testament Confirmation

Our Lord is simply saying that everything pours forth from the heart. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. In other words, whatever we think, whatever we have in our hearts, ultimately we end up speaking. It is revealed. If you would look in your Bibles to the book of Matthew, chapter 15, and let us begin reading there with verse 15. Notice again what our Lord is saying. He is still talking about the heart: "Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable."

And Jesus said, "Are you also yet without understanding? Do not you yet understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

There are two statements here to which we should pay very close attention. First, our Lord says, "But those things which proceed out

of the mouth come forth from the heart." Everything comes out of our heart. Everything flows from our heart. Our heart is our mind. Our heart is our understanding. Our heart is the way we think. And so everything is going to flow out of our heart. The second thing our Lord points out here is this: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," which indicates very clearly that your heart is your mind.

He then goes on to list murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies. Let me put it to you like this: You cannot commit a sin without first thinking about that sin. So when you begin to entertain that sinful, wicked thought in your mind, ultimately what he is saying is that you are going to do exactly what you are thinking about. So, obviously, it is out of the heart that all of these wicked things proceed.

Both Testaments, Old and New, are consistent in establishing the fact that our hearts happen to be our mind and our understanding. Look back in your Bibles to 1 Chronicles 29 because, interestingly enough, the passage that I read to you is found in the context where David is dedicating the wealth that he gave and the wealth that the people gave for the building of the temple. Look back to 1 Chronicles 26 and verse 27, because I want you to be absolutely amazed at something. Notice 1 Chronicles 26 and verse 27.

Context: David's Offering for the Temple

The Bible says, "Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the Lord." Many times, when David conquered foreign enemies and confiscated their wealth, that wealth was given to the house of the Lord. So here is a vast sum of money, a vast sum of wealth that has been laid up for the house of the Lord from the battles that David won.

In 1 Chronicles chapter 29, beginning with verse 2, notice what David said. Not counting that which David had confiscated in battle, he says, “Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the gold for the things to be made of gold, and the silver for the things of silver, and the brass for the things of brass, and iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistering stones of diverse colors, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance.” He had prepared

all this. Now watch: “Moreover, because I've set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good”—this is not what he won in battle, but out of his own substance—“I have of my own proper good of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, even three thousand talents of gold, even of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls for the houses withal, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?”

Out of all the wealth that David had confiscated in order to build the house of God, he gave, from his own personal money and wealth, three thousand talents of gold and seven thousand talents of silver. That does not count the stones, marble, wood, brass, and whatever else he gave.

That figure does not normally register too much with us. We have no way of knowing or imagining exactly how wealthy David really was, or how wealthy the people of Israel really and truly were. But a talent weighs seventy-five pounds. David gave three thousand talents of gold, or 225,000 pounds of gold. If an ounce of gold today is $1,200—1,200 Federal Reserve notes, actually it is more—and you multiply $1,200 by sixteen, you get $19,200. Multiplied by the pounds David gave, he would have ended up giving, in today's value, approximately $4,300,000,000 just in gold. That does not count what he gave in silver: 525,000 pounds of silver.

It was not just David who gave for the temple. “Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel and the captains of thousands and of hundreds with the rulers of the king's work offered willingly. Now watch. And gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents, and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered

willingly unto the Lord. And David the king also rejoiced with great joy."

David had given this vast sum out of his own treasury, and now all of the leading princes and chief of the fathers gave another enormous amount toward the temple of God. The Bible says that David rejoiced. Verses 10 through 16 contain David's prayer and praise, where he blesses the Lord for everything that has been given to God and acknowledges that everything they gave to God was actually His own. They did not have anything that God had not given them.

In verse 16, he summarizes it like this: "O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee an house for Thine holy name cometh of Thine own hand and is all Thine own." There is absolutely nothing that we have that God has not first given unto us. Everything we are and everything we have has come from God. Our text is part of the prayer, praise, and worship of God that David began in verse 10. In verse 18, David requests something of God for his people.

He says, "O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee." When I read this passage some time back, one of the things that really caught my eye was verse 18. The words describe a prayer that God would keep these thoughts forever in the hearts of His people and prepare their hearts unto Him. The phrase, "the imagination of the thoughts of the heart," immediately brought another passage of Scripture to mind. In Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5, the Bible says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The phrase is used again, and that is amazing.

Contrast: Depravity vs. Grace

Genesis 6:5 speaks of every imagination of the thoughts of the heart being only evil continually. In 1 Chronicles 29:18, David says, "Keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people." I hope you can see the difference between Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5 and 1 Chronicles 29 and verse 18. Genesis 6:5 is what

man is by nature; 1 Chronicles 29:18 is what man is by grace. Genesis 6:5 is the work of man, the work of man's depravity; 1 Chronicles 29:18 is the work of God, the work of God's saving grace. In Genesis, we are talking about depravity; in Chronicles, we are talking about grace. We are talking about the imagination of the thoughts of the heart in both passages, but one is depravity and the other is grace. So the question has to be, What do you have in your heart?

Is it depravity, or is it grace? Are your thoughts centered upon that which is wicked, wrong, depraved, and rebellious? Or are your thoughts centered upon that which is right, holy, pure, godly, and biblical? In other words, your life is going to evidence, demonstrate, and manifest whatever is in your heart. What was David's request to keep in the hearts of the people forever?

David's Request: Keep This Forever

That's what he said in verse 18: “O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people.” We could answer very generally and say that David was requesting that God would keep in their hearts all of the good dispositions, all of the good attitudes, and all of the good cooperation that had been given toward the support of the temple. David could also be requesting that God would fix in them a holy temper and a holy disposition to always do that which is right, biblical, and godly. That would be a very general statement.

But I want you to notice something else he says in verse 18: “O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination and thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee.” What David is recognizing here is that the spirit of giving, cooperation, and graciousness that he had just witnessed was the result of God's preparing the hearts of His people.

The Necessity of Heart Preparation

The Bible says in Proverbs 16:1, “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.” The preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord. If your heart is

ever prepared, God prepared it. If your heart is prepared to pray, to study, or to come to Jesus Christ, God prepared it.

It is true that in John 6:37 our Lord said, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come unto Me, and him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." But it is equally true that He said in John 6:44, "No man can come unto Me except the Father who hath sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up in the last days." So, in order for the sinner to come, he must have his heart prepared by God.

The preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord. Yet we must remember that it is our duty, obligation, and responsibility to seek God to prepare our hearts. His is the ability; ours is the responsibility.

The Bible tells us the source of the wickedness in the life of Rehoboam, Solomon's son and David's grandson. In 2 Chronicles 12:14, concerning Rehoboam, it says that "he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." He did evil because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord. Only God can prepare the heart, but Rehoboam had a responsibility, duty, and obligation to seek God to prepare that heart.

Yet 2 Chronicles 27:6 says of King Jotham, "So Jotham became mighty because he prepared his ways before the Lord." In other words, he examined his ways to make sure that they were biblical, holy, and godly. So he became mighty.

This responsibility was also understood by godly Ezra. Ezra 7:10 says, "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it.

Do you realize godliness just does not simply happen? Holiness does not simply happen. You do not go to bed dumb and wake up smart, neither do you go to bed unholy and wake up holy. We must learn what it means to prepare our hearts.

In 1 Samuel chapter 7 and verse 3, Samuel admonished the Israelites: "And Samuel spake unto the whole house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all of your hearts, then put away the strange gods that are among you and Ashtoreth, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only, and He will deliver

you out of the hand of the Philistines." Samuel said, "Look, if you really want deliverance from your enemies, then you put away your strange gods, you put away your god of Ashtoreth. You put away all of these strange gods, you repent, you serve Him and serve Him only."

I think that is a modern-day application we should understand in our day and time. If we really want our land back, if we really want our history and our heritage and our country, then we must cease from our idolatry and our wickedness and our rebellion and turn to the Lord with all of our hearts.

Our Lord tells us basically the same thing in Luke 12:47: "And that servant which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." If we know what God's will is, we have a duty, an obligation, and a responsibility to prepare ourselves. We have a responsibility to seek the Lord and prepare our hearts. How do we prepare our hearts? First of all, by seeking Him.

Secondly, by turning from our sins. Thirdly, by putting in our hearts His Word, His truth, and obeying Him. Undoubtedly, as you look at 1 Chronicles 29, you could say, yes, David wants all of these good dispositions to continue in his people. He wants them to remain true to the Lord. But if you look at verse 18 again, he says, "O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee." David is very specific: "Keep this. Keep this." What is David actually praying that God would keep in the hearts of his people forever? If you understand verse 18, you must take it in the context of verse 17. David says, "I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things, and now have I seen with joy Thy people which are present here, to offer willingly unto Thee."

"O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this," so that "this" refers back to verse 17. What is it, this, that David wants kept in the hearts of the people? First of all, if you look back in verse 17, he says, "I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart."

The very first thing that we are to keep in our hearts forever is that God tries the heart.

God Tests the Heart

The word "triest" is the Hebrew word "bachan," which literally means to examine, to prove, to scrutinize, and to test. God scrutinizes, tests, examines, and tries our heart. God not only knows the heart perfectly; He tests it, examines it, tries it, and reveals it not only to ourselves, but to others as well. You remember that passage in Genesis 22, verse 1? The Bible said, "And it came to pass that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am." It says that God did tempt. Often times we use the word "tempt," but then think of temptation or solicitation to do evil. The word "tempt" there simply means to test. You remember that passage in James 1, verses 13 through 15, when he said, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man."

"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. So God is not going to try to seduce us or tempt us to go contrary to His Word. No. He will test us. He will try us.

He will reveal to us and to others what is exactly in our hearts, what we are made of. But He does not tempt us to sin. The Bible tells you in 1 Peter, 1 Peter 1, verses 6-8: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Peter says, look, you are going through a test, a trial of fire, and that trial is much more precious than gold which perishes. As you read through the Bible, you find that God oftentimes tests us. He

tells us this truth, and sometimes we do not understand it because it occurs under a word with which most people are unfamiliar.

Hold 1 Chronicles 29 and turn to Psalm 7. We will go through the book of Psalms very quickly; I am not going to read all of these verses. Then we will go to Jeremiah and to Revelation. Notice Psalm 7, verse 9. It happens to be one of my favorite verses. There is a wonderful prayer. David prays.

"Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins." Psalm 26:2 adds David's prayer: "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." In Psalm 73:21, when God opened Asaph's eyes, he said, "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins." David said in Psalm 139:13, "For Thou hast possessed my reins: Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb."

Jeremiah 17:10 says, "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings." God says, "I search the heart, I try, or I test the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings." Revelation 2:23 declares, "And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and the hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

There are plenty of other verses that refer to the reins. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word is actually "keliah" for reins, and it literally refers to your kidneys. The Lord trieth the heart and the kidneys. Sometimes it refers to the physical organ, but most of the time it is another word for the emotions, the seat of affection, or the seat of understanding.

In Revelation 2:23, the Greek word is "nephros," which also means kidneys, loins, or the innermost thoughts, feelings, and purposes of the soul. What we do not understand is that throughout most of the Old Testament, and even in New Testament times, people referred to the deepest recesses of man as his kidneys or bowels. Jeremiah said, "My bowels churned within me." One of my favorite Greek words is "splagchnizomai." I looked at my wife and said, "Sweetheart, I love you with all my bowels."

She said, "That doesn't sound romantic to me." But that's biblical: to love you with all my bowels, because the bowels, or the kidneys, were the most innermost part of individuals. They were the seat of affection. When the Bible says that God tries the hearts and the reins, He is saying, "I'm trying everything in you. I'm going to scrutinize every motive, every desire, every thought. I'm going to test it."

You're responsible to keep your thoughts biblical, holy, and pure. What did the Apostle Paul say in Romans 2:16? "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." God shall judge the secrets of men. Your wife, husband, or children may not know what goes on in your mind, but God does. The Bible says, Proverbs 17:3, "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts."

David said this is something we better keep in mind, something we better keep in the imagination of the thoughts of our hearts forever: God tries us. He examines us. He scrutinizes us. He knows everything about us. You cannot con God, deceive Him, confound Him, or avoid Him. He knows everything, and He is constantly scrutinizing your heart, your mind, and your thoughts. In fact, God said in His book, "I know thy thoughts, every one of them, even before they enter into your mind." Remember what David said? "Thou hast laid Thine hand upon me. Thou knowest my words, O Lord, even before I speak them."

"Such knowledge is too wonderful to me. It is too high. I cannot attain to it." God tests our mind. When that wicked, fleshly, sensual thought hits your mind, instantly and immediately kick it out and say, "I will not have it. I will not think of it. That is not my child. I will not have it." My Father tests, scrutinizes, and examines my mind. There are no secrets from God.

If you look back in your Bibles to 1 Chronicles chapter 29, David said that this is the one thing we need to keep in our hearts and minds forever: “I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart.” That is the first thing we should keep in mind. The second thing is this: “and hast pleasure in uprightness.” God has pleasure in uprightness.

Have you ever considered that which pleases God? Usually, we want to do that which pleases ourselves. But have you ever really come to God in prayer and said, “Lord, I know You test my heart. I know You examine my heart. I know You scrutinize my heart. And Lord, with all the scrutiny and all the testing, Lord, I want You to know that in my heart, I really, genuinely want to please Thee”? Because the Bible says that the Lord has pleasure in uprightness. So the question is, have you ever purposely set out each morning, each day, and each afternoon to please God particularly?

God Has Pleasure in Uprightness

The Hebrew word for “pleasure” here literally means to do that which is acceptable, pleasing, delightful, enjoyable, favorable, and approvable. In other words, these are the things that bring God pleasure. Paul prayed for the Colossian Christians, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Notice the words, “that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” You have to walk in such a manner as to please Him. Then he said, “being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” There is a way that we can walk pleasing to God.

Colossians 3:20 says, “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” This is a verse everyone in this room could quote. Wow.

According to our text, the Lord has pleasure in uprightness. Uprightness means that which is straight, upright, right, and due. If we please Him by doing that which is straight, right, and due, here are some questions: What is right? What is God's due? How do we give unto God that which is His right, and how do we give to God that which is His due?

David is praying, "Lord, I want You to keep these two things forever in the hearts of the imagination of Your people: first, that You scrutinize and test the heart; and second, that You have pleasure in uprightness." So, what is God's due? What does it mean to walk straight before Him?

The answer should be obvious. We owe Him obedience, honor, glory, praise, and worship. How much do we owe Him? Let us look again at Colossians 3:20: "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord." It does not say, "Children, obey your parents in some things," or, "Children, do the best you can." It says, "Children, you obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord."

If, as children, we owed total and complete obedience to our earthly parents, how much more, as spiritual children, do we owe total and complete obedience to our Heavenly Father? If the obedience of earthly children to earthly parents highly pleases God, how much more should spiritual and practical obedience to our Heavenly Father please Him? According to Colossians 1:10, we should walk worthy unto the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

If we are well-pleasing to Him, we have to be obedient because we are fruitful in every good work. If we are pleasing Him, we must be studious, because we are increasing in the knowledge of God. It is impossible to please Him without obedience, and it is impossible to please Him without study.

In 1 Chronicles 29:17, David said, “I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart and hast pleasure in uprightness.” David said, “I know these two things.” That is why he said in verse 18, “O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people.” Keep these two things forever.

“As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart, I have willingly offered all these things.” Lord, I know You examine the heart. You try; You scrutinize. Now, Lord, as for me, in giving all of this great wealth, in the uprightness of my heart, I willingly offered these things. I was not reluctant. I was not greedy. I was not selfish. I was not stubborn. I was not half-hearted. Lord, You examine; You know that I willingly offered these things.

Then he says, “And now I have seen with joy Thy people which are present here to offer willingly unto Thee.” Lord, obviously these people offered in the same way. Since we know that You try the heart

and delight in uprightness, keep this in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people forever.

Do you realize that David oftentimes asked God to search him? Sometimes we are afraid to ask God to search us because we know what is there. We think that if we hide it, God will not find it or know it. But David said in Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart. Search me, O God, and know my heart and try me and know my thoughts.”

"And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 51 is that great psalm where David was confessing his sin. It says in verse 6, "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom." Thou desirest truth in the inward parts. Certainly, one would desire truth and uprightness in heart if he understood and kept in mind that God searches his heart and reins. God scrutinizes and knows. You would certainly want to be upright if you were going to please your Heavenly Father.

Isaiah 33:15-16 says, "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." This should really be an encouragement to keep these two things in mind. Why? Because he is walking uprightly. He is walking as pleasing unto the Lord. He is walking in obedience and in faith.

Applications and Conclusion

Now, let me make a couple of applications. When you think of these two truths, especially that God tries the heart, it is a great satisfaction and great consolation to a godly man to know that God tries and examines the heart, the desires, and the motives. How can it be such a great consolation? I dare say that every one of you has had some of the experiences I have had in my life. When you have genuinely, honestly, and truly tried to help someone, your motives were pure, and you were upright, it is a consolation to know that God examines the heart and knows those motives.

And everything exploded and turned out wrong. Instead of people being appreciative, they hated you. At times like that, the only thing I can say is, "Oh, God. You know my heart. You knew my desires. You knew my motives. You knew everything about me. Lord, I did not intend this. I did not want this, but it happened. My motives were right and pure and holy."

You remember how Peter denied the Lord three times? In John 21, three times Jesus asked Peter, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" "Yea, Lord." Finally, the third time, Jesus said, "Peter, lovest thou Me more than these?" And Peter said, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee." What was he saying? You search the heart. You try the reins. You know what is in my kidneys and my bowels. You know everything about me. You know that I love You.

The truth that God searches the hearts and the reins, scrutinizes, tests, and reveals, is a comfort and consolation to God's people, but a terror and consternation to His enemies. When they comprehend that God knows every motive, every desire, every wicked thought, and everything, and that they will give an account in the day of judgment, they shall not escape.

If we desire to please God, we must desire to be like David and say, "Lord, You know. You've searched me and known me. You've tried my downsitting and my uprising. You've examined my thoughts. You know everything about me, Lord. Father, I want to walk uprightly, pleasing unto Thee. I want to be obedient unto Thee. I do not want to live in depravity or wickedness. I want to live in purity, holiness, and godliness." So here is the question: What's in your heart? You cannot have but one thing at a time in your heart. You cannot think of but one thing at a time, no matter how hard you try.

And in your heart, in your mind, in your understanding, you are either going to have obedience or disobedience. You are either going to have grace or depravity. You are either going to be thinking that which is biblical and scriptural or that which is unbiblical and ungodly; that which is heavenly or earthly; that which is spiritual or fleshly. God knows what is in your heart. It is your responsibility to seek Him, to keep wickedness out of your heart, and to bring your

thoughts into absolute and complete conformity to His Word. David prayed, “Keep these things in the thoughts of the imagination of the hearts of Thy people, that You test us, You scrutinize us, and that You have pleasure in uprightness.”

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, help us learn these two simple truths: You scrutinize and test us, and You have pleasure in uprightness. May we please Thee by walking uprightly. May we beseech Thee to search us and reveal our own wickedness, because the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and only You can know it. Lead us in Thy righteousness and godliness. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 14

It's a Matter of Principle

December 24, 2017

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 1:5-25 (KJV)

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abiah, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. 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. There appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard. And thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy

> and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.
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> And he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and in the power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.
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> And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them, and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

"And it came to pass, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days where he looked on me, to take away my reproach from among men."

Introduction to Principles

There are many principles laid out for us in the Word of God. In fact, there are going to be a number of principles that I am going to share with you, not only from our text, but also from a later text in Luke chapter 1. I am going to make some comparisons to show you the difference between Zacharias and Mary at this particular time.

I have often said that one of the greatest problems we experience in our Christian lives is that we fail to live and to learn biblical principles. When you fail to learn biblical principles, usually you fail

to live by biblical principles. The only alternative to living by principle is to live by your feelings and emotions, and by circumstances and situations. Feelings and emotions change; circumstances change; situations change. Principles, however, do not change. They remain steadfast and secure.

Those who fail to live by principle usually have lives full of trouble and turmoil. It is like being on a roller coaster: highs and lows, ups and downs. One moment they are experiencing exhilaration, and the next they are down in the valley of depression. It is one long, rough ride when you live like that. In the end, when the ride is over, you are still living by your feelings, emotions, situations, and circumstances, and you still have not learned to live by principle. I want to share with you some of these principles that are very simple and which some of you know. We simply need to be reminded of them.

Zacharias, of course, was the father of John the Baptist. He was a Levitical priest and the son of Aaron. His wife Elizabeth was also descended from Aaron. Look in verse 5: "There was in the days of Herod the king of Judea a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abiah, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth." Here are two Levites, both in the lineage of Aaron, who are now married. Look at verse 6, because this is an astounding testimony to Zacharias and Elizabeth.

The Righteousness and Problem of Zacharias and Elizabeth

"And they were both righteous before God, walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." When the Bible says they were both righteous before God, that is, they were both just and holy. This indicates more than an outward conformity to the law; it was an honorable testimonial concerning their piety. Walking in all the commandments of God signifies that they were keeping and obeying God's commandments. Walking in the ordinances of the Lord refers to keeping the rites and ceremonies of the tabernacle and, particularly, of the temple. They were blameless in these duties; they were faultless.

That does not mean that they were sinlessly perfect. It means that, as far as their keeping of the rites and ceremonies was concerned, no

one could point a finger at them and say, "This is where you failed." They were exact, strict, and punctual in observing everything that God required of them. Thus, you have two descendants of Aaron whom God testifies were godly, obedient individuals, and yet there was a problem: they had no child because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well stricken in years.

Today, we hardly think the way they thought in biblical times. In Bible times, to be childless was either considered a sin or a reproach. Obviously, Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous before God, so their childlessness was not because of known sin and rebellion in their lives. Several times in the Bible, childlessness is named as a consequence of sin.

For instance, Leviticus chapter 20, verses 20 and 21, says, "And if a man shall lie with his uncle's wife, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness, they shall bear their sin, they shall die childless. And if a man take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing. He hath uncovered his brother's nakedness, they shall be childless." Then there was Coniah, a king of Judah, in Jeremiah chapter 22 and verse 30, where God says, "Thus saith the Lord, write this man childless." In other words, he was such a wicked man that God said, "There's no way that I'm going to bless him."

There were certain sins that withheld children from individuals. But there were people like Elizabeth, who was simply barren, whose womb the Lord had shut up. It was considered a reproach. In 1 Samuel chapter 1, Hannah cried and prayed to the Lord for Samuel. She had no child. Elkanah, her husband, had two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah did not. The Bible says, “And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb.” Here was a woman being reproached because she had no children. In Luke chapter 1, when God blessed Zacharias and Elizabeth, Elizabeth said, “Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He looked on me to take away my reproach among men.”

In other words, it was a shame not to be able to have children. The problem was with Elizabeth, because the Bible clearly says that she was barren. Moreover, not only was she barren, but they were both

old, or well stricken in years. Humanly speaking, there was no hope. They were old, old.

It is kind of like Renee, our oldest granddaughter. Years ago, when Alice and I were in our forties and fifties, she looked at Alice and said, “Granny, tell me about the old days.” There are some folks who are really old and well stricken in years. That was Zacharias, and that was Elizabeth as well.

Although Zacharias and Elizabeth had prayed for a child, it is quite possible that they had now given up hope. In all probability, they had. She had been barren, they were very old, and they were probably no longer praying for a child.

The Angel's Announcement to Zacharias

Now look at verse 13: “But the angel said unto him, to Zacharias, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.” Notice that he says, “Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard,” which is an aorist passive. Your prayer has been heard; in other words, it was heard in the past.

This indicates that they were no longer really praying for a child because, humanly speaking, they counted it absolutely hopeless. Interestingly, the angel appeared to Zacharias while he was offering and burning incense. Luke 1:9-10 says, "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 the incense."

Zacharias was offering incense, and the people were praying without while he offered it. The reason is that incense in the Bible speaks of the prayers of the saints. Revelation 8:3-4 says, "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and it was given him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the Lord. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angels' hands."

Zacharias was offering incense, the people were praying, and he had been praying. The prayers are identified here with the incense, and so the angel said to Zacharias, "thy prayer has been heard."

Simply because our prayers are not answered instantly, immediately, or right away—in our time frame, in the way we want them answered, whenever we want them answered—that does not mean they will not be answered. Undoubtedly, Zacharias and Elizabeth prayed for a child for many years, but it did not come to pass. Now it came to pass in the Lord's appointed time. It came to pass in such a way that the birth of John the Baptist was a miracle, an exhibition of God's power, and something that would bring God more honor and glory.

Here is an interesting question we should ask ourselves about our prayers: Are we really more interested in what we need, what we want, and what we desire, or are we more interested in God's honor and God's glory? God worked it out so that He answered this prayer, but He did not work it out the way Zacharias and Elizabeth wanted it.

He worked it out in such a way that ultimately He was going to get far more glory than if it had been something of a natural experience. In verses 11 and 12: “And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right hand side of the altar of incense. And when Zechariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.”

Zacharias's Fear and Unbelief

The word trouble there actually means to be agitated, disturbed, and distressed. The word fear indicates that Zacharias was genuinely frightened. It was terror and dread that rushed in upon him and seized him.

Most of you know that no one but the priests were allowed in the holy place, and only the high priest was allowed in the most holy, and then only once a year. It was the Levites that were given the charge of the tabernacle and of the temple, not only to protect the tabernacle and the temple, but also to protect the priests.

Numbers chapter 1, verse 51, says, “And when the tabernacle set it forward, the Levite shall take it down. And when the tabernacle is to

be pitched, the Levite shall set it up." "...and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." Verse 53 says, "...but the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel, and the Levites shall keep the charge, or keep the sentry post, of the tabernacle of testimony."

Numbers chapter 3, beginning with verse 5, says, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge, that is, concerning Aaron, and any high priest that followeth, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle." Verse 9 says, "And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons." "They are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel. And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office. And the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death."

Who is to put them to death? It is the Levites, because they have been charged with guarding the tabernacle, later the temple, and with guarding the high priests. When you look at Luke chapter 1 and understand that great trouble and fear has now fallen upon Zacharias, if no one had gotten past the Levites, and if there was a man standing on the right side of the altar, then obviously it had to be a supernatural being. If it had been a man, certainly he would be fearful for his life, because no man was supposed to be in there but him. If it was an angel, he was still fearful because he did not understand what was going on. I would assume that Zacharias probably figured out that it was an angel. Now look what happens in verses 13 through 17.

"But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard. And thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. And he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, or Elijah, to turn

the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

The announcement to Zacharias came not only as a surprise, but also as a blessing. It was a fulfillment of prophecy concerning this child and what he would accomplish. What more could any godly parent desire than to hear that God was going to give them a son? That son would be so special and unique that he would be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, used of God to turn the people's hearts back to God, and be the forerunner of Jesus Christ, preparing the way for Him. You would normally think that, when Zacharias heard this, he would immediately begin shouting, praising, and thanking the Lord. Consider how long he and Elizabeth had prayed for a child, and then to have this special child, so holy, godly, and used of the Lord. What more could you want?

But unhappily, that was not his reaction. In verses 18 through 20, "And Zechariah said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.' And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings."

"And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words which shall be fulfilled in their season." Notice what Zacharias asks: "Whereby shall I know this?" In other words, "I don't believe you. Give me a sign. Let me see something tangible, something I can grab a hold of."

The Scripture tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:7 that we walk by faith and not by sight. What Zacharias was asking for was not the Word of God. In fact, he was indicating that the Word of God was insufficient; he wanted something that he could see and understand. We have all heard and used the old adage, “Seeing is believing.”

That is not necessarily true. Many times people see things that are not really there, and many times they see things that are totally different from what they really see. With the technology today, seeing certainly is not believing. I could have Gary on film talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, and with technology I could change his

lips, put words in his mouth with his voice, and make him say something entirely different.

Moreover, Matthew 27 shows us that seeing is not believing. During the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the chief priests, scribes, and elders mocked Him. Matthew 27:41 says, “Likewise also the chief priests mocking him with the scribes and elders said, He saved others, himself he cannot save.” They continued, “If he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him.” In other words, let us see something, and then we will believe.

No, God says you believe and then you see. Zacharias had everything backwards at this point. He wanted to see something; he wanted some sign that this would come to pass because the Word of God was insufficient for him.

The Bible also says in verse 12, “And when Zechariah saw him,” that is, the angel, “he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.” Mark this principle down in your heart: fear always leads to doubt and unbelief. He was fearful. How do we know that Zacharias did not believe? First, we know because he questioned the words of the Lord in verse 18 when he asked, “Whereby shall I know this?” He added, “For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.” I am old, but she is worse than I am—the way he was reading it. “Whereby shall I know this?” We know, therefore, that he did not believe.

Secondly, if you look in verse 20, the angel said, “And behold, thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak, until the day these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.” Here was Zacharias, a godly, blameless, just man, and he failed to believe.

The Advantages of Zacharias

Consider the advantages Zacharias had. First, he had prayed for a child for many years. It should have come as no surprise that God had heard his prayer and was going to answer it. Secondly, he had the advantage of being married. With God's blessing upon the marriage, he should have expected a child.

Thirdly, he was a priest. The Bible teaches that the priest should know the Word of God. Malachi 2:7 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." The priest's lips should keep knowledge; he should know the Word of God. Thus, Zacharias had the advantage of having prayed, of being married, and of being a priest; fourthly, he had the advantage of knowing the Scriptures.

He had examples in Scripture and in history. There was not an Israelite alive at that time who did not know the story of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham was ninety-nine or one hundred years old, Sarah was ninety years old, and they had a child. Manoah and his wife, who was the father of Samson, were old and childless. Elkanah and Hannah also provide an example. She may not have been old, but she was barren, and God heard her prayer. Zacharias had all these examples; he had history on his side.

Fifthly, only an angel could have been on the right side of the altar of incense and remain there without anything happening to him or harming him. Zacharias had all these advantages. He should have known.

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 1:26-38 (KJV)

The Announcement to Mary and Her Disadvantages

> "And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin, a spouse to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women."
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> "And when she saw him she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest. And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

> "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the high shall overshadow thee. Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age. And this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed."
>
> Mary had absolutely none of the advantages that Zacharias possessed. In fact, there were positive disadvantages in her life. It was the angel Gabriel that appeared to Zacharias, because he said so in verse 19: "I am Gabriel." It was the same angel that appeared to Mary in verse 26, because he identified himself again as Gabriel.
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> Before going farther, let me point out three things concerning angels. First of all, angels do not have wings. Seraphim have wings. Cherubim have wings. But angels do not have wings. Do not let art interpret your theology. How do I know that angels do not have wings?

The answer is that they are spirit beings. Spirits do not need wings. In fact, the Bible says in Psalm 104:4, speaking of angels, "…who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire." Hebrews 1:7 likewise says, "…and of the angels," he said, "…who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." Angels are spirit beings, and therefore they do not need wings.

The second truth is this: Every time an angel has appeared in the Bible, he has appeared in the form of a man. There are no women angels, no female angels, and no little baby angels in the Bible. When little babies die, they do not become angels. Angels are created beings, and there is a limited, finite number of them. Every time an angel has appeared in the Bible, he has appeared as a man. Angels do not have wings; there are no female angels or baby angels. Angels are spirits.

Hold Luke chapter 1, and turn to Hebrews chapter 13. You may have seen an angel and never known it, because when angels appear, they look just like us. Hebrews 13:2 says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Do not forget to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

If there is a knock at my door and someone stands there with wings sticking out of his back, a long, flowing, glowing garment, and a halo over his head, he is not getting into my house. He might be an angel, but he is not one of God's angels. An angel looks just like a man. In fact, there is an angel in this room.

You may laugh, but it is me. The same word is used in Revelation concerning the ministers, the angels of the seven churches: angelos. It means messenger. God's preachers are called angels. Whenever an angel appears, you would never know that he was an angel, because he looks just like us. Two accompanied our Lord to Abraham, and Abraham fed them. This angel, looking just like a man, stands beside the altar of incense for Zacharias, and then this man appears to Mary.

Look in Luke chapter 1, verse 28, and keep this in mind regarding the angels: "And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail, thou art highly favoured of the Lord, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled." She was distressed at his saying and considered what manner of salutation this should be. Why is this man greeting me like this?

The angel said in verse 30, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God." Then verse 31 says, "And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son who shall call his name Jesus." Here is a strange man who has approached Mary, told her that she is highly favoured of the Lord, and started talking about her having a baby. If you had a daughter and a strange man walked up to her and started talking about having a baby, would not alarm bells go off in your mind?

They certainly would in mine. I can understand why Mary was troubled. She had no idea what was about to come out of this man's mouth who happened to be an angel. The angel, or this man whom

she had just met, informed her that she was going to have a child. Let me give you her disadvantages. First, Mary was unmarried.

It is true she was espoused to Joseph, verse 27, or betrothed to Joseph. In the Bible, spousal and betrothal were more than our modern-day engagement. In a modern engagement, if I got engaged to Lorraine and found out I did not like her, or she did not like me, I could break it, or she could break it. It is no big deal. But in the Bible, if you were betrothed to someone, it was counted as the same as being married; you just had not come together as husband and wife yet.

So here is Mary, espoused to Joseph, and the angel is announcing that she is going to have a child. In verse 34, Mary asks a very logical question: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" She had no husband. Her first disadvantage was that she was unmarried. The second was that bearing a child outside of marriage was not only a reproach but absolutely forbidden. Since she and Joseph were espoused or betrothed, her conception of a child would imply unfaithfulness and immorality and subject her to the death penalty. Deuteronomy 22, verse 21, says, "Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of the city shall stone her with stones that she die, because she hath wrought folly in Israel to play the whore in her father's house. So shalt thou put evil away from among you." That is poignant. Then God said in Deuteronomy 23, verse 17, "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel nor sodomite of the sons of Israel."

It was not merely a reproach she would bear; she was possibly subjecting herself to the death penalty as well. One would have to wonder, did she even consider Joseph at this time? Did she think, "What is he going to think? Am I going to lose him? Will this be over between us?" Obviously, if she were pregnant, he would think she had been unfaithful and immoral.

She had the disadvantage of not being married. Having a child outside of marriage was considered a reproach and possibly subjected her to the death penalty. But, thirdly, the angel answered her question, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" The angel answered and said in verse 35, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the high shall overshadow thee, and

therefore thou shalt that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

In other words, there was no other example in the Bible or in history of a virgin birth. Zacharias could point to Abraham and Sarah. He could point to Manoah and his wife. He could point to Elkanah and Hannah. But Mary could not point to anybody. It is true that there is a prophecy in the Bible concerning the virgin birth. Everybody knows it: Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is God with us."

But notice, this was not going to be just any son. His name shall be called Jesus, verse 32. He shall be great. He shall be called the Son of the Highest; that is, He shall be the Son of God. And the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His Father David. He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

How could Mary wrap her mind around the fact that she was going to bear the Son of God? How could she wrap her mind around the fact that she was going to conceive and have a child whose father is God?

The virgin birth, humanly speaking, is beyond human conception. We cannot conceive it in our minds or wrap our minds around it. It is not natural; it is supernatural. It is not an act of man; it is indeed an act of God. Consider Mary's disadvantages: she was unmarried, although betrothed; she faced losing Joseph, reproach, castigation, ostracism, and possibly even the death penalty. She had no example in history or in the Bible of a virgin birth. There was no one to whom she could point and say, "This has happened before." She had to comprehend that she would conceive this child by a supernatural act of God, and that this act would produce the Son of God.

Mary's Faith and Submission

When Gabriel told Zacharias he was going to have a child, Zacharias said, "How shall I know this? Give me something tangible." With all of the disadvantages Mary faced, consider what she said in verse 38:

"And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed."

That blows my mind. When she said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," she expressed resignation to the will of God and faith in His promise. To be the handmaid of the Lord meant that she was submissive and obedient, and that she was going to be whatever God would have her to be.

She was saying, in essence, "I fully credit all that is said, and I am perfectly willing and ready to obey and have everything accomplished in my life." She did not merely say, "Here I am." She added this short prayer: "Be it unto me according to thy word." This was not only an expression of her humility, but of her readiness and willingness to give herself up to the Lord's pleasure. She was saying, "I assent and I consent to whatever God would have me to be and have me to do." Her prayer meant, "Let it come to pass."

Unlike Zacharias, she did not ask for a sign. Zacharias had all the advantages; she had all the disadvantages. Yet she simply believed the words Gabriel spoke to her. The evidence of her belief was that she willingly submitted herself to everything the angel said.

Applications for Believers

Now consider a couple of applications. First, principles do matter. We have looked at the principle of faith, the principle of submission to the will of God, and the principle of resignation to the will of God in spite of the situation and circumstances.

Mary faced not only reproach, but losing Joseph and even facing a possible death penalty. We know how God came to Joseph. Joseph, being a just man, was willing to put her away privately. He was not going to bring her into the law courts and seek the death penalty. God told Joseph, "Fear not." Yet here she was, willing to lose everything. It is amazing that someone has not asked Mary, "Well, how did you feel?"

She was not living by feelings; she was living by faith. The second application is this: Like Zacharias, we have all of the advantages today. We have the complete, full, and final Word of God. Why should we doubt or waver? Everything that we do should be done in

faith, because that principle is enunciated over and over in the Scripture. The just shall live by faith. We're to go from faith unto faith.

God has not asked us to do anything that has not already been done before. Moreover, He's given us examples. He tells us to take the prophets for an example, to remember Job and Lot. Everything that He asked us to do has already been done. We do not have the disadvantages that Mary had; we have all the advantages. God is telling us that our greatest need is to learn to live by principle: the principle of faith, the principle of submission, and the principle of resignation to the will of God. God has given us a historical example in Mary.

When we consider the difference between Zacharias and Mary, it is phenomenal. Zacharias should have known better, but he did not. Mary, who really did not know anything except that she trusted the Lord, was willing for whatever God brought to pass in her life. It did not matter if she suffered reproach or danger, or if she lost Joseph. She trusted Him to work everything out for her good and His glory, and He did. We need to learn to live by the principles that God has laid down in our lives. We have the advantages and not the disadvantages; therefore, we need to embrace these principles and learn to live and walk by faith.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We ask, Father, that You'd be pleased to give us faith, increase our faith, and enable us to exercise the faith that You've given us. May we be thankful for all of the advantages that You've given unto us. We have Your Word, Your history, and examples. Teach us, we pray. Help us to honor Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

Take Out the Garbage

November 1, 2020

In 2 Chronicles 29, we read of Hezekiah: “Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them.”

Introduction: The Ubiquity of Garbage

You've heard the phrase, “Take out the garbage,” many times. I have often wondered how many times that sentence, directive, or command has been given to husbands and sons. It almost seems like an official duty for the husband to take out and to take off the garbage. While normally carrying off the garbage at our house—and I do it most of the time, though occasionally Alice gets to do it—I have often wondered, and have been amazed, at how it multiplies.

I think sometimes, in some magical way, it reproduces during the night while we sleep. It doesn't matter how often I take it off; there's

always more garbage there. Of course, it's a never-ending battle, and it's an urgent situation because the longer it sits, the more it stinks. Not only does it stink, but it will draw flies, roaches, mice, and other critters that you certainly do not want to keep around the house.

Can you conceive in your mind, or have you ever thought about, what a year's worth of garbage would look like under your carport? Or a year's worth of garbage in your yard? Or, even worse, a year's worth of garbage in your house?

Undoubtedly, it would be very devastating to both your physical and your mental condition as well. But what if houses, offices, and church buildings were never cleaned? Think for a minute and contemplate that. If the litter was never picked up, the grass was never cut, the leaves were never raked, and folks simply threw their undesired objects in the yard, thinking that somebody someday would clean it up and that they would not necessarily have to, what in the world would our houses, our church buildings, and our offices look like?

I want you to remember what I'm going to say because I'm going to come back to this just momentarily. When you think of trash or garbage, I want you to think, first of all, of your personal garbage, your family garbage, your friendly garbage, and your enemy garbage.

Now let me explain some of these. I don't have to explain your personal garbage and your family garbage. Certainly, you're quite aware of that. But let me talk about friendly garbage for a moment. Many of you know that I have classes at our farm, and usually the classes are two days. You'd be absolutely astounded and amazed at the garbage that twenty to twenty-five people can put out in two days' time.

It seems like I carry off each day about half of a pickup-truck load. That would include our garbage, the family garbage, and the friendly garbage as well. But enemy garbage is something else. Most of you know I live behind a big gate. The truth of the matter is, oftentimes Alice and I have to pick up at that gate beer bottles, beer cans, soda cans, candy wrappers, and other junk that everybody has simply thrown out alongside the road.

Occasionally, most of this is accidental, but occasionally it may be purposeful. I have, not close, not too far from the gate, run across a huge dump of trash right in the middle of the road. Of course, I would call the road department because it would be too much for even me to pick up. The last time I called the road department, I was talking to the head.

He said, "Well, is there any name there?" I said, "Yes, there's a name here. Not only that, here's a child's homework paper with his name on it." He said, "Tell me who the names are." I told him, and he said, "I'll take care of it." I don't know what happened, but when I came back through, all the garbage was gone. Maybe he called the man.

We had another incident years ago. I was going through the other farm with my father. There was a creek and a bridge over it, and I happened to look to the right. I said, "Dad, stop and look. Someone is throwing a bunch of garbage over in our creek." He stopped the truck and said, "Son, go down there and see if there's a name on any of that garbage."

I started picking through it and said, "Dad, there's not only a name; here's an envelope that has never been opened, and there's a check in it." The check was made out to the person who had thrown the garbage on our property. Dad said, "Bring it to me." He opened it, and it was a check for about four hundred dollars made out to a lady. She had bought fertilizer that was supposed to be 10-10-10, but it turned out to be something like 8-8-10, so they were refunding her the difference.

Dad called her and said, "We found a check with your name on it in the trash you threw over on our property." She said, "I didn't throw that trash over." Dad answered, "Yes, you did, because I've got this four-hundred-dollar check with your name on it." She said, "Just drop it in the mail to me." Dad said, "No, it doesn't work like that. When you come back, pick up all your garbage, and come to me and apologize, I'll hand you the check."

Do not ever throw your garbage on my land again. Of course, she did, picked it all up, and came back. I am simply saying that there is enemy garbage as well. I have read about several fatalities related to

garbage. One man shot and killed his neighbor because the neighbor was throwing dog poop in his yard. The neighbor did not have a dog; the man who did the shooting had the dog, which used the bathroom in his neighbor's yard. He was just throwing it back, and the man shot him and killed him. In another case, a man who worked with the sheriff's department in Texas was shot and killed because he had thrown clippings into his neighbor's yards while cutting the grass. It is absolutely insane when you think about enemy garbage as well.

