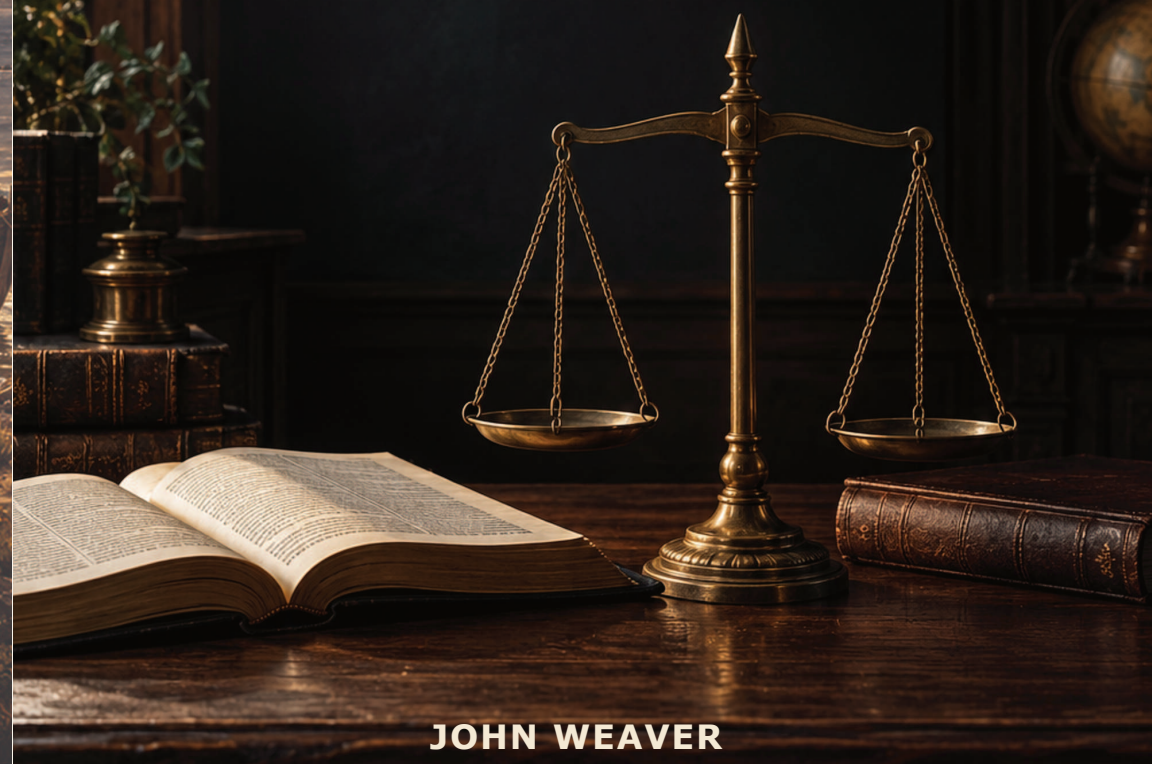
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BIBLICAL STUDIES

Romans: Justification, Faith, and Imputed Righteousness

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

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

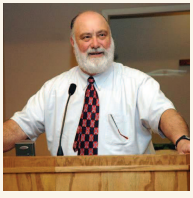
Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

ROMANS 5:1

This Romans-related collection considers justification, faith, law, peace with God, and the practical responsibilities of Christian conduct. John Weaver draws on passages throughout Scripture to distinguish the ground of acceptance with God from the duties that follow. These topical sermons invite careful attention to grace, righteousness, and obedience.

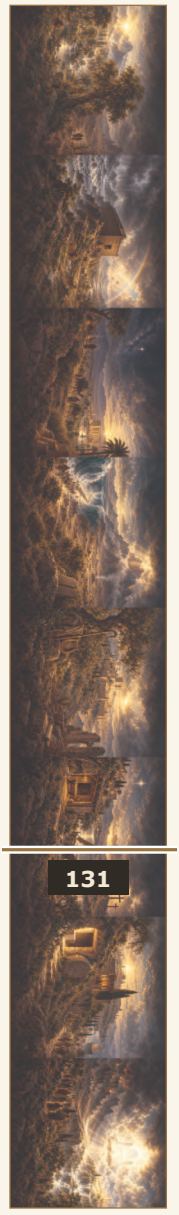
“Love has not replaced the law; love is the fulfilling of the law.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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



BOOK 131

WEAVER BOOKS

Romans: Justification, Faith, and Imputed Righteousness

New Testament Studies

John Weaver

Weaver Bible College

LIBRARY BOOK 131

Romans: Justification, Faith, and Imputed Righteousness

John Weaver

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Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Corrected review edition - October 4, 2026. Repeated full sermons have been consolidated; chapter numbers, contents, indexes, and study-guide reading ranges follow this corrected edition. Original transcript variants remain preserved in the editorial archive. Final editorial and publisher approval is still required.

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CHAPTER 1

Application & Practicality of Biblical Law

August 17, 2000

The Abiding Validity of the Law

Introduction: An Extreme Foundational Sermon

Tonight is what I am going to call an extreme foundational sermon. After tonight, I am going to take the next two nights and show you what is wrong in our personal lives, our families, our state, and our nation, and how the Word of God, the law of God, can be made very practical and applicable. But tonight I want to bring a message on the abiding validity of the law.

The Divine Prohibition (Matthew 5:17)

In Matthew chapter 5, beginning with verse 17, Christ says, “Think not that I'm come to destroy the law, the prophets. I'm not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” “For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least

commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The teaching of Jesus Christ was entirely different from the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees. In fact, Matthew 7:29 says concerning Christ, "For He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." So very clearly, His teaching was different.

Because Jesus Christ was against the tradition of the elders and the pharisaical interpretations, the rulers of His day supposed Him to be a charlatan and a deceiver, going about to destroy the very foundations of piety. Of course, Jesus Christ was not attempting to destroy the foundations of piety. He was destroying their traditions and their misinterpretations of God's Word and God's law. Thus, by open accusation or subtle insinuation, it was around that Christ and His teachings were contrary to the law.

In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus Christ sets the record straight: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law of the prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Let me give you very quickly an outline. We are going to look at verse 17 tonight, and you are going to see a divine prohibition. Jesus Christ said, "Think not"—in other words, do not even begin to think.

He prohibits us from thinking something in verse 17. Then, in verse 18, you have a solemn affirmation: "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." In verse 19, you have a necessary conclusion: "...whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Then, in verse 20, you have a very serious warning: "For I say unto you that except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

First of all, Christ is not pitting Himself against the law of God. So many people try to say, “Well, Brother Weaver, don't you know that the Old Testament is law and the New Testament is grace?” No, I don't know that. The Bible says in Genesis chapter 6, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” And the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians chapter 6, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise.” You have grace in the Old Testament, and you have law in the New Testament.

These two are not contradictory. They are not antithetical or against each other. In fact, they are complementary; that is, they complete each other. Secondly, Christ is not establishing some higher authority than the law of God. The Bible says in Romans 7, verse 12, that “the law is holy and the commandment is holy, just and good.” If God's law is holy, just, and good, why would Jesus Christ replace it? Certainly He would not. Christ is refuting and denying the false misinterpretations and misapplications of the Pharisees, and He is establishing God's law word as final and authoritative.

So, in verse 17, consider this divine prohibition: “Think not that I have come to destroy the law of the prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” Note the words “think not.” They literally mean, do not even begin to think. Do not even let it enter into your mind.

This same phrase is translated a different way: “God forbid,” or literally, “perish the thought.” Jesus Christ is saying, “Perish the thought. God forbid, don’t even begin to think that I’ve come to destroy the law or the prophets. I’ve not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” Here, then, is a clear command and a divine prohibition. Jesus Christ said there is something that we are not even to begin to let enter into our minds. In verse 17 He says, “Think not that I am come to destroy.”

The word “destroy” is katalusai in the Greek, and it literally means to annul, to make invalid, to repeal, to dissolve, to dismantle, to abrogate, or to take apart piece by piece. Literally, He says, “Do not even begin to think that I am come to disannul or dismantle or abrogate or set aside the law or the prophets. I am not come to

destroy." Notice that He said "the law or the prophets." This phrase is usually used in the Bible to refer to the entirety of the Word of God.

For instance, Luke 24:27 says, "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." "Moses and the prophets," or "Moses or the prophets," is an expression referring to the totality of Scripture. Thus Jesus says, "Do not even begin to think that I'm come to destroy the law or the prophets." He is saying, "I'm not come to set aside anything."

When we talk about the law of God, most people divide it into three categories. First is the ceremonial law: the rules and ordinances of worship around the tabernacle and the temple. Second is the judicial law, describing the ordinances of government. Third is the moral law, which most people refer to as the Ten Commandments.

I will make a confession. I do not particularly like that division, and I'll tell you why. When you talk about the ceremonial, the judicial, and the moral, somehow it almost implies that only the last is legitimate because it is moral. But let me tell you something: the ceremonial laws were moral as well. The judicial laws were moral as well. Everything that God does and everything that God says is right, because God is God. Yet usually we simply say, "Here is the ceremonial, here is the judicial, and here is the moral."

Jesus Christ said, "Think not. Don't even begin to think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets." Jesus Christ did not come to invent a new way of religion. He did not come to start a new way of salvation. What Jesus Christ came to do was to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. He came to bring into fruition everything that the Word of God talked about in the Old Testament.

Look again at Matthew chapter 5, verse 17: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets." Let me use this to express what we are talking about when our Lord says, "Do not even begin to think that I am come to destroy the law," because He uses the phrase "the law or the prophets." The word "destroy" means to dismantle, to abrogate, to repeal, or to take apart piece by piece. Apply that to the

prophets. When He says, “Do not even begin to think that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets,” if you were to destroy the prophets, what would you be doing?

You would be denying their validity. You would be, in essence, repudiating their inspiration. You would be saying that the prophets have absolutely no binding power and no binding influence upon anyone. You can see that, can’t you?

Take that very same meaning and apply it to the law. When He says, “I am come to destroy the law,” He is not saying, “Well, you just should not break the law.” No, that is not what He is saying. What He is saying is, “I am not come to deny its validity. I am not come to deny its authority and its binding power.” So He says, “Do not even begin to think that I am come to destroy the law of the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” Now, let me deal with the word “fulfill.” This is basic, so we can have a point of beginning. The word “fulfill” is from the Greek word pleroo.

The word “fulfill” has basically three meanings. Number one, it means to fill and to make full. Number two, it means to set forth fully and to cause to abound. And number three, it means to fill and to keep full, to put something into full force as continuous. So Jesus Christ says, “Do not think that I’ve come to abrogate or to annul or set aside the law or the prophets. I’ve not come to do that. Rather, what I’ve come to do is put it into full force as continuous. I’ve come to fulfill it.”

Let us take the word “fulfill” in its broadest application. How did Jesus Christ fulfill the law? First of all, He fulfilled the law by enunciating the law in His teachings. Jesus Christ corrected the misinterpretations and misapplications of the Pharisees, giving the law its proper place and its proper teaching. Thus, Jesus Christ fulfilled the law by enunciating it. Secondly, Jesus Christ fulfilled the law by exemplifying the law in His life.

How Christ Fulfilled the Law

The Bible says in the book of Galatians, chapter four, “But when the fullness 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." Jesus Christ is the only individual that ever lived who kept the law personally, perfectly, and perpetually. Jesus Christ said in John chapter 8 and verse 29, "I do always those things which please the Father." Jesus Christ was made under the law, the Bible says, and He rendered to that law a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience.

Consider how important the law of God is. Which is more important: the circumcision of Christ or the crucifixion of Christ? Most everyone will say the crucifixion, but circumcision is just as important, because had Jesus Christ not kept the law, the crucifixion would have been to no avail. By coming and being made under the law, Jesus Christ worked out, earned, and merited a perfect righteousness.

I want you to keep these three terms in your mind because I'm going to bring them up later. The law of God demands three things of every individual: a personal obedience, a perfect obedience, and a perpetual obedience. Jesus Christ is the only One who ever rendered what the law demanded. That is why Isaiah, the Word of God, prophesied that Jesus Christ would make God's law honorable. He did so by obeying it in its totality, absolutely, and in every detail. Why is it important that Jesus Christ kept the law perfectly?

Let me ask you another question. I want you to think about this, but do not answer it out loud. Let us suppose that the only thing Jesus Christ did for you—the only thing—was to forgive you of your sins. That is all, nothing else. If all Jesus Christ did for you was forgive you of your sins, would that be sufficient to get you into the presence of God? The answer is no. Forgiveness of sins might keep you out of hell, but it would not get you into the presence of God. Why? Because if you are to go into the presence of God, you need more than forgiveness of your sins. You need an absolute, perfect righteousness.

Let me show you that. Look in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. This is one of the most grand and glorious doctrines in the Word of God. This is known as the doctrine of imputation.

Let me try to explain it for a moment. Everyone in here, especially most of the women, knows what the word "imputation" means. You

say, “Well, Weaver, I don’t.” You may not know technically, but you know practically. Many times, when you go to the store and see a beautiful dress you would like to buy but do not have enough money for, you go get it anyhow. You say, “Impute this to my husband’s account.” Not really. You just say, “Charge it.” That is what the doctrine of imputation is. Now, let me show you.

Let us suppose this tube of chapstick is the believer’s sin, and let us suppose that this pocket knife represents the perfect righteousness that Jesus Christ worked out, that He earned, and that He merited by His perfect obedience to the law of God.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, He—that is, God the Father—made Him, that is, Jesus Christ, God the Son, to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. What did God do? God took our sins and imputed them, charging them to the account of Jesus Christ. Then God took the perfect righteousness that Jesus Christ earned and merited by His obedience to the law and charged that to our account. And so now God sees us as perfectly righteous in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ fulfilled the law, not only by enunciating it, but by rendering a practical, perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience unto it. And then, thirdly, Jesus Christ empowers His people to keep the law of God.

Consider the New Covenant. What has He done according to Jeremiah 31? What has He done according to Hebrews 10? He has written His laws upon our hearts, where now we want to obey Him. We now want to honor Him. Lastly, His law is going to be executed upon unbelievers.

There are many people who say, “The law has been done away with.” But if the law has been done away with, how in the world is God going to judge the wicked? What standard will He use? If the law has been done away with, how will He ever judge the wicked?

Very clearly, the law has not been done away with, because the curse and the broken penalty of that law will be charged upon the wicked, and they shall perish for their sins. In Matthew 5:17, our Lord is confirming and establishing the law by giving us a divine prohibition. He says, “Don’t even begin to think, don’t even let it

enter into your mind that I've come to destroy the law of the prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

Explaining Negative New Testament Passages on the Law

You say, "Brother Weaver, I read my Bible. And I do know that there are some passages, especially in the New Testament, that tend to make one believe that the law has been done away with." Yes, I understand there's some passages like that, and I'm going to show you some of them in just a moment. But may I remind you this? First of all, when it comes to biblical interpretation, you cannot interpret one Scripture so as to make it contradict another plain Scripture. If you do so, your interpretation is wrong.

Now, I don't know how much plainer that you can get than Matthew 5:17, where Christ says, "Do not even begin to think that I've come to destroy the law. I have not come to destroy it, but I've come to put it into full force that's continuous." So, first of all, you cannot interpret one passage to make it contradict another passage. Secondly, you cannot pit Scripture against Scripture. You cannot pick and choose. You can't say, "Oh, Brother Weaver, I'm going to believe this one, but I'm not going to believe that." Oh, no.

We bow to the totality of the Word of God. Now, let me just show you now, please, please write these down or memorize them or something. I'm going to show you three ways that every negative passage in the New Testament can be explained, that is, every negative passage concerning the law. And if you will study the context of every negative passage, you will find that one of these three explanations will always be there in the context.

First of all, there are those passages that renounce the law as a means of justification. I'm going to show it to you in the Bible in just a moment, but let me say this. There is no one that will ever be justified by the law. There's no one that will ever be saved by keeping the law. It is absolutely impossible. And so what the Apostle Paul is doing is he is renouncing not the law of God as a whole, but he is renouncing it as a means of justification. God never gave the law as a standard for justification.

If you look in your Bibles to the book of Romans, chapter six, notice verse 14. And may I remind you, we'll look at the context later, but may I remind you that the apostles' argument for justification by faith actually begins in chapter 3 and runs all the way through chapter 8. When you get to chapter 6, this is right smack dab in the middle of an argument of justification by faith only. He says in Romans 6 and verse 14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you." Why?

"For you are not under the law, but under grace." What does Paul mean? Does that mean I can go out and murder, or be a whoremonger? Of course not. He is saying that you are not under the law as a means of justification. God never gave you that law. We are under grace, justified by grace through faith. The law was never intended as an instrument of justification.

Galatians 2:16 cannot be any plainer, but it is a negative passage concerning the law and what it is doing. It renounces the law as a means of justification: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law. And by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Is Paul saying the law is no good? No. He is saying that God never gave the law as a standard for justification.

No one is ever saved by keeping the law, because it is impossible. I had an unconverted friend, an older man who had lived through the Depression. I enjoyed being around him because he had much wisdom about doing without and saving. I witnessed to him many times, and one time he told me, "Brother Weaver, let me tell you this. I have no doubt that I'm going to heaven." I asked, "What do you base that upon?" He said, "Well, I don't beat my wife. I pay my bills and I treat my neighbor right." I said, "Sir, you're lost. You're never ever going to work your way into heaven. You can't. It's impossible."