What does all this talk about garbage have to do with our text and the Bible? Hezekiah was a godly king, and he was the son of godless Ahaz. It is fascinating to consider how Ahaz, who was so absolutely godless and reprobate, could produce such a godly son as Hezekiah. Even more compelling is how godly Hezekiah could produce such an ungodly son as Manasseh. But he did.

Hezekiah's Righteous Beginning

Here is a truth that we need to understand: godly men do not always produce godly children. Sometimes ungodly men produce godly children, and sometimes godly men produce ungodly children. In other words, depravity is hereditary; grace is not.

Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. We are told in verse 2 that "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that David his father had done." Hezekiah not only had the zeal of David, but also the heart of David. He was a man of integrity, with a love for God, His law, and His worship. He began his reign with the restoration of the temple and the worship of the one true and living God, calling his people to repentance and reformation. Verse 3 says, "He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them." The very first thing he did was open and repair the temple doors. Clearly, the temple doors had been shut.

Hezekiah began his reign by opening the temple doors because his father Ahaz, a wicked and vile reprobate, had shut them, and boarded them up as well. Why did he begin his reign by opening the temple doors? The answer is that his father Ahaz had shut the doors

of the temple. Ahaz did not worship God, had no need for God, and led his people into idolatry. To set the stage, consider Ahaz.

The Wickedness of Ahaz

Second Chronicles 28:24 says, “And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.” Here was a man mutilating the things of God, shutting the doors of the temple, and making altars throughout Jerusalem. Ahaz followed the kings of Israel. Second Chronicles 28:2–4 says, “For he, Ahaz, walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. Moreover, he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire after the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. He sacrificed also, and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.” Ahaz was nothing more than an absolute heathen.

Ask yourself this question: What price did the nation pay for having such a wicked, ungodly ruler? God gives the answer in clear terms. Second Chronicles 28:19 says, “For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he made Judah naked and transgressed sore against the Lord.”

As his sin debased them, it also exposed them. It made them naked to their shame, exposing them to contempt as a man unclothed. It made them naked to danger, exposing them to assaults as a man who is unarmed. Here is the principle: sin strips men. The price they paid was very great. They paid economically, ecclesiastically, militarily, personally, and nationally. They were made naked in many, many different ways.

The Consequences of Ahaz's Sin

The impact of having such a wicked ruler over the nation is shown in Second Chronicles 28:5. “Wherefore, the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and they smote him, and carried away great multitudes of them captives, and brought them to Damascus.”

So there was a war. Syria had defeated Judah, and a large number of captives had been taken away. It does not tell us how many men were killed or how many captives were taken; it simply says, “a great multitude.”

Now watch the rest of verse 5: “And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter. For Pekah, the son of Remaliah, slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.”

Can you imagine the economic impact of losing a hundred and twenty thousand men? Can you imagine 120,000 widows and 120,000 orphanless families? Think about the slaughter of 120,000 men in one day.

We are not talking about using a bomb, cannon, or modern firearms. Think about fighting up close with swords, spears, and bows and arrows. This was great devastation upon a nation: that many men lost, that many widows, and that many children without fathers—and probably without mothers as well. I will show you why I said that.

The Bible goes farther. Watch verse 7: “And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah, the king's son, and Azrikam, the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king.” Ahaz had lost his son, the governor, and his friend. Now watch what happens in verse 8: “And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand women, sons and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them and brought the spoil to Samaria.” On top of 120,000 men being killed, 200,000 women and children were taken captive.

Now obviously, if you read the rest of the chapter, Oded the prophet said, "Hey, you can't do this." Finally, the captives were clothed and allowed to go back home. But the spoil was not necessarily sent back. Here you have this great devastation. But that's not all. Not only did Syria defeat Judah, and not only did Israel defeat Judah. Skip down to verse 17: "For again, the Edomites had come and smitten Judah and carried away captives."

So now they've lost more people—the Edomites. Now look in verse 18: "The Philistines also invaded the cities of the low country and of the south of Judah and had taken Beth Shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho, and the villages thereof, and Timnah, the villages thereof, and Gimzo also in the villages thereof, and they dwelt there." They had not only lost men and women and great funds; they had also lost villages and towns, and now the Philistines were possessing those villages and towns.

This is why the Bible says that the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz: because Ahaz had made Judah naked. He had stripped them of everything. You would tend to think that someone who had been defeated so greatly and so many times, had lost so many people and so much economically, would begin to think, "Hmm, maybe I'm serving the wrong God. Maybe I'm doing something wrong. Maybe I ought to repent." But that never entered the mind of Ahaz.

Something did enter his mind. Look in verse 16: "At the same time, did King Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him?" He didn't cry out to God, but he did send to the king of Assyria. Skip down to verse 20. The Bible said, "And Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. Now watch this. For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the Lord, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it to the king of Assyria, but he helped him not." In order to show you the absolute stupidity of Ahaz, I want you to look at verse 23.

Ahaz's Foolish Idolatry

The Bible says, "...for he, that is Ahaz, sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him, and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, therefore will I sacrifice to them that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him and all of Israel."

It is true that Syria defeated Judah. But it is also true that the king of Assyria defeated the Syrians. Why in the world, then, is Ahaz sacrificing to gods who helped the Syrians against him, when those gods could not help the Syrians against the Assyrians? Hold 2 Chronicles, but turn back in your Bibles to 2 Kings 16.

"So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me." Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the house of the Lord and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria hearkened unto him, went up against Damascus, took it, carried its people captives to Kir, and slew Rezin.

King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, and saw an altar there. He said to Urijah the priest, "the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof." Urijah built an altar according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus. When the king came from Damascus, he saw the altar, approached it, and offered thereon.

Ahaz had taken a copy of the altar and sent it to Urijah, who built one just like that found in Damascus. Remember, the king of Assyria had already defeated the Syrians. Yet Ahaz still made this altar and continued to offer to the gods of Syria.

Ahaz mutilated, destroyed, and defiled the temple. He cut off the borders of the bases, removed the laver, took down the sea from the brazen oxen beneath it, and placed it upon a pavement of stones. He also turned the covert for the Sabbath and the king's entry from the house of the Lord for the king of Assyria. As the Bible says, "And King Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them, and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones. And the covert for the Sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the Lord for the king of Assyria."

The temple was of no use to him. He closed the door, closed it down, and allowed the dust, dirt, and garbage to pile up. When Ahaz wanted to hire the king of Assyria, what did he do? He raided the silver and gold in the temple and stole it. He was a thief, and the money did not belong to him; it belonged to the Lord. He was not merely a thief but also a blasphemer. It had to be an absolute insult to God and a slap in God's face to take God's money and give it to a reprobate, ungodly man.

Moreover, Ahaz made a room in the temple for the king of Assyria. He would not recognize the one true and living King, but he would recognize a powerful, reprobate king. It is absolutely insane, but that is exactly what he did.

When you come to 2 Chronicles 29:3, the Bible says of Hezekiah, "He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them." Hezekiah had his work cut out for him. He had to undo everything his father had done. His father was a tremendous idolater and a tremendous mutilator of the things of God. Once Hezekiah opened the temple door and saw all the uncleanness and filthiness, he summoned the priests and Levites to cleanse the temple. Hezekiah had to deal with all that his father had left behind.

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 29:4-16 (KJV)

Hezekiah Commands Temple Cleansing

"And he brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them together to the east street. And he said unto them, Hear me, you Levites. Sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs. And they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. Wherefore, the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as you see with your eyes.

"For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. Now, it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons, be not now negligent, for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, that you should minister unto Him, and burn incense."

> Then the Levites arose: Mahath, the son of Amasai, and Joel, the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; and of the sons of Merari, Kish, the son of Abdi, and Azariah, the son of Jehalelel; and of the Gershonites, Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah; and of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri, and Jeiel; and of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah, and Mattaniah; and of the sons of Heman, Jehiel, and Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, Shemaiah, and Uzziel.
>
> "And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord. And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord."

"And the Levites took it to carry it out abroad unto the brook Kidron." In verse 5, the king says to the Levites, "Hear ye me, Levites, sanctify now yourselves and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place." The word filthiness here is a very interesting word. It means that which is impure, filthy, unclean, immoral, or idolatrous. He says, in effect, to get rid of anything and everything that does not belong in the holy place.

The Cleansing Process

In verse 16, "And the priests went into the inner part of the house," which would be the holy place and the most holy place, because not all Levites could go into those places. The priests went into the holy place and the most holy place to cleanse them, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord. Then the Levites took it out abroad unto the brook Kidron.

The cleansing of the holy place and the most holy place took eight days of hard work. I do not have any idea how many priests were involved. We know some who may have been named here, and we know that many of the Levites are named. But there are others of whom it says that they gathered their brethren, so we are not told

how many there were. It took eight full days, by numerous priests, just to get the filth out of the holy place and the most holy place.

"Now, they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify. And on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the Lord. So they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days. And in the sixteenth day of the first month, they made an end." It took eight days on the inside and evidently eight days on the outside as well. So, here is what happened.

Hezekiah says to the priests and to the Levites, “Take the garbage out. Get the garbage out. Get rid of anything and everything that is going to defile the temple.” Once the priests and the Levites had cleansed the temple, they then began to offer the sacrifices. The people began to praise the Lord, and God sent a great awakening. He sent a great revival. In verse 36, the last verse in 2 Chronicles 29, we read, “And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people, for the thing was done suddenly.”

After this revival, or in this revival, they went out through all the land. They broke down every altar that was false, every image that was false; anything and everything they simply destroyed. The real, true worship of God was restored. So let me make this point: the first step in any revival, the first step in any reformation, is to take the garbage out. Get rid of the garbage. Get rid of anything that is unclean, anything that defiles.

New Testament Temple: The Believer's Body

Now, in the Old Testament, you had an external building. First of all, you had the tabernacle; then you had the temple. In the New Testament, we do not have an external building. We still have a temple. Let me show you. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 3, beginning with verse 16, God says, “Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” Now, stop and let verse 16 sink in: “Know you not that you are the temple of God? and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.”

Paul said, “If any man defile this temple, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”

In 1 Corinthians 6:19 he says, “What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God’s.” Again he said, “What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.”

He is talking about Christians in Ephesians 2:20–22: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord: in whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Note verse 21: “in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.”

There are basically two Greek words used in the New Testament for temple. The first word is hieron. The Greek word hieron simply refers to the whole of the sacred enclosure. When we use the word temple, we would be speaking about all the buildings connected to and associated with that temple, including the balconies, the porticoes, the porches, and the courts. The temple had a court of the women, a court of the Gentiles, and a court of the men.

Not everybody, not anybody, could simply waltz into the holy place or the most holy place. There were places for people. Those holy places were reserved for the priests and the Levites, so the general populace could not just simply waltz into the temple.

When you stop and think about the New Testament, you find that many of these porches were used by our Lord and His disciples. In John 10:23, the Bible says, "And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch." He was on the porch, but the porch was part of the temple. Our Lord also overthrew the money changers. They were not in the holy place, nor in the most holy place, but out in the porches and porticos. Thus, Mark 11:15–16 says, "And they came to Jerusalem, and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and

would not suffer any man should carry any vessel through the temple." They were outside on the porches, in the balconies, and in the courts, but not in the temple proper. Nevertheless, all those porches, porticoes, and courts were considered part of the temple. Our Lord then took a scourge of small cords and drove them out.

When you think of the word hieron, you are thinking about the temple as a whole. I could say the White House. If you have ever seen pictures of the White House, you know there are porches, balconies, and all kinds of things around it, but it is being spoken of as a whole. That is what the word hieron means: the temple as a whole.

The second Greek word is naos. The word naos always refers to the holy place and the most holy place. In the holy place there was a table of showbread. The Bible teaches in John chapter 6 that Jesus Christ is the bread of life; therefore, Jesus Christ is our nourishment. Also in the holy place was the lampstand, which speaks of the fact that Jesus Christ is the true light of the world. You find this in John chapters 8, 9, and 12. In the most holy place was the mercy seat. That is where the atonement was made, where the high priest entered once a year and sprinkled blood upon the mercy seat. It was that most holy place from which God spoke, and that mercy seat where God revealed Himself as the God of mercy and the God of grace.

Out of these two Greek words, hieron, which simply refers to the temple in general, and naos, which refers to the most holy place, which word do you think is used in these texts? Look in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 16: "Know you not that you are the naos of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the naos of God, him shall God destroy. For the naos of God is holy, which naos you are."

Then look in 1 Corinthians 6 at verse 19: "What? Know you not that your body is the naos of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are His."

Then, in Ephesians chapter 2, beginning with verse 20: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into a holy naos in the Lord: in whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Has it ever sunk into your mind that your body is the temple of God?

Let me ask some excellent questions. Do you want revival? Do you desire more intimate fellowship with God? Do you want God's blessings poured out upon you? Do you want your prayers answered? Do you want power with God and power with man? Do you want to see victory over the evil ones? Do you desire to see His Kingdom come? Do you want God to manifest Himself in power? Do you want the nations to know that they are mere men and there is only one true and living God who has revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you desire to see the wicked overthrown and the righteous exalted? Do you desire to see God honored and glorified? If you answered yes, then take out the garbage. Take out the garbage.

Application: Taking Out Personal Garbage

That means we have to get rid of all our impurities, defilements, immoralities, idolatries, and anything that would make our lives unclean and unusable. You remember when I started this message, I spoke about personal garbage, family garbage, friendly garbage, and enemy garbage. Let me remind you about personal garbage. Your personal garbage is that which is in your heart, mind, and desires. You know what your personal garbage is. I may not know.

It could be your pride, wicked thoughts, wicked desires, or anything else. David said in Psalm 66 and verse 18, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Just the mere regarding of it, the mere holding it in esteem, is enough to make God not hear us when we pray. We have a lot of personal garbage, and that garbage has to be taken out. It has to be dealt with. No one else can clean out your mind, your thinking, or your desires.

Your family garbage refers to the stains, sins, rebellions, unkindness, and incivility that you have allowed to destroy your relationships with your family. I know of families that will not even speak to each other—fathers who will not speak to their sons, sons who will not speak to their fathers, and brothers and sisters who will not speak to each other.

I was preaching in one church many years ago, and I noticed an older man sitting on the edge of the second pew on my right, right up against the aisle. On my left, an older woman was sitting in that second pew, also right up against the aisle. After preaching for two or three days, I looked at the pastor and said, “Something’s wrong with that man and woman.” I said, “They won’t even look at each other or speak to each other. Who are they?” He said, “They’re brother and sister. They haven’t spoken to each other in ten years. They fell out over a family inheritance.”

I said, “You have allowed them to come to this church without disciplining them. This is insane.” But everybody has family garbage. You may not can correct the entire family, but as far as your part is concerned, you can straighten it out.

You can make right whatever needs to be made right. Friendly garbage refers to those sins and those little foxes between you and your friends. You remember that passage in the Song of Solomon? It says, "Little foxes spoil the vines." It does not have to be a great big fox or a great big sin. It may be things that go on between you and your friends that are questionable or not right. Sometimes it may be downright sin. But you need to make it right. I have thought about things in the last several weeks that I probably had not thought about since I was a young man or teenager.

I had friends tell me things that I did not need to know or hear. They were not downright ugly—some of them were, but most were not. It was just useless and worthless. I thought to myself, Why in the world would I tell someone something like this, just to boggle their mind, trouble their mind, and make them think on things they should not even be thinking upon? Friends oftentimes say things to friends that probably should not be said at all.

There is friendly garbage that needs to be taken care of. Then, of course, there is enemy garbage. Enemy garbage relates to bitterness, resentfulness, unkindness, and spitefulness that you hold toward those who have wronged you or whom you despise. You get upset very quickly with those whom you deem opposed to you. Bitterness not only defiles you; it defiles others as well. The Bible says in Hebrews 12 and verse 15, "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, listen now, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." You is singular. Many happens to be plural. Bitterness starts with one individual but extends to a multitude. One of the greatest remedies for enemy garbage is to learn to pray for your enemies, as our Lord said: "Pray for those who despitefully use you and hate you."

I have men who have done me wrong in times past, and I can honestly say that I pray for them. I pray that God will put them in a position where He can use them and bless them. I have no bitterness or resentment toward them, and, by the grace of God, I would never allow myself to be hateful toward them. To hate them only embitters me and makes me unusable. One of the easiest ways to get rid of enemy garbage is to learn to pray for your enemies. Pray for them by name. Ask God to give them repentance, to use them, and to place them where He can bless them. Obviously, you can get rid of that enemy garbage.

David prayed in Psalm 138:7, and he said, “Revive me.” Have you ever stopped to think about this? Revival starts with individuals. You cannot have a national revival without individual revival. You cannot have an ecclesiastical revival without individual revival, nor can you have a family revival without individual revival. Individuals make up the family, the church, and the nations.

Call to Individual Repentance

Everyone in this room can quote 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land.” Let me put it to you very plainly: it does you no good to humble yourself, pray, and seek

His face unless you are willing to take the garbage out of the sanctuary, turn from your wicked ways, and cleanse the temple.

Get rid of everything that defiles, everything that is impure. There will never be a personal, family, ecclesiastical, or national revival until we take the garbage out. That is why 2 Chronicles 29 is so appropriate for us today. Every major revival began with a cleansing.

Final Applications and Prayer

As a priest, you are responsible for the most holy place. Do you know what the Bible says in Revelation 1 and verse 6, talking about Jesus Christ? “and hath made us kings and priests unto God His Father, to Whom be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” He hath made us kings and priests. As priests, then, we have the duty and responsibility to clean out the sanctuary, to cleanse the temple. What? Know you not that your body is the naos of the Holy Ghost? What? Know you not that ye are the naos of God? God has made us priests. We are responsible to clean out the temple. You cannot defile it. If you defile it, God is not going to use you, and God is not going to bless you.

The first step in any awakening is to take out the garbage and get rid of it. It is your responsibility to ask the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, to open your eyes and reveal to you all the garbage in your mind and heart. You remember the Bible says in Jeremiah 17, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?” But the Bible says in verse 10, “I the Lord know the heart.” Our hearts can deceive us, but our Lord knows the heart absolutely perfectly, and He can reveal it to us. David prayed in Psalm 139, verses 23 and 24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” Have you ever asked God to search you, to open your eyes and reveal things that you need to repent of, clean up, and get out of your life? Get the garbage out.

David said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart.” The best place to begin is with one's self. Do not worry about others. It would do me absolutely no good to say, “If I could just get Joshua right, everything would be okay.” Joshua is not my problem. I am my problem. I cannot blame it on Steve, Gary, or James. No, it is me.

"It's me, it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer." The fact of the matter is this: we oftentimes worry about things and are concerned over things over which we have absolutely no control. How many of you can control President Trump, Congress, the judicial system, Russia, or China? Nobody. But we can control ourselves.

We can make sure the garbage is out of our lives. We can work on number one. If we want the blessings of God, if we want God to turn this thing around, we need to learn to take out the garbage, because our bodies are the temple of God. What? Know you not that your body is the temple, the naos of God?

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, impress upon our minds the absolute necessity and urgency of taking out the garbage. The longer it stays in our lives, the more it stinks; and the more it stinks, the more critters and the more sins that it draws. Help us, Lord, to do that which is right. Give us repentance and a determination that we are going to live holily and righteously, godly and obediently, by Your infinite grace and mercy. We ask these things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 16

What It Would Be Like To Love The Lord With All Your Heart

November 7, 2016

Introduction: The Greatest Commandment

Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 4 and 5, gives us a foundational command. Verse 4 is known as the Shema Israel: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.” Verse 5 says, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” This command is based upon the fact that our Lord is one Lord. That is, He is the absolute Sovereign, the Supreme Ruler. Therefore, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

The title of the message is simply this: What it would be like to love the Lord with all of your heart. Have you ever really considered loving the Lord with all of your heart? Have you ever thought about the command that He has given us to love Him with all of our heart?

When we are commanded to do something and we fail to do it, that is called sin. According to Deuteronomy 6:5, we have a duty, an obligation, and a responsibility to obey. If we have been redeemed by God's grace, there should also be a natural desire to please our Heavenly Father. I do not know if you have ever thought about this, but I have thought about it many times.

I have even asked myself, What would it be like to actually love the Lord thy God with all of thy heart for even just one day? Can you imagine the change that would be in your life? If you were not able to do it for one day, then you would want to do it for a week, then a month, then a year, and ultimately the rest of your life, because obviously it would be wonderful. Our Lord takes Deuteronomy 6:5 and reiterates it over and over in the New Testament. He teaches us that it is the essence of obedience and, in reality, the greatest commandment. If we loved Him with all of our heart and obeyed this commandment, we would not have any problem with any of His commandments.

And let me just show you several passages where Jesus Christ uses this and tells us. So, it's Matthew chapter 22. And notice, if you would please, beginning there with verse 36. Matthew 22 verse 36: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Verse 37, Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." If you would look now to Mark chapter 12. Mark chapter 12. And I want you to look, if you would please, Mark 12 and let's start there with verse 29. Because in verse 29 he quotes the Shema Israel, Deuteronomy 6 verse 4, and then he goes on to verse 5. So Mark chapter 12 verse 29, "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength."

This is the first commandment. And then if you would turn right over in your Bibles to Luke chapter 10. Luke chapter 10. And notice if you would please, in Luke 10 at verse 25. Luke 10 verse 25, "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou?"

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. So our Lord now has this repeated at least three times in the New Testament. So here I think would be a couple of interesting questions for each of us to ponder. The first one is: what would happen to us if we actually loved the Lord with all of our heart? The second one would be this: how would our lives be changed if we actually obeyed this commandment?

A Holy Revulsion to Sin and Wickedness

There are many answers that can be given, and I will not be able to give them all. But I do want to give you five things that would be absolutely evident in our lives if each of us obeyed this commandment and loved the Lord with all our hearts.

The very first thing we would find is an absolute revulsion to sin and wickedness. In Jeremiah chapter 44 and verse 4 the Bible tells us God said, "Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh do not this abominable thing which I hate." He is talking about sin. God hates sin—all sin. It does not matter whether you and I consider it a great sin, a small sin, or even an insignificant sin: God hates sin.

It is all a holy revulsion to Him. The Bible says in Habakkuk chapter 1 and verse 13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." We know He sees iniquity because He judges it; obviously, He will bring judgment upon that which is evil. But when the Bible says, "Thou canst not look upon iniquity," it means that He cannot look upon sin or iniquity condoningly or approvingly. Why? Because God is infinitely holy, and all of that is unholy and ungodly. Sin, therefore, is a holy revulsion to God.

The problem today is that unhappily most professing Christians—not just the world, but most professing Christians—still find sin exciting, titillating, and desirable. We want sin, but not enough to be chastened for it. We want to indulge our flesh, satisfy our desires, delight our wills, walk in pride, and experience what the world, the flesh, and sin offer, but not enough to bring the judgment of God upon us. We want to go this far, but no further. We tend to

think that little sins do not matter. Yet the Bible says it is the little foxes that spoil the vines. If you are a real, genuine Christian, the problem in your life is the little sins, not the big sins.

I mean, you are not a murderer, a fornicator, or a thief. It is the little things that nail us specifically. So we do not really see, understand, or comprehend sin for what it really is. According to the Bible, sin is devious, devastating, deadly, destructive, and damning. We have never really understood sin from God's perspective. When I say sin, I am talking about each sin and every sin, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, as an attempt to overthrow and dethrone God. That is exactly what sin is. We have not understood that each sin and every sin is basically a rejection of God's sovereign rule over us.

It is a denial of His sovereignty, His Lordship, and His Godhood. In essence, each sin cries out, "We do not want God to rule over us." The truth of the matter is that sin is even worse than that, because usually implied in our sins is something like this: God cannot be as loving, kind, and great as He should be, because if He were, He would not have forbidden this little pleasure to me. I want to enjoy this. So, when we sin, we are dethroning God, enthroning ourselves, and crowning ourselves as lord of our lives by saying that God's rules and commands do not matter in my life; what I want and what I will is what truly matters. Adding insult to insult, our sin also denies God's all-sufficiency.

In Scripture, God is known as the all-sufficient One. His name, El Shaddai, indicates this truth. Yet when we deny God's all-sufficiency, we do so when we are sinning. We are saying, "God is not sufficient to satisfy my needs; I need this sin. God is not sufficient to satisfy my desires; I need this desire. God is not sufficient; I need this pleasure." Our sins are therefore not only an attempt to dethrone God Himself, but also a denial of God's all-sufficiency.

Every prodigal who leaves the father's house is confessing that the pigpen is more enjoyable than the father's house. Think about this from God's perspective. Sin, then, is a disgrace, a dishonor, a despising, and a detestation of God. If we genuinely and truly loved the Lord our God with all our hearts, then we would have to ask ourselves several questions.

How could we love that which He hates? How could we engage in that which He despises? How could we even entertain the thought of that which would be absolutely contrary to Him? Sin is not necessarily the holy revulsion to us that it should be. If sin were truly a holy revulsion to each of us, if we loved Him with all of our hearts, then we would automatically defend our Lord and His Word.

For instance, in Psalm 94 and verse 16, God asks, “Who will rise up for me against the workers of iniquity? Who will stand for me against the evildoers?” God is looking for people who will rise up and stand for Him against evildoers and against iniquity. If you and I really and truly love the Lord with all of our heart and all of our soul, we would rise up and stand against anything and everything that was not only against God but contrary to Him. We would be on the battle lines against abortion, sodomy, corruption, and fraud.

In fact, we would fight against each and every wickedness that violated His law. In other words, sin would actually be a holy revulsion to each of us. Do you realize that God commands us in Psalm 97, verse 10: “Ye that love the Lord hate evil”? If you love the Lord, hate evil. In Amos 5 and verse 15, He said it like this: “Hate the evil and love the good and establish judgment in the gate.” Hate the evil; love the good.

It is impossible to love Jesus Christ and to love sin at the same time. It is impossible to love Jesus Christ a lot and sin a little. Our Lord made it clear in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not scattereth abroad.”

Consider Revelation chapter 3, concerning the church of Laodicea. Our Lord would rather have us out and out for Him or out and out against Him. Verse 14 says, “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”

"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 spew thee out of my mouth." Our Lord is saying, “I’d rather you be out and out for me or out and out against me. Don’t be wishy-washy.”

If we loved Him as we should, as He commanded us, the way He deserves to be loved, and the way we are obligated to love Him, there would be a holy revulsion to sin and wickedness. I love that term in the book of Job when the Bible speaks about Job and says that he was an upright man and one that eschewed evil. You know what the word eschewed means? It means to spit out. It means you cannot stomach it, swallow it, or take it.

I had a friend who visited me from Wisconsin recently. We went under a persimmon tree, and I asked him, “Andrew, have you ever tasted a green persimmon?” When he said no, I told him he should. He asked, “Is it good?” I said, “No.” “Why should I taste it?” “Because everybody needs to know what a green persimmon tastes like.” Bite into it, and of course, once they do, they immediately spit it out. I did this to Isaiah, who was from Kentucky, as well.

That is exactly what the Bible says we need to do to sin and wickedness. If we loved our Lord, we would automatically spit it out; we could not stomach it. So what would happen if we loved the Lord with all our hearts? First of all, there would be a holy revulsion to sin and wickedness.

A Love for and Delight in the Law of God

Secondly, we would have a love for and a delight in the law of God. You remember that David was classified as a man after God's own heart. He said in Psalm 119:97, "Oh how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day."

We tend to think that if we are going to meditate on something, we have to sit at a desk, bent over, looking at it, staring at it, and doing nothing else. David was a king and a warrior. He was not sitting at a desk all the time. What he was saying is that, no matter what he was doing, he was still entertaining the law of God in his mind and thinking of its applications.

He said in Psalm 119:113, "I hate vain thoughts but thy law do I love." Let me ask you another question: Have you ever had a vain thought? If you say, "I don't have vain thoughts," then all you are telling me is that you have never prayed. When you start praying, a lot of stupid thoughts just come into your mind. Where did that

come from? I wasn't thinking of that. "I hate vain thoughts," said David, "but thy law do I love." Then in Psalm 119:163 he said, "I hate and I abhor lying but thy law do I love."

Let me show you something. I told you that if we really love the Lord with all our heart, the very first thing we would have is a holy revulsion to sin and wickedness. That is the negative. Here is the positive: If we really love the Lord with all our heart, we would have a love for and a delight in His law. These two things go together. You cannot have one without the other.

We do not even know what sin is apart from God's law. One reason we do not hate sin sufficiently, and one reason it is not a holy revulsion to us, is that we do not understand it according to God's law. I suppose we could measure not only our spirituality, but also our love for God, by how greatly or insufficiently we hate sin. On the other hand, we could measure our love for Him by our delight in His law.

Obviously, it is the law that reveals to us what sin really is. That is why in Romans 3:20 the Apostle Paul said, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." You cannot hate something if you do not know what it is. You have to understand what sin is, and the only way you can understand that is by God's law. That is why in 1 John 3:4 he said, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law." You cannot sin without violating God's law.

If you understood and delighted in God's law, you would hate everything contrary to it; you would hate every false way. David said it like this in Psalm 119:128: "Therefore I esteem thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." God is right, man is wrong, and consequently David says, "I hate every false way."

The more we read, study, and delight in the Word of God, the more we understand what sin is. The greater holy hatred and revulsion toward sin we should possess, the more we should delight in the Word of God. David said in Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Why did he delight to do God's will? Because God's law was in his heart. In Psalm 119:77

David said, "Let thy tender mercies come upon me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight."

That is almost equivalent to what the Apostle Paul said: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." If I am going to live, I want to live for Christ. David said that if God let him live, he wanted it to be because God's law was his delight. So let me ask you a question: Do you really and truly love and delight in the law of God? If you say, "Yes, I do. I read my Bible, I study my Bible, and I try to apply the truths," well, here is my next question.

How does your love and delight in the law of God compare to the lives of biblical characters who said they loved and delighted in the law of God? For instance, take Job. In Job 23:12, Job said, "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." Basically, Job is saying, “I’d rather have the Word of God than a T-bone steak.” The Scriptures were more necessary to him than food. Think about that in our day and age, with all the sugar and all the food that is available. Yet someone says, “I esteem the words of thy lips more than my necessary food.”

David, of course, was ever a lover of God, and he said in Psalm 119:103, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." Would you classify your reading and study of the Scriptures as sweeter than honey to your mouth?

Everyone can quote Psalm 119:105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." But then David said in Psalm 119:130, "The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." One of my favorite passages, which I used to quote all the time when I was in college, is Psalm 119:99: "I have more understanding than all my teachers." They would not appreciate that. But the truth is this: if someone actually knows the Word of God and is able to apply it, his understanding is far greater than that of many who have earned Ph.D.s, regardless of the field.

I have known men whom you and I would call great intellects, but they were absolutely ignorant concerning God, His Word, and how to live. What good is a great intellect if you cannot even live correctly?

Jeremiah was like Job. In Jeremiah 15:16 he said, "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." If we actually loved the Lord with all our hearts, we would not only have a holy revulsion of sin, but also an absolute love for and delight in the Word of God. There is a third thing. Listen carefully: if we love the Lord with all our hearts, we would have an unfeigned and unpretended love for the brethren.

An Unfeigned and Unpretended Love for the Brethren

If we love the Lord with all of our hearts, we would have an unfeigned and unpretended love for the brethren. The word unfeigned occurs a number of times in the Bible. It literally means that which is not pretended or hypocritical. It means that which is real and genuine, sincere; and every time you find it in the Bible, that is exactly what it means.

I had a preacher friend, an old country preacher from Ohio who is now dead. He confessed to me, laughing, that he had preached a series of sermons on the unfringed faith. He got to talking about the fringes like a garment. Our garments unravel, with all these fringes hanging down, and you have to take some scissors and cut them off to make the garment look smooth. He said he preached three or four messages on the unfringed faith until he discovered that the word was unfeigned.

I want you to see it in the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 6:6, speaking about how ministers were approved, the apostle Paul says, "By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned," or unhypocritical and unpretended love—love that is sincere and genuine.

In 1 Timothy 1:5, he says, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." Here is faith that is unfeigned, or unhypocritical. In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul writes to Timothy, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." It is called an unfeigned faith, a faith that is actually genuine and sincere.

One more: 1 Peter 1:22 says, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." This is love of the brethren, and the command is that we love one another with a pure heart fervently. So if we really and truly love the Lord with all of our hearts, we would love His people with an unfeigned love.

You remember in 1 John he said, “We know that we’ve passed from death unto life,” why? “Because we love the brethren.” One of the reasons we know that we are genuinely saved is because we have a love for God’s people. But if we had a real, genuine, unfeigned, sincere love for the brethren, we would not be judging and condemning them. Instead, we would be patiently teaching, instructing, and helping them, doing as we have been commanded to do. We would not be doing all the fussing, fighting, and feuding that we are doing.

You have to remember something: there are distinctions in the Christian faith. Not everybody is at the same spot or on the same level. I read in 1 John 2 that there are little babes in Christ, young men in Christ, and fathers in Christ. Obviously, you are not going to expect a young babe to know what a young man would know, nor would you expect a young man to know what a father would know. There are differences.

Instead of looking at someone and saying, “Well, he’s just stupid; he just doesn’t know anything,” why don’t we help them? Why don’t we teach them and instruct them instead of criticizing and condemning? In other words, we want to make sure that we are helpers and not hinderers, and that we do not place a stumbling block in front of them.

The problem is not only that Christians are oftentimes notorious for criticizing and condemning each other; pastors are even worse at times. When we begin to criticize and condemn each other, the sad thing is that most of us do not have the facts. We do not understand what is going on. What was the old Indian proverb they used to say? “Never criticize a man till you’ve walked a mile in his moccasins.” It is easier for me to criticize Gary if I do not even know what is going on in his life. I only know that he did something I do not agree with,

so I can say, “Hey, did you see what he just did?” Yet there could have been a very good reason why he did what he did, or why he said what he said.

The problem is this: most Christians walk around with a chip on their shoulders, placing their feelings before truth. They would rather harbor ill will, unforgiving spirits, and a lack of compassion toward their brethren than do what God commands. Most people put their feelings over truth anytime. “Well, you hurt my feelings.” Really? Why did I hurt your feelings? You should not have had your feelings out to begin with. Was it true or was it not true? Did God say this, or did God not say this? Christians are getting as bad as the liberals, wanting little safe spaces: “You can’t say this about me here now.” That is absolutely ridiculous, but that is where we are.

Romans 14:10 says, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." In other words, God said, just make sure you live right. Make sure you help him. Do not do anything to cause him to fall or to stumble. Just do what needs to be done, because we are all going to answer for ourselves.

Our lives should be a life of helping and not hindering. If we love the Lord the way we should, we would love the brethren the way we should. The Apostle Paul said it like this in Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." If I can help an unsaved man, wonderful; but if I can help a saved man, I have a special duty to do that because he is of the household of faith.

We would have an unfeigned love for the brethren. We would genuinely love each other and want to help each other if we love the Lord with all of our hearts. Fourthly, if we love the Lord with all of our hearts, we would be obedient, submissive, and rejoicing in our submission to the will of our Father in all things. One of the greatest problems in the Christian faith is submission to the will of God. We

are recalcitrant; we are like those Israelites, stiff-necked. We want to have our way and our will.

Obedient, Submissive, and Rejoicing Submission to God's Will

Many people use the excuse, “Well, it’s very difficult to know the will of God.” That is not true. God is more interested in you knowing and doing His will than you are in knowing and doing it yourself. God’s will is revealed in His Word, the Bible. You remember what He said in Deuteronomy 29:29: “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things He has revealed belong to us.

It is amazing how easily distracted most Christians are. If you put on a prophetic conference entitled, “Come and let me tell you what the seven thunders said,” you could pack a house. But the secret things belong to the Lord our God. There are some things we do not know and will never know until they come to pass in time and history. I am not to concern myself with those secret things. My concern is with the things He has revealed. That is what I am responsible and accountable to do. God’s will is knowable and doable. If it were not, Paul would never have written Romans 12:2: “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.” If it were not knowable, you could not prove it; if it were not doable, you could not prove it. Obviously, it is knowable and doable.

Not everything is spelled out in the Bible. If everything were spelled out, you could not carry your Bible around. But there are principles that cover everything—every circumstance and every situation. How do we find those principles? By studying, listening, and learning. That is why Solomon said in Proverbs 25:2, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.” Did not our Lord make us kings and priests unto our God? Then it is our honor to search out a matter.

There are several things in the Bible about which you do not have to guess concerning the will of God. It is simply there. For instance, 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.”

How plain could that be? It is the will of God that I abstain from fornication. Consider 1 Thessalonians 5:18: “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” In everything give thanks. Sinus diarrhea? It’s a stopping thing. In everything give thanks. You may ask, “How can I be so thankful if I’m sick on my stomach?” You can be thankful that it is out of you, and thankful that God is healing you. When you are healed, you can say, “I thank God it’s over.”

There are passages in which you do not have to guess what the will of God is or search it out. It is there in black and white. You simply must obey it. When we obey the will of God, how do we obey it? The answer is: in the way He commands us. Ephesians 6:6 says, “Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” He does not want half-hearted service, lazy, indolent, recalcitrant, unwilling obedience. When you obey Him, He wants it to be from the heart. If we loved the Lord with all our hearts, we would not think of rebellion or even half-heartedness in our service. We would understand that He deserves our absolute best.

It is amazing how people treat God. I heard this from two missionaries. One is a man we have supported and whom I have known for many years. He received notice that a package had been sent to him from the States. When he went to get it, he had to pay thirty-five dollars in duty. When he opened the box, a sweet little lady had sent him a box of used tea bags. She had used the tea bags, boxed them up, and sent them to the missionary.

We try to give God the leftovers. We do not give Him our best. We have to understand submission to His will. By the way, let me point this out: the way things are going in this country, you had better batten down the hatches, because we are going to find out what submission to His will really is. When you think about persecution and problems, usually the quickest way out is by submitting yourself to God and doing that which He commands. We can give a willing

submission, or God can force us to submit. I do not know about you, but I prefer the willing submission.

You remember that passage in Deuteronomy chapter 28? There He said, "You shall serve your enemies and they shall reign over you because you served not the Lord your God with all your heart." There is a willing submission, and there is a forced submission.

Joy, Gladness, and Satisfaction in Worship

Fifthly, if we loved Him with all our hearts, we would have joy, gladness, and satisfaction in honoring, worshiping, and adoring our Heavenly Father. It would be the fullest delight for each one of us. David said in Psalm 16, verse 11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Do you derive joy and pleasure in worshiping the Lord? Do you derive joy and pleasure in hearing His word? Do you derive joy and pleasure in bowing your head and saying, "Lord, thank You for this day, and thank You for letting me live, and thank You for Your creation. Thank You for sight. Thank You for hearing. Thank You for all of these multitudinous blessings that I take for granted"?

If you do not delight in worshiping, honoring, and adoring God now in time and history, what makes you think you would enjoy eternity? Because in eternity we are saved. That is what we will be doing: worshiping, honoring, and glorifying our Heavenly Father. In John 4, our Lord was talking to the Samaritan woman, and He said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Now the point I want you to see is this: God has not changed. The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. What God demands in the New Testament is exactly what God demanded in the Old Testament. If we love Him, we will worship Him, and we cannot worship Him apart from obedience. Our obedience is part and parcel of our worship.

Deuteronomy 10:12 says, “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.” What does God require? Fear Him, walk in His ways, love Him, and serve Him. Notice how all these things are connected and how they literally relate to worship.

Deuteronomy 11:1 says, “Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway.” Deuteronomy 19:9 says, “If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the Lord thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three.” Notice loving Him and walking in His ways.

Deuteronomy 30:6 says, “And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.” Verse 16 says, “In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.” Verse 20 adds, “That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

One last passage is in the little book of Micah, chapter 6 and verse 8: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" You can summarize verse 8 with these words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind."

If we really loved the Lord with all of our heart, we would have a holy revulsion to sin. We would love His law and delight in His law. We would have a real, genuine love for the brethren. We would be willing to submit to Him in anything and everything because He is our Father, and we would want to worship Him, honor Him, and glorify Him.

Conclusion: Seeking Grace to Love God Fully

Let me pull this together and make a statement or two. I do want to love the Lord, and I do want to love Him with all of my heart. I do want to honor Him, and I do want to worship Him. But when we talk about loving Him, we have to remember that we can only love Him because He first loved us. In one sense, our love for Him is a reflection of His love in us.

Secondly, I can only love Him because He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the propitiation for my sins. Had I not been redeemed, I could not love Him. Thirdly, when God commands me to love Him with all of my heart, I have to remember John chapter 15, where our Lord said, "Without me ye can do" how much? "Nothing." Is loving Him something? Yes.

Is loving Him with all of your heart something? Yes. That means we cannot love Him the way we should without Him. We have to acknowledge and confess our own helplessness, weakness, and inability. When we cry to the Lord, we have to say, "Lord, You have commanded me to love You with all of my heart, but I cannot in and of myself. You must help me. You must enable me. You must give me grace. You must give me mercy."

If we love Him, we will discover the truth of Zephaniah 3:17: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." He, God, will joy over you with singing. If we love Him the way we should, it pleases Him. It gives Him joy. He rejoices in it.

We have been commanded to love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, body, strength, and being. If we fail to do that, we are sinning. We need to ask Him for grace to fulfill our responsibility. Not only is it our responsibility; it is a privilege. But if you loved God with all of your heart, how would it change your life? How would it change your home? How would it change your relationship with your spouse or your children? How would it change your church, your community, your state, or your nation?

There is no way in the world we could remain the same if we loved Him with all of our hearts. Seek the Lord and say, "Lord, enable me to love You the way You have commanded me. Enable me to bring

my life into greater conformity to Your Word. Enable me to do that which is pleasing in Your sight. Enable me to fulfill my responsibility in loving You." Begin each day by saying, "Lord, I love Thee. Help me to love Thee more. Help me to have a greater quality in my love. And help me, at least just one day, to love Thee with all of my heart."

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before thee. We thank you, Father, for your love, grace, and mercy in Jesus Christ. We thank you for first loving us and for sending your only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the propitiation for our sins. We ask your divine forgiveness for not loving thee the way we should. Lord, we've failed miserably in so many ways and so many times, but we're thankful that you're merciful and gracious. We ask, Lord, that you would help us to love thee the way you've commanded us, the way we want to, and the way you deserve to be loved. We ask, Father, that you'd be pleased to shed the love of God abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. May we grow in love, wisdom, and knowledge. In thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 17

The Need of the Hour

November 28, 2021

Introduction: The Lateness of the Hour

Let us open our Bibles to 1 Chronicles 12:32: “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.” We will look at other verses in 1 Chronicles 12, but we will return to this verse several times.

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. The reason I am preaching it again is that I was reading through 1 Chronicles recently and was struck again by the truths of this chapter. I 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 may be impressed by 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.”

For instance, Revelation 14:7 says, “...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 speaks of 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.” 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.” 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 sends judgment, initially 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.

In fact, if you look around, I think you understand that every branch of government is corrupt and basically cares about only 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, all you have to do is turn to all the news channels on the television, and you will hear them saying exactly the same thing. There have been emails and things on the internet showing 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 of the matter 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 coming from 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. Molech worship, Satanism, and statism are now the norm in this country. I recently read an article printed back in the 1980s complaining about how Satanism was spreading through our military. Satanism—not merely witchcraft, but pure satanic worship—is now being recognized as a legitimate religion in the military.

Interestingly, that has been going on for a long time. But today there are no concerns for truth, character, or freedom. It is all about power and control. You remember the fellow named 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 slaves for those who own everything. That 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 that its theme concerns the removal of the dynasty of King Saul, a rebellious, disobedient, murderous tyrant, and the installation of King David, a man after God’s own heart. To summarize 1 Chronicles chapter 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 chapter 12.

Clearly, 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 12. What is the need of the hour? What was the need of the hour in 1 Chronicles 12? If we can see what was the need of the hour in 1 Chronicles chapter 12, we can also see what is the need of the hour today in our country and in our time. Look, then, in 1 Chronicles chapter 12 and verse 32.

The Need for Men Who Know What Ought to Be Done

Here is the first thing: the need of the hour is for men who 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 two hundred, and all their brethren were at their commandment."

There are three clear implications in this passage. First, note that the men of Issachar had understanding of the times in which they lived. They knew of the wickedness of Saul and his house. They knew of the power of Abner, his commander-in-chief. They knew that Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was a weakling and could not hold the throne. They knew of the division and danger in which they and their country were. They knew that the politics prevalent at that time were wicked and evil.

We need men today who have understanding of the times. 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. Where are our men who have understanding of the times? Where are our men who know what to do?

If there are men that do really and truly have understanding, then they need to reveal themselves. In verse 32, the Bible speaks of men who had understanding of the times. They knew exactly what was going on. Here is a second truth in that verse: they not only had understanding of the times, they knew what Israel ought to do. Have you ever noticed that if you know what you ought to do, you really do not have a problem? A problem is not a problem if you know what to do. If you have the answer, then you do not have a problem. So they not only had understanding of the times; they knew exactly what Israel ought to do.

They were to disestablish the tyranny and reign of Saul and his sons and establish the reign of David, who was a man after God's own heart.

Biblical Qualifications for Leadership

We are talking about the men of Israel, the men of Issachar, who had understanding of the times and knew what Israel ought to do. In 2 Samuel chapter 5, verse 1 says, "Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron." David reigned for 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 David king.

"Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. 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."

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, of the same kindred and people. If you read Deuteronomy 17, you will find that God forbade an alien or foreigner to be king or 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"; in other words, they were relatives.

The second truth is found 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 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 was that the Lord had designated and ordained David to be captain and ruler over Israel: "And the Lord said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel." David was not only of their bone and flesh, and he not only had a testimony; it was the will of God that he become king.

Verse 3 says, "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." Although God had appointed David king, He did so along with the will and recognition of the people. The people chose David because they knew God had chosen him. David entered into covenant with them to be God's king, and they were to be God's people as well.

The truth of the matter is this: We are in trouble in this country because we have ignored these biblical principles and biblical law. We have chosen men to be our rulers based upon party—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, our kith, and our kindred. So we are in deep trouble.

Now let me show you something. Since you are in 2 Samuel, turn over to chapter 23 and look at the first three verses. Here is a principle enunciated by David, who 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.”

“He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” Isn’t that a simple statement? You cannot be just unless you are ruling in the fear of God. The amazing thing to me is how many times David claims direct inspiration for this one simple statement. Look in verse 2.

“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 one 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 go back to 1 Chronicles chapter 12 and verse 32, because there were three truths in this passage that we need to understand. The first was that there were men who had understanding. Number two, there were men who knew what to do. Notice the third thing in verse 32. The Bible says, “the heads of them were two hundred.” That is, there were two hundred men of Issachar. There were men of understanding who knew what Israel must do. And here is the one that is really mind-boggling: “And all their brethren were at their commandment.”

Willingness to Follow Godly Leadership

Two hundred men out of the tribe of Issachar knew what Israel must do, and all their brethren were at their commandment. In other words, 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 they were willing to follow them.

The problem we have today is true not only in our political arena but also in the ecclesiastical arena. Everybody wants to be the head and the chief, but nobody wants to be the Indian. I have known 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 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. My only real concern should be that the kingdom of God be advanced.

That was the attitude of these people. They cared little 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 first need of the hour, then, 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 need of the hour is for men who are able to do what needs to be done. Look at verses 14–16 in 1 Chronicles 12, and especially verse 14.

The Need for Men Who Are Able to Do What Needs to Be Done

"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 indeed men of valor, courage, and strength. The Bible says that they went over Jordan in the first month, when it overflowed its banks. They put those people on the other side to flight, both toward the east and toward the west, which means 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, no, no. These were men. They knew they

were men, they acted like men, and they were not ashamed to be men.

If you 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 is, "One of the least could resist an hundred, and the greatest a thousand." When you look at the context, that would probably be an accurate translation as well as interpretation. They 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 do you mean, the least could resist a hundred and the greatest could resist a thousand? Hold 1 Chronicles chapter 12, but look back in your Bibles to 2 Samuel chapter 23. You need to read 2 Samuel chapter 23 because this passage deals with David's mighty men. Beginning with verse 8: "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." That does not mean that he threw his spear and it went through eight hundred at one time. Of course not. It means that he took that spear and, in one battle, killed eight hundred men.

He was pretty close to resisting a thousand just by himself. In 2 Samuel 23:9, we read, “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:” that is, most of the soldiers were not there. “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 sword actually clave into his hand; that is, his hand tightened up around that sword, and they had to come and pry his hand loose to get the sword out of his hand. 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, these individuals were men of might. In 1 Chronicles 12:1–2, 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 said they could hurl a stone at an hair's breadth, and not miss.

Every time I read that verse, I think of my father. My father and my mother were both left-handed. But when Dad started bow hunting, he shot his bow right-handed. Later, he began thinking that perhaps he should shoot a left-handed bow, because he was left-handed. So he bought himself a left-handed bow and hunted with it for a while. Then he could not make up his mind whether it was better left-handed or right-handed. He bought a third bow, and the third bow had the arrow rest in the center and could be shot either right-handed or left-handed. He decided he could shoot either way like that. It did not bother him.

These men were armed and could use both hands in firing bows and also in hurling stones. So they were indeed mighty men. The Bible says, “And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to 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 with their shield. The buckler was something that they got under when all the arrows came flying over. But notice that the Bible says their faces were like the faces of lions.

Now, the interesting thing about a lion is that they 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 down to that zoo, and the owner was showing me around. We were the only ones there. It was really not open, but he was just showing me around. We came to the lion cage, and here was this docile, beautiful, big male lion. The owner reached in and petted him.

I looked at him and said, "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. I thought, well, that was nice. A little later, while we were still there, the owner was going around feeding the animals. We came to that nice, pettable lion, and the owner said, "Stand back. Don't even get near the cage." I said, "Why?"

When he threw that big hunk of meat into the cage, the lion snarled, growled, and jumped on it, tearing it to shreds. When he snarled, you could see all those teeth—absolutely, totally terrifying. I think that is what this means when it says they had faces like a lion. They could terrify you. They were determined and ferocious. They were men who knew how to fight.

Now, it is important that we grasp this. In verse 8, we are talking about the Gadites. In verses 1 and 2, some men came to David from Ziklag who were helpers in the war. Some were even of Saul's brethren of Benjamin; that is, they were from the southern kingdom. But the point is this: 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, you have two different groups working together to accomplish what needed to be done, not against each other. Here is a simple truth: God uses men. He does not use committees, politicians, or wimps. He uses men. The need of the hour was, first, men who had understanding of the times and knew what needed to be done; second, someone with the ability actually to do it; and third, men with the ability to do what needs to be done with the right motive.

The Need for Men with Right Motives

David went out to meet these men of Gad, Benjamin, and Judah. Saul was a Benjamite, so some of these men came from the very tribe of Saul. Some were from the northern kingdom, some from the southern kingdom, and some from Saul's own tribe. David answered them and said, "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. Their response showed that they were not coming to betray David, but to help him, because God was helping him.

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." Verse 38 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."

These men had a single heart, a single function, a single mind, and a single purpose. God helped them, and they were not double-hearted. The Bible says in James 1:8, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." A double-minded man cannot function because he does not know what to do or how to act. He has a double mind. 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 wrong motives: revenge, hatred, or personal gain, whether wealth, honor, or power. All of these are wrong motives. Scripture gives many examples of men who did things that were right, but did them with the wrong motive. The outward act may be right, yet God judges the heart and the motive behind it.

Jehu happened to be one of them. 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 gathered 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 had made sure, he went outside to the soldiers and said, "If any man gets out, your life for his, kill them all."

That is exactly what he did. Jehu reformed the state, or kingdom, but he did not reform the church or 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 had promised Jehu four generations on the throne. Now He was vindicating His honor. Although Jehu did some right things, he did them with a wrong motive. John Trapp wrote that Jehu's house was 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…was of a double mind…; 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." Jehu did some right things, but with a wrong motive.

God may use you even if you have wicked and wrong motives, but He will then turn around and judge you for doing what you did, even though it was right, with a wrong and wicked motive. Consider Isaiah chapter 10. God used Assyria to judge and chastise the northern kingdom, the ten northern tribes. There is no doubt about that. In verse 5, God identifies Assyria: "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 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.” His charge was “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 its sins and idolatry.

But did the Assyrians come saying, “We’re here because you’ve sinned against God, and because we want to obey and honor God, and do that which is right”? No. 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 they came against Israel was that they wanted to loot, plunder, rape, steal, kidnap, and do whatever else they desired. They did not come out of honor or obedience to God. God used them even though their motives were wicked and wrong.

What happened? After God used them, He turned around and judged them because of their wicked motives. Verse 12 says, “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.” Notice 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.”

Assyria said, “And I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: and mine 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.” And 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, I am going to judge him because of his

pride, arrogance, and wickedness. He did it with the wrong motive. I sent him; he did what I wanted him to do, but not out of a right motive. Motives do count.

May I remind you of Samson? It is obvious that God used Samson in the book of Judges. But as you read through that book, notice how many times Samson violated his Nazarite vow. He did it repeatedly. He touched the dead body, which he was not to do. He visited the harlots. He intermingled with the Philistines. He did all kinds of things he should not have done. Did God use him? The answer is yes. Did God judge him? The answer is yes. He lost his power, his eyes, and his life. He did plenty of right things, but with a wrong motive.

Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to 2 Chronicles 16. King Asa was one of those individuals who did some right things. He faced the Ethiopians and the Lubim, who had over a million soldiers, while Asa had only four or five hundred thousand. He was outnumbered two to one, and perhaps even more. He prayed to God, trusted in God, and God gave him the victory, delivering all those Ethiopians into his hand. But when the king of Israel came against him, Asa sent to the king of Syria for help. Israel was not remotely like the Ethiopians. In 2 Chronicles, chapter 16, beginning at verse seven.

At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said unto him, “Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand.”

Hanani then continued: “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.” Notice that Asa was rebuked for trusting in the king of Syria instead of God. Then Hanani made 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.” This passage indicates that God is looking for men—men of ability, with a right and pure motive—to use. This promise is also given in a military context. Clearly, God is wanting to use men.

The Need for Men Who Rely on God's Power

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.

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.” 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. God is indeed the captain of the armies. 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.

I want you to look in Joshua, chapter 5. God had ordained that Joshua lead the children of Israel into Canaan land, and the first battle was the fall of Jericho. Before that battle, Joshua was walking around when he saw a man with a sword drawn. Joshua 5:13 says, “And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with 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, men of ability, and men with right motives, who are willing to fight under the auspices and power of God. The Word of God talks about those who want to trust in the arm of the flesh, as well as those who want to 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.

The Scripture says, "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." Anytime you trust in your flesh, anytime you trust in man, your heart is departing from the Lord. Think back to Asa. That's 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's 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 that 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, who are going to stand, and who are going to do that which is right in the power and the Spirit of God. You remember what the Bible says in the book of Zechariah? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." It is the Holy Spirit of God. That is why in Colossians 3 and verse 17, the Scripture said, "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, 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

A poem written by Joshua Gilbert Holland expresses this need: "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, mingled 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 do need men of the caliber that is given to us in 1 Chronicles chapter 12.

The motto of the state of New Hampshire is a very short one: “Live free or die.” That is the motto. It is on their tags. I thought about that motto, and I thought, you know, 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 have to understand that freedom is only in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches us in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 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. There is no freedom apart from God. That is why in Galatians 5, in verse 1, our Lord said, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Freedom is only in the Lord Jesus Christ. The more biblical, the more holy, and the more godly a nation is, the more freedom exists.

The more unholy, the more ungodly, the more wicked, and the more rebellious, the more tyranny exists. Look around at all 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 do pray that You would raise up men to meet the need of the hour: men that have understanding of the times, men that know what we must do, and men that have the ability to do it. Give us men who have the ability not only to do it, but to do it with the right motive; men who will do it under the auspices, command, and power of the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Give us, Lord, holy, godly men. Give us, Lord, Your liberty, Your freedom. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 18

Black Robed Regiment

July 5, 2022

The Black Robed Regiment

Introduction: God Uses Men for His Glory

Hebrews 11:32-35 says:

"And what shall I more say, for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of the 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. Women received their dead raised to life again and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Although I will not be expounding this passage, I will certainly use its truth. From it, we can understand at least a couple of truths. First, God does use men. He has named them here and throughout the Bible. Secondly, when God uses men, it is not for the glory of the

man whom He used, but for the glory of God who used the man. Thirdly, there is consequently a call on each of us, as on these men in Hebrews 11, to be strong and to quit ourselves like men.

As we study history, we will find that pastors were quite different then than they are today. They were members of what were known as the Black Robed Regiment. This name was given to the ministers who sparked, fought in, prayed for, and advanced the war for independence, sometimes called the Revolutionary War. These men wore long, flowing black robes, symbols of their office and authority. Consequently, they were referred to as the Black Robed Regiment.

The Black Robed Regiment Defined

These preachers were despised and hated, and the British eagerly sought them. A price was placed upon their heads. When captured, they were despicably treated, many times thrown into prison, and sometimes even murdered. Pastor Moses Allen of Georgia was frequently cursed by the Tories. He was more obnoxious to them than the leaders of the Patriots, and the most deadly threats were issued against him.

The Cost of Pastoral Patriotism: Moses Allen

In fact, his enemy said that this rebel parson did more injury to the cause of the king than a dozen colonels. I have a message on Moses Allen entitled "The Damnedest Rebel in Georgia," and that is exactly what the English called him. He was indeed quite a man who stood up to the English. Consequently, when Savannah fell, his church and his home in Midway, Georgia, were burned to the ground in retaliation.

He himself was captured and put on a prison ship, where disease, starvation, and all kinds of ill treatment were inflicted on the prisoners. Moses Allen endeavored to minister to those men as best he could until he had an opportunity to escape. When he did escape, he had to dive from the ship into the water and swim to shore. His escape was successful, but he had been so mistreated that he did not have the energy and strength needed to swim to the other shore. Consequently, he drowned.

Some of the prisoners called out for the British to bury him, showing the contempt they had for these preachers. The British said, "We'll take care of him." They sent a boat full of British soldiers, who stomped him in the mud and left his limbs sticking up for the buzzards to take.

It was men like Pastor Moses Allen who nursed the flame of piety and the love of civil liberty. These men preached, prayed, and fought for liberty. Many went into the army as chaplains. Others stirred the people with great patriotic messages that swelled the ranks of the army. Others showered the enemy with tracts, sermons, and pamphlets, while some entered the army, took up temporal arms, and fought alongside the other soldiers.

The Preaching and Influence of the Black Robed Regiment

It was these patriots, these preachers, who taught their hearers to reject with utmost abhorrence the divine right of kings, passive obedience, and non-resistance. They not only preached and taught this, but inculcated these truths into their hearers. They taught that our rights, liberty, and freedom were from God and God alone. They also taught that it was the duty of government to maintain these rights and to follow God's law and God's orderly way.

The pastors during the American Revolution were everywhere. You find them huddled at Valley Forge, facing the storm and the wintry march on Trenton, covered with the smoke of conflict in Bennington, and standing under the enemy's fire at Yorktown. At Lexington, three pastors actually fought as common soldiers. No matter what expedition they went on, no matter how strenuous, arduous, or tiring, these men were there. These pastors were the leaders in this war.

They were the spiritual magistrates who taught and led their people, not only in praying and preaching, but also in fighting. Pastor Gad Hitchcock illustrates their bravery and courage. To understand this, you must understand what an election sermon was. In those days, no one could take an office unless he got preached to.

Bold Preaching Before Tyrants: Gad Hitchcock and Others

It was the pastor's responsibility to talk to the civil magistrate and tell him what God required of him. At the same time, the pastor would preach to the people and tell them what God required of them. Gad Hitchcock was called upon to give an election sermon to the new governor King George III had commissioned. When he arrived, he found that the new governor was none other than General Gage, who had come with an army to subdue the colonists. General Gage sat in the governor's chair with his men standing behind him. Gad Hitchcock preached from Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 2: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice, but when the wicked bear rule, they mourn." Part of the sermon he preached before General Gage was this:

"If I am mistaken in supposing plans are formed and executing subversive to our natural and chartered rights and privileges, and incompatible with every idea of liberty, then all America is mistaken with me. Our continued complaints, our repeated humble but fruitless, unregarded petitions and remonstrances, and if I may be allowed the sacred allusion, our groanings, which cannot be uttered, are at once indications of our suffering and the feeling sense we have of them."

Gad Hitchcock said to General Gage, “Let the governor in his chair of state hear it. We not only mourn, but with groanings that cannot be uttered, and all because the wicked bear rule. The castle cannot shelter him from the scorching thunderbolt. Families are divided. Brother is arrayed against brother and friend against friend. Society is cut loose from its moorings, and hate and consternation reign on every side. And all because the wicked bear rule.” King George might say that the evils producing this state of things were imaginary, but Hitchcock declared, “I will tell the tyrant to his face. It’s because the wicked bear rule.”

Can you imagine a preacher today saying that to a governor or before the President of the United States? These pastors truly preached liberty and freedom. They were bold, brave, and courageous; they did not care who stood before them. They were going to speak the truth. The British were extremely aware of the

authority and influence these pastors possessed, and they were upset that this authority and influence supported independence rather than King George. They called it rebellion.

Resistance vs. Rebellion: A Biblical Distinction

But rebellion is only against lawful authority. If there is no lawful authority, there is no rebellion. I could look at Pastor Brink's wife and say, "Woman, get up and give me a glass of tea." She could answer, "Brother Weaver, if you ask me kindly, I'll be glad to do so. But don't be ordering me around." If I then told her husband that his wife was rebellious, she would not be rebellious, because I have no lawful authority over her. I am not her husband or her pastor.

If there is no lawful authority, there is only resistance. Resistance is to usurp an unlawful authority. She could rightly say, "Brother Weaver, I don't have to obey you. You're not my authority. You're not my head. If you ask me, I'll be glad to do it; but if you're going to order me, I'm just not going to do it." That is not rebellion; it is resistance.

Although the English referred to the war as rebellion, just as the conflict from 1861 to 1865 is officially titled the War of Rebellion, rebellion can only be against lawful authority.

In 1774, the governor of Massachusetts refused the request of the Massachusetts General Assembly to appoint a day of fasting and prayer. Here is the excuse he gave: the request was only to give an opportunity for sedition to flow from the pulpit. In other words, he taught and stated that the preaching and teaching of the truth of God's word was sedition. He was also against what we would call liberty and freedom, and he was for slavery and tyranny.

I do not care how government calls our actions rebellion when they are not in rebellion. All governmental proclamations, sanctions, and indictments do not change truth. They do not change righteousness, and they do not change justice. They may defame it, denounce it, or deny it, but they cannot destroy it, because God's word is truth. The scripture says, "Forever, O Lord, is thy word settled in the heavens."

You must understand that the English viewed all the colonial people as servants and slaves, and considered it rebellion because they would not believe or act upon the unconstitutional orders given them by Parliament. By the way, the colonists were never under Parliament to begin with. They had their own legislatures. Parliament had absolutely no authority over the colonists whatsoever. Thus, it was resistance and not rebellion.

Key Figures: Mayhew, Dwight, and the Call for Union

Dr. Timothy Dwight, an author, theologian, chaplain, and president of Yale University, urged that a Declaration of Independence from England be publicly stated before it was ever done. He said, "I urged in conversation with several gentlemen of great respectability, firm Whigs, and my intimate friends, the importance and even the necessity of a declaration of independence on the part of the colonies. For myself, I regarded the die cast and the hope of reconciliation vanished and believed that the colonists would never be able to defend themselves unless they renounced their dependence upon Great Britain." Dr. Timothy Dwight was calling for a declaration of independence before it was ever done. Dr. Jonathan Mayhew was the originator of the phrase, "a more perfect union."

Robert Treat Paine called Mayhew the father of civil and religious liberty in Massachusetts and in America. John Adams called him the morning gun of the revolution. On August 25, 1765, Mayhew preached a sermon against the Stamp Act from Galatians chapter 5, verses 12 and 13. This sermon was full of divine truth and demands for resistance to tyranny.

George Bancroft, the great historian, said about Jonathan Mayhew, “Whenever or whoever,” says Bancroft, “repeats the story of the revolution will rehearse the name of Mayhew. He spent whole nights in prayer for the dangers of his country. Light dawned on his mind on a Sabbath morning in July 1766.”

He wrote to James Otis: “You have heard of the communion of the churches. While I was thinking of this in my bed, the great use and importance of the communion of the colonies appeared to me in a striking light. Would it not be decorous in our assembly to send circulars to all the rest expressing a desire to cement a union among

ourselves? A good foundation has been laid by the Congress of New York."

"It may be the only means of perpetuating our liberties." The suggestion of a more perfect union for the common defense originated with Mayhew. This was the first public expression of that feature of the Union that has been the glory of the American Republic. It came from a clergyman on a Sabbath morning under the inspiration of heaven as he lay in bed. Yes, pastors in those days were real leaders.

They were the movers and shakers of the Revolution. Let me give you a few of them quickly, and then I will slow down and concentrate on three or four. Dr. John Woodhull, pastor of the Freehold Presbyterian Church of New Jersey, was one of the most active patriots of his day. On one occasion, when he went out to fight the enemy, every man in his parish went with him, without exception, except one old man who was so feeble that he could not go with the pastor.

He bade them Godspeed and asked God's blessing upon them. Then there was Dr. David Ely of Huntington, Connecticut, who was surrounded by Tories. Yet he preached resistance to tyranny so powerfully and effectively that the Tories near him said that when the war was over, they would hang him from the oak nearest his church building.

It did not stop him. Joseph Fish of Duxbury, Massachusetts, was seventy-six years of age when George Washington called upon him to speak and encourage people to join the fight for liberty and freedom. Joseph Fish said, "Were it not that my nerves were unstrung and my limbs enfeebled with age on such a call as you have, I think I should willingly quit the desk, put off my priestly garments, buckle on the harness and with trumpet in hand hasten to the battle." A number of people did indeed heed Washington's call under the preaching of Joseph Fish.

Then there was Jonas Stearns of New Hampshire. He went to a meeting where they were discussing what to do in New Hampshire. He had four sons. When he returned home, his sons asked what had happened. In giving his report, he said, "If the call succeeds, it will be

a great blessing to our country. But if it should fail, your father's head will soon be a button for a halter." Then he sent his four sons into the army, bidding them to fight valiantly for freedom.

And then there was John Mills of Delaware. He was a preacher, and right before the Declaration of Independence was signed, he preached a series of messages from 1 Kings 12:16, when the Israelites said, "What portion have we in David? To your tents, O Israel!" He likened the colonies to the Israelites and insisted that we had no more portion in Great Britain.

We need to learn to take care of ourselves. Dr. David Caldwell of Pennsylvania had his house plundered, everything stolen from it, and then his library and what remained of his house were burned to the ground. He was hunted down like a felon simply because he sided with liberty and freedom. Dr. Thomas Reed of the same state, in 1776, shouldered his musket and went out to battle with forty or fifty men from Philadelphia. He aided Washington in defeating General Howe, and the next year helped save Washington at Elk Ferry because he knew the lay of the land and was able to guide him to safety.

There was Jonas Stearns of New Hampshire, Thomas Reed, and Dr. Robert Davidson of Maryland, who preached from 1 Chronicles 5:22: "For many fell down slain, for the war was of God." William Gilmore and William Graham of Paxton, near Harrisonburg, saw the backwardness of their young men in failing to enroll in the militia. Graham stepped forward and had his name enrolled in order to embarrass them and get them to sign up as well. John Steele of Cumberland, Pennsylvania, served as captain and led the advance company of nine hundred men.

Azel Roe often preached with his musket by the pulpit, ready to defend himself because the English had threatened repeatedly to kill him. To make the militia of his parish fight, during battle he stood exposed to the enemy's fire. Everyone begged him to step down: "Pastor, get down, get down." He answered, "No. I'm staying here until you vow that if I fight, you will fight." They admitted, "Yes, we will follow you and we will fight." Then he stepped down.

Charles McKnight of Shrewsbury was a man of courage, devoted to the cause of liberty and to his sons on the battlefield. Everything he had was burned to the ground; he was thrown into prison and treated worse than a savage. Samuel Clentock sent four of his sons into battle; only one returned alive. Dr. Hezekiah Ripley of Washington is also remembered. After praying with his soldiers at Bunker Hill, John Martin seized a musket and fought with them until the battle ended. Then he preached to them from Nehemiah 4:14.

"And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Do not be afraid of them." These were just a few men. Let me give you one more: Nathaniel Bartlett of Reading. He was a chaplain to General Putnam, whom I will mention a little later. He was accustomed to make his parochial rounds with a musket on his shoulder. He, too, preached with a loaded weapon in the pulpit because of all the English who were dying to get their hands upon him so that they might kill him.

Most of these pastors were ready, willing, and able to fight. They encouraged their people to fight. But not everyone originally had the intestinal fortitude to want to fight. There was one pastor, Payson of Chelsea, and J. T. Headley gives an account of him in his book, The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution. He says, "There, too, was the amiable and learned Payson of Chelsea. He was so averse to bloodshed and all the horrors of war that he felt it his duty to preach patience and even submission. His bolder and more resolute brethren took such umbrage at this that they refused to allow him to preach in their pulpits. They wanted no conciliatory doctrines taught to their people."

The brutal outrage at Lexington transformed this peaceful scholar and meek divine into a fiery, intrepid soldier. Seizing a musket, he put himself at the head of a party and led them forward to attack. "The gentle voice that had long spoken only words of peace suddenly rang out like a prophet of old. A body of British soldiers advancing along the road, he poured into them such a destructive volley that the whole were either slain or taken captive." He was a man of peace and conciliation until the first blood of the Patriot was drained on the ground, and then he became a soldier par excellence.

Profiles of Courage: Thomas Allen, Naphtali Daggett, John Witherspoon, Jonas Clark

There were many more of these men, but I want to single out about four of them. First is the patriot pastor Thomas Allen. Moses Allen, whom I mentioned earlier, was Thomas's brother. When the English converged upon and covered the hills at the Battle of White Plains, sometimes known as Ticonderoga, the colonists were outnumbered and outgunned. Thomas Allen knew that, so he decided to preach a message encouraging his men and all who would listen to fight. Listen to part of his sermon.

"Valiant soldiers, yonder," pointing to the enemy in his sight, "are the enemies of your country who have come to lay waste and destroy and spread havoc and devastation through this pleasant land. They are enemies hired to do the work of death. They were Hessians hired by George III defiled in this land. Their enemies hired to do the work of death and have no motive to animate them in their undertaking. You have every consideration to induce you to play the man and to act the part of valiant soldiers. Your country looks up to you for its defense.

"You are contending for your wives, whether you or they shall enjoy them. You are fighting for your children, whether they shall be yours or theirs, your houses and lands, and for your flocks and herds, for your freedom, for future generations, for everything that is great and noble on account of which only life itself is worth a fig. You must, you will abide in the day of trial.

"You cannot give back while animated by these considerations. Suffer me therefore on this occasion to recommend to you without delay to break off your sins by righteousness and your iniquity by turning unto the Lord. Turn ye, turn you, you ungodly sinners, for why will you die? Repent, lest the Lord come and smite you with a curse. Our camp is filled with blasphemers and resounds with the language of the infernal regions.

"Oh, that officers and men might fear to take the holy and tremendous name of God in vain. Oh, that you would now return to the Lord, lest destruction should come upon you, lest vengeance overtake you. Oh, that you were wise, that you would understand

your latter end. I must recommend to you the strictest attention to your duty and the most punctual obedience to your officers. Discipline, order and regularity are the strength of an army.

"Valiant soldiers, should our enemy attack us, listen, I exhort and conjure you to play the man. Let no danger be too great. Let no suffering appear too severe for your encounter, for your bleeding country, for God's grace assisting me, I'm determined to fight and die by your side rather than flee before our enemies or resign myself to them. I prefer death to captivity. Ever remember your unhappy brethren, now made prisoners at Fort Washington, whose blood now cries to heaven for vengeance and shakes the pillars of the world, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?' Rather than quit this ground with infamy and disgrace, I prefer leaving this body of mine, a corpse on the spot. I must finally recommend it to you and urge it on you once again and again."

"In time of action, keep silent. Let all be hushed and calm, serene and tranquil, that the word of command may be distinctly heard and resolutely obeyed. And may the God of heaven take us all under his protection and cover our heads in a day of battle and grant us his salvation." Did you hear what that preacher said? "I'd rather fight and die right now than run or be captured. I'll leave my body, a corpse on the spot."

After this tremendous sermon, great preaching, and encouragement, the colonial leaders decided to retreat. Thomas Allen was crushed. How could such a thing happen? After the retreat, he and the Berkshire militia went back home. A little later, General Stark sent out a call for the Berkshire militia. They marched all day and into the night on the sixteenth of August during a downpour, a deluge of rain, and arrived at General Stark's camp early in the morning. Pastor Allen wanted to make sure that nothing would happen now as it had at Ticonderoga, so he went to see General Stark.

He said, "General Stark, the Berkshire militia have been summoned to the field without being allowed to fight. Now, if you don't give them a chance to fight, they will never turn out again." General Stark, instead of being upset at what we would call the

impudence of the young preacher, was amused. He was a hero himself and liked the spunk in this preacher. Looking at the pastor, he said, "Well, do you prefer to march now while it's dark and raining?" Pastor Allen said, "Well, no, not right at the morning moment." General Stark replied, "Well, if the Lord give us a blue sky and sunshine tomorrow, I promise you, I will give you your cup of fighting. You will be able to fight. And if I don't give you that, I will never call you out again." Sure enough, the next morning the sun was up and the sky was blue. As the enemy formed their columns and took their positions, the Berkshire men looked at Pastor Allen. "Well, it looks like we will go and be able to fight today." "Yes," said Pastor Allen, "we're going to have our fun at it, but we're not ready yet. Let's just bow in prayer and ask for the Lord's blessing and help and protection." And they prayed. You know what Pastor Allen did next?

When all the Hessians were in place, he ascended a little hill and stood on a stump in his long, flowing black robe. He called to the Hessians to surrender and save this effusion of blood, promising them good terms if they would surrender. Their answer was volleys of musket balls. One went through his hat, but he was not hit.

He stepped down, and the battle commenced. As they fought, he noticed that one of his brothers was slow at shooting and not really able to shoot well. He looked at his brother and said, “Joe, I’ll tell you what: you load and I’ll shoot. You just keep these muskets loaded.” That is exactly what happened.

When the battle was over and the colonial army had won, there was a charge. Guess who was leading the charge? It was Pastor Allen, the first one over the breastworks. Then he heard the exulting cry, “Victory!” from all the colonial soldiers, once the Hessians had surrendered or run away.

He found pack horses that had panniers of medicine and other things upon them. He took the medicine and began to doctor not only his own people, but also the fallen Hessians. After the battle was over and this was done, he had to rush back so that he might preach to his people on the Lord’s Day. By this time, many at home had heard that Pastor Allen had fought.

One of his men came up to him and asked, “Pastor Allen, I heard that you fought like a common soldier. Is that true?” Pastor Allen responded, “Yes, I did it. It was a very hot, close battle, and it became every patriot to do his duty.” “Well, but,” the parishioner said, “Pastor Allen, did you kill anybody?” Pastor Allen said, “Well, I don’t know whether I killed anybody or not, but I noticed a certain bush. There was a flame of fire coming from that bush, and every time it came, one of our men fell. I don’t know that I killed anybody, but I aimed at that bush and fired, and I put out that flash.” So, yes, he did kill the man.

Do you realize that Pastor Thomas Allen lived until 1810 and died of natural causes at age sixty-eight? Where are men like that today? Everyone has heard of old Naphtali Daggett. He was the pastor and president of Yale College. He instructed all his students in the right of resistance to tyranny and that we were not to obey a tyrant.

In 1779, General Tryon, with 2,500 soldiers, landed five miles from West Haven. The little college had to be quickly broken up because it was about to be overrun by English soldiers. One hundred young men volunteered to take up their arms and try to retard the advance of the British troops until the college and town could evacuate. There was confusion in the street until finally the hundred young men had their arms, the fife and drum started playing, and they marched toward the British. As they went a little way out of town, they suddenly heard the clatter of hoofs beating on the sod. They looked back, and here came old Dr. Daggett,

In his long, flowing black robe, on his black mare, with a long fowling piece in his hand, Dr. Daggett passed the young men as they cheered and hollered. He did not look to the left or to the right, but kept heading straight for the British. Finally, he found a little hill, rode up it, had his mare tied, and began to reconnoiter the situation.

By this time, the young men had hit the advance party of the British soldiers. They poured such a volley of fire into the advance that the soldiers turned and ran back to the main body of troops. The 100 young men chased them until they suddenly realized that they were confronted with 2,500 troops. They had to turn and get out of there.

As they passed the hill, there was the report of a musket loader. They looked up and saw old Dr. Daggett aiming that long fowling piece into the British army. At first, the British ignored it, but the bullets kept finding their way into the ranks, and men began falling. Finally, an officer told a man, “Take some men, go up and see what’s going on up on that hill.” When they reached the top, old Dr. Daggett stood there reloading his muzzleloader. To the British soldier, it was rather amusing. He could not believe his eyes.

He looked at Dr. Daggett and said, “Why, you old fool, you. What do you think you’re doing?” Dr. Daggett replied, “Exercising the rights of war, son, exercising the rights of war.” The soldier said, “You old rascal. If I let you go, will you promise never to fire on His Majesty’s troops again?” Still loading, Dr. Daggett said, “Nothing more likely, son, nothing more likely.” They took Dr. Daggett, forced him down the hill, and made him march in front of them. They treated him so badly that, although he lived, he died within 16 months from all the mistreatment and maltreatment given to him.

Dr. Daggett—Naphtali Daggett. Then, of course, there is John Witherspoon, a pastor, patriot, congressman, and president of Princeton College. Did you know that John Witherspoon and Roger Sherman were responsible for the hard-money clauses in the Constitution of the United States?

"No state shall make anything but gold and silver as legal tender." Congress shall have the power to coin money, not print it, but coin it, because it was to be of gold and silver. When the Declaration was presented before Congress, some men hesitated to put their signatures to it. Everyone knows the story of John Hancock, but John Witherspoon, seeing their hesitation, arose and said, "Mr. President, that noble instrument on your table, which ensures immortality to its author, should be subscribed this very morning by every pen in this house.

"He who will not respond to its accents and strain every nerve to carry into effect its provisions is unworthy of the name Freeman. And although these gray hairs must descend into the sepulcher, I would infinitely rather they should descend thither by the hand of the executioner than desert this just and sacred cause of my country." He was willing to die. One timorous man objected, "Well, I

don't think that we are ripe for such a declaration of independence." John Witherspoon jumped up and responded, "Sir, we're not only ripe, we are rotten." Of course, it was signed.

Jonas Clark was the pastor at Lexington. He had taught and trained his parishioners in civil disobedience and resistance to tyranny. In fact, Adams and Hancock often found asylum in Pastor Clark's house. The people who sat under his ministry were so thoroughly indoctrinated by his teaching that his instructions are now in the legislature; they are embodied there in writing.

Between twelve and one o'clock, word was received that the British were on their way. Pastor Jonas Clark had the bell rung, and men began to gather on the church green—150 of them. Their names were enrolled and called out. Before morning, the pastor and 150 of his men stood in the starlight, waiting for battle.

The great question of Hancock and Adams was, "Will these men fight?" These were farmers and mechanics, and they would be facing the trained and drilled troops of England. Jonas Clark responded, "They will fight. For this very hour, I've trained them. And they will die if necessary."

Stop and think about that. He had trained them theologically, practically, and militarily. Yes, they were going to fight. When the British arrived that morning, they began issuing commands: "Throw down your weapons, throw down your weapons, disperse you rebels, disperse." They did not. Then came the sound of the muskets.

When the battle was over, seven stalwart men from Pastor Clark's church lay dead, and many others were wounded. Jonas Parker, the strongest wrestler in Lexington, had said that he would never run from the British. He was shot and bayoneted at the very spot he had taken. He did not run. Old Caleb Monroe's gray hairs had been turned into blood. Caleb Harrington was shot running up the church steps to get more powder for the men. We always hear of Lexington Green, but never of what we call the church green. Clark was obviously moved by the loss of his men and those who were wounded.

Yet he said, "From this day will be dated the liberty of the world." Everyone knows about the shot heard around the world. What many

do not know is that it was Jonas Clark, the pastor, who had taught and trained these men. I have two messages on the biblical doctrine of self-defense.

We do not understand all the customs that we have. When I was a boy, I was raised in church. We went Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, and any other night there was a meeting. I always noticed that men sat at the ends of the pews. When I grew up, I sat at the end of the pew. When the service is over, the pastor always goes to the back to greet everybody and shake hands. You say, "Well, that's normal." No. If all you want to do is greet the pastor, you can walk up front as easily as he can walk to the rear.

Customs Rooted in Defense: Seating and the Pastor's Role

Those customs came from here. When colonial men went to church, they stacked their arms in the middle of the aisle. The men sat at the ends of the seats so that, if Indians or the English came along, they could grab their weapons without falling over their women and children. The pastor had the best gun in town and was usually the best shot. He walked to the door because he was the under shepherd and carried his weapon with him. He opened the door and looked out to make sure there were no Indians or British around. When he deemed all safe, the men came out with their weapons, and then the women and children. A lot of our modern-day customs come from these men, and we do not even realize it. Alice Morse Earle,

I think is her name, wrote a book, The Sabbath in Puritan New England. You need to read the book. You will find out that a lot of the customs and habits we have today came from our colonial ancestors. Then, of course, there was Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg. There is so much on Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg, but he was the pastor of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Dunmore County, Virginia.

Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg: From Pulpit to Battlefield

He preached a message in his long, flowing black robe from Ecclesiastes, chapter 3: “There’s a time of peace and a time of war.” When he finished preaching, he threw off his black robe, and there

he stood in full military uniform. He pointed to a young man who had a drum, and the young man started drumming because Muhlenberg was recruiting men to go fight.

In defending his actions, here is what he said: "I'm a clergyman, and it's true. But I'm also a member of society as well as the poorest layman, and my liberty is as dear to me as to any man. Shall I then sit still and enjoy myself at home while the best blood of the continent is spilling? Heaven forbid it. Do you think if America should be conquered, I should be safe? Far from it. And would you not rather fight like a man than die like a dog?"

"The cause is just and noble. Were I a bishop, even a Lutheran one, I should obey without hesitation. And so far from thinking that I am wrong, I'm convinced it is my duty so to do, a duty I owe to my God and to my country." Where are the men like that today? I have a message I preached many years ago entitled "Comest Thou Peaceably?"

The Need for Manly Preachers Today

When you read 1 Samuel, chapter 16, little Samuel, the sweet prophet, is going to Bethlehem to offer a sacrifice. Before he gets there, the people send out a committee to meet him, and they ask him, "Comest thou peaceably?" What a question to ask a preacher. Can you imagine today a preacher walking up to a city council or county council and, before he can enter the room, men coming out and asking, "Preacher, are you coming in peaceably?" Why would they ask Samuel that? Read 1 Samuel, chapter 15. Samuel had just taken a sword and hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord. That is why.

When I was a boy, pastors and ministers were respected. I was raised in the South, on a farm, where many farmers smoked. I saw farmers smoking cigarettes, but when a pastor walked up, they would take the cigarette from their mouths, put it behind their backs, and pinch it out with their fingers while he stood speaking to them. They were not trying to hide that they smoked; he knew it. Yet, out of respect for him, they put it behind their backs.

I am simply saying that, back then, there was more respect. Today, people do not respect preachers; they insult and hate them. You know why? Because most preachers are not men. They do not know how to fight, will not fight, cannot fight, and will not stand.

I believe this with all of my heart: We will never get our country back until we get our preachers back. Truly, the troubles we are facing in this country basically can be laid at the foot of the pulpit, because preachers have been fearful and unwilling to preach the truth, come what may. Most churches are in debt up to their eyeballs. If they really preach the truth, people get mad and leave, and now they are left with a sinking fund payment and may lose their property.

Look at the men who were alive and fighting in 1776—the preachers. Look at the men in 1861 and 1865, and then look at the preachers today. I think you will see a vast difference. You remember when God took Elijah up into heaven in a whirlwind and Elisha picked up his mantle. He went back to the river, smote the water with Elijah's mantle, and said, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" And the waters parted hither and thither.