So there are passages that renounce the law as a means of justification. Secondly, there are passages that point to the death-dealing nature of sin in relation to the law.

There are those passages that point to the death-dealing nature of sin in relation to the law. You say, "What are you talking about?" Look in the book of Galatians, chapter 3, verse 13, to begin with. Notice the Apostle Paul says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." He has not redeemed us from the law; He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree."

Now, wait a minute. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. How do we get under the curse of the law? Let us go back and read Galatians chapter 3, verse 10. Watch carefully. He says, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." That is, if you are trying to be saved by the law, if you are trying to be justified by the law, you are under the curse of the law.

What is it? "For it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident, that the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them."

Go back, if you would, to verse 10. He said, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them." What does the law demand? It demands a personal obedience, a perfect obedience, and a perpetual obedience. Who can give it that? No one. Let me show you. Suppose that you were enabled from this day forward to live a perfect life. You never sinned again physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. From this day forward, you were perfect. From this day forward, you gave the law personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. Would that get you into the presence of God? No. Because what about all those sins you committed before you became perfect? It is impossible. God never, ever gave a law for justification.

Sometimes there are those passages that point to the death-dealing nature of sin in relationship to the law, saying that we are under the curse, under the broken penalty, or under the penalty for breaking that law.

In Galatians 2:19, the Apostle Paul says, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." What does Paul

mean by, "I, through the law, am dead to the law"? Does that mean Paul can go out and commit adultery? No. Does that mean Paul can go out and steal? No.

He is saying, "I, through the law, am dead to the curse and to the penalty of that law, that I might live unto God." Why is he free from the curse and the penalty? Because he has been redeemed by Christ, who suffered the penalty and the curse in our stead.

There is a third way to explain the negative passages: those Scriptures that refer to what we call the ceremonial law. Look in Ephesians chapter 2. All of God's law is in full effect, but notice what this passage says about Jesus Christ. In verse 13: "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." He is speaking of that partition in the tabernacle, that partition in the temple. Verse 15 says, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments," not the moral law or the judicial law, but "the law of commandments contained in ordinances," referring to the ceremonial law, "for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

You may say, “Brother Weaver, you just said that all of God’s law is in effect. But now you have said that some passages refer to the ceremonial law that Christ took out of the way.” I understand that, and I did say that. That is one way to explain the negative passages. But understand something about the ceremonial law. You may say, “The ceremonial law has been done away with because we do not have a high priest, an altar, or a temple, and we do not bring dripping blood sacrifices.”

Let me ask you a question. When you were in church this past Lord’s Day, did you worship God? The ceremonial law has not been done away with, per se. It has been fulfilled, and we now have the substance, the reality, where in the Old Testament they had the type and the shadow. You may say, “I do not go to high priests.” If you do not, you do not worship God, for Jesus Christ is our High Priest. Hebrews chapter 4. “But I did not bring a sacrifice.” If you did not, you did not worship God, for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed

for us. 1 Corinthians 5. “I did not come to an altar.” If you did not, you did not come to God. Hebrews 13. We have an altar, Jesus Christ, where those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. Jesus Christ is our temple, our altar, our sacrifice, and our High Priest.

This ceremonial law has not been done away with. We have the substance and the reality; it has been fulfilled in Christ. It continues because we have reality. God’s judicial law has not been done away with. The death penalty is still in effect. Jesus Christ did not destroy the Scripture that says, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” He did not destroy the passage that says, “Thou shalt not suffer a murderer to live.” And certainly the moral law has not been done away with. He says, “Do not even begin to think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

Consequences of Doing Away with the Law

Let us reason together from Scripture. Inevitably, invariably, you have heard—and may even have said, taught, or preached yourself—that the law has been done away with. I did in times past, until I learned better. Now, think seriously about that.

If the law has been done away with, there is no such thing as sin. If it has been done away with, what is wrong with adultery? What is wrong with murder? What is wrong with theft? I am going to show you this from Scripture in just a moment, but one of my men came to me a few years ago and said, “Brother Weaver, you know Pastor so-and-so down the street.” I said, “No, I don’t know him.”

He said, “I was talking to him the other day, and he told me the law had been done away with.” I said, “Oh, he doesn’t believe that.” The gentleman became a little irritated, thinking I was questioning him. He said, “That’s what he told me.” I said, “No, Mark. You misunderstood. I did not say he did not tell you that. I meant that he does not really believe that.”

I am not saying this to be ugly, funny, crass, or gross; I am trying to prove a point. I said, “Mark, he doesn’t really believe that the law has been done away with.” He said, “I don’t know whether or not he

believes it, but that's what he said." I said, "I can tell you how you can test him." He asked, "How?" I said, "Go back to him and ask him if it would be all right with him if you spent the night with his wife." What do you think that preacher would have done? He would probably have swung at Mark. I would have.

But folks, listen to me: if the law has been done away with, what is wrong with adultery?

You and I cannot even know what sin is without the law. Romans 3:20 says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Here is a negative passage concerning the law dealing with justification. The law was never given for justification, but you cannot even know what sin is apart from the law of God.

Paul asks in Romans 7:7, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid." That expression means, "Perish the thought. Don't even let it enter into your mind." He continues, "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Then he says, "For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

What in the world is he talking about? Do you remember that Paul was a Pharisee? In Philippians chapter three, he describes himself as a Pharisee of the Pharisees and says that, "as touching the law," he was "blameless." The Pharisees always taught that the law was totally external. They taught that as long as you had never taken a knife, plunged it into someone's heart, and killed him, you were not a murderer. But that is not what Jesus Christ taught. Christ said, "If you hate your brother, you're a murderer." They said that if you had never physically lain with another man's wife, you were not an adulterer. But Christ said, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

The Pharisees externalized everything. Paul was saying, "I was alive once without the law. I was blameless." He thought he had a righteousness that was perfect—his own righteousness. But when the commandment came, when he saw the spirituality of the law, sin

revived and he died. When he saw that God's law touches even the inward nature and inward part of man, he realized, "I am a sinner."

I'm the one that had sinned and come short of the glory of God. And I died to my self-righteousness and to my works. You cannot even know what sin is without the law. In 1 John chapter 3 and verse 4, John tells us exactly what sin is: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law." You can't sin without violating God's law. If you haven't violated God's law, you haven't sinned. But whenever you violate God's law, you've sinned. If the law has been done away with, we don't know what sin is. We can't preach against it or define it. But John said, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law."

If the law has been done away with, not only is there no sin, there is no salvation. You say, "What?" Well, look in your Bibles. Galatians chapter 3 and verse 24 says, "Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.

I realize the illustration I'm about to use will not be appropriate for today's children. But some of us who are a little older will remember the days of the one-room schoolhouse when the teacher had several grades in one room. Usually there was a blackboard behind the teacher, and on top of that blackboard was a rod—not just a switch, but a rod. In the upper left-hand corner of the blackboard, there was something like this: "Lying, five lashes. Stealing, seven lashes. Cursing, eight lashes. Fighting, ten lashes." If you got caught fighting, they didn't take you to the principal's office and smack you once or twice. They brought you up in front of the class, you took your shirt off, and they gave you ten lashes.

Because that's what the law demanded. What does a schoolteacher do? A schoolteacher not only educates, but disciplines. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The law teaches us and educates us in a certain way. What does it show us? What does it teach us? First of all, it teaches us that we're sinners, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Secondly, it shows us that we cannot save ourselves because we cannot give to the law that personal, perfect and perpetual obedience that it demands. Thirdly, it shows us that there's a great chasm, a great gulf, between a sinner and an infinite, holy God. Fourthly, it teaches us that if we ever get to God, we must get to Him through the merits of someone else who is absolutely perfect, and that someone else is Jesus Christ. You do away with the law. You've done away with salvation. One of the real reasons there's no real conversion today is that we don't preach the law of God.

The old Puritans used to say it like this: “The sharp needle of the law must precede the scarlet thread of the gospel.” If you do away with the law of God, you've done away with sin; you've done away with salvation. Inevitably, someone comes along and says, “Oh, but Brother Weaver, don't you know love has replaced the law? All we've got to do is love, love, love, love.” What they mean by love is a sickly, syrupy, sentimental emotionalism that courts sin, pets sin, allows everybody to do what they want to do, and simply loves them anyhow.

Love as the Fulfilling of the Law

Love has not replaced the law. Biblical love is the law. Romans 13:10 says, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Consider it in the context: “Owe no man anything.” Pay your bills. Pay your debts. “Owe no man anything, but to love one another. For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” Then it says, “For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet. And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.”