We could change that question: "Where are the Lord God's Elijahs?" Where are men willing to be men—willing to study, stand, pray, preach, and sacrifice everything for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God? If we want our country back, we need to get our pulpits back. We need men who will proclaim the truth and stand for the truth. The Black Robed Regiment were men who preached, prayed, and fought.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, I ask for your blessing and your help. Teach us, encourage us, and embolden us. Help us, Lord, to stand, and having done all, to stand. Our flesh is weak, and we need thee, thy blessing, thy spirit, and thy power. We ask for a fresh anointing and a double portion of thy spirit. Awaken us, instill a royal backbone in us, and enable us to be what we should be. For your honor and your glory, in the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 19

Breaking The Heart Of God

February 13, 2021

Introduction: The Reality of Heartbreak

In Ezekiel 6:9-10, God says, “And they that escape of you shall remember Me among the nations, whether they shall be carried captives. Because I am broken with their whorish heart which hath departed from Me, and with their eyes which go a-whoring after their idols. And they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. And they shall know that I am the Lord, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.”

I want to begin by asking this question, and I want you to think about it. Have you ever been heartbroken? Have you ever been so emotionally devastated that you could not function? Have you ever been betrayed to the extent that you considered it a relief to see the one or the ones that hurt you punished?

There’s a passage in Proverbs 24 and verse 17 that says this: “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth.” Yet there are times, I think, that we are

absolutely glad to see that the evil is indeed punished, and punished in a biblical manner. I think at one point the Bible forbids what is known as evil rejoicing, but I think there is also, according to the Bible, that which is known as a righteous rejoicing.

Keep Ezekiel chapter 6 before you, but look in your Bibles to Psalm 58. Notice verses 10 and 11 there, beginning with verse 10. The Word of God says, “The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.”

“He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So the man shall say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous. Verily, he is a God that judgeth in the earth.” Obviously, in this passage, the righteous is rejoicing when he sees the righteous punishment of God upon the wicked.

Revelation 19 also clearly states this righteous rejoicing: “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Hallelujah, salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments. For he hath judged the great whore who did corrupt the earth with her fornication and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Hallelujah, and her smoke rose up forever and ever.” There is indeed, I believe, a difference between an evil rejoicing and a righteous rejoicing.

But I begin by asking, has your heart ever really been broken? Speaking of broken hearts, there is probably no greater hurt than that experienced by those who have given oaths to each other, especially in marriage. Friends may forsake us, betray us, and deny us, and it hurts. But there is nothing like the betrayal of a spouse.

David also speaks of how friends can hurt us: “For it was not an enemy that reproached me, that I could have borne it. Neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together and walked into the house of God in company.” If it was an enemy that reproached him, David could understand it. If his enemy had magnified himself against him, he could have dealt with that. But the thing that hurt the most was this: “Thou, a man mine equal, my

guide, and mine acquaintance." They had walked in the house of God in company.

The truth of the matter is that there is hurt, especially not only in relationship to friends, but also in relationship to spouses as well. I have known both men and women who had been so hurt and so betrayed in marriage that they simply did not want anything else to do with the opposite sex because of such a devastating betrayal. They had been so hurt that they were unwilling to further trust anyone and certainly to give their heart to anyone in that sense of the word. When we talk about betrayals, we have to understand that our Lord certainly was betrayed as well.

Peter, of course, denied Jesus Christ. Judas betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ. His enemies mocked Him and ridiculed Him. His disciples forsook Him and fled when He was arrested. The truth of the matter is, many of us have denied Him multitudinous times. We refuse to acknowledge Him, both privately and publicly. We refuse to thank Him. We refuse to praise Him. Oftentimes, we have given in to grievous idolatry. Moreover, we have done things that actually are a real betrayal because we place our wills, our wishes, and our desires far above Him. In essence, what we are doing is dethroning our Lord and establishing ourselves as God.

The question that I would have to ask is this: Have you ever considered the implications toward God in these things? Obviously, our sins, rebellions, and disobediences do not please Him. When we talk about sin, rebellion, and disobedience, do you somehow think that God simply sits back passively and lets things go on, expressing no interest or concern over them whatsoever?

Sin Has Horizontal and Vertical Consequences

You see, most Christians turn out to be deists instead of Christians. When I say that, what I mean is this: Deism taught that God created the world. He wound the universe up like a clock, and then God simply withdrew from it, sat back, and watched the world wind down, so to speak. Obviously, according to deism, there is no such thing as divine intervention. There is no such thing as miracles. There is no such thing as supernatural revelation. Because God is passive, He is simply sitting back, watching the world wind down.

That is why I say that most Christians turn out to be deists instead of real biblical Christians, because they really and truly have no thought and no concern toward God, toward His will, and toward His Word.

Sin has consequences, and the consequences of our sin are not simply personal. It is true that the wages of sin is death; that is clearly taught in Scripture. It is also true that we reap what we sow, and that the way of the transgressor is hard. In other words, we will not only reap what we sow, but will pay for our sins in the long run. We will discover that the way of the transgressor is hard.

Another principle in Scripture deals with this concept. It is found in Romans 14:7: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." The principle is that our lives always affect other people. Our sins affect other people, and our holiness affects other people.

Sin not only destroys families, individuals, churches, societies, and even nations. To learn this by example, we need only look at what God did to Israel and Judah in 722 B.C. and 586 B.C., and then at what finally happened to Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Sin always has consequences. Most people express this sentiment: "What I do is my business, and what I do does not affect anyone but myself." That certainly is not true. They may think it is true, but when a drunk gets drunk, he does not consider the effect of that sin upon his family—morally, financially, and socially—or even upon his neighbors. When that drunk, who thinks his drinking is his business and that he is not hurting anybody, gets in his car and rams another family, killing and maiming individuals, it turns out to be far more than just his business.

The point is that his sin has affected someone other than himself. It is true that he will reap what he has sown, that he will find the way of the transgressor hard, and that the wages of sin is death. But his sin always affects someone else. We need to remember this: no man lives to himself, and no man dies to himself.

We see the implications of this very easily when we look at man, because our relationships to each other are what you and I would call horizontal relationships. We can look around and see how sin affects individuals, families, churches, societies, even nations. But most of

us never consider that there is a vertical aspect to sin as well. Sin not only has an effect upon man; sin also has an effect upon God. There is that vertical relationship as well.

The truth of the matter is that God hates sin. God hates sin intensely. His holiness recoils from sin, because sin is basically a denial not only of His glory, but of His person, and it seeks to dethrone God. That is why God said in Jeremiah 44 and verse 4, “Oh, do not that abominable thing which I hate.” So God says specifically that He hates sin.

Sin affects God in the sense that it is an attack upon His external glory. It is not only an attack upon His external glory; it is an attack upon the revelation of His Word. It is an attack upon His authority, upon His sovereignty, and upon His right to command.

God Is Pressed Down by Our Sins

In Amos 2, verse 13, God says to Israel, “Behold, I am pressed under you as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.” Isn’t that an interesting statement? God said to Israel, “I am pressed under you as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.” What is the old expression that we have: “Never mind the horse, load the wagon”? We always hear of the straw that broke the camel’s back. I’m sure that most of you, at one point or another, have overloaded a wagon or overloaded a trailer. And, of course, if Pat were around, he would want me to tell about those tires I had to buy him from an overloaded trailer with concrete block on it. We understand how you press down on a wagon that is overloaded. This is exactly the illustration God is using when He says that Israel has pressed Him down as a wagon is pressed when it is full of sheaves.

John Calvin said of Amos 2:13, "This place admits of two interpretations. The first is that God was pressed under the Israelites as a wagon groans under too much weight, and so God expostulates that he was weighed down by the Israelites. 'You constrain me,' he says, 'to labor under your sins,' Isaiah 1:14. The sense then that God was pressed down under them may be viewed as not unsuitable and yet the more received interpretation is this, 'Behold I will bind you fast as a wagon is bound.'" He continued, "I am however more inclined to the first meaning that God here reprehends the Israelites

because they had pressed down, he was pressed down by them." John Gill expressed it this way: "Behold, I am pressed under you with the weight of their sins, with which they had made him to serve and had wearied him."

"His patience was quite worn out. He could bear them no longer. As a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves, as a cart in harvest time, in which the sheaves of corn are carried home, when one sheave is laid upon another, till they can lay no more, and the cart is loaded and overloaded with them, and ready to break, to be pressed in the earth with them."

"Thus Jehovah represents Himself as loaded and burdened with the sins of these people, and therefore would visit for them and inflict deserved punishment." God says, "Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." Both Gill and Calvin understand this passage to mean that our sins have an effect upon God. God complains about the sins of the Israelites, for those sins have burdened Him, and His long-suffering is often taxed by them. His power, however, is not taxed, and every sinner will inevitably receive the righteous judgment of God. In light of all this, what follows is an absolutely wonderful and glorious truth.

God Does Not Afflict Willingly

Lamentations 3:33 says, speaking of God, “For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” So many people have a wrong attitude and concept of God. When they understand God’s holiness, they sometimes think that God is an old meanie sitting up in heaven, waiting for us to mess up so He can whip us. But that is not true. God does not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men.

No loving parent has ever delighted in chastening his child. Why do we chasten our children? It is not because we hate them, but because we love them. We want them to be honest, upright, truthful, correct, and obedient. Every loving parent has, at one time or another, wept over the fact that he had to chasten his children.

I will never forget my father. When he would come to whip me as a boy, he would say, “Now son, this is going to hurt me worse than it does you.” I thought, “Oh, boy, that’s a lie.” I knew better, because he

had whipped me until I grew up and had children of my own. Yet it breaks your heart. There have been times when I have wept over the fact that I had to discipline my children.

If you and I would weep because we have to discipline our children, what about a loving Heavenly Father—a holy, righteous, sovereign God, of whom the Bible says, “He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men”? God not only desires our obedience; He commands it. You do not discipline an obedient child; you praise an obedient child.

What we need to comprehend is that our sins have implications, not just horizontally toward one another, but vertically, heavenward, because they insult our Heavenly Father. Each and every sin is, in one sense, a denial of God: a denial of God as our chief good, a denial of God in His sufficiency, and a denial of God in His love and grace.

Sin as Spiritual Adultery

Now let me give you an illustration that I hope will bring this truth home to you. When a husband or a wife commits adultery, it is not simply unfaithfulness. It is that. But it is much more than that. It is a denial and a rejection of their spouse and a declaration of the fact that that spouse is insufficient to satisfy their needs. And what they're saying is, "I need something else or I need someone else." And so, really and truly, it's not just unfaithfulness, it is a statement of facts, that you're not what I need. You're insufficient. You're incapable of satisfying me.

Now just like that is true physically, it is also true spiritually. When we sin against God, we're saying to God, "You're insufficient to satisfy me. You are no longer my chief good. I need something more than you. I need something above you. I need something beyond you."

Now, let me show you. Therefore, because of this, sin in the Bible is likened unto adultery. I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Jeremiah chapter 3. You can see this all through the Bible. We'll look in Jeremiah chapter 3. And notice, if you would please, verse 6. Jeremiah 3 verse 6. "The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath

done? She is going up upon every high mountain under every green tree and there is played the harlot." Now skip down, if you would, to verse 8. "And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I put her away and given her a bill of divorcement, yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also." So, in this passage, God is likening idolatry to spiritual adultery.

Idolaters' hearts do actually depart from God as an adulterous wife departs from her husband. So what God is saying in Jeremiah chapter 3 is that their whorish heart, their heart of whoredom, their idolaters heart, which was full of that sin, addicted to that sin, delighted in that sin, and wedded to that sin was a denial of God and His sufficiency and His grace and His mercy. We have to understand that our sins have a vertical effect and not just a horizontal effect.

We Make God Serve with Our Sins

Now, I want you to think about this implication. When a spouse that is unfaithful in one sense of the word, he causes or she causes the other spouse to serve with that sin. You say, "What are you talking about?" Well, suppose here is a husband and here is a wife. And the husband begins an adulterous affair with someone else, and the wife does not even know about it, at least for a while.

Yet he keeps coming back home and pretending like everything is hunky-dory, everything is okay. Actually, what he is doing is forcing her to serve with his sin because he is totally keeping her ignorant about that sin.

There is a vertical effect of our sins. In Isaiah 43:24, God says to His people, “Thou hast brought Me no sweet cane with money, neither hast Thou filled Me with the fat of Thy sacrifices, but Thou hast made Me to serve with Thy sins. Thou hast wearied Me with Thine iniquities.” Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins. How in the world could Israel make God serve with their sins? You have to remember that there was a covenantal relationship between God and Israel. Since that covenant existed, whatever Israel did affected the God of that covenant. Their disobedience was not merely a private matter; it affected the God with whom they were bound.

It is just like husbands and wives being in a covenantal relationship. What one does affects the other; you cannot have it otherwise. In a covenant, two or more are bound together. God said to Israel, “You have made me to serve with your sins.” That is the effect of being bound together in covenant.

Now, here is a good question: Is that possible in the New Testament? Is that possible in today’s time? The answer is yes. In 1 Corinthians 6:13, the Apostle Paul says, “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.” God made our bodies for Him and not for fornication. God has both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by His own power. Now watch carefully: “Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” We are joined to Christ in a covenantal relation. “Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot?”

"God forbid." Whenever you see these two words, "God forbid," it literally means "perish the thought." Do not even let it enter your mind once. Do not consider it or think about it. So he asked, "Shall I then take the members of Christ, which members we are, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid." Then he says, "What? Know you not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body. But he that committed fornication sinneth against his own body. What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have of God, and you're not your own? For you're bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are his."

We are in a covenantal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. If you read 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 3 and 4, you find that Jesus Christ is our head and we are His body. We are joined together. In 1 Corinthians 6:15, he says, "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" He is our head; we are his members, his body. "Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid." Being joined to a harlot is one

body, which is the marriage relationship, but "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

The truth is that whenever you and I sin, we are joining Jesus Christ with that sin, whether it is adultery or anything else, because He is the head, we are the body, and we are one spirit in Him. In essence, we are making Him serve with our sins. We are doing exactly what Israel did in the Old Testament.

In Ezekiel 6:9, the text that we took, God said, "I am broken with their whorish heart." That is why this message is titled "Breaking the Heart of God." The word "broken" is the Hebrew word "shabar," which means to break, to break in pieces, to tear, to crush, to break down, to hurt, to shatter, and a crush.

God Is Grieved and Broken by Sin

Usually it is grief, and great grief that leads to brokenness. I think that probably each one of us at one time or another has made the statement to someone who has heard us, "My heart is crushed." My heart is crushed. God said, "I'm broken. I'm crushed with your whorish heart. I'm crushed with your sins. I'm crushed with your denial. I'm crushed with your declaration of my insufficiency. I'm broken."

Now let me ask you a question. Since it's usually grief that leads to a broken heart, and by the way, you can lose a mate. You can lose a husband, you can lose a wife, you can lose a child. And the grief oftentimes is very great and it leads to a broken heart. So my question in light of this, is it possible for God to be grieved and broken in heart over our sins? Remember, it's grief that oftentimes leads to brokenness. So let me answer that question by showing you a number of passages.

I want you to turn first of all in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 6. You're going to find in this passage the very first time this word is used in the Bible. Genesis 6, look at verse 6. Interesting, Genesis 6 and verse 6. "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." It grieved him at his heart.

And we're talking about sin. And we're talking about the wickedness of man. It grieved him at his heart.

Now, if you would turn right on over to the book of Judges, chapter 10. Judges, chapter 10. And look, if you would please, at verse 16. Joshua, Judges, Judges 10, and verse 16. This is in relation now to Israel again. Judges 10, look in verse 16. Israel had sinned. Let's read verse 15. "And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned. Do Thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto Thee, deliver us only, we pray Thee this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD. And his, that is God's soul, was grieved for the misery of Israel." So it's obviously possible for God to be grieved. If you would turn right over to Psalm 95. Psalm 95. And look if you would please there at verse 10. Psalm 95 verse 10. Psalm 95 verse 10. God says, "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation and said it is the people that do err in their heart."

"And they have not known my ways." God says, "Forty years long was I grieved." Yes, it is possible for God to be grieved. In Mark chapter 3 and verse 5, our Lord Jesus Christ—God incarnate, God in the flesh—is described: "And when he, that is the Lord Jesus Christ, had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored whole as the other." The Bible says He was grieved. Yes, it is possible for God to be grieved. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, and He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts.

Ephesians 4:30 says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed in the day of your redemption." Wow. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." So God the Father can be grieved, God the Son can be grieved, and God the Holy Spirit can be grieved. The Bible makes this truth clear.

Now, if you would turn right on over to the book of Hebrews, and look in chapter 3, Hebrews chapter 3, you're going to see again a restatement of that which we saw in Psalm 95. But look if you would in Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 10. Look what God says, "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways." Skip down to verse 17. "But with whom was he grieved forty years?"

"Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?" It is our sins, it is our wickedness, it is our disobedience and our rebellion that grieves and breaks the heart of God. Remember, if you would please, that the scripture says that God does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. It is necessary to do so at times, but he's not some old meanie sitting in heaven just waiting to strike with a rod.

Now, I want you to turn back in your Bibles to the book of Hosea. Daniel, Hosea, and I want you to look in chapter 11, and let me explain a verse. Look in Hosea, Daniel, Hosea, and look please in chapter 11. Hosea 11, and look if you would please at verse 8. In fact, let's read verse 7 so you can see it in the context here. He says, "And my people were bent to backsliding from me."

"Though they called him to the Most High, none at all would exalt him." So the people now are turning from God. And look what he asks in verse 8. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? And how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? And how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me." He's grieved, he's broken. "My repentings are kindled together." Now, an interesting thing. He names the tribe of Ephraim, which was the leader in the northern kingdom, the leading tribe. And then he says, "How shall I deliver thee Israel," which would refer to mainly the northern kingdom, but it could include all of them.

And then he has this statement. He has this question. "How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim?" I could ask you, what is Admah? What is Zeboim? You know what the answer is? These two, Admah and Zeboim, were cities of the plain that God destroyed when he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. You remember the Bible says he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain? And so God is asking, He said, "How am I going to do this? I don't want to whip you, I don't want to chasten you, I don't want to give you up, but it looks like I'm going to have to." In other words, their sins affected God.

We have to understand that there are implications for our sins, not just horizontally, but vertically as well. Do you understand it is God's desire that we obey? It is God's desire that we be obedient. In fact, it's not just His desire. He's commanded us to be obedient. He's

commanded us to have a heart toward Him and to Him. It is for our good and God's glory that we have a heart for Him.

God Desires Our Obedience for Our Good

In Deuteronomy 5:29, God said concerning Israel, “Oh, that there were such an heart in them that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever.” What? God says, “Oh, that there were such a heart in them that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever.” God said, “I want you to obey. I want you to be in a position for me to bless you and keep you and help you. That is my desire.” His desire is not to beat us to death. His desire is that we be obedient and honor Him.

Now turn in your Bibles, if you would, to Psalm 81. Psalm 81. I want you to watch this passage. Psalm 81, verse 8. This is an astounding passage. God says in Psalm 81, verse 8, “Hear, O My people, and I will testify unto thee. O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto Me,” just listen, said God, “just listen and obey. There shall no strange God be in thee, neither shalt thou worship any strange God.” Now watch verse 10. “I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.”

You know, you can see this every year, every year, under our carport. We have little house wrens come and make nests among all the equipment. We even had one make a nest in our grill, so we never even used the grill until all the birds hatched. Usually, when those birds make their nests there, and make them kind of low, you can look in and see them. When you walk up, even if the mother bird is not there, you look into that nest, and there are three or four of those little wrens. At the least little bit of noise, they are all opening their mouths, sticking their heads up, waiting for you to put something in.

And this is what God is saying: “I am the Lord thy God which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. Open thy mouth wide and I'll fill it.” That is all we have to do. He is willing to fill it and feed us. But here is the sad thing: “But my people would not hearken to my voice.”

“And Israel would none of me.” That is, we would not have anything to do with God. “So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts. And they walked in their own counsels.” Then God says, “Oh, that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways.” God said, “I would, that they had done that. I would, that they had obeyed me.” If they had obeyed Him, what would have happened? “I should soon have subdued their enemies and turn my hand against their adversaries.”

“The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him, but their time should have endured forever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied him.” God is saying, “I want your obedience. I want to bless you. I want to help you.”

Think of all the enemies we have today in this world—not just the enemies of Christians, of which we have sufficient, but the enemies of humanity, Americans, and people all over the world. Look at those who want to reduce the population of the world to 100 million. What does that mean? They want to kill everybody else. God said, “If you had obeyed me, I would have subdued all of your enemies.” If we want our enemies defeated and subdued, there must be obedience to God and His Word. There will be no victory apart from God, and no victory apart from obedience. God said, “Open thy mouth wide and I'll fill it.” If we obey, God will do this and this and this for us. You always want to bless and help an obedient child; you never want to help a rebellious child.

I do not normally give money to strangers because you do not ever trust strangers. But I was putting gas in my automobile so I could come down here and teach. My back was turned, and about from here to Steve, a tall, strong black man stood. I heard him say, "Permission to approach you, sir." I turned around and said, "Pardon?" He repeated, "Permission to approach you, sir."

He said, "I did not want to step up behind you and startle you." I said, "You have my attention. Tell me what you need." He said, "To be absolutely honest, I just got out of prison. I'm hungry; I don't have anything." I told him, "Sir, I will buy you something to eat. But would you tell me which prison you were in?" He did, and I bought him something to eat.

Normally, if he had walked up to me and said, "Can I have some money?" I would have said, "No. You cannot have any money. I'm not going to buy you anything." But here he came saying, "Permission to approach you, sir." My wife asked me, "Did you learn that in prison?" I said, "They teach that in prison, and they teach it in the military as well. You do not just walk up to a commanding officer. You have to have permission to approach the commanding officer." I suppose you would have to have permission to approach a guard or a warden as well.

Here was someone who acted as though he wanted to do that which is right now, and I was more than willing to buy him something to eat. The question is, are we as Christians willing to do that which is right now? Are we willing to obey? Are we willing to say, "Permission to approach you, sir?"

"Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner. Lord, give me a heart to fear thee. Give me a heart to obey thee. I'm willing, Lord, to open my mouth, and Lord, I want you to fill it." That is what Psalm 81 is all about. We have to discover that our sins defraud us, deny us, and destroy us. It is only when we turn to Him that we realize the depth and depravity of our sins.

Without Him, there is no joy. Without Him, there are no blessings. Without Him, there is only judgment. We do reap that which we sow, and we do suffer from the consequences of our sins. We cannot break the heart of God and escape the consequences.

I've often said to Alice, "I love you. I don't want to hurt you. I want to help you, and I surely do not want any arguments between us. I have to live with you, and you have to live with me." That is the way it is with each other, and that is the way it is with God. We cannot live without Him, and I certainly do not want Him angry with me. I do not want Alice angry with me, nor Mark, nor anybody else. I cannot control their anger, but I am going to do what is right by the grace of God. If people get angry with me, that is their problem, not mine.

But here it is with God: we must understand that it is our sins that separate us. It is our sins that hide His face, destroy us, and cause us

to be subdued by our enemies instead of Him subduing our enemies. We do suffer the consequences of our sins.

Hosea 9:1 says, "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy as other people. Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy as other people, for thou hast gone a-whoring from thy God, and thou hast left a reward upon every cornfloor. The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her."

Then he says, "They shall not dwell in the Lord's land, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria. They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord, neither shall they be pleasing unto him. Their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners. All that eat thereof shall be polluted for their bread, for their soul shall come, shall not come into the house of the Lord." And then he asks, "What will you do in the solemn day and in the day of the Feast of the Lord?"

In other words, you do not rejoice as other people because you have gone a-whoring from your God. You will face famine, starvation, problems, enslavement, hard work, and hard labor because you have departed from Him. It is just that simple. Our sins break the heart of God and bring His chastening hand upon us.

Applications: Consider the Effect of Sin on God

The first application is this: our sinfulness as well as our selfishness is clearly seen in the fact that we often concentrate upon our hurt, our grief, our disappointment, and our brokenness. We hardly ever think of the effect that our sins have upon God. We are more concerned with our grief. We are more concerned with our hurt. We are more concerned with our brokenness than we are with God's. We have become totally man-centered instead of God-centered.

Likewise, it is not just that we are concerned about our hurt, grief, and disappointment. We are concerned about our joy, our happiness, and what pleases us. We are not concerned about what pleases God, what makes Him happy, or what gives Him joy. No, no, no. We are concerned with ourselves. In that sense, we are still idolaters, because we are putting ourselves above God.

We have to understand that sin destroys. It does not delight, at least not in the long run. There is temporary pleasure in sin, but when it is gone and its lasting effects remain, it is absolute stupidity to trade a lifetime for a few minutes of unlawful pleasure. Think of the ruined lives, wrecked homes, wayward children, and devastated families sin has produced. To sin against God is a bad, bad bargain.

It is like trading a ton of gold for a single piece of fiat paper money. You have to be insane to do that; we have to be insane to sin against God. He is the source of our life. He holdeth our soul and life. Our times are in His hands. Why would I want to aggravate, intimidate, deny, or denigrate the God who holds my soul and my life in His hand? This is why I label this message “Breaking the Heart of God.” God said, “I'm broken under your whorish heart. I'm pressed down like a wagon that's been overloaded.” “You've made me to serve your sins.”

The third application is this: when tempted to violate the law of God, before you act, think and reflect upon the implication of your sin upon the Lord Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father. When God said, “Oh, that there was such a heart in them to fear me and to keep my commandments always that it might be well with them and their children forever,” we need to say, “Lord, give me such a heart as that. Work in my life so that I will not break your heart.” How often have you asked the Lord Jesus Christ to restrain you from sinning against Him? That should be a daily prayer.

John wrote in 1 John 2 and verse 1, “My little children, these things I write on you that you sin not.” We should ask our Lord daily, “Lord, help me not to sin against thee today. Help me not to do anything that's grievous unto thee and would break your heart and hurt you. Help me to remember and think upon the implications of my actions and the implications of my attitude.” Do not break the heart of God.

Do not insult His external glory. Do not deny Him and His sufficiency. Do not try to dethrone Him by your sin and enthrone your sin to yourself. God said, “I’m broken under your whorish heart.”

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You, Father, for Your Word and for Your truth. Lord, help us understand the implications of our sins—not just manward, not just horizontally, but vertically as well. Give us grace, Lord, that we may serve Thee acceptably. Let the reverence in God be feared. We pray that You would help us not to sin against Thee or violate Thy Word. Help us, Father, to open our mouths wide and ask Thee to fill them. Give us grace and mercy to be obedient unto Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 20

Godly Wars

August 17, 2021

Introduction: The Concept of Godly Wars

The sons of Reuben and the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword and to shoot with bow and skillful in war, were four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore that went out to war. And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab. And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them, for they cried to God in the battle, and He was entreated of them, because they put their trust in Him.

And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men an hundred thousand. For there fell down many slain, because the war was of God, and they dwelt in their steads until the captivity.

It seems whenever war is mentioned, there is not and cannot be anything godly about it. Each one of us has heard the old adage, “war is hell,” and undoubtedly that is true from one perspective. However,

from a biblical perspective, war is oftentimes a biblical remedy for injustice, wickedness, rebellion, and tyranny.

I am not a warmonger. I do not desire or encourage war. I do not wish for war. I do not teach warfare. I have not been trained in warfare and therefore obviously I cannot teach warfare.

Just War Principles and Modern Wars

On the other hand, I am not a pacifist. I will fight when it is necessary and right. However, my position is very simple: If war can be averted by just and holy means, then those means should be encouraged. Oftentimes, however, war is indeed a necessity. In fact, in the Bible, war was a necessity, and under certain circumstances, war is certainly necessary today.

In the fourth century, Augustine, one of the early church fathers, developed a concept of a just war. He pointed out that war should never be fought simply for greed, gain, dominance, or a desire to subjugate others. In the Bible, war was used to overthrow tyrants, wickedness, and rebellion, as well as for self-defense and the defense of the nation. Augustine therefore spoke not only about the right to go to war, but also about the right conduct in war, which the Bible teaches very clearly as well. Unhappily today, most wars have absolutely nothing to do with self-defense or any godly purpose whatsoever.

They're usually unbiblical wars, and they are unnecessary wars because they're motivated by greed, ambition, politics, or simply a desire for empire and dominion. James chapter 4 in verse 1 really hits the nail on the head: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your own lusts that war in your members?” Usually that is true. Wars arise in us individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and even nationally because of that lust in our own members—the wickedness, the greed, and the dominance.

It was Major General Smedley Butler who said, “War is a racket.” Major General Butler was a retired United States Marine Corps Major General and a two-time recipient of the Medal of Honor. He had fought all of his life and realized at the end of life that he was not really fighting for anything that was just and holy, but was being

used, and that it was basically bankers' wars. He came up with this little booklet, War Is a Racket. You can certainly find it on the internet by typing in General Smedley Butler's name or “war is a racket.” It is very easily read, and I would encourage you to read it as well.

Robert E. Lee said, “It is well that war is so terrible lest we should grow too fond of it.” War, like anything else, can be abused and misused for wrong reasons and wrong motives.

However, we must understand one very important truth: war is not evil in and of itself, even though it is associated with death and destruction. Death and destruction are not necessarily evil in and of themselves. Everyone dies, and death is nothing more than the destruction of the body. Moreover, according to the Word of God, there are some things that should be destroyed, and there are some enemies of God that need to be destroyed, which He will indeed in time destroy. Anything wicked, rebellious, and treasonous to God, the rightful owner and creator of this world and the judge of all the earth, will indeed face His wrath and judgment when He comes down upon them.

It was Frédéric Bastiat, a Frenchman in 1850, who said this: If every person has the right to defend, even by force, his person, his liberty, and his property, then it follows that a group of men have the right to organize and support a common force to protect these rights constantly. If there is an individual right, there is a family right. If there is a family right, there is a church right. If there is a church right, there is a state right. If there is a state right, there is a nation right as well.

General John J. Pershing, who died in 1948, said this: “If you know how to shoot and are quite ready to shoot, the chances are you won’t have to shoot.”

We are specifically told in 1 Chronicles chapter 5 and verse 22, “for there fell down many slain because the war was of God.” The war against the Hagarites was indeed a godly war, but there were other godly wars as well. How do I know that? The answer is because it is revealed in the Bible. In Numbers chapter 21 and verse 14, the Bible says, “Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the LORD,

what he did in the Red Sea, and in the brooks of Arnon." Note the words, "the book of the wars of the LORD." The Hagarite war was a godly war because the Bible says it was of God. There were other godly wars as well. We must understand that anything God is involved in is holy, just, and right. We must also remember that God is a warrior.

God as a Warrior

God fights, and God wars. In Exodus chapter 15, verse 3, the Bible says, "The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name." Psalm 24, verse 8, says, "Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle." Very obviously, God is indeed a man of war.

It is not only that God the Father is a man of war; God the Son is a man of war as well. Revelation 19, beginning with verse 11, says, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

This King of kings and Lord of lords, who is called Faithful and True, makes war in righteousness. Therefore, war cannot be evil in and of itself if God the Father and God the Son engage in war.

Oftentimes God uses war to deliver His people. God defeats His enemies by war. He helps His people in the time of war and defends His people in the time of war. God oftentimes uses war to defeat and destroy His enemies.

One of the main problems we encounter with war today is that our wars are not godly wars. They are not based upon biblical principles.

Usually, wars are fought over oil, natural resources, a desire to conquer and subjugate, a desire to rule, or simply a desire to have an empire. In other words, these wars today are basically based upon wicked and depraved motives.

There is a book I would encourage everyone to read, now available as an audiobook: Confessions of an Economic Hit Man, written by John Perkins. If you read that book, you will understand why the other nations hate America, because he reveals exactly what we do as a nation: how we deceive, bribe, steal, invade, and assassinate leaders who will not go along with the political establishment in this country. It is an astounding, eye-opening book, and you will understand where we are and why we are so hated.

But when any country, state, nation, church, or family is invaded by a hostile force, it has the right to defend itself. The invaded people have a right to fight back and to defend and restrain the invader by any means necessary. When the North invaded the South in 1861, the South resisted with military force, and it was indeed a biblical right.

The war was not over slavery. Most Southerners did not own slaves because they were very expensive. Moreover, many people do not realize that there were abolitionist societies in the South, probably even more than in the North. When most Confederate soldiers captured by Northern troops were asked why they were fighting, the standard answer was, “Because you were here.” The South did not invade the North; the North invaded the South. That was exactly what they were saying: “You are here. You do not need to be here. If you had stayed where you were, we would be where we are, and there would not be any fighting going on whatsoever.”

What I want to do today is share some biblical principles based upon 1 Chronicles chapter 5. This single message on godly wars does not take the place of the fifteen-part series I did a number of years ago on the biblical doctrine of war. Look at verse 18. The very first point I am going to cover today is this: war is a necessity.

War is a Necessity

"The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skillful in war, were four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore that went out to the war." When I say that war is a necessity, I do not mean that we must be engaged in constant and consistent physical warfare. I mean that we do have enemies, and those enemies seek our destruction.

Our Lord Himself told us that there are going to be wars and rumors of war. As long as evil, wicked, and depraved men rule, there will be war because of greed, a desire for gain, dominance, and wicked motives. That is for sure. I desire peace.

We are given a command in Romans chapter 12 and verse 18: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Notice the words, "if it be possible." There are circumstances in which it is not possible to live peaceably with all men, and God recognizes that. If fighting breaks out, you do not want it to be on your part; you want it to be on the part of the other individual, because you are a peaceable individual.

The grandfather of a prominent actor would always say, “I'm a peaceable man, but don't get me riled.” And that's the way it is. We want to live peaceably with all men if we can.

Now, hold 1 Chronicles 5, but look, please, in Deuteronomy chapter 20. I want you to see what God says in this passage. Deuteronomy 20 and verse 1 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.” Notice verse 1 and the word when: “when thou goest out to battle against thine enemies,” not if. You do have enemies, there will be war, and you will have to fight. He says, “when thou goest out to battle against thine enemies.”

In other words, God admonishes the people not to be fearful of a multitude or their might. They may have multitude on their side, and they may have might on their side, but the LORD thy God is with thee. Certainly, we would rather have God on our side than might or

multitude. You have heard the old adage, “If you want peace, then prepare for war.” The truth is that most people, especially most Christians, are not prepared for war. Most Christians are not even prepared to fight. They will not fight mentally, emotionally, spiritually, or physically. We have overlooked the fact that the Christian life is likened to warfare.

The Apostle Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 12 to fight the good fight of faith. In 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 3, he said, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” In Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10 through 18, God delineates all the armor we must use and apply in our lives to fight the good fight of faith. If we are not to fight, if we are not to war, why in the world did God provide all this armor? If you notice that passage in detail, you will discover that there is no armor for the back. There is only armor for the front, which means we are not to be running, and we are not to turn our backs to the enemy. We are to fight against the enemy.

To be absolutely honest, I have no idea what makes Christians think they will fight physically when they refuse to fight spiritually. Our primary warfare, of course, is spiritual warfare. However, I understand, and so does the Bible, that there are times when spiritual warfare may become physical warfare. Consider these questions in light of what I am teaching today.

Will you fight for your life? You may answer yes, but are you prepared to fight for your life? What kind of physical shape are you in? What physical and fighting abilities do you possess? How would you defend yourself against an armed attacker? If you were armed and attacked with arms, would you shoot back? Could you shoot straight and accurately under intense pressure, with emotion and adrenaline flowing?

What if you were outnumbered, facing a squad of men or a group of trained foreign fighting troops? We need to consider these questions and answer them biblically. If it is right, honorable, and biblical to defend yourself against one individual attacking you, it is certainly right, honorable, and biblical to defend yourself against two or three, a whole squad, or a whole nation. The right of self-defense is indeed biblical and right.

Samuel Adams said, “If ever a time should come when vain and aspiring men shall possess the high seats in government, our country will stand in need of its experienced patriots to prevent its ruin.” I am afraid what old Samuel Adams said has come true. We have vain and aspiring men in control of this country today.

President Theodore Roosevelt said, “The great body of our citizens shoot less as time goes on. We should encourage rifle practice among schoolboys and indeed among all classes as well as the military service by every means in our power. Thus and not otherwise may we be able to assist in preserving peace in the world. The first step in the direction of preparation to avert war if possible, and to be fit for war if it should come, is to teach men how to shoot.” How times have changed. He was following the adage, “If you want peace, prepare for war.” If you cannot shoot quickly and accurately, you must learn to do so.

Skill with arms is a necessary acquirement. This is what I'm talking about and what the Bible is referring to when I say that war is a necessity. We do have enemies, and there will be times that we must defend ourselves physically.

War is for Men

War is for men. He said, "the sons of Reuben and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skillful in war." So let me just make this very plain. War is not for women and children. It is for men.

I know that that statement goes contrary to political correctness. It is also contrary to the modern day feminist movement. It is also contrary to what the world today calls equality. Yet it is indeed a biblical truth. Deuteronomy 22 and verse 5 says, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God." The interesting thing about this passage is that whenever it is read or quoted, people are willing to argue over clothing. Now, I will admit that clothing is involved to a degree, but the truth is there is much more revealed in this verse than mere clothing.

First of all, notice the word for woman. The Hebrew word is ishshah, which refers to a wife, a woman, a woman as opposite to a man, hence a female. The woman shall not wear that which pertains to a man. You would automatically think that the word man here would be from the Hebrew word ish, but it's not.

You remember when God brought Eve to Adam. Adam said, "she shall be called Ishshah." Why? Because she was taken out of ish. That is, she shall be called a woman because she's taken out of man. So the Hebrew word here is the word gibbor, which means a man, a man-child, a warrior, a strong man, that which emphasizes strength and the ability to fight.

Now, watch it in verse 5: “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man.” Let me take care of this phrase, “that which pertaineth unto a man.” It comes from the Hebrew word keli, and it is translated in our Bibles as vessel 166 times, instrument 39 times, weapon 21 times, armor 10 times, and even as armor bearer and furniture. Hence, this passage or phrase refers to implements, tools, weapons, and equipment. So it is not just that a woman shall not wear a man’s clothing; she is not to be a warrior.

This is talking about any profession that is distinctly male, including a soldier. Now, before I go further in this verse, let me explain something. If it comes to a fight—I am talking about a military fight—I would much rather have next to me a six-foot-three, 250-pound man than a five-foot-two, 130-pound woman. I do not care how beautiful or resourceful the woman is; I would still rather have the man. Why?

For a number of reasons. First of all, if I am wounded or hurt, I want someone who can drag me or throw me over their shoulder and carry me to help. Usually, a five-foot-two, 130-pound woman is not going to carry a 200-pound man over her shoulder. It is just not going to work like that. All I am saying is that I would rather have fighting strength and ability than feminine charms.

Let me explain it a little further. I know I am old, and I know I am feeble. You want to call me decrepit; that is fine. But I can challenge any woman in this congregation to a fight, and I believe I can win.

You see what I am saying? Why? Obviously, women are usually not a match for men.

I usually say that there have to be a few women somewhere who could really whip me and wear me out, especially those trained in martial arts. I understand that. But the truth of the matter is that most women cannot defeat or fight successfully against men, contrary to Hollywood movies. When they portray little 110- or 115-pound women whipping 230- or 240-pound men, it usually does not happen like that.

I have watched some of these little female cops and often thought that if they tried to arrest me, as old as I am, and I did not want to be arrested, they would have a fight on their hands, probably more than they could handle. I know they are trained at the academy; I understand that. But the truth of the matter is that most women cannot overpower a man.

You will remember that in Atlanta a few years back, a huge male felon was waiting to go into court. They put a female cop with him to guard him while he waited. He jumped her, beat her, took her weapon, murdered her, and left the building. I think he was finally shot outside. Why would they send a 5'2", 110- or 115-pound woman to guard a 220- or 230-pound man? It is insane, even if she does have a weapon.

Here is what Scripture says. Titus 2:4-5 says that the older women are to teach the young women “to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” It says that women should be keepers at home. In 1 Timothy 5:14, Paul says, “I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.”

Before anyone objects and tries to attack me verbally, let me set the record straight: I am not against women. I love women. My mother was a woman, my wife is a woman, my sister is a woman, and all my daughters are women. I even had a female horse, and I have a female dog. I am not against women. Whether it is admitted

or not, the truth is that there are more than physical differences between men and women.

Men and women are equal in certain ways. First, they are equally creatures of God. The woman is just as much a creature of God as the man, and they stand on equal footing before Him as His creatures. Second, they are equally sinners and equally depraved. Without Jesus Christ, both are equally lost. Neither is necessarily more depraved than the other; both are totally depraved. Third, men and women may be equally redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. A woman may be saved exactly as a man may be saved; men are no better in the standing of redemption. But there are differences. For instance, I could make a woman cry much more easily and quickly than I could make a man cry.

And I am not talking about pain; I am talking about speech and emotions, which differ between women and men. God ordained these differences; acknowledging them is not putting women down. The Bible says in 1 Peter 3:7: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” The Bible specifically calls the woman the weaker vessel. Therefore, the woman, the female, is the weaker vessel.

Many men say that being called the stronger sex means that men are strong. No, that is not what it means. We do not like to think that. But if a woman is called the weaker vessel, it means the man is weak as well; the woman is simply weaker than he is. Thus, 1 Peter 3:7 tells us very clearly that the woman is the weaker sex.

A woman's place is basically in the home and certainly not on the battlefield, on an electrical pole, or in a fire station. Anything that includes instruments of war, weapons, armor, and equipment belongs completely to men. Deuteronomy 22:5 says, “neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.” The Bible therefore forbids the crossing of the sexes. There must be a distinction between male and female. When a man dresses as a woman, he is not called a trans according to Scripture; he is called an abomination, because he is trying to cross that line. Contrary to what modern-day political correctness

teaches, there are only two sexes, male and female—not twenty, according to the Democrats.

War Requires Skillful Men

War is a necessity, and, secondly, war involves men.

Thirdly, 1 Chronicles 5:18 gives us this third truth: “the sons of Reuben and the Gadites and half tribe of Manasseh of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword and to shoot with a bow and skillful in war.” It is not merely men, but skillful men—men able to bear the buckler and sword. The buckler was the heavy shield. The wording also indicates that they were able to shoot with a bow, because the following clause declares, “and skillful in war.” In order to be skillful, they had to know how to use the buckler, or shield, the bow, and the sword. The text calls them valiant men.

The Hebrew word for “valiant” is chayil, meaning men of valor, strength, might, bravery, and efficiency. Notice that he calls them able to bear. The Hebrew word for “able” is nasa, meaning to bear, carry up, lift up, sustain, and endure. It is translated “armor bearer” eighteen times in Scripture. The text is therefore speaking of hardness, courage, endurance, and efficiency.

And this certainly would eliminate women on the battlefield. I want to give you a quote from a news article discussing diversity in the Army, also reported by Stars and Stripes: “Recently, the Army announced that it intends to lower the standards of the Army Combat Fitness Test because biological differences between men and women were resulting in an appalling failure rate among women.”

The Army is planning to lower the standard for the Army Combat Fitness Test because biological differences between men and women are causing an appalling failure on the part of women. In order to get women in, the standard is being lowered. As reported in Stars and Stripes, this change came from demands by Democrats such as Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Democrat of New York, and Richard Blumenthal, Democrat of Connecticut, that the Army cease implementation of changes to the gender-neutral Army combat

fitness training until the test could be evaluated for its fairness to women completing it successfully.

The same article stated: “An 80-pound ruck, that is, a rucksack, does not discriminate against anyone. No matter your race or sex, it still weighs 80 pounds and you have to carry it a long distance. The military is a selective service; it picks and chooses the best people for the jobs it needs to be done by using batteries of aptitude tests, competitive instruction, medical standards, physical standards, and even moral standards. The military is not an equal opportunity employer by any means.”

Human beings have made war on each other for a very long time, and the lessons of those thousands of years of warfare have distilled the important qualities of the combat soldier down to just a few things as predictors of success, such as the ability to run, lift, jump, dodge, and crawl. From the modern Army infantry soldier to the Roman legionnaire of 2,000 years ago, these are the physical abilities that count the most on a field of battle. Gender equality is not one of them.”

And that is true. He is talking about men able to do this. We are talking about warfare—men of ability, valiant men.

Trusting God in Battle

In 1 Chronicles chapter 5, verse 20, we find another truth: war is a time to examine oneself and to exercise faith in God. Concerning the sons of Reuben, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, Scripture says, “And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them.” Why? “For they cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them; because they put their trust in him.”

There is an old adage that there are no atheists in foxholes. In a time of war, I not only want help; I want divine help. I want God’s hand to be upon me. In the time of battle, it is specifically time to call upon the Lord. Years ago, I watched the movie Cromwell. As Cromwell was about to battle the king’s men, he rode back and forth on his horse, prayed, and said, “Lord, I shall be busy about many

things today. And if I forget thee, please do not thou forget me." Certainly, that is true. We want divine help.

David said in Psalm 140:7, "O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." We want divine protection. Proverbs 21:31 says, "The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD." It does not matter what weaponry or machinery you have, or how many men you have. If God does not protect you, you are not protected. It is just that simple. The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord.

Psalm 27 gives us David's confidence: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host"—that is, an entire army—"should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple."

"For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD."

In Numbers chapter 31, God ordered a war against the Midianites. The Midianites had seduced the children of Israel into fornication and idolatry. The Bible says in 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."

It is interesting that in verse 2 God told Moses to avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites, but in verse 3 Moses told the Israelites to avenge the LORD against the Midianites. You can read this chapter and find out what was accomplished in that great war.

But notice verse 49. After the war was over, everything had been divided—the booty and the spoil—the commanders brought a special offering to the Lord. They said unto Moses, "Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are under our charge, and there lacketh not one man of us." Not one Israelite was lost in that war. Not one.

That is why we need the Lord. I would much rather have the Lord on my side than might and multitude. I would much rather have truth, honesty, holiness, and justice on my side than the arm of the flesh.

When God fights, there is always victory. When God fights, we are the conquerors. When God fights, we win. That is why the Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

War is not only a time of trusting; war is also a time of testing. Victory can be turned into defeat through pride and disobedience. God had given them a great victory.

War as a Time of Testing

But look at what happened in verses 25 and 26: "And they"—the sons of Reuben, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, to whom God had given this great victory—"transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them. And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day."

When God sovereignly delivered His people, instead of praising Him, honoring Him, giving thanks unto Him, being obedient to Him, and worshiping Him, they turned to the gods of the defeated people. Why would you turn and change from a god of victory to a god of defeat?

When you read through the Bible, you will find many times that God destroys a people because of their pride, arrogance, and

self-will. God used the Assyrians against the ten northern tribes, including the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. When God was going to send them against these people in Isaiah chapter 10, verses 5 through 7, He said, “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger.” God was calling the Assyrians the rod of His anger. “And the staff in their hand is mine indignation.”

"I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 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."

God said, “I’m sending the Assyrians. The rod in their hand is the rod of my wrath. The staff in their hand is the staff of my indignation. I’m giving him a charge. I want him to take out this wicked, disobedient, dishonorable people.” But then He said, “Howbeit he”—the Assyrian—“meaneth not so in his heart.” In other words, the Assyrian did not attack Israel thinking, “You have sinned against God; we are going to wipe you out because God has sent us, and we are doing this for God’s honor and glory.” No, they did not do that. They wanted to rob, rape, pillage, kill, steal, and murder. That was all that was in their hearts. God did use them. Do you know what happened to the Assyrians after God used them? He judged them. He destroyed them.

Why? Let me give you the answer. Isaiah 10:12–16 says, “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. 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, and 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.”

Then 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.

What did the king of Assyria say? It is my victory, my wisdom, and my might. I did this. God said, really? Shall the axe boast itself against him who heweth therewith? No. God said, you did not do it. I did it. You are stealing my honor and my glory. And God judged them.

War is a time of testing. Victory will often lead to defeat unless we humbly acknowledge God's grace, mercy, and goodness, and unless we are obedient to Him. 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 all the stories and all the miracles. "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."

"Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow"—that is, my AR or my shotgun or my .30-06—"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 for ever."

In verses 1 through 3, he is talking about the mighty works of God performed in the days of battle, and how God destroyed and defeated the enemies of Israel. Then he says again in verse 4, "Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob." Literally, here is what he says: Do it again, O Lord, do it again. You gave victory in time past; give victory now.

Applications and Conclusion

The first application is as strange as it may seem: It is possible for a war to be a godly war. War is not evil in and of itself. When one has a just cause or a defensive cause and fights according to the rules and principles laid down in the Word of God, it is a godly war. It is godly fighting.

The second is this: If the war is godly, then we must be fighting based upon biblical principles. If we are fighting based upon biblical principles, we should immediately seek divine help. They cried unto the Lord in the time of battle, and He was entreated for them. Why? Because they trusted in Him. So if we have a godly war, a godly cause, and are godly people, we should instantly beseech Him for His divine help and mercy. God will always help in a godly cause; He is not going to help in an unholy and ungodly cause.

The third is this: In our text, God allowed His people to win, to experience victory and defeat their enemies, because they cried unto Him. It is always safe to trust in the Lord. We need to trust in the Lord in times of danger, but we must trust in Him when there are no times of danger as well. If we trust in Him daily, when we do get into danger it should be much easier to trust Him, because we are accustomed to trusting Him and crying unto Him.

And the last one is this: We must learn to fight and defend ourselves, and to do so in a biblical, godly manner.

Now, let me point something out. When I said learn to fight and learn to defend ourselves, obviously we are not going to be like some twenty-year-old. There is no way in the world I can be as flexible as some sixteen-, eighteen-, or twenty-year-old. It is impossible. There are some things I cannot do, but there are some things I can do. I can learn basic principles, basic skills, and I can learn to shoot.

If you have not heard, or if you have forgotten, the two messages I preached years ago on the biblical doctrine of self-defense, I encourage you to listen to them. It is godly, right, and holy to defend our lives, our families, our neighbors, our community, our state, and our nation. There are godly wars. I do not want war, but if I am involved in a war, I want it to be a godly war, not an ungodly one. If

it is a godly war, it will be fought according to godly and biblical principles.

So what does the Scripture say? “For there fell down many slain, for the war was of God.” We need to prepare our hearts, minds, and bodies.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You today. We thank You for Your Word and truth. We ask, Lord, that You would build us up in the most holy faith. Give us a holy, godly fighting mentality, that we might fight mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and, whenever necessary, even physically, that Your name might be honored and glorified in all that we say and do. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 21

An Astounding Fact And Realization

January 17, 2022

Introduction: The Shock of Realization

Job 16:11 says, “God hath delivered me to the ungodly and turned me over unto the hands of the wicked.” Look at it: “God has delivered me to the ungodly and turned me over into the hands of the wicked.”

Facts have a way of distorting and correcting our fantasy views. Realization sometimes hits home harder than a baseball bat. Do you remember how stunned you were when you realized one time, or perhaps the first time in your life, that you had been conned, lied to, deceived, and defrauded, and even stolen from? In fact, the first thing that would go through your mind was, “How could this be happening? How could this be happening to me? How could someone do such a thing? And how could someone do such a thing even to me?”

God's Absolute Sovereignty in Job

All of a sudden, you realize that you cannot correct it and you cannot change it. It has happened, and there you are, while your frazzled brain is trying to figure everything out, though there is really nothing left to figure out.

When you look through the book of Job and read the book of Job, it brings you to a sudden realization of certain facts. In the book of Job, we discover that God is absolutely, totally, and unequivocally sovereign. We discover that God has the absolute right to test us, try us, and afflict us. We discover the fact that God, as the Creator, has the absolute right to do with us as He wills.

He is the potter, and we are the clay. Jeremiah 18 gives us a picture of this exact truth. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, “Arise, and go down to the potter’s house. And there I will cause thee to hear my words.”

“Then I went down to the potter’s house, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter.” Now watch: “So he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter, saith the Lord? Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.”

The truth of the matter is that God may do with us however He wills. He is the potter, and we are the clay, and He can make us according to His will. Oftentimes, God deals with us so that we may see the depths of our heart and the depths of our depravity. He will expose our wrong thinking and our wrong ways. We discover also in the book of Job one answer to an age-old question: Why do the righteous suffer?

Job's Unparalleled Suffering and Righteous Response

The book of Job opens with a scene of suffering. I would say that this suffering is basically unparalleled. If you read Job 1:3, you will find that in one day Job lost 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 she-asses. Not counting that great economic loss, on the same day he lost ten children—seven sons and three daughters.

Moreover, he also lost a number of his faithful servants. Job must have been very shocked. Someone may ask, “How could such a catastrophe happen to such a godly man?” Job was indeed a godly man. He offered sacrifices for his children daily. Job 1:5 says, “Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts: thus did Job continually.” Day by day, he offered sacrifices for his children, just in case there was a secret sin.

Job was no sluggard or slacker. He was absolutely faithful, and he did this daily. Job was not looking for trouble, expecting trouble, or desiring trouble. Yet trouble came in a very unusual way.

If something like what happened to Job happened to the ordinary, professing Christian today, that Christian would absolutely fall apart and probably end up cursing God, as Job’s wife tried to get him to curse God and die. But in Job 1, beginning with verse 20, we see Job’s reaction after he had lost all his possessions, his children, and many of his servants: “Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither.”

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." That is an astounding statement. In light of everything that happened to him, he did not sin, and he did not charge God foolishly.

Today we know what Job did not know: there was a controversy and a challenge to God by Satan. God knew that Satan had considered Job and desired him, just as He desired Peter. In fact, our Lord said to Peter, "Peter, Peter, Satan hath desired thee that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." "When thou art restored, then you deal with your brethren, you witness to them, you help your brethren." But notice that He said, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat."

The Heavenly Controversy and Satan's Challenges

In Job 1:9, this is what happened: "Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job fear God for naught?" This was the first

challenge. Satan said, "Hast thou not made a hedge about him and about his house, and all that he hath on every side, and thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." In verse 12, "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord."

This was when he lost his children, his cattle, and everything. Yet Job did not sin or charge God foolishly. Satan then came back. Since this first attack did not succeed, there was a second attack. Job 2:4 says, "And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."

“But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand, but save his life.” So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal, and he sat down among the ashes.

God had now allowed Job to be attacked, but his life was to be spared. Job was covered with boils, sores, and putrefying sores. He sat among the ashes and took a potsherd to scrape himself, not only from the scabs and probably the itch, but also probably from worms that were basically eating him alive. Job was in a very miserable state.

Job's Perspective: God as the Source of His Affliction

Added to his misery was what he received from his wife, his servants, and his friends. You and I know what was happening because we have the completed Word of God, but Job did not know. All Job knew was that God was using him for target practice. In Job 16:11, he says, “God hath delivered me to the ungodly and turned me over into the hands of the wicked.”

In Job 19:6–8, he says, “Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net. Behold, I cry out of wrong, but

I am not heard. I cry aloud, but there is no judgment. He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths."

Job is saying, "I have done nothing that would be considered rebellious and wicked, but yet God has literally cast me down." In light of Job's suffering, four friends visit him. The youngest, Elihu, does not speak until Job 32. With friends like these, who needs enemies? Yet when you read through Job, you should be astonished not only at the words but at the wisdom of Job's three friends. They said an awful lot of true and right things to Job. The only problem was that what they said did not apply to Job. That does not mean everything they said was wicked and wrong.

The Three Friends and Their Faulty Perspectives

They were coming from different perspectives. Each had his own perspective, and therefore they were trying to tell Job that he was indeed a sinner, that he had sinned against God, that his children had sinned against God, and that God was giving Job his just desserts. There was a reason for this position, a reason why they were trying to prove absolutely that Job was a wicked, vile sinner.

You cannot understand the book of Job unless you understand the different perspectives from which his three friends spoke. If you look around Christianity today, or the average church today, you will see many Christians speaking from the same perspectives as these three friends.

Everyone has a perspective; everyone has a worldview. It may not be a Christian worldview or a Christian perspective, but everyone speaks from his own particular perspective. So did Job's three friends.

The first was Eliphaz the Temanite. In Job 22, beginning with verse 5, Eliphaz sums up what he and his friends believed concerning Job: "Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite? For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for naught, and stripped the naked of their clothing. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry. But as for the mighty man, he had the earth, and the

honorable man dwelt in it. Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken."

In other words, they were declaring, "Job, you're a wicked, vile man. Your wickedness is great. Your iniquities are infinite. You've defrauded the widow. You've broken the arm of the hungry. You've withheld food from him that was hungry and water from him that was thirsty." They had concluded that Job was an awful, wicked, vile sinner.

We must look at these three friends and what they said from their own particular perspectives. Eliphaz the Temanite was the first to speak, and he spoke from the perspective of experience.

Think about this truth for a moment. Today, the average Christian speaks from this perspective: experience. You will hear individuals say, “I know what happened to me. I know what I’ve been through. I’ve been through this and I survived it, and this is what I learned. Let me tell you what happened to me.” So Eliphaz is always speaking from experience.

Now look in Job chapter 4. Let me show you this. Job chapter 4; let’s begin reading with verse 7. Eliphaz says, “Remember, I pray thee, whoever perished being innocent, or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, this is what I have observed, this is my experience, they that plow iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same.”

Now I’m going to come back and quote verse 7 a little bit later before we close. But look at that. Remember, he said, “I pray thee, whoever perished being innocent.” In other words, “Job, you cannot possibly be innocent. And where were the righteous cut off? You can’t possibly be righteous because this is my experience: God always takes care of the wicked.” Now skip down to verse 12. Watch it. Experience.

Eliphaz says, “Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof. The image was before mine eyes.” There

was silence, and he heard a voice saying, “Shall a mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?”

This is what Eliphaz is doing: “This has been my experience, and this is what happened to me. And Job, since I’ve been through this experience, I’m telling you, you are a wicked, vile sinner. That’s all there is to it.” You have heard the age-old adage, “Experience is the best teacher.” That certainly may be true in one sense, but for someone to take his experience, apply it to someone else, and demand that they have exactly the same experience is not our standard. Our standard is the Word of God. Our standard is not your experience, my experience, or anyone’s experience. The Word of God is our sole ground and sole foundation for faith and practice.

In some professing Christian circles, if you do not have a certain experience, you are counted as a lost man, or at least a second-rate Christian, because you have not gone through that particular experience. Experience is often elevated above the Word of God, which is fatal to truth.

Anytime you read in Job of Eliphaz speaking, he is always speaking from the perspective of experience. The second friend was Bildad the Shuhite. Unlike Eliphaz, Bildad speaks from the perspective of tradition. Tradition is often the mother of error and heresy. The mentality that something must be true because it is old or has stood for ages is contrary to Scripture. This was the sin and error of the Pharisees. They wanted to follow their tradition rather than the Word of God. In Mark 7 and Matthew 15, our Lord said, “With your tradition you make void the Word of God.” Basically, they were placing their tradition above the Word of God.

It is the same thing today with many Christians. They believe what they believe because their parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents believed it. I have had people tell me, "Well, I am a Baptist because my parents were Baptist and my grandparents were Baptist." Really? In other words, you are not a Baptist by conviction. You have not studied the Scripture and found that you believe Baptists are closer to the Word of God and the principles of God. You are a Baptist because of tradition. The same thing is true of Presbyterianism and any other group. Most of the time, we are what we are, not because of our own personal study and conviction, but

because that is how we were raised and taught. Tradition is often indeed the mother of heresy and error.

There is nothing wrong with honoring our ancestors or tradition, as long as that tradition is scriptural and biblical. But we cannot take something merely because it is old, or because it has always been done that way, and elevate it above the Word of God. We have to refuse such traditions.

I read a number of years ago what seemed to me a very funny story about a little girl. She watched her mother cook a roast. Her mother cut off the end of the roast, laid it in the pan, and put the pan in the oven. The little girl asked, "Why did you do that?" Her mother said, "I really do not know. I saw my mother do it, so I started doing it. Let us ask Granny." Granny answered, "I really do not know. I saw my mother do it. Let us ask Great-Granny; she is still alive." When they asked Great-Granny, she said, "That is simple. My pan was too small for the whole roast." Thus, a tradition continued because of a small pan. That is the way it happens.

People will often honor tradition above the Word of God. Look in Job chapter 8, beginning with verse 2. Bildad the Shuhite asks Job, "How long wilt thou speak these things? And how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind? Doth God pervert judgment? Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?" Then he says, "If thy children have sinned against him, and he hath cast them away for their transgression," asserting that even Job's children were sinners, "if thou wouldst seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty. If thou wert pure and upright, surely now He would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase."

"For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to search of their fathers. For ye are all but of yesterday, and know nothing because our days upon earth are as a shadow. Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?" In other words, look to tradition. Tradition is often contrary to fact and reality, as well as contrary to Scripture. Whenever you hear people say, "But we've always done it like this," or "Our ancestors have done

it like this," or "It's been handed down for generations," that is nothing more than tradition.

There is nothing wrong with tradition as long as it is biblical and scriptural. But if tradition is unbiblical and unscriptural, it is worthless, unless you simply want to do it out of tradition.

You have Eliphaz speaking from experience, Bildad speaking from tradition, and now the third friend is Zophar the Naamathite. He is a dogmatist—someone who is absolutely sure that he is right. He will force everything down your throat. Zophar had truth; he thought he was right, and he thought you should not and could not disagree with him. He would not allow disagreement because he was right. He knows everything, and he is absolutely right.

Look in Job 11, beginning with verse 1: "Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, Should not the multitude of words be answered?" I am going to read this with an attitude, because I can hear Zophar saying it: "Should not the multitude of words be answered?"

Zophar asks, “And should a man full of talk be justified? Should thy lies make men hold their peace? And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?” He says that Job claims his doctrine is pure and that he is clean in God's eyes, but wishes that God would speak, open His lips, and show Job the secrets of wisdom. “Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth. Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?”

“It is high as the heaven. What canst thou do? Deeper than hell. What canst thou know?” In other words, Zophar is saying, “Man, you're a sinner. You're not getting half of what you deserve. You're wicked, vile, and ungodly.” He continues, “For he knoweth vain men. He seeth wickedness also, will he not then consider it? For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt.” If Job will prepare his heart, stretch out his hands toward God, put his iniquity far away, and let not wickedness dwell in his tabernacles, then he will lift up his face without spot, be steadfast, and not fear. Zophar's message is simply, “You need to put your iniquity away. You're a sinner. That's all there is to it. You are wicked. You are wrong.”

Have you ever known men like Zophar? I have, and many of them are pastors and teachers. You cannot disagree with them; they are absolutely right in their own minds. They believe they have all light and all understanding, and it is impossible to disagree with them and remain friends. If you do not agree with them, they are highly insulted and offended. If you do not quickly submit to them and their way of thinking, they will cut you off and kick you out.

Elihu's Correction and God's Condemnation of the Friends

Men like that have no understanding of the doctrine of illumination. They also have no understanding of the doctrine of God's sovereignty. God does not teach every man exactly alike, nor reveal the same truth to all men at the same time. Look at the truth Martin Luther came up with, the truth Calvin came up with, and the truth Zwingli came up with. Those truths had always been there. We have had the Bible the whole time, yet over the years God has allowed men to see and understand things. Here is the point: Eliphaz came from experience, Bildad from tradition, and Zophar is a dogmatist.

Each one, from his own perspective, ended up condemning Job and telling him that he was a vile, wicked sinner. Job gave a wonderful response to these three friends in Job 12. In fact, I have used it before in trying to answer some critics. Job said, “No doubt, but ye are the people and wisdom shall die with you.” You are the ones who have understanding; when you are dead and gone, that is it. There will be no more wisdom or understanding.

But what they were doing was not simply attacking Job; they were attacking his wisdom and understanding. Job said, “But I have understanding as well as you. I’m not inferior to you. And who knoweth not such things as these? I am as one mocked of his neighbor, who calleth upon God, and he answereth them: the just upright man is laughed to scorn.” He was saying, “You are just mocking me. You are making fun of me. I am not inferior to you.” Yet, undoubtedly, they were the people, and wisdom was going to die with them.

Do you realize that the scribes and Pharisees in the New Testament took the position of Zophar? They were the dogmatists.

In John 7:49 they said, “But this people that knoweth not the law is cursed.” They assumed that they knew the law and had understanding, which they did not. They were the wicked, the unbiblical and unscriptural ones. They not only followed tradition; they were dogmatists as well.

Unhappily, multitudes of Christians today speak from one of these three perspectives. They are either experience-oriented, tradition-oriented, or plain-out dogmatists.

Elihu was the youngest of the four friends. He did not speak until Job 32, and when he did, he began to set the record straight, not only for Job but also for the three older friends. “So these three men ceased to answer Job because he was righteous in his own eyes.”

In other words, Elihu was protecting himself from their charges. “Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel, the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram. Against Job was his wrath kindled because he justified himself rather than God.” Which he did, and God straightens him out. “Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled,” because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. Each one condemned him. There is a reason for that, which I am going to point out before I close, but notice that each one had condemned Job.

“Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled.” Elihu, the son of Barachel, the Buzite, answered, “I am young, and you are very old. Wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitudes of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment. Therefore I said, Hearken unto me, and I will show thee mine opinion.”

So Elihu immediately condemns the perspectives of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. He shows us that experience, tradition, and dogmatism are not the best teachers.

Even God condemned these three men. In Job 42:7, we read: “And it was so that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job,

the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends. For you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that you have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them. The Lord also accepted Job, and the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

"Also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." With this background, let me say it another way. Go back to Job 16:11: "God hath delivered me to the ungodly and turned me over into the hands of the wicked."

Now go back to Job 32. Elihu recognizes that it was God who had thrust Job down. Job said, "God has delivered me. God had fenced me in." Elihu says, "Behold, I waited for your words, I gave ear to your reasons, whilst you searched out what to say. Yea, I attended unto you, and behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words, lest you should say, We have found out wisdom." Then he says, "God thrusteth him down, not man."

Why the Friends Needed Job to Be Guilty

Elihu recognized that whatever was happening to Job was because of God. In Job 32, he pointed out that Job's three friends had not found an answer, but had condemned Job. Each one of them said that Job was a filthy, rotten, dirty sinner. He was a wicked, vile man. Why did Job's three friends try to refute Job's statement, "God has delivered me over into the ungodly and turned me over in the hands of the wicked"? Why did they refute his declaration, "God has fenced me in and hedged me up. God is doing this to me"?

Why were they so persistent in claiming that Job was wicked, vile, and wrong? Why were they so intent on telling him that he was receiving less than he deserved and ought to be thankful that matters were not worse than they really were? Eliphaz could make that claim from experience, because that was what he did. Bildad could make

the same claim from tradition. Zophar, the dogmatist, simply declared, "You're wicked. You're vile. You're wrong. That's all there is to it."

Eliphaz said in Job 4:7, "Remember, I pray you, whoever perished being innocent and where were the righteous cut off?" That question was designed to prove to Job that he was an exceedingly vile sinner. In other words, he was saying, "Whoever perished being innocent? Job, if you were innocent, you would not be going through this. You would not be suffering this."

They needed Job to be guilty and vile. They wanted Job to be guilty and vile. Why? Here is the answer: If God could deliver an innocent and righteous man to such suffering and deprivation, He could do the same to them. They were seeking to protect themselves against God's sovereignty. They did not want for themselves what God had given to Job, so in order to protect themselves, they had to prove that Job was a sinner.

Remember Philippians 1:29: "For unto you it is given on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." It is given; that is, it is a gift. Not only to believe on Him—faith is the gift of God—but also to suffer for His sake. Suffering is the gift of God. Just as God does not give every man the gift of faith, He does not give every man the gift of suffering. But when God gives the gift of suffering, He gives the grace to go along with it as well.

These men did not want in their lives what Job was experiencing. The book of Job brings one to a sudden realization of certain facts. We discover that God is absolutely, totally, unequivocally sovereign. We discover that God has the absolute right to test us, try us, and afflict us. As Creator, He has the absolute right to do with us as He wills. He is the potter, and we are the clay.

Job's Submission and the Lesson of God's Unaccountability

Job passed his test with flying colors. He learned that God had the absolute right to do as He pleased, with whom He pleased. Job had been crying for an audience with God, and God finally granted his request. In Job 40, beginning with verse 1, we find how Job handled

himself when God began speaking to him: “Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said, Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it. Then Job answered the LORD, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.”

Job had learned his lesson. He was not going to criticize God or attack Him, because whatever He does is absolutely right.

The truth of the book of Job is that God is God. He is the sovereign Almighty, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Immutable, Eternal God of the universe. He is the Creator, the Provider, and the Sustainer of all. He has the absolute right to do with us as He pleases. He is God; He is just, holy, and righteous. Whatever He does is ultimately for our good and for His glory. God does as He pleases, whenever He pleases, wherever He pleases, with whomever He pleases, and however He pleases. Because God is God, remember Psalm 115:3: “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” Do you realize that God is the only One who can do that?

You and I cannot do as we please. We have to do what we have to do. Only God can do as He pleases. What does the Bible say in Revelation 4 and verse 11? "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Why did God create the world? Because it pleased God to create the world. Why did God create you? Because it pleased God to create you. Why did God allow certain things to happen in your life? Because it pleased God to allow those things to happen.

God has the absolute right to do with each one of us as He pleases. Moreover, this is the absolute truth. Job 33 and verse 13 is what Elihu says to Job: "Why dost thou strive against him? For he giveth not account of any of his matters." God does not owe you an explanation. He does not have to give you an answer. Many times He graciously does give us answers, but He does not owe us an answer or an explanation. We are accountable to Him. He is not accountable to us. He is God. This is what Job's three friends did not want to

realize: God could just as easily do with them as what He did with Job.

The Wicked as God's Sword and the Call to Repentance

When you think about the book of Job, there should be a number of things that come to your mind. I remember a statement I heard Lester Roloff make many years ago, which I have never forgotten: "In the time of need and distress, think of how many that can come and how few that can comfort." Whether it is a sickbed, a funeral, or whatever it is, you will always have friends and neighbors coming. How many can come, but how few can really comfort.

Look at Job chapter 16, beginning with verse 1. Job said to his three friends, "Then Job answered and said, I have heard many such things. Miserable comforters are you all. Shall vain words have an end? Or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? I could also speak as you do, if your soul were in my soul's stead. I could heap up words against you and shake my head at you." Job was saying, "I could say the same thing that you are saying, if I were in your shoes and you were in my shoes."

It is easy to criticize when we are not in someone else's shoes. I have heard people say, "Boy, let me tell you right now, if that happened to me, I'd do such and such." No, you do not know what you would do. You have no earthly idea. We should learn from this, teach it, and receive teaching in true compassion toward those who are genuinely suffering. Job was genuinely suffering, and all his friends were doing was adding misery to his suffering.

"Miserable comforters are you all." We should listen carefully, because this is why I am preaching this message. Job said in Job 16:11, "God hath delivered me to the ungodly and turned me over to the hands of the wicked." God had indeed delivered Job over to Satan, as well as to the harassment of his friends. Thankfully, whenever Satan is involved, he must have God's permission to touch one of His own. At first Satan asked, "Does Job serve God for naught?" God said, "You can take everything he has, but you cannot touch his body."

When Satan came back the second time and said, “Yea, skin for skin, all that a man hath, will he give for his life?” God said, “You may touch his body, but you cannot take his life.” With every permission, there is always a limitation. Here is an untouched truth: Job understood this. He may not have understood its total and full implications, but he understood the principle when he said that “God hath delivered me to the ungodly and turned me over into the hands of the wicked.” The truth is that the wicked are oftentimes God’s sword of punishment for the righteous. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 both deal with blessings and curses. In Leviticus 26:25, God says that if Israel rebelled—and if we rebelled—the same principle applies.

SCRIPTURE READING - Leviticus 26:25; Deuteronomy 28:45-51 (KJV)

> God said, "And I will bring a sword upon you that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant. And when you are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy." But notice, God says, "It's my sword." What is his sword? Being delivered into the hand of the enemy.
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> "Moreover, all these curses shall come upon thee and shall pursue thee and overtake thee till thou be destroyed, because thou hearkenest not unto the voice of the Lord thy God to keep his commandments and his statutes, which he commanded thee. And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder and upon thy seed forever. Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things. Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee in hunger and in thirst and in nakedness and in want of all things, and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy necks until he have destroyed thee. The Lord shall also bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flyeth, a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand, a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor unto the young. And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed, which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee."

These two passages should be exceedingly clear. God said, “I’m going to bring the enemy upon you.” If that is not clear enough, look in Psalm 17, beginning with verse 8. David is praying:

“Keep me as the apple of thine eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies who compass me about. They are enclosed in their own fat, with their mouth they speak proudly. They have now compassed us in our steps, and have set their eyes bowing down to the earth. Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.”

Now watch: “Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down, deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword, from men which are thy hand.” That is, the wicked are the hand of the Lord. “O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasures, they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.” Note again verse 13: “Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down, deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword.”

Remember that God is immutable; He is unchangeable. The wicked are still His sword. It was the Assyrians that He brought against Israel, and the Babylonians that He brought against Judah and Jerusalem. He brings the wicked upon a disobedient and rebellious people. It may be time for you and me to begin paying attention to who is ruling over our land and why they are ruling over it. Is God’s sword being displayed against us? If God has unsheathed His sword, it will not be sheathed until He finishes the job.

That is what He said in the book of Isaiah: “Sword of the LORD, sword of the LORD.” His sword is designed to bring His people to their knees in repentance and faith. I believe that we are probably headed for some real suffering in the future, and in a not too distant future. If God has withdrawn His sword—and obviously it is withdrawn, because the wicked are ruling in greatness of power—

They appear unstoppable, which is not true. They only appear that way; they are stoppable. As quickly as you and I learn to repent and cry unto God, He will hear us. Everyone can quote 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble

themselves and pray and seek my face, then will I hear from heaven and heal their land, forgive their sins and heal their land." Land will not be healed without repentance. The wicked will not go down without repentance. Job said, "Now it's turned me over to the ungodly," and he was suffering greatly.

If we want to be delivered, we must demonstrate real, genuine repentance.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You today. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We thank You for an astounding fact and realization: Thou art God, and Thou mayest do whatsoever Thou hast pleased. We pray, Father, that You will turn us, and we will be turned quickly, O Lord, and we shall call upon Thy name. Grant us repentance and faith, but help us never to criticize or condemn Thee. Thou art not accountable to us; we are accountable unto Thee. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 22

Twin Sisters or Sister Sins

August 24, 2025

Introduction: Twin Sisters and Sister Sins

The reason I am preaching this message today is in the providence of God. A good friend asked me a question, and I decided to preach a message on it. So notice the title: “Twin Sisters or Sister Sins.”

Look in Numbers, chapter 25, verse 1: “And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people into the sacrifice of their gods. And the people did eat and bowed down to their gods, and Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay you every one his men that were joined unto Baal Peor. And behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”

“And when Phinehas the son of Eliezer, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand. And he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were 24,000.”

Most of you, if not all of you, are aware that Alice and I have identical twin girls. Of course, now they are grown. They normally have children, but also grandchildren of their own. Yet they still remain identical twins. A number of things are interesting about them. When one twin calls the other, they know when the phone rings that it is the other twin calling. They do not know when I am calling them, but they know when the twin is calling. They can pick up the phone and say, “Hello, Leah,” or, “Hello, Laura,” because they know it is the other twin.

When they were young, we were riding horses, and no one had said anything for a long period of time. The horses were walking, and we were riding side by side. Leah made the statement, "I really like her." Laura, on the other side of me, said, "Yes, Cheryl is a very nice girl." I looked at Laura and said, "How did you know who she was talking about?" She said, "I don't know. I just knew." She was talking about Cheryl.

I've read interesting things about twins, especially identical twins, how one might have an attack of appendicitis while the other may be 500 miles away, and yet she begins to hurt like her sister. Of course, she doesn't have appendicitis, but she still begins to hurt. There are a lot of interesting things about twins that we really don't understand. I used to joke with our twins and use a spoonerism.

A spoonerism is when you change the first letters of two words. For instance, with Lance Packing Company, you would change the first letters of the first few words to make it "Pants Lacking Company." Instead of calling our girls twin sisters, I would call them sin twisters. This is exactly what we're talking about today. I was not telling you that merely to tell you something about our twins. I was telling you that there are sins that are twins. There are sins that go together, and there are sister sins in the sense that you cannot have

one without the other. In order to understand the sister sins, or the twin sins, you have to understand the context.

The Context: Balak's Fear and Balaam's Calling (Numbers 22)

So go back in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Numbers, chapter 22. What I'm going to be sharing with you is from Numbers 22 all the way through Numbers chapter 25. Look at Numbers 22, beginning with verse 1: "And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho. And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was so afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam, the son of Beor, to Pithor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt."

"Behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me. Peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, that I may drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and whom thou cursest is cursed. And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand, and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak."

Israel had now come into the land of Moab, and Midian was there as well. They were absolutely terrified of Israel. Balak therefore sent for Balaam, who was a false prophet, that he might come and curse Israel, with the intent that he might smite them in war and drive them out of the land. Balaam was indeed a false prophet, yet the truth is that he was used of the Lord in this instance. God used him to bless Israel instead of cursing them.

Balaam is called a soothsayer in Joshua 13 and verse 22. The Bible says, "Balaam, also the son of Beor, the soothsayer." The word soothsayer happens to be the word kosem in the Hebrew, and it

means one who practices divination. This would refer not only to all false prophets, but also to the false prophets that happen to be in Israel.

This is the exact same Hebrew word used when King Saul went to the witch of Endor and asked her to divine up Samuel. In 1 Samuel chapter 28 and verse 8, "And Saul disguised himself and put on other raiment and went and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night and he said, I pray thee divine unto me by the familiar spirit and bring me him up whom I shall name unto thee." He said, "divine unto me." This woman had a familiar spirit, which would be demonic. Notice that the word divine and the word soothsayer are basically the same Hebrew word.

Here is a question that should automatically appear in your mind: How could God use a false prophet? The answer is really rather simple, because God is quite able to use a crooked stick to draw a straight line. God is just as sovereign over wicked and ungodly men as He is over godly and righteous men as well. You must remember Proverbs 21 and verse 1, where the Bible says this: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as rivers of water."

“He turneth it whithersoever he will.” So God, then, is absolutely, totally sovereign.

God will use wicked men, but He does not listen to them. The Bible tells you in Joshua 24 and verse 10, “But I would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore he blessed you still, so I delivered you out of his hand.” God used him, but God certainly refused to listen to him.

There are four truths that I must share with you in order to give you the message that I want to give you. These four truths are basically between Numbers 22 and Numbers 25. The first one is this: The unsaved, especially worldly, materialistic men, believe that everything may be bought by money and everything may be accomplished with money. That is how we get the old saying, “Every man has his price.” You may see this attitude expressed in governments and especially in our government. Their attitude is this: If there is a program, it does not matter if it is unbiblical or unconstitutional, such as the Department of Public Education; if it is not working, what we need to do is throw more money into it. Put

more money into it; therefore, it is going to work. No, not necessarily so. But that is exactly what worldly, materialistic men believe.

Truth 1: Worldly Men Believe Money Can Buy Anything

Look in verse 7 of Numbers 22 again: "And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand. And they came unto Balaam and spake unto him the words of Balak." Why did they come with the rewards of divination? Because Israel was in their land. They wanted Balaam to curse them so that they might defeat them in battle. It is just that simple. They came, then, with money in their hand.

Now note what happened. In Numbers 22, beginning with verse 8 and reading through verse 12, Balaam, when he was offered all this money, inquired of the Lord. He said in verse 8, "And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me. And the princes of Moab abode with Balaam. And God came unto Balaam and said, What men are these with thee? And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which cover the face of the earth. Come now, curse me them, for peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out. And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse this people, for they are blessed."

It could not be stated any more plainly, concisely, or pointedly. God said to Balaam, "You're not to go with these people, and you're not to curse Israel because they are blessed." In reality, this should have ended the issue and the situation. However, wicked men believe that if you throw more money at a matter or give a little more honor, you will get exactly what you want.

So, in verse 13, Balaam said to the princes of Balak, "Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you." The princes of Moab returned to Balak and said, "Balaam refuseth to come with us." Then Balak sent princes more and more honorable than they. They came to Balaam and said, "Thus saith Balak the king of the sons of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: For I will promote thee unto very great honour.

And I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me. Come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people." Balak was saying, "You come and do what I am asking, and you name your price. I will give it to you."

Balaam already knew that God had said, "Don't go with them," and, "Do not curse this people." Yet more honorable princes came. In verse 18, Balaam said, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more." Why do you need more, Balaam?

God had already told Balaam what to do: "And God came unto Balaam at night and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them. But yet the word which I shall say unto thee thou shalt do." Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

Notice that God had said, "If the men call thee," but the men did not call him. Balaam simply rose up and went with them. Verse 21 says, "And Balaam rose up in the morning and sat on his ass and went with the princes of Moab." Most worldly men believe everything can be settled with money. Here is a second truth: most men will do anything for money—even fly in the face of God, violate His law, and break His commandments.

Truth 2: Men Will Do Anything for Money, Even Defy God

You have to ask yourself this question: How is it that Balaam, who knew the express commands of God, arose and went with the princes anyhow? The answer is not just because he was a false prophet. He was a false prophet. But here is the answer: He valued money and the praise and honor of man more than he valued the one true and the living God.

Balaam is mentioned in the New Testament several times. In 2 Peter 2:15, we read, "Which have forsaken the right way and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." He loved the wages of unrighteousness. Then, in the book of Jude, verse 11: "Woe unto

them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah."

We often speak of men who are willing to sell their soul for money, and Balaam was certainly one of those individuals. He was willing to do that, and those men today who are willing to sell God out for money are said to be following the way of Balaam by loving the wages of unrighteousness. Jude says they are the ones who run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward.

Now I want to show you the absolute blindness and stupidity of such men. I am using the word stupidity purposefully. Look at Numbers chapter 22, beginning with verse 22, and read through verse 33. I am going to point something out that I hope will be very helpful to you. Look in verse 22: "And God's anger was kindled because he went."

The angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against Balaam. He was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. The ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his sword drawn in his hand. She turned aside out of the way and went into the field, and Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way.

The angel of the Lord then stood in a path by the vineyards, a wall being on this side and a wall on the other side. When the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself into the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall, and he smote her again. The angel of the Lord went further and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam. Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

The Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me, I would there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill thee. The ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, No.

I am going to be honest with you. I smile every time I read this because I can just imagine this conversation. Can you imagine a man talking to his ass? The ass had never spoken before in his entire life, and yet now he was carrying on the conversation. You are talking about someone actually dumb and not recognizing something. But watch, as you would in verse 31: "Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand, and he bowed down his head, and he fell flat on his face. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times?"

“Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me. And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times. Unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.”

This is absolutely astounding. The ass saw the angel of the Lord with the sword drawn in his hand and understood that there was danger. Balaam, the prophet and diviner, did not see the angel of the Lord. He was totally blind and totally stupid to this.

God's Sovereignty and the Certainty of Judgment

Herein is revealed what we would call the blindness of man by nature. Also revealed is the righteous and just anger and wrath of God against such men who love the wages of unrighteousness.

Now turn to Deuteronomy, chapter 32, and look at verses 34 and 35. Look at the question God asked: “Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?” What is laid up in store with God? What is sealed among His treasures? Verse 35 answers, “To me belongeth vengeance and recompense. Their foot shall slide in due time, for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.”

It is only a matter of time until the men of this world who sell themselves for the love of money and the honor of men meet the righteous judgment of God. Look at the billionaires today who are so insane in the sense that they are trying to destroy people everywhere and control the world. Yet God says it is only a matter of time: “Their foot shall slide in due time.”

If you go back to Numbers 22, Balaam acknowledges his fault, but he does not repent. Verse 34 says, “And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned, for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me.”

"Now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again." I will go back. "And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men, but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak." You know the rest of the story. Balak took Balaam to three distinct positions from which to see Israel. Each time, Balaam had Balak build an altar, and sacrifices were offered upon that altar. Each time Balaam, instead of cursing Israel, ended up blessing Israel.

Balak was very upset. In one of the prophecies Balaam gave, he said, "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it."

Pay attention to this truth: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob. Neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." God will not curse where there is no wickedness, perverseness, or iniquity. God curses sin. God has ordained that blessings always follow obedience and curses always follow disobedience. Now consider Numbers 23:23.

Here is another truth we need to understand: "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob. Neither is there any divination against Israel. According to this time, it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" There is no enchantment against Jacob, and there is no divination against Israel. We do not have to be fearful of curses, hexes, or the rantings and ravings of wicked individuals. You cannot put a hex upon that which God has blessed. You cannot curse that which God has blessed. I never will forget that there was a teacher I had in eleventh grade.

She was a very attractive, tall, stately woman. Every teenage boy in the school was in love with her, but she was married. I never will forget the time that I lost all respect for her. I was not even a

Christian at the time, but I had a little sense because my father and mother had taught me quite well. Her husband happened to be a revenue agent who fought against the moonshiners, going out to break up stills and that kind of thing.

He was in training at a school, and she was supposed to go up and meet with him that weekend. When Monday came and we were back in school, she told us she had not gone. I asked her, "Why did you not go to meet your husband?" She answered, "On the way out of town, I stopped at a fortune teller, and a fortune teller told me that if I went, it would end up in tragedy. So I did not go."