This is what biblical love is. Someone asked me a question last night: “Brother Weaver, how in the world can we tell whether or not we're being obedient to God's law or not?” I want to show you what biblical love is, and explain it in just a moment.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

Now let me just show you something. Suppose that after service tonight I run up to Pastor Wardlaw and put my arms around his neck. I am crying, tears are running down my cheek, and I am hugging his neck. I say, “Brother, I love you. I love you. I love you.” Everybody hears me. Everybody sees me. And everybody hears me. And somebody says, “Oh, look how Brother Weaver loves Brother Wardlaw. Isn’t that wonderful?” But while I am telling him I love him—

Suppose I have my hand in Brother Wardlaw's pocket, stealing a hundred-dollar bill from him. According to the law of God, do I love him? No. No matter what I say, I do not, because love is the fulfilling of the law, and the law says, “Thou shalt not steal.”

Now let me show you the other side of the coin. Suppose I never become emotional toward Brother Wardlaw and never say, “I love you,” but I always respect him. I treat him as God tells me to treat him. I respect his property, his wife, his children, his family, and his pastor. I act toward him in every way God commands me to act. Do I love him? Yes, because Scripture says, “Hereby we do know that we love the brethren, when we love God, and keep his commandments.”

If you really want to know what love is, look at verse 3: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” Love is not sentimentalism or emotionalism. Love is obedience. Love is keeping God's law. Jesus Christ said in John 14:21, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Verse 24 says, “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.”

Now let me show you something. I almost hate to show you this, because it shoots so many church members right out of the saddle, but it is the truth. Look in 1 John 2, beginning with verse 3: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”

How do I know that I love God? I am being enabled and empowered by His Holy Spirit to bring my life more and more into conformity with His Word. “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” But verse 4 says, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

So here is a man who says he is a Christian, yet he has been committing adultery or stealing for years. Is he a Christian? Not according to the Word of God. Love has not replaced the law. Love is the fulfilling of the law, if you understand what love is.

Let me point something else out. Any so-called gospel that destroys or sets aside the law of God is not the gospel of grace.

The Gospel Establishes the Law

You say, “Brother Weaver, how can you say that?” Because God said it. Just to show you Paul's argument concerning justification by faith, look at Romans 3:28: “Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” So you do not need your works to be justified. “Man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is He the God of the Jews only?” “Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also. Seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith.”

Watch what Paul says: “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law.” Did you hear what he said? Real justification by faith establishes the law. The real gospel of grace establishes the law; it does not make it void. Once again, he says, “God forbid”—perish the thought. Did you know that even the law taught faith? The law did not say it, but it certainly taught that.

Look in your Bibles to Matthew 23:23. Look what Jesus Christ Himself said. I do not know about you, but I will take His word for it. He was getting hold of these Pharisees, and He said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.”

“These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” You pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin. You are so particular that you want to make sure that you tithe down to the tenacious herb. You should have been that particular, He says, but what you have done is this: You paid attention to those things and left out the weightier matters—judgment, mercy, and faith. So any gospel that does away with the law of God is not the true gospel. Paul said in

Romans 3:31 that justification by faith establishes the law of God. It does not do away with it; it establishes it.

Every time our Lord witnessed in the Bible, He always used the law of God. Look in John chapter 4, where He met the woman at the well. How did He use the law of God there? He said, "Go call thy husband." What is the seventh commandment? "Thou shalt not commit adultery." She said, "I have no husband." He said, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband."

Look at Mark chapter 10. Here came the rich young ruler, who said, "Good Master, what must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Our Lord rebuffed him: "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." What did He mean? He was saying, "If I'm good, I'm God. If I'm God, you don't come running into My presence demanding something of Me." Since the young man had asked, however, He told him, "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal."

The young man said, "All these have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Our Lord was showing him that quoting the law was insufficient. He said, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and take up the cross, and follow me."

When the Lord saved you, did you sell everything you had and give to the poor? No, you still have things. Why, then, did our Lord tell this young man that? He wanted him to see that he had violated the law of God. The first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." This young man had made his money his god. He went away exceedingly grieved, for he had great possessions. Our Lord was putting His finger on the tender spot of covetousness and idolatry: "Son, go back and deal with that sin. You are a sinner. The law of God has shown you."

Every time our Lord witnessed, He used the law. Thus, in Matthew 5:17, He gives a divine prohibition: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

The Abiding Validity of the Law

If the law is separated from grace, then grace also disappears. The Bible knows nothing of an antinomian grace. Jesus Christ does not save a man just so that man can live any way he pleases. When Jesus Christ saves you, you live the way Christ pleases; and if you have been saved, you are pleased to live that way. The Bible knows nothing of someone being saved and then continuing to live in his sins.

The Solemn Affirmation (Matthew 5:18)

Jesus Christ did not come to save anybody from hell. He came to save us from our sins, which send us to hell. “Thou shalt call His name Jesus.” Why? “For He shall save His people from their sins.” Being saved from hell is a byproduct of being saved from sin, which sends you to hell. When He saves you, He saves you from your sins. The Bible knows of no one being saved and continuing in a life of constant rebellion and wickedness. No. This may give some people an odd look, but it is the clear teaching of Scripture.

Here is the solemn affirmation in verse 18: “For verily I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.” In verse 17, Jesus says, “Do not even begin to think I’m come to destroy the law or the prophets.” However, in verse 18 He singles out the law because He knows most people will probably try to deny or denounce it. Here you have the eternal validity of the law, its abiding validity. The law is an expression of God’s will. For He says, “Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.”

A king rules by his will. A king rules by his law. Because God is immutable, unchangeable, His law is immutable, unchangeable. Because God is eternal, His law is eternal. Jesus Christ said, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.” Now let me show you how abiding and how valid this law is. A jot, or a yodh, is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It is much like our comma, only a tad smaller. If you watch my finger, I’ll make one for you.

You did not see it because you were not looking, and because it is too small. It is almost like our comma. Listen to what Jesus Christ said: it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the smallest Hebrew letter in the law to pass until all be fulfilled. That sounds pretty valid to me—pretty abiding.

What is a tittle? Suppose I had a blackboard and wrote LITTLE, making my T's and I kind of fat: L-I-T-T-L-E. How do you know which is the I and which is the T? I go back and put a little dot over the I and a little cross over the T. That little dot over the I is not a letter. It is a small distinguishing mark between letters. The little cross of the T is not a letter in itself; it is a small distinguishing mark that distinguishes it from an L in English.

In Hebrew, that is what a tittle is. A tittle is not even a letter; it is just a small distinguishing mark. Thus Jesus Christ said it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for even the smallest distinguishing mark between two Hebrew letters to pass until all be fulfilled. What did our Lord say in Psalm 119, verse 89? “Forever, O Lord, is Thy Word settled in the heaven.” So you have a solemn affirmation in verse 18.

The Necessary Conclusion (Matthew 5:19)

Thirdly, in verse 19, you have a necessary conclusion: “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Verse 19 is exactly what the Pharisees were doing. They were breaking the commandments and teaching others to do so.

That is exactly what we do today, especially when we convey the idea, “You are saved by grace; that means you can live any way you please.” Grace is that which saves us. We are not saved by grace plus works, or by grace plus anything. It is pure, sheer, undiluted, and unadulterated grace. But the grace that saves always works. It always demonstrates and evidences itself as a real, genuine work of God’s grace. What most churches have done, even when I was growing up, is kick out God’s law and replace it with our own little rules, our own little system of laws.

You know what that does? It makes us good Pharisees. We talk about legalists, but that makes us legalistic and content in our sins.

Let me give you an illustration. I was raised in church, and we had a preacher who would say, "You don't go to the movies." I'm not telling anybody to go to the movies; I don't go to the movies. But that was all he said. Our people would not go to the movies. Yet when the same wicked, ungodly, reprobate picture came on their own television sets at home, they sat there and watched it. Then they said, "Bless God, I don't go to the movies." Listen, the principle in the Bible is not, "Thou shalt not go to the movies." The principle is, "Thou shalt set no wicked thing before your eyes." If it is wrong at the movies, it is wrong at home.

But you see what we have done? We have made good little Pharisees out of ourselves. We can say, "I don't drink, and I don't smoke, and I don't chew, and I don't go with the girls that do," but we do everything else we want to do.

This is a sad truth and a sad commentary. In the average church—in the average Baptist church, Southern Baptist church, or independent Baptist church—as long as you come on Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night and go to visitation, most preachers do not care how you live. If you want to sleep with somebody else's wife, have at it. Just be faithful and give. They do not care, and they will not exercise church discipline.

What we are doing is teaching people to be good little Pharisees. We are teaching them to deny God's law, and we say they are spiritually all right as long as they keep our rules. Our Lord said, "Whosoever shall break one of these commandments, the least of them, and shall teach men to do so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of God. But whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of God."

The Serious Warning (Matthew 5:20)

Look at verse 20. Christ gives a serious warning: “For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Let me read that again: “Except your

righteousness exceed, go beyond the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

You must remember that the Pharisees had only an external righteousness. They had nothing internal, merely external. Did you know the average Baptist preacher today would give his right arm to have a church full of Pharisees? You never had to beg them to come; they were always there. They wanted to show everybody they could be the first ones present. You never had to ask them to pray; they would fight to see who could pray. They brought their Bibles every service and sat there looking through them. When the offering plate came by, they put in large amounts and wanted to make sure everybody saw them.

The average pastor would be happy to have a church full of Pharisees because he would have no problems. But this is a sad commentary: the Pharisees in our Lord's day went so much further than the modern-day professing Christian of today. Our Lord said, "Except your righteousness exceed theirs, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." What is He saying? You must have a righteousness that is internal, a righteousness that only He can give, a righteousness that works its way out externally. They had only the external; we must have both the internal and the external.

Jesus Christ then begins to correct the Pharisees' false interpretation of the law. After saying that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, He begins to correct their false interpretation of the law. For instance, look in verse 21: "You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill."

Christ Corrects Pharisaical Misinterpretations

Here is what they said the sixth commandment meant. But look down in verse 22: "But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause," etc. Note what He did. He said, "You've heard it said by them of old time. Here's what they taught you. But here is what I say. This is the real teaching of the law."

Look in your Bibles, if you would please, to verse 27. He says, "You have heard that it was said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.'" That is, do not commit the physical act. But He says, "I'm correcting that. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Christ is saying, "Not only don't do the act, don't have the thought." So the Sabbath commandment goes beyond the act.

Look at what He said in verse 31: "It has been said"; verse 32: "but I say unto you"; verse 33: "Again, you have heard that it has been said by them of old time"; verse 34: "but I say unto you." Verse 38 says, "You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"; verse 39: "but I say unto you." In verse 43: "You have heard that it has been said"; verse 44: "but I say unto you."

What is Christ doing? Christ is not doing away with the law. Christ is establishing the law. The only thing He is doing away with is the Pharisees' misinterpretation and misapplication of the law. Here is the true teaching of the Word of God.

Why did Jesus Christ take the pains to go down in Matthew 5 and correct all of this pharisaical misinterpretation of the law? Why did He say, "You've heard it said by them of old time, but I say unto you," over and over and over? Why did He do it? Here is why. Look down in your Bibles to verse 45: "That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven." A child looks like his parents, acts like them, walks like them, and talks like them. I go into many churches and sometimes play a little game with myself. I look out in the congregation and say, "That woman belongs to that man, or that man belongs to that woman. And those children belong to that couple."

After the meeting, when I begin to introduce people, I have usually hit it right on the head: "Well, Brother Weaver, this is my wife," or, "Brother Weaver, this is my husband. These are my children." How can I do that? Folks look like each other after they have lived with each other for so long, and the children look like each other.

What does our Lord say? He says, “I am correcting this because I want you to be the children of your Father who is in heaven. I want you to walk the way He would have you walk, and I want you to talk and act the way He would have you talk and act.”

He came not to abolish, abrogate, set aside, or nullify the law. He came to put it into full force as continuous.

Conclusion: The Totality of Scripture as Our Rule

The totality of Scripture is our rule for faith and practice. Someone says, “I am a New Testament Christian.” Is the Old Testament the Word of God or is it not? What is wrong with the Old Testament? I understand what you mean: we are living now in the time of the fullness of Christ. But you cannot understand the New Testament without the Old, and you cannot understand the Old without the New. If you went through the New Testament and removed its references to the Old Testament, you would lose over half of it. If you removed all the implied verses, you would lose three quarters of it.

The totality of Scripture is our rule for faith and practice. None of God’s Word has been abrogated or set aside. It is all there. The immutability of God confirms the immutability of His Word and the immutability of His law.

I told you on Tuesday night, and I want to repeat it tonight: it all boils down to this, folks. You’re either going to be under God’s law or you’re going to be under man’s law. It’s that simple.

It was William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, the Quaker, who said, “He who will not be ruled by God condemns himself to be ruled by man.” I find more liberty, more freedom in the law of God than I ever find in the law of man. The very fact that Jesus Christ has placed His loving stamp of approval upon the law should be sufficient for us. He said, “Think not that I’m come to destroy the law of the prophets. I’m not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

God’s law has an abiding validity. It is applicable to the totality of our lives, easily worked out, practical, and how it will resolve personal problems, family problems, church problems, state problems, and even national problems.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee this day. We thank Thee for the attention of these dear people. I pray, Lord, that You would open their eyes and teach them, build them up in the most holy faith, and enable them, Father, to bring honor and glory to Thy name. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

The Biblical Doctrine of Justification

October 5, 2003

Introduction and Importance of Justification

Romans chapter 3, verses 24 and 25, serve as our introductory verses. I will deal with these verses together with a multitude of others. From time to time, I have tried to give overviews of certain doctrines. Not so long ago, I gave an overview of biblical law. Today, I want to give an overview of the biblical doctrine of justification, and I can assure you that it is one of the most important doctrines in Scripture.

In Romans chapter 3, beginning with verse 24, the Bible says, “through the forbearance of God.” I hope most of you know that the biblical doctrine of justification was the principle God used to start what we know as the Reformation. This truth was mainly what God used to stir the people, because it was a clear teaching from Scripture in absolute opposition to what the church had taught for years and years.

Martin Luther, whom God used in that Reformation, made this statement concerning justification by faith alone: “The doctrine of justification is the article of the standing or the falling church.” In other words, to the degree that the church understood justification by faith alone, it stood. To the degree that it did not understand justification by faith alone, it fell.

There is a vast area of importance in this doctrine. Your view and understanding of justification by grace alone affects other doctrines in the Bible. It affects your Christology, your view of Jesus Christ; your soteriology, your view and theory of salvation; your anthropology, your view of man, the doctrine of man; and your view and understanding of assurance. To the degree that we understand justification by faith alone, to that degree we stand; and to the degree that we do not understand it, to that degree we fall.

Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners.

Definition of Justification

Justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners. First, we see the author of justification: God. Justification is an act of God, God’s free grace unto sinners. Secondly, we see the subjects of justification: sinners.

Justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners, wherein He pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in His sight, not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only or solely for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them and received by faith alone.

There is the essence of justification: He pardoneth all their sins. Here is the ground of justification: He accepteth and accounteth them righteous in His sight, not for anything done by them or wrought by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Jesus Christ. Here is the method of justification: by God imputed unto them. And here, of course, is the means of justification: received by faith alone.

There is a basic question that has been asked throughout Scripture. You will find that basic question in Job 25 and verse 4: How may a man be just with God?

Now, what does justification imply? What does justification teach? Turn in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 3, beginning with verse 10: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.”

The Problem: The Law's Demands and Man's Inability

For as many as are under the works of the law are under the curse of the law. God gave His law, which is absolute righteousness and an expression of His will. It is holy, just, and good, according to Romans 7 and verse 12. Since we were made under the law, you and I are accountable to God to render to that law whatever the law demands.

The law demands three things from every individual: personal obedience, perfect obedience, and perpetual obedience.

When you and I try to obey the law, we are doing that personally. But is there anyone in this room, or anyone that you know of, who has ever obeyed the law perfectly? What is the answer? No. Has anyone ever obeyed the law perpetually? The answer is no. This demonstrates the fact that absolutely no one can be saved by the deeds of the law.

For instance, if you were made perfect right now, inwardly and outwardly, and never committed another sin the rest of your life, what would happen, or what would have to be done, for all those sins that you committed before you became perfect? You see, no man can be justified by the law because we cannot render to the law that personal, perfect, perpetual obedience that it demands.

Consequently, this teaches us that we are under the curse of the law. The curse of the law is that the man who fails to render the righteousness that the law demands deserves death and condemnation. Now the Bible teaches us in Galatians 3 and verse 13 that Christ came to redeem us from the curse of the law. So what did

Christ do? Christ came and stood in the sinner's place as a sinner substitute and paid the price that the law demanded. Not only that, Jesus Christ also worked out a perfect obedience to the law so that His righteousness may be imputed—that is, charged or given—to those who repent and believe on Him.

So the Bible teaches us that here is the problem: God's righteous law, and we are sinners, and we cannot give to that law what it demands—a personal, perfect, perpetual obedience.

The Answer: The Gospel Reveals God's Righteousness

Now what is the answer to the question, "How then may a man be just with God?" The answer to how a man may be just with God is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Romans 1:16-17, the Apostle Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein, that is, in the gospel of Christ, is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

It is only in the gospel that the righteousness of God is revealed. So how may a man be just with God? The answer comes back only through Jesus Christ. Let me ask you this simple question. Think about this.