I thought, I thought you were an educated woman. I thought you had better sense than that. But that is the way people are. They will trust anything and fear anything other than God and other than His Word. May I remind you of Romans chapter 8, verses 31 and 32? The Apostle Paul said, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?"

So there is no enchantment and no divination that can be used against the people of God when they are obedient unto God, when they serve Him and love Him. Nothing is going to work like that. You cannot curse those whom God has blessed.

Truth 3: Balaam's Counsel to Ensnare Israel

Now, here is the third truth, and it is vitally important. Remember that Balak wanted to war against Israel. In Numbers chapter 22, verse 6, he said, "Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." When Balaam ended up blessing Israel instead of cursing Israel, both Balaam and Balak knew that Israel could not be defeated in battle.

We have a problem, a situation that now exists between Balaam and Balak. Balak knows that he cannot defeat Israel or drive them out of his land. Balaam knows that he is not going to receive the

rewards of his divination, because he has not done what Balak wanted. Balak needed a blessing instead of a cursing.

Look in Numbers chapter 24, beginning with verse 10: “And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together. And Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place. I thought to promote thee unto great honor, but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honor. And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord to do either good or bad of mine own mind. But what the Lord saith will I speak.”

Here is the dilemma: Balak wants Israel cursed, and Balaam wants his rewards of divination. It appears that neither one of them is going to get what he wants. Balaam, in one sense of the word, understood the situation, and so he counseled Balak. In Numbers 24:14, Balaam says, “And now, therefore, behold, I go unto my people. Come, therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.”

The word advertise is the Hebrew word ya'atz, meaning to advise, to consult, to give counsel, to deliberate, and to devise a plan. In order to receive the rewards of divination, Balaam devised a plan and counseled Balak concerning what to do in order to get Israel cursed. How do we know that from the word advertise?

The answer is because there are other passages that tell us so. Numbers 31:16 spells it out very plainly: "Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord." Note this carefully: "Behold, these caused the children of Israel through the counsel of Balaam."

Micah 6:5 says, "O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that you may know the righteousness of the Lord." God said, remember what Balak consulted and what

Balaam answered him. Balak asked, and Balaam answered. The passage identifies both men and their parts in what happened.

Revelation 2:14 says, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." Notice what God said: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." What was the doctrine of Balaam?

He taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel to get them to eat the sacrifice and the idols and to commit fornication. The word stumbling block is the Greek word skandalon. It is where we get our English word scandal. A skandalon was the trip stick in a snare. When the animal tripped that stick, the animal was ensnared or captured. God was saying that what Balaam did was counsel Balak on how to ensnare the children of Israel.

Balaam wanted his rewards, and Balak wanted Israel cursed. Balaam therefore came up with a plan and counseled Balak how to accomplish it. What was the plan? It was very simple: Be neighborly. Invite Israel to your feasts. Seduce them to fornication and idolatry, and God will judge them Himself.

The Twin Sins: Fornication and Idolatry

In Numbers 23:21, look at what Balaam said in one of his prophecies: “He,” that is, God, “hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him and the shout of a king is among them.” God would not curse Israel because He had not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither had He seen perverseness in Israel.

Balaam then advised Balak to be kind and neighborly: invite the Israelites to the feast and their sacrifices, let the women entice them to fornication, and get them to worship Baal Peor. When this happened, God Himself would curse Israel. “You’ll have what you want. I’ll have what I want.”

Matthew Poole wrote, “The Moabites, being now neighbors to the Israelites, and finding themselves unable to effect their design

against Israel by war and witchcraft, they now fell another way to work by contracting familiarity with them and perceiving their evil and lustful inclinations that they," in other words, their daughters, "invited them to their feast." Some pretty young women were inviting the Israelite men to their feast: a free meal, with lots of food.

John Trapp, the Puritan, said, "Gluttony is the gallery that lechery walketh through." A full stomach, therefore, leads to lechery. The twin sisters, or sisters of sin, in Numbers 25 are fornication and idolatry. You cannot have one without the other. They go hand in hand, and they are always together.

Numbers 25:1 says, "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab." The word whoredom refers not only to physical fornication and adultery, but also to spiritual adultery and fornication. It may surprise you that the term adultery in the Bible, while at times referring to physical acts, most of the time refers to spiritual acts. The same is true of the word whoredom.

John Calvin writes, "From this narrative we learn assuredly that the people were no more able to bear prosperity than adversity." Most people fail in prosperity. In adversity we usually stay strong because we are crying out to God for help; we are in pain or in need, and we cry to Him. But when we enter prosperity, we often forget God. That is what Deuteronomy 8 is all about: do not forget God when He blesses you.

Heretofore, either worn out by fatigue or rendered impatient by abstinence and famine, they often rebelled against God. When they had entered a habitable land and were resting in the midst of fruitful fields, they were incited by their more comfortable dwelling places and more pleasant mode of life to lasciviousness and the indulgence of filthy lust. Moses relates how, when they had given way to their lust, they fell at the same time into whoredom and idolatry. We shall presently see that this arose from the counsel of Balaam.

The Moabites prostituted their women to the Israelites in order to entice them by their blandishments to unholy worship. Balaam had learned by experience that God's favor was an invincible safeguard to protect the people from all injury. He therefore invented a plan

whereby they might destroy themselves by not only depriving themselves of God's protection, but also provoking His wrath against them. By this plan, Balaam stirred up the fire and impelled those poor wretches, inflamed by blind lechery, to another crime, by which they might arouse against themselves the enmity of God.

Consequently, Paul, referring to this history, informs us that the punishment inflicted upon them was for fornication. For although it was God's design to avenge the violation of His worship, still it is fitting to examine into the origin and source of the evil. Just as if a drunken man has killed a person, the murder will be imputed to his drunkenness. So Paul, seeing the Israelites impelled by fornication to idolatry, sets before us the punishment as a warning to deter us from fornication, which was the primary cause of their chastisement and the means of their corruption.

One sin leads to the other. Since the fall from one sin to another is so easy, let us learn to be more watchful, lest Satan entangle us in his snares. Let us also observe that he creeps upon us by degrees in order to entrap us. The Moabitish damsels did not straightway solicit the Israelites to worship their idols, but first invited them to their banquets and thus tempted them to idolatry. If mention had been made at first of idol worship, perhaps they might have shuddered at the atrocity of the crime; but they allowed themselves to be beguiled by degrees.

To be present at a feast celebrated in honor of false gods was a kind of indirect renunciation of the true God. When they had been attracted thus far, they threw aside all shame and abandoned themselves to that extreme act whereby they transferred the honor due only to the one true and living God to false and imaginary deities.

Fornication and idolatry are twin sins, sister sins. They go hand in hand; you cannot have one without the other. You say, “Now, wait a minute, Brother Weaver. I know individuals who have committed fornication or adultery, and they never bowed down to an idol.” Yes, they did, because that idol happened to be themselves.

They were preferring their will over God’s will, their lust over God’s command—what they wanted more than that which God

ordered and commanded. Their fornication was indeed a type of idolatry because they placed themselves above God.

Colossians 3 and verse 5 says, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth,” including “fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” All of these things mentioned in Colossians 3:5 are idolatry: fornication, inordinate affections, uncleanness, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. If I covet anything that Brother Clay has, I am an idolater. If I am a fornicator, I am an idolater. If I am lascivious, licentious, or have evil thoughts, I am an idolater. I am placing what I think above God.

In 1 Corinthians 10:7, when the Apostle Paul writes about what happened in Numbers 25, he says, “Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” The word play is the Greek word paizo, translated to play, to sport, and to jest. This kind of playing is not volleyball, basketball, or croquet. It has reference to sex. Look back to Genesis 26:8.

When Abraham went out of the land because of the famine, he told Sarah, “You’re going to have to say that you’re my sister because you’re so beautiful, men will kill me that they might have you.” She was his half sister, but she agreed. Abimelech took her, and God came to Abimelech by night and said, “If you touch her, you’re a dead man because she’s another man’s wife.” Abimelech said, “In the innocence of my hand, in the integrity of my heart, have I done this?” And God said, “Therefore, have I held thee from sinning against me.”

When Isaac went down, he did the same thing with Rebekah. He said that she was his sister. Just as Abraham was caught, Isaac was caught as well. Genesis 26:8-9 says, “And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out the window and saw, and behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. And Abimelech called Isaac and said, Behold, of a surety, she is thy wife. How saidst thou, she is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, lest I die for her.” What was Isaac doing? He was acting in a way that very obviously showed Rebekah was not his sister. He was sporting with her.

He was playing with her. It was a sexual thing. Abimelech said, “You've lied to me. This woman happens to be your wife.” Likewise, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. In 1 Corinthians 10:14, when Paul concludes what he is saying from Numbers 25, he says, “Wherefore, dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.” He does not say, flee from fornication. He says, flee from idolatry. Fornication and idolatry always go hand in hand, and fornication always leads to idolatry. Idolatry encompasses the sin of fornication, as well as all the other sins mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10. One sin always leads to the other. Fornication and idolatry are twin sins; they are sister sins. You cannot have one without the other, because in fornication you end up worshiping yourself and your lust over and above God.

Application: Avoiding the Counsel of Balaam

The point I want to emphasize is this: if the fornicators and idolaters of this world think they shall escape the righteous judgment of God, they are deceived. The righteous judgment of God will always catch up with those who sell themselves for money and those who sell themselves for sin and unrighteousness. You cannot commit fornication and idolatry and escape the righteous judgment of God. Remember, it was Moab and Midian that came together with the rewards of divination for Balaam.

Numbers 31 and verse 8 records: “And they,” that is, the Israelites, “slew the kings of Midian beside the rest of them that were slain, namely Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian, Balaam also the son of Beor, they slew with the sword.” Joshua 13, verse 22, says, “Balaam also, the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain.” Remember Deuteronomy 32: “Their foot shall slide in due time, and the things that shall come upon them shall make haste.” God, when He judges, will bring it upon them very quickly.

The Bible tells you in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 that this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you may know how to possess your vessel in sanctification and honor. He is talking about

abstaining from fornication. Then, in verse 8, he says, "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God."

Here is the point I hope sinks deeply within your minds: it is true that we are in a warfare, but right now we are not in a physical warfare in the sense that we are shooting at each other. There are some Christians who are being shot at, and some are being killed; that is for sure. But it is not an open warfare. I believe that if Satan, and if the wicked, thought they could kill every Christian and get away with it, they would do so. It could come into an open warfare. But why would you go to open warfare if all you had to do was seduce professing Christians into sin and get God to judge them?

Stop and think about this. What Balaam counseled Balak to do to Israel is exactly what our flesh and the world do to us: little by little. They make us think that we can do this and it has no effect; we can do something else and it is really not going to hurt us that much. You keep going and keep going until, all of a sudden, you are in open sin and rebellion against God, having been seduced into your sin.

There are lures to the flesh, and there are lures to the world. Remember what God said: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Why? For all that is in the world is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. And the world and lust thereof passeth away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." But remember what Paul said about Demas in 2 Timothy chapter 4: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Look at the pleasures of the world. Look also at what our Lord said in Matthew chapter 13 about being concerned with the world and the supplies of the world. It does not necessarily have to be worldly attractions; it is pulling us away.

It could simply be that we have to make a living. We have to work, and we want a better car or a better television. When we become so intent on these things, we neglect Scripture, prayer, worship, and God. We are seduced and drawn aside by the lust of our eyes, the lust of our flesh, the pride of life, and the world.

We end up in spiritual whoredom against God. Balaam was a false prophet, but he did not understand that we cannot curse whom God

has blessed. Yet if we can get people to sin against God, God will judge them; and if we are children of God, He will chastise us. The world, the flesh, and the enemy will do everything they can to seduce us and draw us away. That was Balaam's plan. It is Satan's plan, the world's plan, and the plan of the flesh. Stay away from the counsel of Balaam; it will destroy you.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, help us, teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, and give us wisdom and understanding, that we may avoid the counsel of Balaam and the trap set for us by our flesh, our world, and our enemy. Give us Your mercy, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 23

Have You Ever Wanted To Be A Little Puppy?

February 3, 2023

Introduction and Title Explanation

In Matthew chapter 15, we will read verses 21 through 28. I will read this passage a little bit later. I am certainly not going to begin expounding this passage right away; what I have to say will lead up to this passage, so we will be looking at a number of other passages as well.

Now, the title of the message is, “Have You Ever Wanted to Be a Little Puppy?” Listen carefully: Have You Ever Wanted to Be a Little Puppy? You may smile or giggle a little bit, but do not laugh out loud. I will explain the title. Look at Matthew chapter 15, verse 21:

“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with the devil.”

“But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, ‘Send her away; for she crieth after us.’ But he answered and said, ‘I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ Then came she and worshipped him, saying, ‘Lord, help me.’ But he answered and said, ‘It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.’ And she said, ‘Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.’”

“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, ‘O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.’ And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”

Here is a good question: Have you ever considered the word “dog” and the word “dogs” as they are used in the Bible? If you search those terms, you will find that they are used both in a positive and in a negative sense in the Bible. You will also find that these words refer not only to four-legged animals, but to two-legged animals as well. Sometimes the word “dog” or “dogs” is used in a derisive form and as an expression of contempt.

The title of this message, "Have You Ever Wanted to Be a Little Puppy?," has absolutely nothing to do with the insanity and stupidity of gender transition or gender identification. I recently read where one school was forced to put in a litter box because one student identified as a cat. This message has nothing to do with that stupidity at all. It should be clear that when one leaves the Word of God, one heads straight into stupidity and insanity.

Let me put it very plainly, which most of you already know: men cannot become women, women cannot become men, men cannot get pregnant, women cannot sire children, and there are not twenty-seven genders; there are only two, male and female. The truth of the matter is that, no matter what you claim or how you try to identify yourself, you cannot change the way God created you. The very fact that you want to change or try to change indicates your rebellion against Him and your lack of faith in your Creator. Clearly, then, this message has nothing to do with gender transition or identification.

Biblical Use of 'Dog' in a Negative Sense

Anyone who knows me knows that I love animals. My wife and I have had animals ever since we have been married. There is a picture in our house of my sister and me when I was two years old. Right in the middle of us is a huge German shepherd, and each of us has our arms around that German shepherd. There is another little picture that I do not like to show. It shows a chubby little boy, probably about nine or ten months old, holding a puppy. I wince every time I see it because it looks as though I am choking the puppy to death. I have been around animals all of my life.

The Word of God has a lot to say about animals and what we can learn from them. The first passage is found in Job chapter 12, verses 7 through 9: "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?" God is saying that we can learn from all the animals, from the birds, from the earth, and from the fish as well.

In Proverbs chapter 6, verses 6 through 11, God says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." God says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise."

There are many other passages in the Bible about animals and how we can learn from them, but some of those passages are not nearly as enjoyable as Job 12 and Proverbs chapter 6.

For instance, the Apostle Peter teaches us that we can learn from dogs and hogs. He illustrates that when one does not truly, genuinely, really, and sincerely repent, it is evidence that he is not saved, because he always returns to his sins like a dog returns to his vomit and a sow to her wallowing in the mire. In 2 Peter 2:22, Peter said, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb,

The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

That is very true. A dog will eat whatever he regurgitates. I do not care how clean you wash a sow, how much perfume you put upon her, or how many bonnets you place in her ear.

She is going right back into the mud and right back into the wallow. That is exactly what Peter is illustrating.

There is also a proverb that was prominent during the presidency of LBJ, Lyndon Baines Johnson. You will remember that Lyndon Baines Johnson got us deeply involved in the Vietnam War. There was also a picture of Lyndon Baines Johnson with his dog—I think it was a beagle—and he had the dog by the ears. Proverbs 26:17 says, "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears." LBJ certainly meddled in strife that did not belong to him or to the United States as well. The truth is, if you go to a dog that you do not know and grab him by the ears, you might not be able to turn loose for a little while, because he may just eat you alive. This proverb actually became popular during that time.

Sometimes the word "dog" is used as a form of scorn and derision; sometimes it is also used as a means of self-humiliation. Consider David when he went out to fight Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. Saul put his armor upon David, but it was much too big. Finally David said, "I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them." He reached down and picked up five smooth stones, took his sling, and went out to meet Goliath.

Goliath was a man of war, with a spear, a shield, and a sword. When he saw little David coming with his slingshot, he said in 1 Samuel 17:43, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. In other words, Goliath was saying, "I'm a warrior. I'm a man. Why are you sending this kid out here with a stick or with a sling?" He was insulted.

Goliath said, "What do you think? I am a dog. I'm not a dog. I'm a warrior. Send me somebody to fight." He received the embarrassment of his life when that little stone sunk into his forehead. Then David stood upon him and cut off his head with his

own sword. But that was it: “Am I a dog, that thou sendest someone?”

When Saul was chasing David, David had several opportunities to kill Saul, yet he did not. In 1 Samuel 24:14, David asked Saul, “After whom is the king of Israel come out? And after whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog, after a flea.” David was saying, “I’m not one of great importance. Why are you even chasing me? I’m not your enemy. I’m not trying to kill you. I’m worthless in this aspect. I’m like a dead dog. I’m like a flea. And you’re chasing me for the wrong reasons.”

Mephibosheth did the same thing. He was Jonathan’s son. Saul, Jonathan, and all of his house were killed in battle, and David became king. David asked, “Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?” Ziba the servant told him there was one, Jonathan’s son, by the name of Mephibosheth. David said, “Go, bring him to me.” In those days, the standard procedure was for the new king to kill all the family of the old king and all the friends as well.

When Mephibosheth came, 2 Samuel 9:8 says, “And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?” In other words, “I’m nothing. I don’t deserve your grace. I don’t deserve your mercy. I don’t deserve your kindness.” This was self-humiliation through acknowledging, “I’m not anything but a dead dog.”

Another good illustration is found in 2 Kings 8. Hazael was sent by Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, to see Elisha, the man of God. Ben-Hadad was sick and sent, I think, forty camels’ burdens of stuff to Elisha to ask, “Shall I recover of this disease?” Elisha told Hazael, “Go, tell him, Thou mayest certainly recover.” Then the next verse says, “And Elisha settled his countenance steadfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept.” Hazael asked him, “Why weepeth my lord?”

Elisha answered, "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child." In other words, Hazael

was going to murder their people. Hazael said to Elisha, "What is thy servant? Am I a dog, that I should do this great thing?" And Elisha said, "The LORD hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria."

Hazael went back to Ben-Hadad, and Ben-Hadad asked, "What did the man of God say?" He answered, "Thou shalt certainly recover." Hazael waited until the king was asleep, took a thick cloth, soaked it in water, and smothered him. He murdered him and reigned in his stead. He did to Israel exactly what Elisha had said he would do.

Now turn to Psalm 22. I could quote it, but I want you to see it with your own eyes, because there are several other passages that I want you to look at as well. Psalm 22, Psalm 23, and Psalm 24 are a trilogy; they go together. Psalm 22 shows our Lord on the cross.

It is interesting what He calls His enemies. In verse 16 our Lord says, "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet." Our Lord refers to His enemies here as dogs. In verse 20 He says, "Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog." Thus our Lord's enemies are referred to as a dog, the primary enemy, and then dogs.

Now I am going to give you two other very clear, very forceful passages in which the word “dogs” or “dog” is used, and it has nothing to do with a four-legged beast. In Deuteronomy 23:18, God says, “Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are an abomination unto the LORD thy God.”

When I was a child, I heard my elders speaking—in fact, I was told this by several—that it was unbiblical to buy a dog. Why would that be wrong? If you have to give somebody twenty-five or thirty bucks for a puppy, why would that be wrong? I did not understand why they would even say that until the Lord saved me and I really started reading the Bible.

When I came to this verse, I understood what they had misunderstood. “Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore,” which would be a female prostitute, “or the price of a dog,” which is a male prostitute, “into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are an abomination unto the LORD thy God.” You

would have a female prostitute who sold her body, and a male prostitute who sold his body, usually to other men as well. God here refers to them as a dog, because they act like a dog. Notice that He said, "You're not to bring the price into the house of God." Why?

Because the money is derived from an alien law system. It is money derived from that which is contrary to God, from that which is in rebellion to God. God said, "I will not have it. I cannot have it. I will not respect it, and I will not receive it." This verse deals with what you and I would call a sodomite. God refers to him as a dog.

Now notice the second passage, in Philippians chapter 3. The Apostle Paul writes, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord."

"To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." He was saying, "I want you to be safe. I am repeating some truths." What did he repeat? First, in verse 2: "Beware of dogs." Once again, he was not talking about four-legged critters. He said, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision," referring to the Jews and the Judaizers. Then, in verse 3: "For we are the circumcision," that is, the true circumcision, "which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." He therefore referred to those who were against the Lord Jesus Christ and against His person and work as dogs, especially the Judaizers who troubled him wherever he went. We are the true circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh. Anyone who has confidence in the flesh and in self-righteousness, God would refer to as a dog.

With that in mind, look in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 22, beginning with verse 13. Our Lord says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." So we refer to these people simply as dogs.

Dogs are also spoken of in the Bible in a positive light and framework. They are not always an emblem of violence and

contempt. The humorist Will Rogers said, “If there are no dogs in heaven, then when I die, I want to go where they are.” Later, James Thurber observed, “If I have any beliefs about immortality, it is that certain dogs I have known will go to heaven, and very, very few persons.” In other words, some of the dogs he had known were far better than the people he had known.

Positive Depictions of Dogs and Personal Anecdotes

One of the most delightful things that happened to me many years ago occurred when I was preaching in a little church in Indiana. After the service was over, a number of people were standing around talking near the pulpit.

Of course, that area was carpeted. There was a little girl, about four or five years old, and she was barefooted. Her mother, father, and grandparents were standing there, and we were all talking. I had taught both her mother and father in a Christian college. I knew the young girl's parents because they were farmers, and since I was raised on a farm, we had a lot in common and conversed.

Their oldest daughter, four or five years old, came crawling up to me on all fours. I said, "Oh, what a pretty little puppy," and reached down and patted her head as I would pat a little puppy. When I did that, she did something I have never forgotten. She sat up, reached up with her bare foot, took her toes, and started scratching her ear just like a dog. I thought it was absolutely hilarious. Her mother was horrified, which made it funnier to me. Her father and grandfather were laughing, and we had a good laugh out of it.

Years later, I was preaching in Indiana in another church. My friend Bill Smith and his wife, Beverly, came with two beautiful young women to the service. I walked up to Bill and said, "Bill, introduce me to these two young ladies." When he called the first one's name, I realized she was the little four-year-old girl who had scratched her ear like a dog. She had brought her friend, and when I realized who she was, I looked at her and said, "Sweetheart, have I ever got a story to tell you?"

Of course, she was embarrassed. I was reminded of our oldest granddaughter. I used to try to tell her some of the things she had

done when she was young, and she would put her hands over her ears and say, "I don't want to hear it, Papa. I don't want to hear it." That was the way this young woman was. It was really, truly funny to me.

Now, I want you to understand something, especially when it comes to dogs. This is what got me started on this subject and thinking in the way I am thinking right now. Here is an episode that happened to Alice and me some time back. A year or so ago, Daddy Johnson from South Carolina was on his way to our house for a class. About an hour from our house, he found two puppies beside the road that someone had thrown out.

So he stopped and picked them up. One was a little solid white dog, and the other was a little black one with a little gray muzzle, which was a male. He brought them to the house and, thankfully, had even stopped and bought some puppy food. He said, "I want you to keep these."

At first, I thought he meant keep them until he went back home after the class. Then it dawned on me that he wanted me to keep the dogs permanently. He said, "You know, but I'm the one who's going to keep them." I said, "Well, okay." Truthfully, I really did not want the dogs, but I said, "You know, I'll keep them for a while. Maybe we can find them a family or something."

So I put them in the pen. Alice named the little white dog Annie and the male Rooney, after two of Robert E. Lee's children: Annie, his daughter who died during the war, and Rooney, whose actual name was Fitzhugh but whose nickname was Rooney.

Annie was very, very smart and very quick. I put her in the pen, and three minutes later she was out. I caught her and put her back in; three or four minutes later, she was out again. I picked her up and thought, "How did she get out of the pen?" I inspected it. She had not dug out. I put her back in the pen, hid behind the tree, and watched.

She climbed right up the chain-link fence and then jumped over. She climbed up just like a ladder. I thought, "My soul." It took her about two days to adapt to everything, to every change. She was sweet, smart, and loving. Rooney, though, was standoffish and quiet.

He had no personality like she did. He acted as though he really did not want to be bothered, and he did not want to be petted.

His attitude was, "I'm Joe Cool. I don't need anybody and I don't need anything." That was the way he was for months. Then one day, for some unknown reason, the dogs got into a fight in front of our house, and every one of them jumped on Rooney. Thankfully, our big Mastiff was not involved. I would have really had problems had he been involved.

I heard the noise and ran outside. Alice was outside, running toward them. Everybody was attacking Rooney. I don't think Annie was attacking him; she was trying to help him, but she was involved. There were three or four other dogs. I started kicking, pulling, choking, and throwing dogs left and right to get them all off Rooney. The next thing I knew, I looked up and saw Annie dragging him across the yard. He was on his side. She was trying to get him away from there, but her teeth had gotten caught in his collar, and she was choking him.

Rooney's Transformation and Its Spiritual Lesson

I whipped out my knife, cut the collar off, took it out of her mouth, and threw it down. Rooney was lying on his side with his tongue hanging out. I hollered for Alice, and when she came over, I said, "Start doing chest compressions." I opened his mouth and started breathing into it while she pumped on his chest. We did that for two or three minutes. All of a sudden, he started doing this, and we kept doing it for another minute or two.

Finally, he was able to sit up. Alice got some water, and he drank it. After a little while, he was perfectly normal. But the next day, everything changed. That dog wanted to be with me incessantly. He wanted to love on me, lick on me, lie in my lap, and have attention. It looked like twenty-four hours a day. He was totally, absolutely, thoroughly, completely changed.

One day this past week, I went into the bedroom and sat on the edge of the bed. He had followed me into the room, jumped up beside me, and started rubbing against me, loving on me, and trying to get in my lap. I broke down and started petting him. He rolled

over on his back, with his throat and stomach totally exposed. I started rubbing his throat and stomach. When a dog does that, it is simply—any animal. Wolves will do that.

They are saying, "I trust you. I'm yours. Do with me what you will." I sat on that bed, said it to myself, and then said it out loud: "Lord, please let me love You the way this dog loves me. And Lord, please help me to trust You the way this dog trusts me." Because here is what he was saying to me: "Here I am. Do with me as you please. I'm yours."

To this day, that is the only dog that will stand absolutely still and allow Alice and me to do whatever we want to do. If we want to clean his ears, it does not matter; he will just stand absolutely still because of the absolute trust.

It is important for us to understand this simple truth: when dogs lick you, as gross as it may seem to some, it is a form of bonding. That is the way dogs bond. Husbands and wives may hold hands, kiss each other, hug each other, and love on each other, bonding in that way; but dogs bond by licking. Now, Alice and I have rescued many dogs.

Ezekiel 16: The Sinner as a Cast-Out Infant

We've had all kinds of pets through the years: cats, dogs, horses, cows, birds, squirrels, and all kinds of animals. Some of the best dogs we've ever had were rescues. When we found them, they were scared, skinny, hungry, wormy strays—cast out and cast off.

I think of Honey, one of our golden retrievers, and Dixie, Dabney, Emma, Rooney, and Annie. These and others were rescue dogs. When Alice brought Emma home, I thought, "I don't want that dog. I don't like that dog." When she died a month or two back, I had to say, "That was the sweetest dog I've ever known in my entire life." But they were all rescue dogs.

Now let me ask you a question. If you're driving home and see, on the side of the road, an absolutely skinny, stray dog with his ribs sticking out, wormy, probably disease-ridden, unwanted, unloved, and with no idea what is in him, would you want a dog like that? Would you be interested in having a dog like that?

Before I ask you my next question, turn in your Bibles to Ezekiel chapter 16. Listen carefully and follow with me as I read the first fourteen verses:

"Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations." Remember, an abomination is a stench in God's nostrils. "And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan." Canaanites. "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite." "And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing 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. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare."

“Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.”

The picture of Israel given here is the picture of a sinner. By nature, we had nothing. We were nothing. We could do nothing. We were heathen, unwanted, unwashed, uncared for, and left to die. Who wants a sickly, flea-infested, skinny, worthless, wormy, mixed puppy? No one. So here is the question: Have you ever asked, Why did God want you?

The Question: Why Did God Want Us?

When you look at this picture, we are like that old stray dog. We were cast out to the loathing of our persons. Yet in His great mercy and grace, He saved us. He passed by us and said, “Live, yea, I say live.” He saved us, redeemed us, forgave us, warmed us, fed us, and doctored us. He gave us a new heart and a new life. We became His.

Now do you understand what happened to Rooney? Why did that dog change? He viewed Alice and myself as his saviors. To be absolutely honest, he was a goner and done for had we not stepped in, taken over, and done doggy CPR on him. Somehow, he realized that. To this day, he seemingly cannot get over the fact that we were the ones who saved his life. He was extremely appreciative, grateful, and thankful for the life we gave him.

Greek Words for 'Dog' and the Canaanite Woman's Faith

He shows it by loving us consistently and constantly. So my question is this: If a dog can show that kind of appreciation and love in recognition of what happened to him, why is it that we cannot show that same appreciation and love to our Heavenly Father when we know what He has done for us? Had He not passed by us, we would have been goners.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for dog is "keleb." It literally means a dog, or it is used as a form of contempt and abasement. It also refers to a male prostitute, but it is the same word used in either sense. In the New Testament, there are two main Greek words for dog. The first is "kuon," referring to a literal dog; it is also used metaphorically to refer to a man with an impure mind.

Consider Matthew chapter 7. If you are wondering where the Apostle Paul got the inspiration in Philippians chapter 3 to refer to those who hate Jesus Christ as dogs, I think you will find the answer here. Our Lord is speaking on the mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. In Matthew 7:6 He says, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." He is speaking of people who care nothing for truth or Jesus Christ and are not interested in salvation. He calls them dogs and swine. There are those who hate and despise the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.

In Luke chapter 16, the same word appears. Lazarus, the beggar, was laid at the rich man's gate, full of sores and desiring to be fed with the crumbs from the rich man's table. "Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores." The dogs—the "kuon," the literal four-legged creatures—came and licked his sores.

In Matthew chapter 15, the second place and the second word in which a different word for dog is used, we read:

"Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

The Bible says she was a woman of Canaan. She was not an Israelite; she was a Phoenician, sometimes called a Syrophoenician, and sometimes called a Greek. The Greek word is "ethnos," which simply means nations.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: "Just as Jesus went to the coast of Tyre and Sidon, a woman came out of the same coast to meet him. Sooner or later, a meeting will come about between Christ and seeking souls. This woman of Canaan had no claim on account of her nationality. She was a Gentile of the worst sort, of a race long before condemned to die. She came from the narrow strip of land whereon the Tyrians dwelt, and like Hiram of Tyre, she knew the name of David, but she went farther, for she had faith in David's Son."

John Gill said: "And, behold, a woman of Canaan, that is of Phoenicia, which is called Canaan, so Shaul, the son of a Canaanitish woman, is by the Septuagint, in Exodus 6 and verse 15, called the son of a Phoenician. And the kings of Canaan are by the same interpreters, in Joshua 5, verse 1, called kings of Phoenicia. Hence this woman is by Mark said to be a Greek, that is a Gentile, as the Jews used to call all other nations, and a Syrophoenician, being a native of Phoenicia, called Syrophoenician because it bordered upon Syria and had been formerly a part of it by conquest."

Here is a woman from Canaan. She comes to the Lord and asks Him to have mercy upon her because her daughter is sore vexed with a devil. Look in verse 23. She begs Him for help, and He answered her not a word. He would not even speak to her. In all probability, He turned His back on her and walked away, because the rest of the verse says, “And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.”

Wherever He went, she went. Wherever they went, she went. She was not giving in, giving up, or giving out.

Finally, when our Lord did speak in verse 24, He said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Our Lord certainly knew that she was not an Israelite, and she knew it as well. Yet she still sought the Lord for help. I love verse 25: “Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.”

Just think of those three words: “Lord, help me.” The Bible also says that she worshipped Him. I will come back to that word momentarily. The word “Lord,” of course, is kurios in the Greek, meaning Lord, Master, Sovereign, Owner. In other words, it recognizes Jesus Christ as God and as sovereign. And she said,

“Lord, help me.” The Greek word is boetheo, meaning to help, to succor, to bring aid. It signifies not only someone crying for help, but also someone running to give the help and aid that is needed and necessary. Have you ever cried those three words? They are simple words. Why is it that we do not cry them more frequently? Our Lord tells us why.

In Matthew 9, you need not turn there. The Pharisees asked why our Lord ate with publicans and sinners. What did He say? “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.”

Nobody will cry for help until realizing how helpless he truly is. If you choose to be haughty and proud, and think you do not need the Lord’s help and can work everything out yourself, just wait. But when desperation comes and you realize you cannot, you may learn to cry, “Lord, help me.”

She had asked for help twice. Notice what she did. She said, “Lord, help me, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.” She was identifying herself with her daughter. What afflicted the daughter affected the mother as well.

I understand that. But it was even more than, “Lord, I can’t get any sleep. Lord, I can’t do this.” No, no, no. It was, “Lord, help me.” And the only way You can help me is by helping her—identifying herself with them.

So note, if you would, in verse 26, our Lord, when she worshipped Him and said, “Lord, help me,” answered, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.” He called her a dog.

You have to understand. I’m not saying our Lord was a Jew; He was a Judahite. But the Jews in general referred to the Samaritans as dogs and to all nations as dogs. Islam teaches that anyone who is not of the Islamic faith is a dog. They literally hate the four-legged critters called dogs. Yet our Lord here called this woman a dog. When He said this, I would just imagine there was a smile on His face, which, of course, encouraged this woman.

When our Lord said, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs,” He used the word “kunarion,” meaning a little pet dog, a little puppy, a family pet, a household pet. Evidently, the

woman understood exactly what He meant. That is why she said, “Truth, Lord: yet the kunarion, the little pet dogs, eat of the crumbs which fall from the master’s table.”

Here is what she said: “Truth, Lord, whatever You say, call me whatever You want to call me. I will be whatever You want me to be. If You want me to be Your little pet dog, I’m willing to be Your little pet dog, Your little puppy. The little puppies eat of the crumbs that fall from the master’s table, the owner’s table. I’m willing for You to be my owner, and I will be satisfied with the crumbs You give me.”

Worship as 'Licking the Master's Hand'

Do you remember that I told you earlier the Hebrew word for dog was “keleb”? There was a man in the Old Testament associated with Joshua, one of the only two spies who brought forth an honest report. His name was Caleb. “Caleb” means dog. God said concerning Caleb, “For he hath wholly followed Me.” I know it means that he obeyed God completely, but God said, “He hath wholly followed Me.”

I cannot stand up in the house without the dogs following me. I cannot walk outside without them following me. The thought hit my mind that the name Caleb means dog, and God said, “He’s wholly followed Me.” In other words, everywhere I go, God says, “There’s Caleb. He’s hanging right in with Me. He’s doing exactly what I would have him to do.”

Now, let’s go back to verse 25: “Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.” You remember I told you the Greek word for dog is “kuon.” But when our Lord used the word “dog” in verse 26, He used the diminutive form of the word, which refers to a little pet dog, a little puppy, or a household pet.

“Then came she and worshipped Him.” The word “worshipped” is the Greek word “proskuneo.” “Pros” is a preposition meaning “to” or “toward,” and it is from the word “kuneo,” which means to act like a dog. The word actually means to kiss the hand or to lick the hand. I could hold my hand down to any of my dogs, and they would immediately begin licking my hand. You remember I told you

earlier, and I'm going to make this an application: for a dog, licking is bonding.

That is how they bond. I never will forget, we had two dogs, now dead, Jeb and Bell. Jeb was a Mastiff, and Bell was an American Bulldog. Bell would always want to lick Jeb, to wash him. He did not want to be washed, licked, or bothered. She would keep on until finally he would just fall over, as if to say, "Here I am; go ahead. I might as well get this done and get it over with." I told Alice, "They had to have been married; at least they're acting like that." Finally, when she finished washing and licking him, he would get up and leave.

"Kuneo," "proskuneo" here, means to bow, to lick the hand as a dog licks his master's hand. In worship, what do we do? We bow to Him. We lick His hand. We kiss His hand. We acknowledge that He is our Master, Owner, Boss, and Sovereign; that we are His creatures, His people, and the sheep of His pasture; and that He is in full and total control of us. We bond with Him by kissing His hand in obedience.

"Lord, help me. I'm willing to kiss Your hand. I'll lick Your hand. I'll be Your little puppy dog, for any crumb that You give me, because I do not deserve any." Here are two applications. The first is this: One thing that will make us more thankful, appreciative, and grateful for our Lord's grace and mercy is understanding from Ezekiel 16 what we were when He found us.

Applications: Gratitude and Loving Obedience

When you stop and think of the pollution and filth in which we were wallowing, and He passed by and said, "Live, yea, I say unto thee, Live," nothing can compare to His love. The world does not love us, and even the love of our parents cannot compare to His love. Sinners are referred to as dogs and swine. Considering how great a sinner each of us really was, we were strays, unloved and unwanted, until God came along and took us in.

When we understand where we came from, it will make us appreciative of what He has done for us. If you think for one instant that it is degrading to be considered a little pet dog, then you need to

go back and reread Ezekiel chapter 16, Romans chapter 1, and Ephesians chapter 2, and see how much worse the picture could have been. Certainly, I will be happy to be held, petted, loved, and spoiled by our Lord.

The second application is that thinking like a puppy dog should make us willing to love our Lord as often and as much as we can. As I pointed out earlier, we lick His hand by our obedience. We demonstrate our love and our training by our obedience. I enjoy the affection my animals show me, and I enjoy loving them. I enjoy the affection and love shown by my wife, children, and grandchildren. If I can relish the love of my animals, my wife, my children, and my grandchildren, do you not think that it might encourage and bless the heart of God for you and me to love Him and tell Him? Laugh all you like, but I tell my dogs that I love them. I tell my cows, my wife, my children, and my grandchildren that I love them, and I tell the Father that I love Him. We need to understand how we show our affection to Him.

It is through worship. It is through bowing to Him. He holds out that divine hand, and you and I, like a dog, bow and lick His hand and say, "You're the Sovereign. You're the God. You're the Creator. You're the Master. You're the Owner. I'm at Your disposal. Command me. I'm here. I'm waiting." Every time I start to go outside, if the dogs are inside, they are right with me. If I am outside and start walking, they start walking with me. If you see me driving my truck downtown, you will probably be surprised to see at least four dogs in it every time. Anytime that truck moves, they are in it.

You will not mess with me, especially in that truck. I have told people, I will leave the doors unlocked, leave the windows rolled down, and put a $100 bill on the dashboard. If anybody wants to reach in and grab it, help yourself. You will pull back a nub, because they will protect that truck and protect me.

I am simply saying that I am more than willing to be our Lord's little pet dog. I am more than willing to be a lap puppy. I am more than willing for Him to be the Master and for me to be the pet.

Closing Illustration and Prayer

Next time you love on your dog, if you have one, and that dog rolls over and shows you his throat and stomach, think of the trust involved. I was preaching in Arizona, and down the road from where I was staying was a private zoo run by a Vietnam veteran.

He received no funds from the government. He would go around to all the stores and take up the leftovers and whatever they would give him to feed those animals. He had lions, wolves, and everything. The pastor's son said, "Let me take you down there. The zoo is not open, but I know him and he will show you around."

We walked down there; it was not far from the house. As I was introduced, I said, "I'm John Weaver." He introduced himself and began to show us around. We got to the wolf pen, and this huge female wolf ran straight to me. When she got to me, she was still inside the pen. She fell on her back and exposed her throat and chest to me.

The owner said, “You’re a preacher, aren’t you?” I said, “Yes. How do you know?” He replied, “This wolf has only done this one other time, and it was to a preacher.” Isn’t that amazing? I did not reach in and pet the wolf, but it was a sign of absolute submission and trust. We need to become little puppy dogs in one sense of the word: “Lord, here I am. I love You. I trust You.”

Father, help us in the name of Jesus Christ. Give us a heart of love and obedience. May we see our great need of Thee, and help us to worship, bow, and kiss Thy hand. Thou art God, and besides Thee there is none other. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask these things. Amen.

CHAPTER 24

When God Rises Up

March 22, 2023

Introduction: The Picture of God Sitting

Although I am going to use Psalm 2 and refer to it back and forth, we will certainly look at many other Scriptures. Notice Psalm 2, verse 1: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.”

“Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

“Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

Sitting has often been identified as a place of ease, comfort, rest, and inactivity. That is certainly true in relationship to mankind. It is when we rise up that activity takes place.

Even as a child, I often heard adults say this to children, and sometimes to other adults: “Get up off your duff and go to work.” In other words, sitting down is not helping; you are not doing anything except resting. I know that there are jobs and work that require sitting. However, generally speaking, it is only when we rise up that we are prepared to take care of whatever needs to be taken care of.

There is a story about General Nathan Bedford Forrest. I believe it was after the war, when he was on a train and the train made a stop. As the train began to let on other passengers, another man boarded without a ticket, not wanting to go anywhere, but having understood that General Forrest was on the train. He began screaming for Forrest, telling him that he had come to whip him and would make an end of Forrest right there. When Forrest heard his name and the man screaming, Forrest simply stood up and took a few steps toward him. And then the unwilling

The assailant looked at General Forrest, changed his mind, and got off the train. There was no fight. You have to understand that General Forrest was a very, very big man for his day. He stood six feet, two inches tall and weighed 210 pounds. He was very imposing for a man at that age. Alice and I have been to many museums, and we were impressed by how small many of the officers' uniforms really were and how small the boots were. In fact, we looked at General Lee's boots, and you would be surprised how small his foot really was, because most men in those days did not reach six feet. Here was a man six feet two. You also have to remember that General Forrest personally killed 30 men in battle. He had 29 horses shot out from under him and was wounded eight times, which is recorded—probably many more than eight, but eight that are recorded. All General Forrest had to do was simply arise.

That took care of the situation. If a strong and determined man like General Forrest could easily put fear into his enemy simply by rising up, can you even begin to imagine what it will be like when the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God rises up against His enemies? The Bible tells us that He will place not merely fear in them, but will indeed destroy them. In Psalm 9 and verse 20, which we will look at a little later, the psalmist said, "Put them in fear, O Lord: that the nations may know themselves to be but men." I can assure you that when God rises up, they will not only be put in fear, but they will be destroyed. Listen to Isaiah chapter 42, verses 13 and 14. Listen to what God 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. “I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.” God said, “I’ve been still. I’ve refrained myself, but now I’m going to rise up. I will be like a travailing woman, and I will destroy and devour at once.”

Before this message is over, I hope you will understand that the petition and prayer for God to arise is one that must really and truly be prayed. Oftentimes, when believers were in danger, they cried for God simply to arise. Sometimes they prayed, “Make bare thy arm, show thyself, lift thyself up.” In each instance, they were asking God to arise.

God's Sitting Does Not Imply Unconcern

Oftentimes in the Bible, God is pictured as sitting. In Psalm 2 and verse 4, the Bible says, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.” Psalm 29 and verse 10 says, “The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.” God is pictured as sitting.

Psalm 47 and verse 8 says, “God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.” Psalm 99 and verse 1 says, “The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.” Isaiah 40 and verse 22 says, “He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof

are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."

When you come to the New Testament, the truth is exactly the same. In Colossians 3:1, the Bible says, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God the Father." When you get to Revelation 6:16, it says, "And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Then, in Revelation 7:10, "And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Lastly, in Revelation 7:15, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." When you look at Psalm 2:4, the Bible says, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh."

Although God is pictured as sitting, for God it is certainly not—and it does not imply inactivity, unconcern, or indolence. God is not only pictured in verse four as sitting; He is also pictured as laughing and as having His enemies in derision. In verse five He speaks unto them in His wrath, and He vexes them in His sore displeasure. He is not sitting idly by while the wicked scheme and connive against Him. He is not oblivious to their plans and schemes. He is not one who is blessed with woeful ignorance. No, He knows every thought, every plan, and every scheme.

Now, turn to Psalm 94. We will come back to this Psalm in a little while, but look at verses 8 through 11. In this passage, God is telling us very plainly that He sees, He hears, and He knows. Notice Psalm 94, beginning with verse 8. The Bible says this: "Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise?

"He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." So God not only knows the thoughts; the Bible tells you in the book of Ezekiel that He knows those thoughts before they ever enter into the mind. God knows what the wicked are going to think before they ever think. He knows what is going to enter into their minds. He may be

sitting, but He certainly is not inactive. He is not unconcerned. He is not unknowing. That is why the Bible says, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.” Thomas Adams said this: “The one enthroned in the heavens laughs. They scoff at us, but God laughs at them.”

The Terror of God's Laughter and Word

Laugh? This seems like a harsh word at first view. But are the derision, the persecution, and the injuries of His saints, and the cruelties of their enemies, a matter of laughter? God laughs, but it is in scorn; He scorns, but it is with vengeance. Short is the joy of the wicked. Then he says: “Oh, what are God’s frowns if his smiles are so terrible? If God merely laughs—and when you laugh, you smile—and in His laughing, if in His smiling He is vexing them with sore displeasure and speaking to them in His wrath, if that is His smile, what in the world will His frown be like?”

Charles Spurgeon said it like this: “Note God’s derision of the rebellious. What will the King do to those that reject him? Mark the quiet dignity of the omnipotent one, and the contempt which he pours upon his raging enemies. He has not taken the trouble to rise up and do battle with them. He despises them. He knows how absurd, how irrational, how futile are their attempts against him. He therefore laughs at them.”

Let me give you a little illustration. Alice and I took Shorinji Kempo for eleven years. We both got to be second-degree black belts. One time in my entire life, I had one young man threaten me. He happened to threaten me when I was in peak physical condition and working out three and four times a week. And when he threatened me,

I could not contain myself. I merely laughed. I laughed in his face. When I got through laughing, I looked at him and said, “Son, if you jumped on me, it'd be the worst mistake you ever made in your entire life.” Two days later he came back to me and apologized. He said, “You're right. It would have been the worst mistake I'd ever made.”

I am simply pointing out the fact that I knew—I absolutely knew—I could mash him as quickly as I could mash a bug. I merely laughed. Can you imagine the omnipotent God—that's all power—when he sees these rebellious bugs and worms squirming against him, and all he has to do is mash? He laughs at them because of their ignorance and their stupidity.

God does not need to arise to dispatch his enemies. In fact, the Bible said, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.” His word is not only creative power, because he spake the world into existence, but his word is also destructive power. That is why the Bible says, “For he shall speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.”

Remember Hebrews 4, verse 12: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword.

Consider Revelation chapter 19, beginning with verse 11: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” This is the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 12 continues: “His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

“And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.” All our Lord has to do is simply speak,

and once those words go out, his enemies are done for. He really does not need to rise up. But when he does rise up, it will be the end of his enemies. If God's Word is so powerful when he speaks, what will it be like when God does indeed arise against his enemies?

Martin Luther said it like this: "Let the Lord but stir his finger only. Let him but look into the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire, and they shall be troubled," as in Exodus 14, verse 24. God looked upon them through the pillar of fire, and all he did was look, and they were troubled.

Biblical Prayers for God to Arise

Throughout the Bible, you will find that oftentimes God's people, especially in times of danger, cry out to God with petitions like, "Arise, O Lord. Lift up thyself, O Lord. Make bare thine arm, O Lord." In other words, they are requesting God to rise up to help them because they perceive the danger in which they are. They also want God to defend his own cause.

In Psalm 3 and verse 7, the psalmist says, "Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly." Notice what David prays: "Arise, O Lord, save me, O God." God is pictured as sitting, and David wants God to arise and quickly come to his defense. Yes, he had smitten David's enemies and broken the teeth of the ungodly, but David is asking for a full and final salvation.

In Psalm 7:6, he 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." Here is another picture: as if God was only sitting, but God is sleeping. So he says, "Arise, O Lord," and then, "Arise, O Lord, in thine anger"—the Lord's getting upset about this—"Lord, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies, and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded." He is asking God to fulfill His word as well.

Psalm 9:19 says, "Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight." Have you ever asked God to arise to overthrow the wicked? That is what he is asking: "Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail. Let the heathen be judged in thy sight." "Put them

in fear, O Lord: that the nations may know themselves to be but men." Have you ever asked God to arise, O Lord, and let not the United Nations prevail? Arise, O Lord, let not the Great Reset prevail. Arise, O Lord, let not the Illuminati prevail. Arise, O Lord, let not the CFR prevail. Arise, O Lord, let not the Trilateralists prevail. Arise, O Lord, do not let the New World Order prevail.

This is what David is praying: "Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail." Psalm 10:12 says, "Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble." Arise, O Lord, lift up thine hand. Just raise Your hand, Lord, and it will be taken care of.

Psalm 12:5 says, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." God pictures our enemies as doing nothing but puffing air at us. Because they are oppressing His poor ones and He is hearing the sighing of the needy, He will arise and put us in safety from the one who is threatening us and blowing his breath in our face. Psalm 17:13 gives us another good prayer.

He prays, "Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword." Notice that he asked God to arise, disappoint the wicked, cast him down, and deliver his soul. Of course, that is a wonderful prayer request.

In Psalm 44, verse 23, he says, "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever." Here is another one that pictures God as sleeping. In other words, "Lord, please do something, please deliver us. We can't keep going like this." Then, in verse 26, he says, "Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake." That is amazing: "Arise for our help, redeem us for thy mercies' sake."

Psalm 68, verse 1, says, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him." I want you to mark this psalm because we are going to come back to it briefly. The interesting thing is that verse 1 is actually taken from Numbers chapter 10 and verse 35. During the wilderness wanderings, when God's ark was leading the way, whenever the ark set forward, Moses prayed this prayer: "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered;

and let them that hate thee flee before thee." Thus, Psalm 68 and verse 1 is taken from Numbers 10 and verse 35.

In Psalm 74, verse 22, he prays, "Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily." I love this passage, too. In other words, the psalmist is saying, "God, I don't see how you put up with this. Think of all the reproach. Think of how these men stupidly reproach thee." Think of what I quoted a few weeks back, that Yuval Noah Harari, who said that Jesus Christ is fake news and the resurrection is not true.

And he and Klaus Schwab are claiming to have divine power. "Arise, O Lord, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish reproacheth thee daily." I've often said, I do not see how God puts up with what he puts up with. And I've also often said, I'm glad I'm not God. For had I been God, I would have killed me and a whole lot more a long time ago. I can assure you. But he's praying, "Arise, O Lord, plead thine own cause. Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily."

Psalm 68: A War Hymn and Messianic Psalm

Psalm 82:8 says, "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations." So here's a prayer for God to arise and judge the earth. And in Psalm 132:8, "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength." Again, God is being called upon to arise.

Psalm 68 is a wonderful Psalm, a Psalm of David, and a hymn of war. It is a prayer and a request for God to arise and to clear the way for his people by destroying his enemies. His enemies not only fight against him; they also fight against God's people. The psalm begins with this wish and prayer, that God would indeed take care of all his foes. We are praying this and asking that it would be near at hand: "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him." Let God lift himself up; let his enemies be scattered, and let those who hate him flee before him.

Spurgeon said of verse 1: "Our glorious captain of the vanguard clears the way readily, however many may seek to obstruct it. He has but to arise, and they flee. He has easily overthrown his foes in days of yore, and will do so all through the ages to come. Sin, death, and

hell know the terror of his arm. Their ranks are broken at his approach."

Our enemies are His enemies, and this is our confidence in victory, because no one can thwart, hinder, overthrow, or stop the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Matthew Henry said, “If God but arise, all his impenitent and implacable enemies that will not repent to give him glory will certainly and speedily be scattered and driven away and made to perish at his presence. For none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered.”

The day of judgment will be the day of the complete and final perdition of ungodly men, who shall melt like wax before that flaming fire in which the Lord shall then appear. Psalm 68, therefore, is not only a war psalm; it is also a psalm concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are certain messianic Psalms in the Bible: Psalm 22, Psalm 23, Psalm 24, Psalm 45, Psalm 110, and others. In fact, you could just about say every Psalm is about the Lord Jesus Christ in some manner. Psalm 68 also has the Lord Jesus Christ in mind. In verses 17 and 18 we read: “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” Psalm 68:18 is explicitly quoted concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and expanded upon in Ephesians chapter 4, verses 8 through 16.

Jesus Christ is indeed the Lord of glory, the God of judgment, and the conqueror. He is the victor, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the invincible One, and the One who will be honored and glorified. Since this is a hymn of war, it is also a hymn of judgment. Jesus Christ is the Judge.

John chapter 5 deals with our Lord healing a man at the pool of Bethesda. The Bible tells us that in this pool lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, and withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

Jesus Christ the Sovereign Judge

Because once a year an angel came down and troubled the water, and whosoever first stepped in was then healed of whatever disease that he had. So our Lord walks in among this multitude, singles out one individual, and heals him. He looks at this one man who had been there for 38 years and asks him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The man said, "Sir, I have no one to help me get down to the water, but while I'm coming, someone else steps in, and I never make it in time." Our Lord simply said, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." And he did.

Could not Jesus Christ just as easily heal the entire multitude as he did the one man? The answer is yes. He is omnipotent; he is God. Why, then, did he not do it? Why did he single out the one man and heal nobody else, walking right past them?

Look in John chapter 5, beginning with verse 20, and you will get the answer: "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." Now watch the next verse: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."

In other words, the one attribute that demonstrates that God is God is his sovereignty. God did raise up folks in the Old Testament—those whom he chose. He did not raise up everyone. The Bible says, "Even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." That is why our Lord walked through the whole multitude and healed one man.

He was demonstrating His sovereignty. He can do as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases, because He is God. He is demonstrating the fact that He is the sovereign God. Look a little further, in verse 22: “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.” Jesus Christ is the sovereign Judge.

If God smiles, if God's laughter is so severe against the wicked, what will His frowns be like? Revelation chapter 6 gives us a picture of what it will be like for the wicked when God rises up. Beginning

with verse 14, the Bible says, “And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” No one can stand against our Lord.

Illustrations of the Wicked's Destruction

It is not that this is a judicial process and they have no standing. No, they have no ability to stand. They have to flee. They cannot stand in His holy presence. Looking back at Psalm 68, the psalmist gives two striking illustrations that demonstrate conclusively that the wicked cannot stand when God rises up. In verse 1 he says, “Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.” They cannot face Him or stand before Him. Here is the first illustration: “As smoke is driven away, so drive them away.”

I do not know if you have ever watched a house burn. I have seen several houses burn, and especially when those houses are full of furniture, it is nothing but rolling, thick black smoke. It is so dark and thick that anyone in it without a breathing apparatus merely chokes to death; he asphyxiates because he cannot breathe. It will simply kill him.

But it does not really matter how thick that smoke is, how black or dark it is, or how it boils. The least little wind will drive it away. Everyone has seen bonfires. When the wind comes along, the smoke is gone. This illustrates how easily God scatters His enemies, just like wind blowing against smoke. They disappear. As smoke disappears, it cannot stand before the wind.

Now look in verse 2 again: “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.” Wax is a more firm substance. It is normally hard, until it comes near flame or fire; then it melts away as easily as wind blows away smoke. It melts into nothingness.

Spurgeon said this on verse 2: “Easily the wind chases the smoke, completely it removes it. No trace is left. So, Lord, do thou to the foes of thy people. They fume in pride. They darken the sky with their malice. They mount higher and higher in arrogance. They defile wherever they prevail. Lord, let thy breath, thy Spirit, by providence make them to vanish forever from the march of thy people.”

Then he goes on: “As wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. Wax is hard when by itself, but put to the fire, how soft it is. Wicked men are haughty till they come into contact with the Lord, and then they faint for fear. Their hearts melt like wax when they feel the power of his anger. Wax also burns and passes away. The taper is utterly consumed by the flame. So shall all the boastful power of the opposers of the gospel be as a thing of naught. Rome, like the candles on her altar, shall dissolve, and with equal certainty shall infidelity disappear.”

Israel saw in the ark God on the mercy seat, power in connection with propitiation, and rejoiced in the omnipotence of such a manifestation. This is even more clearly the confidence of the New Testament church.

For we see Jesus, the appointed atonement, clothed with glory and majesty. Before His advance, all opposition melts like snow in the sun. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands. When He comes by His Holy Spirit, conquest is the result; and when He arises in person, His foes shall utterly perish.

So I have some exceedingly bad news for the Davos crowd, the Great Reset crowd, and the New World Order crowd. I have some very bad news for George Soros, Klaus Schwab, Harari, Zuckerberg, and all these others. Here it is: You will fail. You will fall. You will be blown away like smoke in the wind. You will melt like wax in the fire when you see and face the righteous anger and wrath of a holy and just God.

When it comes to God's enemies, it really does not matter how many they are. It does not matter how agreed they are. It does not matter what their plans or schemes may be. They cannot succeed. It is absolutely impossible. He, and He alone, shall prevail.

Look in Psalm 83. Psalm 83 is a song of Asaph. Asaph wrote a number of Psalms; Psalm 73 is probably the best-known Psalm of Asaph, but he wrote many Psalms. In fact, from about Psalm 73 through Psalm 83 are Asaph Psalms. Note what Asaph is talking about: a conspiracy against God and against God's people.

He prays, “Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.” In other words, “Don't sit still. Don't be reclining.” “For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.” Look what they have done: “They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.” Just like it is today. “They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation.” That is, we'll depopulate the world and get it to where we can control it. “Let us cut them off from being a nation. Let the name of Israel be no more in remembrance.”

“For they have consulted together with one consent”—or, you could say, they have conspired together with one consent—“they are confederate against thee.” Look who is teamed up against God: “The tabernacles of Edom, the Edomites, the Ishmaelites, the Moabites, the Hagarenes, Gebal, Ammon, the Ammonites, the Amalekites, the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur”—that is, Assyria—“also is joined with them.”

“Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kishon”—that is where they were killed—“which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna”—whom Gideon killed. All this was when Gideon was fighting against the Midianites, who said, “Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.” In other words, they were conspiring against God and against God’s people. They intended to conquer, take everything into their possession, and make it theirs.

Then he says, “O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: that

men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth."

Do you realize that men are going to find out who God really is? They will discover who He is either in salvation or condemnation, but they will find out who God truly is.

Now look at Psalm 82. This psalm is against judges and rulers, and it is also a psalm of Asaph. Verse 1 says, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods." This is not saying that there are other gods besides the one true and living God. If you read John 10, Jesus Christ identifies these gods as rulers and judges. The next verses make that clear: "How long will ye judge unjustly"—they are the judges and rulers—"and accept the persons of the wicked?"

Here is what they should be doing: "Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked." That is what they are supposed to do, but they will not. They are unjust. Therefore, he says, "They know not"—that is, the judges—"neither will they understand."

They walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course. That is, they turn the world upside down. "I have said, Ye are gods"—that is, you are representing the one true, the living God—"and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." Watch it: "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations." Those who think they have divine power and are going to win shall die like men and find out that they have no divine power whatsoever.

Those who are righteous, godly, and obedient desire the end of wickedness. That is why the Bible says, "Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just." We have been commanded in Amos chapter 5 and verse 15 to hate the evil and love the good. You cannot love the good without hating the evil. If you hate the evil, that means you love the good. You cannot love the Lord without hating everything contrary to the Lord—even people. David said in Psalm 139, "Do not I hate them that hate thee, O Lord? Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies."

In the very next breath, in the very next verse, he said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me.” Clearly, if we love the Lord, we are going to want an end to wickedness and want to see his kingdom, his rule, and his reign. It is impossible to love God without hating everything contrary to God.

Psalm 94 gives another prayer request in this light: “O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.” That is what the psalmist is asking God to do: execute vengeance, show himself, lift himself up, and take care of the wicked. Then he says in verse 3, “Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?” Basically, he is asking God, “How long are you going to put up with this? How long shall they utter and speak hard things?”

All the workers of iniquity boast themselves. They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. And that is when he says, "Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."

"O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud." When God arises, that is exactly what he is going to do.

Applications: Praying Against the Wicked

Let me make an application. So many people think that it is unchristian to pray against the wicked. It is not unchristian to pray against the wicked; in fact, it is not even unbiblical. All these verses show that David was certainly praying against them. So was Asaph. Through the Bible—and I have not even gotten to some of the stronger verses—David prayed, "Break their teeth in their mouth, O

God; break their arms; cast them down, that they rise not up again. Yea, let the wicked be consumed out of the earth." Those are prayers in the Psalms. It is not only Christian to pray against the wicked; it is biblical to do so. We ask God to deal with them, and God may deal with them in any way that he chooses. He may be pleased to regenerate and convert some of them.

They would no longer be his enemies or our enemies; they would be our friends and our brothers and sisters. He could do that. That is up to him. These are his prerogatives. He could simply remove their power, money, or positions, and they would no longer be able to fight. He could also judge them and remove their lives, taking them from off the face of the earth.

In other words, whatever he decides to do is his business. It is our responsibility to pray against them; however he resolves it is up to him. Our Lord taught us to pray, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.” Have you ever stopped to think that when you pray, “Thy kingdom come,” you are actually asking God to destroy the kingdom of man and the kingdom of Satan? You cannot pray, “Thy kingdom come,” without asking him to destroy the kingdoms that are in opposition to him.

Someone says, “I’m just going to pray for the Lord Jesus Christ to return, and that will take care of everything; I do not have to get involved.” Really? Do you know what will happen when Jesus Christ returns? Second Thessalonians chapter 1, beginning with verse 7 and going through verse 10, says: “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.”

You cannot even pray for the return of Jesus Christ without praying for the destruction of his enemies. When we ask God to arise, to lift himself up, to show himself, and to make bare his arm, we are asking him to deal with the wickedness in this country. We have become a virtual Sodom and Gomorrah in this country—literally. People have become absolutely insane. I just found out that the Board of Education in our county is considering hiring an open lesbian as school superintendent.

I shall attend the meeting if God allows me, and I will speak against it with some others. But I want to tell you this: if they hire someone like that, they deserve to lose their children, because they are violating every principle of Scripture. It is time we learn to pray, "Arise, O Lord, make thyself known."

We must understand that God is far above all the malice and power of His enemies. They cannot touch God, nor frustrate Him. He knows their plots, schemes, and connivings. He is omniscient and omnipotent; He cannot be defeated. Therefore, He merely laughs at them. They are absolutely insane.

If we desire victory, peace, blessings, and prosperity, we must learn to pray, cry, and beseech God to rise and deal with the sins and wickedness in our land, because we cannot do it in and of ourselves. There is not one individual I can convict, not one individual I can convert, and not even one individual I can control outside myself. May I remind you that God took notice of Pharaoh and destroyed him and his armies. He took notice of Haman and had him hang on his own gallows. He took notice of Ahab and had him removed.

We simply need to read our Bibles, read history, and understand that God is immutable; God does not change. We need to cry as David, Asaph, and all these people: "Arise, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered. Let thine enemies flee before thee, as smoke that is driven away by the wind, and as wax that melts by the fire. Let them be destroyed. Let them perish. Remove them however you want to remove them. It is totally up to you. But arise, O Lord, and make thyself known."

That would be a real, genuine revival in this land. You cannot have a reviving without dealing with that which is evil and wicked. Let God arise, and its enemies will be scattered.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word and your truth, and we ask for your divine help, mercy, and grace. Impress upon us to pray and seek thee, Lord, to deal with all the wickedness in our land. Arise, O Lord. Make thyself known. Reveal thyself, make bare thine arm, and scatter thine enemies. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen. Amen.

CHAPTER 25

It Is Testing Time

October 27, 2023

It Is a Proving Time

Introduction and the Command to Prove All Things

First Thessalonians chapter 5 and 1 John chapter 4 provide the passages for this message. First John chapter 4 is our text, while First Thessalonians chapter 5 sets the stage. The title is “It Is a Proving Time,” or “Testing Time.” First Thessalonians 5:21 says, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” In 1 John chapter 4, beginning with verse 1, the apostle writes: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

The Meaning of 'Prove' and 'Hold Fast'

There are many commands in Scripture which must be obeyed. However, in light of the times in which we are living, there is one command that is absolutely necessary, and that command is found in First Thessalonians 5:21: “Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.” So there are both truths: prove all things, and secondly, hold fast that which is good. Each of these is a present active imperative in the Greek, which means that each is a command. Literally, you are commanded to prove all things, and you are commanded to hold fast that which is good.

The word for “prove” is the Greek word “dokimazo,” translated in our Bibles as prove, try, discern, and examine. The word actually means to test, to examine, and to scrutinize whether something is genuine, real, or true. We are going to see this word again just a little later on. It is a very important word, and it conveys a very important truth.

When he said in verse 21, “Prove all things,” the next phrase was, “hold fast that which is good.” The word for “hold fast” is katecho, meaning to keep, possess, retain, and keep from going away. The word was historically used to describe checking a ship’s headway, where the pilot holds the ship steady to keep it from veering off course. Literally, he says, “I command you to prove all things. I command you to hold fast.” That is, keep on the right course and hold fast that which is good.

In order to prove and hold fast that which is good, obviously you must have an objective standard, because good is determined by God and not by man. Fallen man thinks that sin is good. He thinks rebellion is good. He thinks that his feelings and desires are good. But God is the one who determines and defines good. When he tells you to hold fast that which is good, the word is kalos in the Greek. It means that which is good, honest, meet, choice, suitable, praiseworthy, and approved.

The Danger of Letting Truth Slip Away

Let me put this together and show you another Scripture in light of this. He says in verse 21, “Prove all things”—scrutinize all things, test

all things, try all things—and when you find that which is good, hold it fast. Look in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 1. The Apostle writes, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”

The Greek word for “slip” means to glide by, pass by, escape, and slip away from us. All my life I have heard people say, “It slipped my mind,” “It escaped me,” or “I simply let it pass by,” and usually we say, “I forgot.” Scripture is telling us that the truth is not to slip away from us. We are to hold it fast. It is impossible to hold it fast if we do not care for it, consider it, obey it, and apply it. You could have a pastor or teacher teach you truth until

He died. But if you do not consider it and hold it fast, it will do you absolutely no good. It will slip from you. You will forget and lose how to apply it. It is like that old adage: you use it or you lose it, and that certainly is true.

Historical Context: Gnosticism and Its Heresies

Now, when you look in your Bibles at 1 John chapter 4 and verse 1, you will see how this is applied. The Scripture begins, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits.” First, note the word “beloved.” John is addressing Christians, because he refers to them as beloved. The word agapetos is translated in our Bibles as beloved, dearly beloved, and well beloved.

Now look at what he said: “Beloved, believe not every spirit.” What he is actually saying is, “Beloved, stop believing every spirit.” In other words, it is a present active imperative, just like 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 21. He is commanding these believers to stop believing every spirit.

Let me remind you that in 1 John the Apostle John is writing against the Gnostics and Gnosticism. There were basically two main groups of Gnostics: the Docetic Gnostics and the Cerinthian Gnostics. Each group was heretical. They differed in some aspects, but they were still heretical.

We get our word Gnostic from the Greek noun gnosis, which means knowledge, and the verb ginosko, which means “I know.”

When you put an alpha, or an “A,” in front of a Greek word, it negates the word. Thus we get our English word agnostic straight from the Greek. If ginosko means “I know,” agnosko, or agnostic, means “I don’t know.” An agnostic is someone who does not know whether he knows anything or not. He simply says he does not know, usually in reference to God as well.

The Docetic Gnostics, as well as the Cerinthian Gnostics, actually believed that all matter was inherently evil. This table, since it is made of matter, would be evil. This cup, because it is made of matter, would be evil. My arm, because it is made of matter, would be evil as well. The word Docetic Gnostic came from the Greek word "dokeo," which means "I appear" or "to appear." Since Jesus Christ was God, and they believed that all matter was inherently evil, Jesus Christ could not have had a real physical body. If He had, that would be evil and opposite to being God. That is why they were called Docetic Gnostics: they said that Jesus Christ was a mirage, an apparition, or a spirit. In other words, He was not real by any stretch of the imagination.

In 1 John chapter 1, John deals with this heresy and says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard"—that is, there was a real voice—"which we have seen with our eyes"—there was a real person—"which we have looked upon," and "our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)." John is saying that Jesus Christ was real. They looked upon Him, heard Him, and handled Him.

He was not a ghost. He was not an apparition. He was not a mirage. He was that which was real. John was writing against these Docetic Gnostics. Then there were the Cerinthian Gnostics, named after their teacher Cerinthus. Like the Docetic Gnostics, they still believed that matter was inherently evil. Since matter was inherently evil, how did the world come into existence?

Here is how they answered it. If one could draw a picture, one would make a big circle and put God in that big circle. Below it, one would make a smaller circle, and smaller circles continuing down until there were about nine. These smaller circles were known as

Demiurges, or little gods. The Cerinthian Gnostics said that the one true and living God made another God who was less holy than Himself; that God made a God less holy than Himself, and so on down. About the seventh or ninth Demiurge was the one who created the world.

So that was Cerinthian Gnosticism. There they were saying again that matter was inherently evil.

Cerinthus only accepted the book of Matthew in the Bible. That was the only book he believed in. He believed that Jesus was the offspring of Mary and Joseph, and that at His baptism Christ descended upon Him and was on Him, but right before His passion, right before His death, Christ left Him. They had all kinds of bizarre ideas concerning Christ. Cerinthus also adhered to circumcision, the Sabbath, and some type of millenarianism.

Gnosticism claims hidden knowledge as the basis of salvation. Adherents to Gnosticism believe that you can only be saved if you have their secret knowledge. In other words, it was their knowledge that lightened the divine spark within you and elevated you so that you could understand who God really and truly was. They divided Christians into two groups. They said that the carnal Christians did not understand anything about the Spirit and were inferior, while those who possessed all this knowledge were superior and therefore enlightened. You can think about groups today that hold to secret knowledge and require their knowledge for membership in their clique or club, or for their form of salvation. It is nothing more than Gnosticism. That is all there is to it.

In 1 John chapter 4 and verse 1, this is why the Apostle John says, "Beloved, stop believing every spirit." In other words, you simply cannot believe everything that you hear or everything that is said to you from a religious standpoint.

The Command to Try the Spirits

There are two mindsets that are absolutely, totally unbiblical, and unhappily most people have these two mindsets today: credulity and gullibility. Credulity is a willingness to believe and to trust without any real evidence. Gullibility means that you simply swallow

anything and everything that you hear. Unhappily, most people today are like that. If they hear anything religious, anything spiritual, or anything that is supposed to be Christian, they swallow it, hook, line, and sinker.

In 1 John chapter 4 and verse 1, he said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit," or "stop believing every spirit." It is a command. If you and I are going to stop believing every spirit, if we are going to do what he said in verse 1—"try the spirits"—then you and I must have an objective standard. How in the world can you discern? How in the world can you scrutinize? How in the world can you try without an objective standard? So the Bible, then, is our standard.

Let me give you some biblical Scriptures right now. First of all, Psalm 33 and verse 4. The Scripture says, "For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth." Then you get to Psalm 43 and verse 3, where David said, "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles." And then David said it like this in Psalm 119 and verse 142, "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth." Note what he said: "thy law is the truth." And then our Lord, in His high priestly prayer in John 17 and verse 17, said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." The interesting thing is that the Bible, over and over, is called the Word of Truth. You will find that in Psalm 119 and verse 43, 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 7, Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 13, 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 15, and James chapter 1 and verse 18. So the Bible is referring to itself as the Word of Truth.

So let me put it to you very plainly. John is telling us that all religions are not equal. Gnosticism is not equal to Christianity. Islam is not equal to Christianity. Hinduism is not equal to Christianity. There is no equality when it comes to religion, unless you are just trying to say that all religions outside of the Bible, all religions outside of Christianity, are equally wrong and equally lost.

That might be an accurate statement, but you cannot say that all these have equality and standing with the Word of God. Look back, if you would, at 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." In the introduction, when we looked at 1 Thessalonians 5:21, "prove all things," I told you that

“prove” was the Greek word “dokimazo,” meaning to scrutinize, examine, and test. In 1 John 4:1, the word “try” is also “dokimazo.” It means to prove, try, discern, and examine; to test and scrutinize something as to whether or not it is real, true, and genuine.

Here is a good question: If he says, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God,” how do you try a spirit? How do you scrutinize or test a spirit? Do you say, “Come over here and sit in this chair in front of me and let me examine you? Let me question you”? How do you try a spirit? Notice clearly what he says in verse 1: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God,” because “many false prophets are gone out into the world.” The spirit is connected with the prophet.

Biblical Examples of Testing Spirits

Here is what is true in the Bible: the Holy Spirit is connected with God’s prophets and preachers, and an evil spirit is connected with false prophets and false preachers. So how do you try or test the Spirit? You try and test the preacher. You listen to what he is saying, examine what he is saying, and scrutinize what he is saying by the Word of God.

Now, let me show you. I want you to hold this passage, 1 John chapter 4, but I want you to go back in your Bibles to the book of Nehemiah. Look in chapter 9 and verse 30. Nehemiah chapter 9 and verse 30. I want you to watch this carefully because remember I just told you that the Holy Spirit is connected with God's prophets, God's preachers. So here we go. Nehemiah chapter 9 verse 30, the Word of God says, "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." Now how did God testify against Israel by His Spirit? Well, His Spirit that was in the prophets, they refused to hear. They would not listen to the preachers. They would not listen to the prophets. They continued in their rebellion and their sin. But notice God was testifying against them by His Spirit in the prophets. Now if you'll look in your Bibles to

the book of Acts chapter 11 and notice, if you would please, verse 28. Acts 11 and verse 28. Look at what he said here. Acts 11 verse 28:

"And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar." So here's my question. How in the world did Agabus signify by the Spirit that a great famine and a great dearth was coming?

How did he do that? He prophesied. He preached. He taught. He warned. So it was the Spirit of God in him that was warning, using his voice as he proclaimed the truth that God had given.

Now, since you're there, look in Acts chapter 16. Now, the same thing is true concerning an evil spirit, just like it was true concerning the Holy Spirit. So, in Acts chapter 16, let's begin reading there with verse 16. Here's this young woman that was demon-possessed. "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers." Now notice, if you would. The Bible tells us this woman had a spirit of divination.

It was an evil spirit, but she brought much gain to those who owned her by her soothsaying. How did the spirit speak through this woman? Through her voice, through her words, through what she said. It was an evil spirit, but it was still there.

When you look in your Bibles at 1 John 4:1, notice what he says: "Beloved, believe not every spirit," or, "stop believing every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Clearly, these false prophets are connected with this evil spirit speaking untruth.

How can you test, how can you prove the spirit of the preacher if you do not know truth, if you do not have an objective standard, if you do not rely upon the Word of God? What will you test the preacher against?

What if Marshall said to me, "Well, I heard him, but the way I was taught when I was a child was not what he said"? Is that a correct way to test what the preacher said, based on what you were told when you were a child? You may have been told wrongly when you were a child. Could you say, "This is not what I'd been taught"? Can you say, "This is not what I've heard all my life"? No.

You have to have an objective standard. Revelation 2:1 says: "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand," the seven preachers, "who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," the seven churches. You will read that in Revelation 1:20. Now look at verse 2, talking to the church of Ephesus.

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." How in the world did the Church of Ephesus try these false apostles and find them to be liars? Was there a prosecuting attorney? Was there a defense attorney? Of course not. They took what these men said and compared it with the Word of God, finding that they were false apostles, false prophets, and liars. They took their words and compared them with Scripture.

Unhappily, most Christians today are so easily deceived and led astray because they do not know the Word of God. Think about all the Bibles lying around in the average home. Usually there is at least one or two Bibles, sometimes three or four. But they simply lie around and gather dust because they are never read or studied; therefore, we are totally and completely ignorant of doctrine.

The Test of the Incarnation

In other words, Christians today are not like the Bereans. The Bible says concerning them, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." When the Apostle Paul preached, or Apollos or anybody preached, they listened intently and compared what they heard with Scripture to find out what was true and what was not true. So the

spirits—that is, the preachers, the prophets, the apostles, everything—have to be tried by the Word of God.

Here is a good question: If you do not know the Bible or understand Bible doctrine, how can you try a spirit? How can you discern whether that man is speaking truth or untruth? You must know that there is an objective standard. We think, "Well, this is not too important." Oh, yes, it is. Turn back in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 4, because this shows how important it is. He said in verse 1, "Beloved, stop believing every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Now watch verses 2 and 3. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God:" He is giving you a way to know what truth is. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

The test, the trying, and the proving in this passage relate to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. I would, if I were a betting man, bet you that the average Christian cannot explain or even tell you what the word incarnation is or what it implies. Even if some might give you what they believe is the right answer, they could not give you supporting Scriptures. Why? Because once again, this is doctrine. You cannot test a preacher, a prophet, or an apostle without knowledge of doctrine.

Incarnation is the doctrine that the second person of the Trinity assumed human form in the person of Jesus Christ, and that He is fully divine and fully human. In Christianity, incarnation, or incarnate, expresses the idea that Jesus Christ, who is God, came to earth and assumed human form. The word means being made flesh.

Turn back in your Bibles to the book of John—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—chapter 1, beginning with verse 1. We are talking about Jesus Christ, who is the divine Logos, the Living Word. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any

thing made that was made." Now note verse 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the

John 1:1 says, "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." Now skip down to verse 14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." So the incarnation refers to Jesus Christ becoming flesh. He is the God-man.

Now I want to tell you something. In 1 John 4:3, the Bible says, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." So the Bible tells us that anyone who denies the incarnation is a liar and is an antichrist. Anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is denying the truth of God. That means you have all heard of Yuval Noah Harari, who is the spokesman and close confidant to Klaus Schwab and the Great Reset. He is a liar and is an antichrist because he said that Jesus Christ is fake news and He is not real. It is all a lie.

So here is my question: Had you rather believe a reprobate like Harari, or would you rather believe the Word of God, and especially the Apostle John, who gave his life for the Lord Jesus Christ? I am simply pointing out the fact that this is an issue that we must face.

Galatians 4:4–5 says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." There is the incarnation: God sent His Son, made of a woman. God became man. God assumed human flesh. If you look in your Bibles, 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16.

The Incarnation and Its Doctrinal Connections

In 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16, the Bible says, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Without controversy, there is no argument about this. God was manifest in the flesh. That is incarnation.

Now look in 1 Timothy chapter 2, verse 5: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." What does that have to do with the incarnation? The incarnation was absolutely necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ to be the mediator. You remember in Job chapter 9, verse 33, Job was asking and praying that there would be a daysman, someone who would be a go-between between himself and God.

First Timothy 2, verse 5, is the answer to Job because Jesus Christ is the mediator. Since Jesus Christ is God, He can represent God truthfully and accurately. Since Jesus Christ became man, He can also represent man truthfully and accurately. The truth of the matter is this: without the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no mediatorship. If the Lord Jesus Christ had not become incarnate, there would not be any mediator, and therefore there would not be any salvation.

So, if the incarnation of Jesus Christ is denied—listen carefully—if the incarnation of Jesus Christ is denied, His deity is also denied. If Jesus Christ is not God in the flesh, as the Bible teaches, then Jesus Christ is not God. A denial of the incarnation leads to a denial of His deity.

Now look in 1 John chapter 4, verse 15: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." That is, He actually became incarnate; He is the God-man. Now look in 1 John 1, verse 9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The reason for reading this verse is the word "confess." It is the exact same Greek word found in 1 John 4, verse 15: homologeo. Homo means one and the same, and lego means I say the same. When we confess our sins, we are not merely mouthing words.

To confess our sins is to say the same thing that God says about our sins and to take the attitude that God takes about our sins. If I confess my sin of theft, I am not merely saying, "Well, Lord, I stole from Steve today. Forgive me. Maybe I can get Gary tomorrow, and if I get Gary tomorrow, maybe I can get Marshall next week." No. I am agreeing with God that stealing is wicked, vile, wrong, and death-dealing. I repent and turn from it. I cannot keep doing it if I agree with God.

He said, “Whosoever confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.” It is the same word. When we confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, we are saying that Jesus Christ is God. We are claiming Him as the Son of God, as King of kings and Lord of lords, and as God of gods. We agree with God the Father that He is the God-man, that He is God in the flesh.

Romans 1:3–4 says, “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” This shows not only the continuity of Scripture, but also the continuity of doctrine. When we confess Jesus Christ as God, we confess Him as the incarnate Son of God. If Jesus Christ is not the incarnate Son of God, if He did not become flesh, then He is not God. And if He is not God, there was no resurrection.

And that means there is no salvation. All of this is connected. Romans 1:4 says, “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” The word “declared” is the Greek word horizo, from which we derive our English word horizon. Horizo literally means to determine, to ordain, to appoint, to declare, and to mark out boundaries. When we look at the horizon, that is the boundary as far as we can see; we cannot see any further. That is exactly what the word means.

Everything about the life and death of Jesus Christ was appointed, ordained, and marked out. Nothing happened to Jesus Christ except that which God determined before the world began. Nothing could happen to Jesus Christ outside of that determination.

Acts 2:22–24 says: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”

Verse 23 says, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel of God.” The word “determinate” is the Greek word horizo. It is the same word found in Romans 1:4. Everything about Jesus Christ was marked out.

Acts 4:25–28 says: “Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.” Now look for a truth.

"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." What did Pontius Pilate do? What did Herod do? What did the Gentiles do? What did Israel do to Christ? Verse 28 says, "whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

The words "determined before" translate the Greek word "prohorizo." It is the same word with a preposition in front of it, meaning before. Everything concerning Jesus Christ was marked out; the boundaries were set. Everything was ordained and appointed by God the Father before the world ever began. Everything about Jesus Christ was predestinated to the nth degree.

What I want you to see is the continuity of Scripture and the continuity of doctrine. When you deny one doctrine, you end up denying a multitude of doctrines. When you deny the incarnation, you deny the deity of Christ. When you deny the deity of Christ, you deny soteriology and salvation, because you also deny the resurrection. As Paul proved in 1 Corinthians 15, if Christ was not raised from the dead, then we are yet in our sins; we are lost, that is for sure.

The Response to the Word as a Test

There is another test. How can you tell whether someone is of God? How can you test, try, prove, scrutinize, and examine them? The only answer is by the Word of God, but there is another way: their response to the Word of God. Do they receive it, or do they refuse it?

In 1 John 4:6, he said, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." How can you tell the spirit of error? The spirit of error is someone so obstinate and rebellious that he will not listen.

Do you remember what Scripture says about Apollos? He was a mighty man, eloquent, and mighty in the Scriptures, and he came preaching. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they realized that although he was very eloquent and did a fine job, he did not know everything. So they took Apollos into their house and taught him the way of God more perfectly. He received it and went his way preaching. Hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. The spirit of truth will always listen to and receive the Word of God. The spirit of error will always repudiate and refuse the Word of God.

If you deny one doctrine, you deny all the doctrines, basically, because all these doctrines are interconnected and you cannot have one without the other. When you deny the Incarnation, you deny the Deity. When you deny the Deity, you deny Salvation. When you deny Salvation, you deny the Resurrection. You deny practically everything. We know the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error because the Spirit of Truth receives the Word of God. The spirit of error is the spirit of Antichrist, which repudiates the Word of God, and whoever refuses what God says is an Antichrist and a liar.

Applications: Gnosticism Today and the Sacred-Secular Divide

The Word of God is our only sufficient rule for faith and practice. Because it is the only inspired rule, it is our canon. What has happened is that there is a great deal of syncretism in religion. Thomas Aquinas was a famous Roman Catholic theologian, and he tried to take Christianity and intermingle with it the teachings of Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. He tried to put the philosophy of man alongside the Word of God. Anytime you have a combination of man and God, or humanism and the Bible, you have what is known as syncretism, which perverts the Word of God and turns out to be complete heresy.

I began this message by talking about Gnosticism. The problem is that many of these ancient heresies are still with us today. We do not understand that all the old heresies are dressed up and given to us today in different forms. The Gnostics denied materialism; they basically thought anything material, anything physical, was evil, wicked, and wrong.

They always emphasized what they called the spiritual. Consider this little quiz. Do not answer aloud; answer true or false, or yes or no, in your mind.

Is prayer more important than mowing your widowed grandmother's lawn? Is sharing the gospel more important than taking a meal to a sick person or to a family that has just returned from the hospital? Is doing sacred work, such as preaching or being a missionary, more important than secular work—being a carpenter, an engineer, an accountant, or a lawyer? If you answered true or yes to either one of those, you have imbibed Gnosticism.

I want to show you why. You can turn to this passage, or I can quote it: 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. So you can keep house to the glory of God. You can wash dishes to the glory of God. You can dig a ditch to the glory of God. You can do ordinary work, as well as sacred work, to the glory of God.