What in the world is justification? I have just given you a definition. Justification is an act of God's free grace. But let us be more specific. When we talk about justification, what in the world is justification? Justification is a legal pronouncement. It is a judicial act. It is a verdict of the court. So when we talk about justification, justification is something that God does. It is not necessarily something that is done in us or something that is done to us. It is something that is done for us because it is a pronouncement in light of the law.

Justification as a Legal Pronouncement

Justification is a judicial term. Here is a man brought before a court of law. He is charged with a criminal act, and during his defense he proves conclusively that he is innocent of the charge lodged against

him. The jury comes back and says, “We acquit the defendant.” The judge strikes the gavel and says, “This court is adjourned. The defendant is free to go.” In other words, the judge has made a verdict, a pronouncement, and a judicial statement: here is the law, here is the defendant, and in light of the law, the defendant is not guilty; he did not violate the law.

So here is God's law and God's righteous standard. When God makes a pronouncement of justification, God is looking at His law and looking at the repentant sinner who is now declared righteous in light of that law.

But you say, “Brother Weaver, how in the world can that sinner be declared righteous when you know that sinner violated that law?” That is what the doctrine of justification is all about. Jesus Christ came as a substitute, obeyed the law perfectly in our stead, and then died as a substitute, paying the penalty for that broken law. Hence, the answer is in the gospel.

Let me show you how justification is a legal term. Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 25 and verse 1. God says, “If there be a controversy between men and they come to judgment, that the judges may judge them, then they, that is the judges, shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.”

Justification is the opposite of condemnation. If we return to the earlier illustration, here is the defendant in the courtroom. Instead of proving himself innocent, it is proved that he is guilty. Then the judge pronounces him guilty and pronounces his sentence. We call that condemnation. That is exactly what Scripture says. The judge shall justify the innocent. He does not do anything in the innocent man, and he does not do anything to the innocent man. It is a declaration for the innocent man that he is innocent in light of the law.

Therefore, justification is a legal, judicial act. Proverbs 17:15 says, “He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord.” Look carefully at the words, “He that justifieth the wicked.” If justification were something done to someone, or something done in someone, then it would be good to justify the wicked, would it not? It would be to

make them godly and to make them right. But justification is not something done in someone or to someone. It is a declaration for someone.

When a judge justifies the wicked, he lets a wicked man go and pronounces him innocent when he is still wicked. God says that is an abomination. When a judge turns around and pronounces an innocent man wicked—that is, when he condemns him—that also is an abomination. Therefore, justification is a legal term, a term of the law courts.

Luke 7:29 says concerning the preaching of John the Baptist, "And all the people that heard him and the publicans justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." Here is an interesting statement: they justified God. How in the world would you justify God? John came preaching the doctrine of repentance. What does the doctrine of repentance include? It includes the fact that we are sinners, that we are guilty, that we are vile, and that we are undone. When John preached the biblical doctrine of repentance and the people heard him, they said, "He is right. We are sinners. We are wicked."

We have violated God's law. We will turn from our sin. In turning from their sins and agreeing with God's verdict concerning their wickedness, what were they doing? They were justifying God. They were saying, God is right, holy, and just in condemning us. Thus they were pronouncing a verdict that God was right and they themselves were wrong. The Pharisees and the lawyers, however, were not willing to do that; they were saying God was wrong and they were right.

So it does not matter which way you look at it: justification is a verdict, a pronouncement. Look at Luke chapter 16, verse 15. Our Lord said to the Pharisees, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men. But God knoweth your hearts, for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." He says, "You are they that justify yourselves among men."

When I gave you the definition of justification, I said it is an act of God's free grace. That means justification is something only God can

do. It does not matter how many men justify themselves, or say they are right, holy, and righteous; their justification does not amount to a hill of beans. Only God can justify. He is the author of justification. Therefore, our Lord says, "Ye are they who justify yourselves before men."

A Broad Overview of Justification

Man's justification does not stand; only God's stands. Remember that justification is the opposite of condemnation. Just as condemnation is a legal verdict, justification is a legal verdict as well. When you condemn someone, you declare that person guilty. When you justify someone, you pronounce that person innocent.

Remember, too, that justification is not subjective, but objective. It is not something done in you. It is not something done to you. It is something done for you by God.

Primarily by Grace

Let me give you what I am going to call a broad overview of justification. How does God justify a sinner? I am going to give you four ways. First of all, He justifies primarily by grace—primarily by grace. Go back in your Bibles to the book of Romans, chapter 3. We began there. I am going to show you what the Scripture says. Notice Romans 3:24: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that we have in Jesus Christ."

When I say that we are justified primarily by grace, everyone knows that grace is what we would refer to as unmerited favor. That is, we do not earn it. But the Bible says, "Being justified freely by His grace." When we use the term free grace, please do not equate it with a free meal.

For instance, if we went to a restaurant afterward, sat down, and ate together, and I started to get up to pay, Henry might say, "Oh, Brother Weaver, don't worry about this. I'll pay for your meal." I could walk out and say, "Well, I just got a free meal." By that, I would mean that it did not cost me anything.

But when you talk about free grace, free grace does not refer to the fact that it simply did not cost anything. Certainly, grace costs

something, because it cost the Lord Jesus Christ His life. What in the world, then, does it mean when we say that we are justified freely by His grace?

Look in Romans 3:24 again: “Being justified freely by His grace.” Hold this verse, but turn in your Bibles to the book of John, chapter 15, and look at verse 25. It is very important that you see this passage, because it will explain the term free grace. Look what our Lord says: John 15:25.

"But this cometh to pass that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause." You may ask, "Brother Weaver, what in the world has that got to do with free grace?" Notice what our Lord said concerning His enemies and His people: "They hated Me without a cause." This little phrase, "without a cause," is exactly the same Greek word translated "freely" in Romans 3 and verse 24. When the Bible says we are being justified freely by His grace, we could read it as being justified without a cause by His grace. Likewise, in verse 25 of John 15, we could read, "They hated Me freely." Now, when our Lord says, "They hated Me without a cause," what does that mean?

It means that He was perfect, totally righteous, and totally innocent. There was nothing in Jesus Christ that merited, earned, or drew forth their hatred. When they hated Jesus Christ, they hated Him freely. They hated Him without a cause. There was nothing in Him that drew forth that hatred.

When the Bible says that we are justified freely by His grace, what does that mean? It means there is nothing in us that merits, earns, or draws forth the grace of God. What God gives us is free; that is, it is without a cause. There is nothing in us that moves God, forces God, or makes God move. God was simply freely gracious. I could ask you this question.

How many of you deserve to be saved? What is the answer? None. If I were to ask you to name one individual who has ever lived who deserved to be saved, what would be the answer? None. There is not one. All sinners deserve is justice. When we get anything other than justice, it is grace. God was not obligated to save anyone. The very fact that He saved some is just an act of His pure grace.

In Hosea 14:4, God says, “I will heal their backsliding,” talking about His people. “I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him.” Notice what God said: “I will love him freely.” When God says He will love us freely, is there anything in us that merited or drew forth the love of God? None. There is nothing in us that merited or drew forth the love of God. The Bible says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” We were unlovable. We were ugly. We were undone. Yet God commended His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Here is the passage everyone can quote, Ephesians 2:8–9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” It is by grace that we are saved, and that is not of ourselves. The Bible tells us that God loved us freely, that God gave us grace freely, being justified freely by His grace. Isaiah 43:25 says that He saved us for His own name’s sake. It was not just because we needed to be saved; He saved us for His name’s sake.

Now, let me show you something about grace. How do we talk about God’s free grace? Suppose Robert owes me a whole lot of money. I wish he did, but he does not. Still, suppose he owed me a whole lot of money and did not have it to pay me. I am really getting irritated with him, and I come up to him and say, “Now, Robert, tell you what I want to do. If you don’t give me my money, I will just beat you in the ground. That’s all there is to it. I will take it out in blood if you don’t give me my money.”

Robert has an ultimatum. He owes me, and if he does not pay me, I am going to beat the socks off of him. Roy finds out about the situation and asks, “How much does Robert owe you?” I answer, “Man, he owes me $6,000.” Roy says, “I’ll tell you what, I’ll pay you the $6,000. You just don’t hurt him.”

Am I obligated to take that $6,000 from Roy? No. Roy does not owe me any money; Robert owes me the money. If I really wanted to, I could tell Roy, “You keep your money. I am going to exact it from Robert one way or the other.” Now, here is the point: who was it that paid our debt? Jesus Christ. He came as a substitute. He came to the Father, basically, and said, “Father, I will pay their debt for them.”

I want you to understand that God was under no obligation, in one sense of the word, to receive Jesus Christ as a substitute. Of course, we know that God appointed Him. But God could have said, justly speaking, "I am going to exact my payment from every one of those sinners." And He would have been in His right to do so. Therefore, it is free grace that God was willing to accept a substitute.

Secondly, it was free grace that God not only was willing to accept a substitute, but that God Himself provided the substitute. The Bible says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." God actually gave His Son. It was pure, wondrous grace that God was willing to give His only begotten Son to be that substitute. It was still marvelous grace that God the Son was willing to undertake to be our surety and pay the price, when He knew the awfulness of that price.

So we are justified, first of all, primarily by the grace of God. It was God who gave us His Son. Secondly, we are justified meritoriously by His blood.

Meritoriously by Christ's Blood

The Bible says in Romans 3:25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Jesus Christ is the ground of our justification. If you have not put two and two together, let me tell you something: if it had not been for Jesus Christ, there would have been no salvation, period.

You remember that definition I gave you? Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, not merely that He pardoned all our sins and makes us acceptable and righteous in Jesus Christ, not for any work that we have done or wrought by us, but only for the full satisfaction of Jesus Christ. It is only because of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us in Acts 20:28 that Paul was speaking to the Ephesian elders. He said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

In Ephesians 1:7, the Bible says, “In whom,” referring to Jesus Christ, “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” By the way, let me make a comment on verse six. Ephesians 1 contains one of the longest sentences in the Greek New Testament—not one of the longest verses. This sentence begins at verse one and does not actually end until verse eleven. It is a long sentence in the Greek. “To the praise of the glory of his grace.”

“Wherein he,” that is, God the Father, “hath made us accepted in the beloved.” Let me just stop and give you one of my little pet peeves. I have preached this in time past, and I have told you this. I do not know if you remember it, but we have today the mentality of people going around asking others, “Won’t you accept Jesus Christ?”

That is a bad question. The correct question is, “Would you receive Jesus Christ?” There is a difference. The Bible says in verse six, “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he,” God, “hath made us accepted in the beloved.” The word “accepted” means to be made beautiful, to be made glorious, and to be made righteous. God must make us righteous; we must be made acceptable. Jesus Christ already is acceptable, righteous, and glorious. We receive Him as He is. But God must accept us and make us something that we are not. And God makes us that something. How? Through Jesus Christ. The Bible says, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Ephesians 2:13 says, “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

Justification is primarily by grace, but meritoriously it is by the person and work of Jesus Christ—by His blood. The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:17, “And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” We should pass our time here in reverence and godly fear. Why? “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish. The Bible tells us in 1 John 1:7 that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. The Bible tells us that He is the propitiation for our sins.

Now let me explain that word. The Bible says in Romans 3:25, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation.” You will also find it in 1 John 2, where the Bible says that He is the propitiation for our sins. The Greek word for propitiation is hilasmos. I know that word well because, in my third year of Greek, I had to write a term paper on it about nine pages long. If you can get nine pages out of one Greek word, you are doing well. The word was propitiation, hilasmos: God had set forth His Son to be a propitiation.

What does propitiation actually mean? It means to placate, to appease, and to satisfy. When God set forth His Son Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, it means that Jesus Christ came, made of a woman, made under the law, and rendered to that law a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience.

He's the only one who ever did so. For he said in John 8:29, "I do always those things that please him." Jesus Christ obeyed the law perfectly, personally, and perpetually. He gave to the law that which the law demanded. Then he became our substitute. He died in our place to pay the penalty for that broken law, and he became our propitiation. What does that mean? It means he placated, appeased, and satisfied the righteous anger and wrath of God the Father. He actually turned God's anger and wrath away from us.

This is why the Bible says it is meritoriously by his blood. It was his life, his person, his work, and his sacrifice. That is the ground for justification. Without that, there would be no justification and no pronouncement.

The method that God uses to justify us is imputation. There are three acts of imputation mentioned in the Bible. First, Adam's sin is imputed to his posterity. Secondly, the believer's sins are imputed to Jesus Christ. Thirdly, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers.

Second Corinthians 5:21 teaches imputation very clearly: "For he," that is God the Father, "hath made him," that is God the Son, "to

be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." God made Christ to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

If you were to take this knife and say, for instance, this is our sins, and take this tube of chapstick and say, this is the righteousness of Christ, what God did was simply this: God imputed our sins to Jesus Christ. He paid for them as our surety and our substitute. But then God took that perfect obedience of Jesus Christ that He earned and imputed it to us. So when God justifies us, He looks at His righteous, holy law. He looks at us in the person and work of Jesus Christ and sees that we're perfectly pure and holy and perfectly obedient because of the work of Christ. Then he pronounces us just in the sight of the law.

Instrumentally by Faith

So it is primarily by grace, meritoriously by the blood of Jesus Christ, and, thirdly, justification is instrumentally by faith. It is received by faith alone.

It is not faith plus works, nor faith plus or minus anything; it is simply by faith alone.

A man is justified in faith, through faith, or by faith, but never on account of faith. You follow that? We are justified in faith, by faith, or through faith, but never because of faith. In other words, faith is not the ground or basis of our justification. Of course not. Jesus Christ is the ground of justification. Faith is the gift of God. Although we are justified by faith, in faith, and through faith, faith itself is not the basis of our justification.

When God justifies us, He also sanctifies us. When God sanctifies us, we have already been called, repented, and believed in Jesus Christ. Since all the other graces that accompany salvation are found in us, why does the Bible always say that we are justified by faith alone? This is a question that must be pondered.

Can a man be saved without repentance? No. Yet the Bible never says that a man is justified by repentance. Repentance is absolutely necessary to salvation, but the Bible always says that we are justified by faith alone. Why? Because faith is the only grace that is totally

and completely receptive. By faith we receive Jesus Christ; by faith we receive everything else. Faith is the only grace that is totally, completely receptive. That is why the Bible says that we are justified instrumentally by faith.

If I were a beggar with my hand out, begging for bread, and about to starve, and you came by and put a piece of bread in my hand, I could take that bread, cram it into my mouth, eat it, and swallow it. Then I could look at my hand and say, “Thank goodness for that hand; that hand saved my life.” But did the hand save my life? No. What saved my life? It was the bread. The hand was nothing more than the means by which I received the bread.

You could use the same illustration with a spoon. Here you are starving, and all you have is a spoon, perhaps in a bowl, while the bowl is empty. Then somebody comes by and gives you a bowl full of cornflakes and some milk. You eat the cornflakes and drink the milk, and say, "This spoon saved my life." How ridiculous. It was not the spoon that saved your life; it was the cornflakes and the milk. The spoon was nothing more than the instrument that enabled you to receive the life-giving nourishment. That is all faith is. Faith is the instrument that enables us to receive Jesus Christ. We receive Him by faith, and therefore the Bible says we are justified by faith alone.

Faith is faith. It may be weak faith, strong faith, or great faith, but it is faith. If faith receives Christ in His finished work, then that is saving faith. How are we saved? How are we justified? Primarily by grace; meritoriously by the blood of Christ; instrumentally by faith; and evidentially by works. Listen carefully to this last point, because so many people get it mixed up: evidentially by works.

Evidentially by Works

Look in your Bibles to James chapter 2, beginning with verse 14. The question is asked: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" To understand verse 14, you could add two words: "Can that kind of faith save him?" James is not contradicting the apostle Paul. Paul says we are justified by faith alone. James continues in verse 15: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;

notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

James chapter 2 contrasts three faiths: a demon's faith, a dead faith, and a divine faith. The dead faith is the one he discusses most here. It is when a man says that he has faith, but there is never any evidence in his life that faith is present. He never lives like a Christian, obeys God, or seeks to bring his life into conformity with the Word of God. He just does his thing and says he is a Christian.

Ephesians 2:8–10 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

The faith that is a divine faith always evidences itself in genuine biblical obedience. There is always evidence that we have been saved by faith. The faith that most people possess, or say they possess, when they never obey God or bring their lives into conformity to God, is nothing more than a dead faith—a totally dead faith. You look around.

Let me give you two illustrations. Look around at all the politicians who say they're Christians, and look at all the ungodly,

reprobate laws that they pass. Look at all the Hollywood movie stars who claim to be Christians, and then look at their lives—the adultery and the fornication. There is a dead faith, an intellectual faith that is nothing more than a dead faith.

First John 2:3 says, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." How do I know that I know God? How do I know that I'm in a saving relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ? Here's the answer: I keep His commandments. He has enabled me, by His grace, to bring my life into conformity to His Word. Verse 4 says, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

What does God say about a man who has a dead faith, with no evidence of that faith? God says he's a liar. He didn't have any faith at all. When God saves a man, there is always evidence. When a baby is born, how do we know that baby is alive? There is evidence. He is not only breathing, but crying; he wants milk. Likewise, when God saves one of His own, He tells us to desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby. There is always evidence: evidence of life and evidence of obedience.

When God justifies a man, that man will always seek to bring his life into conformity to the Word of God, because God has pronounced him righteous in light of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Grace has been given to him; he has received Christ by faith; and now his life is being brought into conformity to the Word of God. Justification is one of the most important doctrines in the Word of God.