I think Martin Luther said that the way to impress others with your Christianity is this: if you were a shoemaker, you would not impress people by putting little crosses on your shoes; you would impress people by making good shoes.

How about Colossians chapter 3, verses 23 and 24? “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.” Whatever you do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men.

How about this one? Finally, James chapter 1, verse 27: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” What does God rather have us do? God

had rather have us visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction.

That is just as biblical and just as godly as preaching and teaching. Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord. For the Christian, there is no division between the secular and the sacred. Everything is sacred, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do. You prove, test, scrutinize, and examine by the Word of God. It is our objective standard; that is how we test the spirits and the preachers.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth, and pray that You would enable us to see, examine, scrutinize, try, test, and prove according to Your Word, by Your Word, for Your honor and glory. Help us understand that everything we are and do is to be done for Your honor and glory. Give us Your grace, we pray, in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 26

The Path of Life

February 21, 2024

Introduction: The Exclusive Claims of Christ

In John 14:6, our Lord said, Jesus answering Thomas, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” In Psalm 16:11, the psalmist said, “Thou wilt show me the path of life. In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.”

John 14:6 is a verse that practically every Christian can quote from memory. If you cannot quote it, you need to memorize it, because it is an absolute and essential truth concerning Jesus Christ and salvation. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by and through Him. This verse also teaches us the exclusiveness of Christ. There is no other way, no other truth, and no other life. One must either be saved by Jesus Christ, or he is not going to be saved at all. Jesus Christ has opened the only way unto the Father and also into everlasting life.

Please understand this one simple truth: to know the Father is eternal life. Our Lord said in John 17:3, “This is life eternal, that they

may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." To know the Father is to know the true God and His Son Jesus Christ.

The Word of God says in 1 John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." As God the Father is referred to as the true God and eternal life, so God the Son is referred to as the true God and eternal life.

We know that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh and that He is the true God, for Colossians 2:9 teaches, "For in him," that is, in Jesus Christ, "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Jesus Christ is indeed God in the flesh. Since He is the way, the truth, and the life, He is the only mediator between God and man. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 2:5 that there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Christ as the Way, Truth, and Life

Jesus Christ has claimed to be the way, the truth, and the life, and He said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Ephesians 2:18 says, "For through him," that is, through Jesus Christ, "we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." So the way to the Father is through Jesus Christ in the Spirit.

Hebrews 9:12 says concerning Jesus Christ: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Hebrews 10:19 continues, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that has promised."

Thus, in these passages, Jesus Christ has entered into the holy place, the holiest of all. He has entered there by His own blood,

having obtained eternal redemption for us, and He has opened a new and living way for us to enter. Therefore He has said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Pause for a moment and think about these statements. Jesus Christ said, “I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life.” And then He said, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Each of these statements in and of itself is profound. In one sense, each is a statement that would stagger the mind.

When Jesus Christ said, “I am the way,” undoubtedly He probably had in mind Isaiah 35:8, because that verse talks specifically about the way. Listen to Isaiah 35:8: “And a highway shall be”

There, and a way, it shall be called the way of holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. In other words, this way is the way of holiness. It is also a very plain way.

Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Matthew Henry wrote: "Christ was His own way, for by His own blood He entered into the holy place, and He is our way, for we enter in by Him. By His doctrine and example He teaches us our duty, and by His merit and intercession He procures our happiness, and so He is the way. In Him, God and man meet. We are brought together. We could not get to the tree of life in the way of innocency, but Christ is another way to it. By Christ, as the way, intercourse is settled and kept up between heaven and earth; the angels of God ascend and descend; prayers go to God and His blessings come to us by Him. This is the way that leads to rest, the good old way. The disciples followed Him, and Christ tells them that they followed the road, and while they continued following Him they would never be out of their way."

Jesus Christ is the way because of His doctrine. In John chapter 6, when He was teaching that He was the bread of life, and unless men ate of His flesh and drank of His blood they could not inherit eternal life, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" The Bible tells you many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

But our Lord looked at His own disciples and said, "Would you go away also?" Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

“And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus Christ is the way because of His doctrine. Jesus Christ is also the way because of His sacrifice.

Hebrews 9 speaks of the tabernacle in the Old Testament: “The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” That earthly tabernacle and temple were nothing more than figures, pictures, types, and shadows. They were not the real thing. “Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.” That was until the time that Christ came.

“But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Jesus Christ, then, is the true way. He is the way because of His doctrine and sacrifice, and He is also the way because of His example. First Peter 2:21–23 says: “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.”

"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Note, if you would, the Bible says He is our example in verse 21. Jesus Christ is the way, not only by His doctrine, not only by His sacrifice, but also by His example.

Jesus Christ is the truth as opposed to error. Jesus Christ is truth as opposed to falsehood. Jesus Christ is truth as opposed to false religion. Moreover, Jesus Christ is truth as opposed to all the types and shadows. In John 1:17, the Bible tells us, "For the law was given

by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Is that telling us there was no truth in the Old Testament? Of course not. There was truth in the Old Testament, but it was truth that was through typology, truth through shadows, and truth through emblems. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all those types and shadows. And so, therefore, He is the apex of truth. He is the fulfillment of truth.

Jesus Christ is truth because of the promises of God. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Jesus Christ the truth. Since He is truth incarnate, He is the incarnate truth. That is why Deuteronomy 32:4 says, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth.

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Jesus has claimed to be the way and the truth. He has also claimed to be the life. Certainly, He is the author of life, the giver of life, and the purchaser of life. He purchased it by His own death, and it is Jesus Christ who, by His own doctrine, shows us the way to life.

You remember the passage in John chapter 11, where Lazarus had died and had been dead four days. Jesus came to see Mary and Martha. When Martha heard that Jesus was there, she went out to meet Him. The first thing she said was, “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 said unto her, “Thy brother shall rise again.” Martha said 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.”

I love what Lester Roloff said concerning this passage. He said concerning Jesus Christ, “The resurrection just walked into town.” And that is the truth. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” He went to the grave and said, “Lazarus, come forth.” The Bible says that he who was bound in grave clothes came forth. Jesus said, “Loose him, and let him go.” He was indeed, and is indeed, life.

Just as Jesus spoke to Lazarus and he came to life, the Bible tells us that Jesus is going to speak again, and many are going to come to

life. Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.”

And they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Jesus is not only the way and the truth; He is the life. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Consider two comments, one from Albert Barnes and one from John Calvin. Albert Barnes says, “No man cometh to the Father, but by me. To come to the Father is to obtain his favor, and to have access to his throne by prayer, and finally to enter into his kingdom.”

No man can obtain any of these things except by the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. Coming by Him means coming in His name and depending upon His merits. We are ignorant, and He alone can guide us. We are sinful, and it is only by His merits that we can be pardoned. We are blind, and only He can enlighten us. God has appointed Him the Mediator and ordained that all blessings shall descend to this world through Him. Hence He has put the world under His control, given the affairs of men into His hand, and appointed Him to dispense whatever may be necessary for the peace, pardon, and salvation of His people.

That is certainly true. Let me take it a step further. John Calvin said it like this: “No man cometh to the Father. This is an explanation of the former statement. For he is the way, because he leads us to the Father; and he is the truth and life, because in him we perceive the Father. As to calling on God, it may indeed be said with truth that no prayers are heard but through the intercession of Christ. But as Christ does not now speak about prayer, we ought simply to understand the meaning to be that men contrive for themselves true labyrinths, whatever, after having forsaken Christ, they attempt to come to God. For Christ proves that He is the life,

because God, with whom is the fountain of life, cannot be enjoyed in any other way than in Christ."

"Wherefore all theology, when separated from Christ, is not only vain and confused, it is also mad, deceitful, and spurious. For though the philosophers sometimes utter excellent sayings, yet they have nothing but what is short-lived and even mixed up with wicked and erroneous sentiments." That is true.

The Question: Why Could Jesus Say This?

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Verse after verse shows that Jesus is the way, Jesus is the truth, and Jesus is the life. Now here is my question: How could Jesus Christ say that? Do not respond, "Because it's true." Yes, I know it is true, but that is not my question. Why did He say it? Why is He the way, the truth, and the life?

There are many answers we could give, and many of them are theologically correct. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life because He is God incarnate, God in the flesh. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no man can come to the Father except by Him, because the Father has ordained and appointed Him to be the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Savior, and the propitiation for our sins.

In fact, the Bible specifically calls Jesus Christ God's elect. In Isaiah 42:1, He said, "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." So Jesus Christ was God's elect; that is, God chose Him to be the mediator and the redeemer. We can answer that, and yes, that is true.

Each one of those answers is theologically correct. But there's another answer, and it's a very practical answer. So go back in your Bibles to Psalm 16, and look, please, at verse 11: "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

If you take the time to read this psalm, you will find that it is a messianic psalm, a psalm concerning the Messiah. I said that one time before, and someone responded, "Well, are they not all messianic psalms?" Generally speaking, yes, but some psalms refer

more specifically to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Hold Psalm 16, and turn in your Bibles to Acts, chapter 2. We're coming right back to Psalm 16, but look in Acts, chapter 2.

Psalm 16 as a Messianic Psalm

Let's begin reading at verse 24, so you can see that the Lord Jesus Christ is in view: "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." Now watch verse 25: "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance."

Now go back to Psalm 16 and look at something. Let's begin reading there with verse 8: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” Psalm 16:8 is found in Acts 2:25, Psalm 16:9 in Acts 2:26, and Psalm 16:10 in Acts 2:27–28. These verses particularly applied to Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Very clearly, Psalm 16 is a messianic psalm, applied directly to Jesus Christ. The verse to notice especially is verse 11: “Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.”

You must consider the context of this psalm. First, it is a messianic psalm, and the person involved is the Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, the statement, “Thou wilt show me the path of life,” implies that the Messiah was dead. Verses 9 and 10 determine that context: “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.” Why? “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was dead.

You remember Philippians 2:8: “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” In His obedient and sacrificial death, He has shown the path of life. Psalm 68:20 says, “He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.” Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. And that is why in Psalm 16

He said, “Thou wilt show me the path of life.” Now here is the interesting thing. When you read through the Scripture, Jesus Christ is called the firstborn from the dead, or the first begotten from the dead. He is also called the firstfruits. So let us look at these passages. In Revelation chapter 1, verse 5, we read: “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.” Note that He is called the first begotten of the dead.

Christ as the Firstfruits and Forerunner

Now turn to First Corinthians chapter 15, beginning with verse 20: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.” Understand this: Jesus Christ has been called the first begotten of the dead. He has been called the firstfruits so far. Let me ask you a question: Were there other people raised from the dead before Christ was raised from the dead in the Bible? The answer is yes. Yes, there were. I smile every time I think about the men who were burying the man who died.

They got to Elisha's sepulcher and looked up to see the enemy coming. So they threw the dead man into the sepulcher, and he landed on Elisha's bones, sprang back to life, and ran with them. I do not know what would make them go faster—the man being raised from the dead or the enemy coming—but he jumped up and ran with them.

There were other people who were raised from the dead before Christ. So how can Jesus Christ be called the firstfruits, or the first begotten of the dead, when there were plainly others in the Bible who were raised before Him? Here is the answer: Jesus Christ is the only one who was raised from the dead and entered into what we would call immortality or eternal life in the presence of God the Father. All the others who were raised from the dead before Him died again. Jesus Christ did not die again.

John Gill writes concerning the path of life: "Not the way of life and salvation for lost sinners, which is Christ Himself, but the resurrection of the dead, which is a passing from death to life, and was shown to Christ, not doctrinally, or by illuminating His mind, and leading Him into the doctrine of it. For so He Himself has brought it to light by the gospel. But practically and experimentally, by raising Him from the dead, or by causing Him to pass from death to life. And He was the first to whom the path of life was shown in this sense, or that whoever trod in it, and so has led the way for others. Hence He is called the firstfruits of them that slept, the firstborn, and the first begotten from the dead."

Though others were raised before, they were not raised to an immortal life, never to die any more, as He was. The view, faith, and hope of not being left in the grave so long as to see corruption, and of being raised from the dead to an immortal life, caused joy and gladness in Christ at the time of His sufferings and death.

Adam Clarke says, “Thou wilt show me the path of life. I first shall find the way out of the regions of death to die no more. Thus Christ was the firstfruits of them that slept. Several had before risen from the dead, but they died again. Jesus rose from the dead and is alive forevermore. Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead was the first entrance out of the grave to eternal life, or lives, for the word is in the plural, and with great propriety, too, as this resurrection implies the life of the body and the life of the rational soul as well.”

Here is the uniqueness of Christ. Here is why He is called the firstfruits, and why He is called the firstborn, or the first begotten, of the dead. Romans 6:9-10 says, “Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over

him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

When you read in Psalm 16:11, "Thou wilt show me the path of life," Jesus Christ is saying, "I'm going to be shown practically and experientially the path of life. I'm going to be the one, the first one, that rises from the dead to an eternal, immortal life."

You remember the passage in John 10:27: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish."

"pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

Jesus Christ has been called the firstfruits, the first begotten, or the firstborn from the dead. There is one other term. Hebrews 6:19 says, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;" that is, into the most holy place in the presence of God. Verse 20 says, "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Jesus is not only called the firstfruits and the first begotten; He is also called our forerunner. The word "forerunner" is the Greek word "prodromos," and it means one that is sent before, one that goes in advance, and one that leads the way.

Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." How could Jesus Christ say this? Because God the Father raised God the Son from the dead and took Him from death straight to His throne. He not only rose from the dead; He ascended, and He is seated at the right hand of God. He knows the way because He was the first one to tread that way.

The Answer: Christ Trod the Path of Life

He is a real pathfinder. He is the truth because He knows the truth, which is the only way, and He is the life because it is only in Him that we have life.

In the Bible, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is attributed to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, because the three are one. Our Lord said it in John 10:17: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

The path of life for our Lord was obedience, even unto death, trusting His heavenly Father to lead Him from death to life. That is exactly what He did. Jesus Christ is our path to life, the only path to life. He is the truth and the life as well as the way. Hebrews 5:9 says, “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”

All those who follow His directions, who submit to Him and listen as He directs them in the way, the truth, and the life, are brought to God. It is only in Jesus Christ that we arrive in the presence of God the Father. It was the person and work of God the Son to bring us to God the Father. In 1 Peter 3:18 we read: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Jesus Christ died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God.

When man sinned, the first thing he did was run from God. When man is saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the first thing he does is run back to God. Jesus Christ died to bring us unto God the Father. He said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." To know the Father is to have eternal life. Therefore, it is only Jesus Christ who will bring us into the presence of God the Father.

Stephen Charnock, an old Puritan, said it like this: "It is Christ triumphing in the consideration of his exaltation, and taking pleasure in the fruits of his sufferings. 'Thou wilt show me the path of life.' God has now opened the way to paradise, which was stopped up by a flaming sword, and made the path plain by admitting into heaven the head of the believing world. This is a part of the joy of the soul of Christ. He hath now a fullness of joy, a satisfying delight instead of an overwhelming sorrow, a fullness of joy not only for

some sparks and drops, as he had now and then in his debased condition. And that in the presence of his Father, his soul is fed and nourished with a perpetual vision of

God, in whose face he beholds no more frowns, no more designs of treating him as a servant, but such smiles that shall give a perpetual succession of joy to him, and fill his soul with fresh and pure flames. Pleasures they are, in comparison of which the greatest joys in this life are anguish and horrors. His soul hath joys without mixture, pleasures without number, a fullness without want, a constancy without interruption, and a perpetuity without end. So that is why he said, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

Application: Believers as Joint-Heirs with Christ

So Jesus Christ is enjoying all of that as He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. As it was for Jesus Christ, so it will be for His people, for He is our head and we are His body. Moreover, in Jesus Christ, we have an inheritance beyond description.

In Romans 8, verse 16, the Bible says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we're the children of God. Verse 17 says, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." The Bible tells us that we are not only heirs of God; we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Let us assume for a moment that I have a million Federal Reserve notes. I do not, but let us just assume that for a moment. I have four daughters. I could make a will and name my daughters, saying that each one gets $250,000. That would be dividing up a million dollars. Or I could name each one of my daughters and make them all joint heirs. Together they inherit the million dollars. In other words, it is not each one getting $250,000; each one has everything at one time. If they are joint heirs, each one gets everything, as it amounts to. When the Bible tells us that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, it means that we receive everything that He receives.

At His right hand is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. As He saw God the Father, we get to see God the Father. As He is raised to immortality, so we shall be raised to immortality.

The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The very fact that we are indwelled by the Holy Spirit, that He witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God, means that He has sealed us and guaranteed this inheritance. Just as surely as a child of God is possessed by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit of God resides in him, just that surely he will inherit God and be a joint heir with Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus Christ could say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He was shown the path of life. The only way that we can be in that path is through obedience to Him, trusting in His redemption and His merits, and following Him as He commands.

Conclusion and Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We thank You that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one can come to the Father but by Him. Even in His death, He trusted in Thee. He said, "Thou wilt show me the path of life. Thou wilt not leave my soul in corruption. Thou wilt not allow my body to corrupt." Lord, we can be just as sure that Thou wilt not leave our body in the grave, and that we will not see corruption, because of Thy divine revelation and resurrection and Thy almighty power. Help us, Father, to trust Thee, to look to Thee, to obey Thee, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ, who is our life, our way, our truth, and our path. Thank You, Father, in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 27

In The End

February 9, 2025

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 23:1-7 (KJV)

And in the seventh year, Jehoiada strengthened himself and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, and Ishmael the son of Johanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him. And they went into Judah and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said to them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord has said of the sons of David.

This is the thing that you shall do. A third part of you entering on the Sabbath of the priests and of the Levites shall be porters of the doors. And a third part shall be at the king's house, and a third part at the gate of the foundation. And all the people shall be in the courts of the house of the Lord. But let none come into the house of the Lord save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites; they shall go in, for they are holy. But all the people shall keep the watch of the Lord. And the Levites shall compass

> the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand. And whosoever else comes into the house, he shall be put to death. But you be with the king when he comes in and when he goes out.

Introduction: The Love of Endings

In the end, everyone loves a good ending. I know of some folks who are so addicted to the endings of a book that they oftentimes turn to the end and read it first, and then go back and read all the way through. In movies as well as books, there are surprise endings. Many times, one who reads with attention may discover how the book is going to end before he ever gets there. On the other hand, no one actually likes to have endings spoiled for them.

Most of you know that Alice and I do not have a TV. We have not had one in years. We do not want one, and we do not have time for one. However, years back, when we used to have a TV, Alice liked that NCIS program, a mystery whodunit. Occasionally, I would sit and watch it with her.

When we got rid of the TV, we never watched those programs anymore. But when we traveled and stayed in motels with some time available, she would turn on the TV to see if she could find NCIS. I would sit down with her, and after watching five minutes, I would say, “We have already seen this program. Now, to save you some time, I will tell you the plot, and I will tell you how it ends.” She would always look at me and say, “No thank you, I will watch the replay,” because she had already forgotten it. So I would get up, go to the computer, and go to work.

But we like happy endings. The truth of the matter is that not every story, not even every true story, has a happy ending. Consider 2 Chronicles 26 and the story of King Uzziah. He reigned for fifty-two years, an exceedingly long reign for a king. He did many wonderful things, obviously good things, and you and I would probably say that he was a good man. But in spite of all that he had done, and all of the blessings of the Lord upon him, and though he was helped by the Lord, his heart was lifted up with pride, and he sinned against the Lord.

The Danger of One Sinful Act

In chapter 26, verse 16, the Bible says, “But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.” That was reserved for the priests, and priests only.

Let me point out a truth that needs to be enforced in our minds: a good, godly, and obedient life can be destroyed by pride, hardheadedness, stubbornness, and disobedience. Uzziah is not remembered for all of his good deeds. He is usually remembered and preached about because of this incident. He rebelled against the Lord, and God smote him with leprosy.

“And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God.”

“Then Uzziah was wroth.” His attitude was, “While I’m the king, I can do what I want to do.” “Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord: and Jotham his son was over the king’s house, judging the people of the land.” Thus Uzziah is remembered for this rebellion against the Lord.

There is an interesting story everyone knows, found in 2 Samuel chapter 11: the story of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah. David committed adultery with Bathsheba while her husband Uriah was at war. When she told him she was with child, David thought he could

cover his deed. He sent for Uriah and asked for a report on how the war was going.

Then he sent a mess of meat down to the house. And, lo and behold, Uriah slept at the door. The next morning, when they told the king what had happened, David asked Uriah, "How is it you've come from the battle and went not down to your own house?" Uriah said, "How could I? The ark of God is in the field, and Joab and all the Lord's servants are there fighting the war. How could I go and rejoice with my wife and rest and have a good time? No, no, no. God forbid, I will not do that."

David tried to make him drunk, and he did make him drunk, but Uriah still slept at the king's door. He still refused to go to his own house. Finally, when David saw that he was not going down, he wrote that note: "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle and retire from him, that he may die." In that story, David is the bad guy; Uriah is the good guy. But at the end of that particular story, Uriah dies, and David, of course, is still alive.

There are many true stories that do not have what you and I would call happy endings. Thankfully, there are happy endings and endings with a real surprise for some individuals. The very first verse in the Bible, Genesis 1:1, says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The last book of the Bible, in Revelation chapter 11 and verse 15, says, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." So there is certainly going to be a happy ending there. It is going to be a happy ending for the saints of God, but a real surprise to the One Worlders, the New World Order crowd, and all of these dictators, tyrants, and despots. They are going to find out that, number one, they are

Not God; and, number two, their wills, wishes, wants, and decrees are nothing. They are going to find out that they will be destroyed in the end as well.

Revelation 14:12 speaks about the patience of the saints. Hebrews 10:36 tells the people of God, “You have need of patience.” Stop and think about this. We need patience not just because God tells us that we need patience, but it should be obvious that we need patience for

a multitude of reasons. Particularly, we need patience in reference to the justice, judgment, and vengeance of God.

If you remember Revelation 6, it was the souls of those who were beheaded for Christ's sake, who were under the altar, crying out, "How long, O Lord God, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood which was shed by those on the earth?" The Bible says that He gave them white robes and told them to be patient a little longer, until those who were to be martyred joined with them as well.

We need patience in the sense that it grieves us when we look around and see the wicked prospering and reigning, so to speak. We see men left and right with power, position, and money defying the Lord Jesus Christ, denying His Word, and trampling His saints under their feet.

The truth of the matter is that many of us are much like James and John. In Luke 9:52–54, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and was going to stop in Samaria, evidently to spend the night there. But when they saw that His face was steadfast to go to Jerusalem, the Bible says they received Him not. "Lord, no, no, no, You're not staying here." James and John said, "Lord, shall we call fire down out of heaven upon these people as Elijah did? Let's destroy them right now."

That is exactly the way many people are. We cannot discern why God does not instantly smite some of these people down. They are so wicked and vile. Thus we forget the truth, and we also forget Deuteronomy 32:34–35. Listen to what God asked: "Is not this laid up in store with me, and

So God has a particular treasure that He has stored up and sealed, belonging to Him alone. What is that peculiar treasure? He said, "To me belong vengeance and recompense. Their foot shall slide in due time, for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things which shall come upon them shall make haste." Listen to what He said was His peculiar treasure: vengeance is mine. Their foot shall slide in due time, and the things that shall come upon them shall make haste.

There is another truth that you and I often forget: 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 25 says concerning Jesus Christ, "For he must reign till he has put all of his enemies under his feet." The word

"reign" is a present active infinitive. Present active means it is something happening now and continuing to happen. "For he must reign"—how long? "Until he's put all his enemies under his feet." Jesus Christ is reigning now, and while He is reigning, He is actively subduing His enemies.

You may not see it or discern it, but the truth is, He is doing exactly that. We tend to forget that God may subdue His enemies in at least three different ways. First, He may simply take their lives; He must simply eradicate them. Second, He could take their position, their power, or their money, and therefore render them ineffective. Third, He could convert them, as He did Saul of Tarsus; they are no longer His enemies but have become His friends.

There are none of God's enemies who are going to escape. Look at Psalm 21, beginning with verse 8: "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies. Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee."

“Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger. The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against thee. They imagined a mischievous device which they were not able to perform. Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them. Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength. We will sing and praise thy name.” Notice that he said, “Thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.” In other words, God is not embarrassed to judge and destroy his enemies whatsoever.

Here is a truth that each of us must grasp and hold to: all tyrants, even wannabe tyrants, will end up defeated and destroyed. Their time will be short. Their foot shall slide in due time, and the things which shall come upon them will not tarry but shall make haste.

Our story in 2 Chronicles chapter 23 is one that has a happy ending for believers. But in order to understand it, we must understand 2 Chronicles 21 and 22; we are going to use that as a background for a moment.

Let me point out something about King Uzziah and King David. Uzziah was remembered not for his good deeds, but for his rebellion.

David is probably far more remembered for his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah than for anything else. Everybody knows about that. Uzziah was a godly man, and so was David; David was classified as a man after God's own heart. But you may destroy a good and godly testimony with one stupid, sinful, rebellious, and disobedient act.

You may destroy all of that with one act, but you cannot get it back with one act. You can destroy the trust of a lifetime in one act, but you cannot regain the trust of a lifetime in one act. So we need to pay attention to this truth and learn from the illustrations God has given us.

If you go back in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 21, you will find that King Jehoshaphat has died, and his son Jehoram is reigning in his stead. Jehoshaphat was a godly man; Jehoram, his son, was exceedingly ungodly. I am still absolutely amazed when studying the kings of Judah and Israel, especially Judah, because all the kings in Israel were wicked kings. Among the kings of Judah, however, you will find a godly man like Jehoshaphat who sires and raises an ungodly son like Jehoram. You will also find a godly man like Hezekiah who sires an ungodly son like Manasseh. On the other hand, some wicked kings sire a godly son. It is absolutely astounding. Grace and God's mercy run even among these families.

The Wicked Reign of Athaliah

Once Jehoram came to power, he did something very wicked and wrong: he murdered his own brothers, even though they were not in competition with him. 2 Chronicles 21:1 says, "Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead. And he had brethren, the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah. All these were the sons of Jehoshaphat, king of Israel. And their father gave them great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things with fenced cities in Judah. But the kingdom gave he to Jehoram because he was the firstborn. Now when Jehoram was risen up in the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself and slew all of his brethren with the sword and divers also of the princes of Israel."

These brothers were not necessarily competition. They were not fighting for the throne; they had everything they wanted. Their father distributed them throughout the country and gave them great riches as well. Yet Jehoram turned around and murdered them.

God now judges Jehoram. Before answering another question, consider this: Jehoram was in the southern kingdom, the kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom was known as Israel. Of course, the southern kingdom was Israel as well, but the northern kingdom had Samaria as its capital. Jehoram was actually in the southern kingdom, yet he ruled, reigned, and acted like one of the kings in the northern kingdom, which was totally and completely reprobate. So you have to ask yourself this question: Why was this man so wicked, so evil, and so ungodly?

Look in verse 6: “And he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab, for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife. And he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord.” He married Athaliah, who was the daughter of Ahab.

Can you imagine having Ahab as a father-in-law and Jezebel as a mother-in-law? You are going to find that the apples do not fall far from the tree. That is for sure. Pay attention to verse 6: “And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab, for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife.” Now look in chapter 22 and verse 2.

Now we are talking about Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram. “Forty-two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign. And he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah.” That was her name. “The daughter of Omri.” If you look back in chapter 21, verse 6, she is called the daughter of Ahab. But in chapter 22, verse 2, she is called the daughter of Omri. Is there a contradiction here? No. Was she the daughter of Ahab or the daughter of Omri? Both, because Ahab was the son of Omri. Many times in the Bible, the children, the sons and daughters of the son, are referred to as the children of the grandparents. Take my grandsons. I would always call them my right-hand man. Yes, they are mine. There is another way that she is called the daughter of Omri: she followed in his footsteps—in his worship, his religion, and

his politics. Just like Ahab did, so did she. You are going to find out. So the reason then Jehoram was so wicked and so vile

Jehoram was married to Athaliah, who was a worshiper of Baal and a very, very wicked woman, that is for sure. Because of Jehoram's wickedness, the curse of God came upon him. In 2 Chronicles 21:12, Elijah the prophet wrote: "Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself: Behold, with a great plague will the Lord smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: and thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of sickness day upon day."

That is not all. Verse 16 says, "Moreover the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabians that were near the Ethiopians." He stirred up all these people to attack and trouble him. Notice that he was to die of a horrible disease. Verse 18 says, "And after all this the Lord smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. And it came to pass that in the process of time after the end of two years his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness. So he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him like the burning of his fathers."

He had this horrible, vile disease, very painful undoubtedly, for two years. His stomach rotted away; everything rotted until his bowels simply fell out. Jehoram was dead. Upon his death, his son Ahaziah came to the throne. In chapter 22, verse 1, "And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his stead."

Why the youngest? Here is why: “For the band of the men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest.” He was the only one left. So Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram, king of Judah, reigned. “Forty-two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign. And he reigned one year in Jerusalem.” Just one year. “His mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri. And he also walked in

the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor to do wickedly. Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the Lord like the house of Ahab, for they were his counselors after the death of his father to his destruction." His wickedness and destruction are laid at the feet of his mother and all those who were his counselors as well.

Ahaziah was slain by Jehu, the son of Nimshi. You have to understand that the kings of Judah and the kings of Samaria oftentimes had the same name, or the same-sounding name. Ahab had a son by the name of Joram or Jehoram, the same as Ahaziah's father. Joram, or Jehoram, the king of Samaria, was on the throne there in Samaria, and he had war with the Syrians. The Syrians wounded him, so he came back, I think it was to Jezreel, to be healed.

Ahaziah, the king of Judah, then went to check on his uncle. If Joram was the son of Ahab, and Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab, then Joram, the king of Samaria, king of Israel, was his uncle. At this particular time, God had raised up Jehu, the son of Nimshi, anointed him king over Israel, over in Samaria, the northern kingdom, and gave him an order to eradicate and exterminate the house of Ahab. Ahab was already dead because he had been shot through with an arrow. While Jehu was taking care of the house of Ahab, he also took care of Jezebel, Ahab's wife. The Bible says that when he came up there, she tired her head, painted her face, and stuck her head out the window, probably on the second or third floor.

Jezebel looked at Jehu and said, "Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?" The words teach us to learn a lesson from Zimri. Zimri reigned only seven days before he was killed. Jehu then said, "Who is with me?" Two eunuchs looked out from the window, and he said, "Throw her down." They threw her down, and he trampled her with the horses, perhaps running the chariot over her as well. He trampled her down into the ground.

Jezebel was slain. Ahaziah had gone up to check on Jehoram. Jehu met Jehoram and Ahaziah. Joram said, "There's treachery, Ahaziah." Ahaziah turned to run, and so did Joram. Jehu took care of Joram and then said, "Go find Ahaziah. He is in the family of Ahab too because his mother was Athaliah." They captured Ahaziah and the men with him, and Jehu executed them as well.

Take note of two things. First, Jehoram of Judah died of what we would call natural causes. He died of a great bowel disease where his bowels gushed out, yet it was the judgment of God upon him. Ahaziah died because he was executed by Jehu, the son of Nimshi. Both men were judged by God. Both men died because of God's judgment.

Athaliah was the wife of Jehoram of the southern kingdom and the mother of Ahaziah, who had just been killed. She then did a very un-grandmotherly thing: she murdered all her grandchildren. Second Chronicles chapter 22, beginning with verse 10, says, "But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah."

But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Joram and the wife of Jehoiada the priest, hid him from Athaliah so that she slew him not. She hid him in the temple; he was with them hid in the house of God six years, and Athaliah reigned over the land.

Athaliah was not chosen by God or by the people. She was a usurper, a murderer, a thief, and

Athaliah was a tyrant. She did not have, nor did she meet, any biblical requirements to be a ruler. Moreover, she certainly was not a son of David. She was the daughter of Ahab and the granddaughter of Omri, who were Baal worshippers and murderers. Both Omri and Ahab were murderers, as was Jezebel, and they were both tyrants. Thus, she had absolutely no qualifications. She got the throne only by murder, usurpation, and theft, and she reigned nearly seven years, bringing havoc across the land.

Restoration Begins Spiritually and Covenantally

When you get to 2 Chronicles chapter 23, we begin to see the justice of God coming to pass and being executed. Joash, the one grandson of Ahaziah not murdered by his grandmother, had been hidden in the temple and taught and raised by Jehoiada the high priest. He was made king at the age of seven years. What kind of king could a

seven-year-old child be? But Jehoiada had taught him. Some of our founding fathers had graduated with master's degrees by the time they were thirteen or fourteen. I think it was Sam Adams who went as a diplomat to Russia at the age of fourteen. Things were different back then. One requirement for entering college was already being able to read, write, and speak Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. You did not learn that in college; you learned it at home. Many children learned to read, write, and speak those languages by the time they were five or six years of age.

So here he is in the temple, and at seven years of age they are going to make him king of Judah and king of Jerusalem. The first truth we should notice in 2 Chronicles 23 is that restoration and justice began on a spiritual level.

It did not begin with government. Let me put this very plainly: there is never going to be a top-down restoration or a top-down execution of justice. It does not begin at the top, because the top is usually corrupt. Look in 2 Chronicles 23:1–2: "In the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself and took the captains of the hundreds," naming them. "He took them into covenant with him and they went about in Judah and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah and the chief of the fathers of Israel and they came to Jerusalem." It started with Jehoiada the priest. Then he went out and gathered the other men and the rest of the Levites, and they all came to Jerusalem.

Here is something we must learn: true justice is biblical justice, and there is no justice apart from biblical justice, because God determines what justice is. Man does not determine it; God does. That is why you look around today. I just read where an illegal alien who raped a young girl was released without bail. Daniel Perry, who defended one or two people and choked a man while trying to keep him from hurting the others, and the man was killed, was put under something like a million-dollar bond. Explain to me how one is justice and the other injustice. No, the rapist should have been under a million-dollar bond, and they should have given Daniel an honorary key to the city or something. I am simply saying that we have no justice apart from the Word of God and God Himself. It is

impossible for us to know what justice is apart from God and His Word.

The second truth we need to consider is that the restoration of the kingdom—or, in another way, the restoration of the country and the nation—and the true execution of justice came about through covenant. Look at the latter part of verse 1. What did he do? He took all these men into covenant with him. Now look down to verse 3: "And all the congregation"—representatives of the people of the nation and country—"made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the

"Lord had said of the sons of David." So they made a covenant. We usually do not think covenantally, but we should. We look at our Bibles and see that they are divided into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. We fail to understand that the word testament means covenant. Thus, we have the old covenant and the new covenant. Not only that, our salvation is based upon covenant. It is based upon the eternal covenant, which we read about in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 20: "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."

When you stop and think about this, practically everything in our lives is based upon covenant. Our marriages are covenantal in nature. Our work is covenantal in nature. Our church attendance is covenantal in nature. You may ask, How can that be? I am under covenant to teach and preach the Word of God. You are under covenant to hear the Word of God taught and obey it. You cannot escape covenant. Everything that we do is basically covenant-based.

Now, if you will look at verse 16 of 2 Chronicles 23, there is another verse on this: "And Jehoiada made a covenant between him"—that would actually be the Lord—"and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the Lord's people." Actually, there were two covenants here, or one covenant in two parts. He made a covenant between the Lord, the king, and the people, and between the king and the people.

If you hold 2 Chronicles 23 and turn back to 2 Kings chapter 11, verse 17 teaches this more clearly. It is the same account concerning Athaliah and Jehoiada: "And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people that they should be the Lord's people; between the king also and the people." The first covenant, or first part of it, was between the Lord, the king, and the people. The king and the people agreed to be the Lord's people; they agreed to obey Him and follow His Word. The second part of the covenant was between the king and the people: the king agreed to rule faithfully and biblically, and the people agreed to obey him as long as he did. This was covenantally based.

We do not normally consider this same truth in relationship to ourselves and to our own government. Regardless of your view concerning the Constitution of the United States, it is a covenant, because the states created the federal government and said, "This is how we're going to interact. This is how we will support you." The federal government then turned around and said, "I agree that these are my limitations expressed in this document." We agree to rule according to this Constitution. So it is indeed a covenant.

The Coronation of Joash and Execution of Athaliah

Since there was an agreement, it did have some semblance of legality and lawfulness, even though it was not perfectly and thoroughly biblical. Whenever the Constitution is ignored, overlooked, usurped, denied, and overturned, the government has become despotical and tyrannical. Then it wants you to obey its every whim, desire, and decree: "We are your rulers. You must bow down regardless of what we say." Which is a lie.

I know he's dead now, but I remember reading years ago about Alcee Hastings, who was a representative from Florida. Someone asked him, "What are the rules that you follow when you're making or passing a law?" Alcee Hastings responded, "There ain't no rules. We make them up as we go." If there are no rules, then we are not a government of law. If there are no laws that are legal and lawful, then we are under dictatorship and tyranny. It is just that simple.

I would encourage you, if you do not remember this, to go back and listen to my messages on Romans 13, or at least get my book and

read the chapter on the covenantal nature of government. In that chapter I explain the biblical principle that when one party violates the covenant, it releases the other party from obedience.

Stop and think about that. It is true between God and man. God covenanted with Israel: "If you obey me, I'll bless you." They disobeyed Him, and He cursed them and sent them into captivity. God was not obligated to bless them in their disobedience and rebellion. The same is true between man and man. If Steve agrees to fix my car for a thousand bucks and does not fix it, but only halfway fixes it,

He wants me to pay him. I said, "I'm not going to pay him." Why? He had not fulfilled his end of the covenant. He said, "I'll sue you." "Fine, sue me." He took me to court, and the judge asked, "Do you owe this man a thousand dollars?" I said, "No, I do not." When he asked why, I said, "Here is the covenant. Here is the contract." He had agreed to fix my car, and I had agreed to pay him a thousand dollars. He had not fixed my car, so I did not owe him the money until he fixed it.

If that is true between God and man, and between man and man, it is also true between government and man. When government violates the covenant, we are not obligated to obey—not at all.

Once the covenant was completed and the parties agreed to it in 2 Chronicles 23, the king was brought forth and given the testimony, which was a copy of the law of God. In 2 Chronicles 23:11, the Bible says, "Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king. God save the king."

What happened next is absolutely astounding. Reading it makes me wish I could have been there to see the expression on Athaliah's face. Verse 12 says, "Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the Lord," probably the first time she had been there. "And she looked, and behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in of the princes and the trumpets by the king. And all the people of the land rejoiced and sounded with trumpets, and the

singers with instruments of music. And such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes and said, Treason! Treason!"

Why? She hears the noise, comes in, and sees the one grandson she missed. He is anointed king, and she cries, "Treason! Treason! Treason!" Athaliah was the one who committed treason. She was a usurper, a traitor, and a murderer. Yet, just as it is today, she refers to Jehoiada and the godly men with him as traitors.

Do you realize that people today who want to live right, do right, and be biblical, conservative, and constitutional are known as right-wing nuts? Even the word patriot has come under fire. "Oh, he's a patriot," is spoken with a bad connotation. In other words, what Athaliah was doing, she was calling these people what she actually was herself. She was treasonous and traitorous. And so it is today as well.

Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds who were set over the host and said, "Have her forth without the ranges. And whoso followeth her, let him be slain with a sword." For the priest said, "Slay her not in the house of the Lord." He said, "Don't kill her in here. Let her get out a little ways. Then you kill her, and everybody who follows her."

This is true justice. "So they laid hands on her. When she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king's house, they slew her there." Remember, her mother Jezebel was trampled by the horses. Adam Clarke said of this verse, "So that she was trampled happily by the horses as her mother had been. Howsoever, she was slain among the stables and the dunghills of the king's house." She died as she lived, with the dunghills and the stench of the stables. It was justice executed and justice deserved.

The Ultimate End: God's Sovereign Reign

Here is a picture of what is going to happen in the end, and what is going to happen to all the tyrants and dictators, wannabe tyrants and dictators, all those who hate our Lord, and all those who fight against him. Ultimately, desecration, dishonor, destruction, and death await each one. They will die as rebels, having lived against

God as outlaws against God, and they will die as she died. They will perish with and as the dung for which they lived.

This is why the Scriptures tell us, “You have need of patience.” God has everything under control. In the end, God will be reigning supremely and sovereignly, just as he is reigning supremely and sovereignly now. All those who oppose him shall perish.

Anyone who thinks that it is possible to overthrow God, resist him, deceive him, or stop or thwart him is deceived, and basically is in for a real surprise. Denial of this reality is nothing more than a death wish. Look in your Bibles to the book of Revelation, chapter 19, beginning with verse 1: “After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Hallelujah. Salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God.”

“For true and righteous are his judgments, for he has judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication”—spiritually, politically, physically, any which way—“and he has judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Hallelujah. And her smoke rose up forever and ever.” In the end, yes, all that oppose our Lord shall be brought

In the end, the saints of God shall be vindicated, blessed, established, and stand in the absolute righteousness and holiness perfected by our Lord Jesus Christ in obedience to his Father and his law. In God's ending, even the earth will be released from its bondage of corruption with all the saints. Paradise will be restored, heaven gained, and eternity given to serve and worship our great God and Savior. It is a happy and blessed ending for those who serve and worship the Lord Jesus Christ. However, it will be a surprise ending to those who hate him and think they will set up a kingdom of their own. No, no, no. The kingdoms of this world are going to become the kingdom of our God and his Christ.

We can look around today and wring our hands, saying, "Look at all the wickedness and corruption." We need to remember that he must reign until he has subdued his enemies, and he is subduing them. We may not see it or be able to discern it, but he is doing so.

One of my favorite stories is that of Martin Luther and his successor, Philip Melanchthon. You know that Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the castle church door in October 1517, beginning the Reformation. During the Reformation, not only Luther but those who followed him were persecuted. Their goods were confiscated, they were thrown into dungeons, and some were murdered. I read that Philip Melanchthon was walking back and forth across the room while Luther sat at his desk studying and reading. Melanchthon wrung his hands and said, "Oh, Luther, oh, Luther, what are we going to do? Look at what is happening. Look how they are attacking us and trying to destroy us. Oh, Luther, Luther, what are we going to do?"

It was written that Martin Luther lifted his eyes from his book and said, "Let Philip Melanchthon cease to rule the world and all shall be well." God does have it all under control. The end will be his ending. He will vindicate his saints, destroy his enemies, and give us his grace and glory.

Father, we ask for your blessing and help, and pray that you would teach us and build us up in the most holy faith, giving us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

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