Without justification, there is no salvation. God is the one who justifies. He pronounces us righteous in light of His law because of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we thank You for Your love and mercy. Enable us to understand all Your Word, especially this important doctrine. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Enable us to call upon Thee in repentance and faith. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 3

How to Act if We Want to be Delivered

January 20, 2008

Introduction and Review of Psalm 18

In Psalm 18:20, David says, “The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands, hath he recompensed me, for I have kept the ways of the Lord and am not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me and I did not put away his statutes from me. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore, hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.”

“With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful. With an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure. And with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward. For thou wilt save the afflicted people, but wilt bring down high looks. For thou wilt light my candle, the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.”

We have been looking at Psalm 18 for five weeks. I began with point one, David's determination, where he said in verse one, "I will love thee, O Lord." His love for God was a response to God's love. The second message concerned the reasons for David's love for the Lord. In verses one and two, he refers to the Lord as his strength, his rock, his fortress, his deliverer, his God, his strength, his trust, his buckler, the horn of his salvation, and his high tower. Then he said, "I will call upon the name of the Lord who's worthy to be praised."

In verses four through six, we looked at David's distress and saw how oftentimes God will back us up against the wall and put us in a position where we must call upon Him. In verses seven through nineteen, we looked at David's deliverer and saw how David describes the sovereign majesty of God when God comes to deliver His people. Certainly, He does indeed do that.

I concluded the message the last time with a quote from Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and I want to give it again to set the stage for what I would like to share from Psalm 18. Concerning verses seven through nineteen, Spurgeon says: "Free grace lies at the foundation. Rest assured, if we go deep enough, sovereign grace is the root, or is the truth, which lies at the bottom of every well of mercy. Deep-sea fisheries in the ocean of divine bounty always bring forth the pearls of electing, discriminating love to light."

The Question of Grace vs. Works

"Why Jehovah should delight in us is a question without an answer, and a mystery which angels cannot solve. But that He does delight in His beloved is certain, and is the fruitful root of favors as numerous as they are precious. Believer, sit down and inwardly digest the instructive sentence now before us and learn to view the uncaused love of God as the cause of all the lovingkindness of which we are partakers." So, as Spurgeon is saying, sit down and think about the uncaused love of God. That is the root, the source, of everything that appears to us in lovingkindness and mercy.

In light of that comment, I want us to explain the passage I just read to you in verses 20–28. We know that the source of all mercy is God's sovereign, saving grace. Yet David says in verse 20, "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the

cleanness of my hands." He goes on, saying, "I was upright before him." We know that the cause of David's deliverance was God's sovereign grace. How, then, can we explain David's statements that the Lord rewarded him according to his righteousness and according to the cleanness of his hands?

As Brother Weaver said earlier, Scripture does not contradict Scripture. If our interpretation of Scripture contradicts a plain passage somewhere else in Scripture, Scripture is not wrong; our interpretation is wrong. Scripture does not contradict itself, so we have to interpret Scripture in light of Scripture. Today I am going to cover just one point, as I have basically done these last several weeks: David's deportment.

When we talk about deportment, we are talking about someone's conduct, or how they carry themselves and act. So let us look at David's deportment in verses 20 through 28. The question is very simple: Was David's deliverance the result of God's sovereign grace, or was it the result of his own personal righteousness and works? David has just spoken about God's sovereign grace, and now he says, "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands, hath he recompensed me?" Which is it? Is it God's grace, or was it David's works?

Many of you can quote Ephesians 2:8 and 9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." But can you quote verse 10? "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath foreordained that we should walk therein."

Those who understand God's sovereign grace realize that works do not save them, cannot save them, and cannot help save them. In Isaiah 64:6, the Bible says, "...but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquity, like the wind, hath taken us away." Isaiah is telling us that we are wicked in and of ourselves. In Romans 3:12, Paul explains it: "They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good. No, not one."

How then can David say, "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands"? It should be

obvious, even from casually reading the Bible, that your works do not save you, do not help save you, and are not the basis for God rewarding you in any special way. Romans 8:8 says, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." How many of us, in and of ourselves, can please God? Absolutely none. That is why Titus 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His own mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The Bible consistently tells us that it is not because of our works that we are saved, delivered, or helped by God.

We cannot earn God's grace or merit God's mercies. We are sinful in and of ourselves. Sinners are in a precarious predicament. If you trust in your works, you are damned; but if you do not fulfill God's commandments, you are rebellious, and then you are damned. The old expression, "damned if you do, damned if you don't," truly speaks of a sinner's position. He is damned if he does his works and trusts in them, and damned if he does not, because God has commanded him, yet he cannot fulfill God's commandment.

There is a real dilemma for those who do not understand God's grace and the relationship between works and grace. It is true that God's people should have evidence of God's sovereign grace in their lives, evidenced by their works. But our works do not save us.

Our works do not help save us. They are not an addition to grace. Rather, they are merely a manifestation of grace. There is a big distinction between being a manifestation of grace and the basis or source of grace. You remember, I quoted Ephesians 2:10 earlier: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk therein." Ephesians 2:8 and 9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith," precedes verse 10. Our works, which we have been foreordained to walk in, have been based upon sovereign grace.

That is what the Bible teaches us in Titus chapter 3 and verse 8: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will now affirm constantly, that they which believe in God might be careful to maintain good works." Who are our good works profitable unto? Are they profitable unto God? No. They are profitable unto men. It is our

good works, therefore, which demonstrate and manifest that there is grace in our lives.

Biblical Foundation: Works as Evidence of Grace

If you do not learn anything else today, learn this: If we have any good works in us at all, if any of us are gracious, kind, biblical, right, honoring God, and doing that which is righteous in His sight according to this law, it is nothing more than God's grace working in us. We have nothing in and of ourselves.

Do you realize that even the mighty Apostle Paul made this statement in Romans 7 and verse 18? He said, "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing. For the will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." Paul said, "I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." There are times I really want to do good, but how in the world I can do it, I do not know, because there is nothing good in me.

This actually explains any good works or any righteousness that we as God's people have in our lives. Paul writes to the Philippian Christians, “Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” What did Paul tell these Philippian Christians? “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Did he mean that they had to work to be saved? No, that is not what he was saying. When he says, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” he explains in the next verse: “For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure.”

If you ever will to pray, God worked it in you. If you ever will to come to Christ, God worked it in you. If you ever will to obey, God worked it in you. If you ever will to repent, God worked it in you.

What, then, is God saying to us through the Apostle Paul, especially in verse 12, when he says, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”? Here is what he is saying: God gave you the grace. God gave you the mercy. Now it is your responsibility to work it out—that is, to apply it and to make it manifest the way He has ordained.

There are some godly people, some Christian folks, who are just full of good works. Dorcas in the Bible was full of good works. It is true that there are people who are full of good works. But what is the root cause of their good works? Why are they so honorable? Why are they so gracious? Why are they so right? Isaiah 26:12 gives the answer: “Lord, Thou hast ordained peace for us. For thou hast wrought all our works in us.” What does that mean? If there is anything good in us at all, God worked it in us, God worked it through us, and God enabled us to work it out. So everything, according to Spurgeon, goes right back down to God's sovereign saving grace.

Interpretive Insights from Gill and Calvin

Now I want you to turn back to Psalm 18. I want to give you two quotes, one by John Gill and one by John Calvin, explaining verses 20, particularly through 28. David says, “The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands that he recompensed me for. I've kept the ways of the Lord and have not wickedly departed from my God.” I will explain those verses, but first listen to what John Gill says: “This, therefore, must be understood of the righteousness of David's cause, and of his innocence with respect to the things he was charged with by his enemies, of his righteousness towards Saul and of the cleanness of his hands and not defiling them with his blood when it was in his power to take away his life. Therefore, God rewarded him by delivering him out of his hands and setting him upon the throne and causing his kingdom to flourish and prosper.”

All Gill is saying is this: if you take Psalm 18:20–28 in context, David is not proclaiming his own personal righteousness, as though he were a perfect man. We know David was not perfect. Rather, he is proclaiming the righteousness of his cause and the righteousness of his actions in dealing with all his enemies, particularly Saul, who was his greatest enemy.

Calvin goes further: "If God rendered to David a just recompense, it may be said, does it not seem, when he shows himself liberal towards his people, that he is so in proportion as each of them has deserved? I answer, when the scripture uses the word reward or

recompense, it is not to show that God owes us anything, and it is therefore a groundless and false accusation and a groundless and false conclusion to infer from this that there is any merit or worth in our works. God, as a just judge, rewards every man according to his works, but he does it in such a manner as to show that all men are indebted to him, while he himself is under no obligation to anyone."

The reason is not only that which St. Augustine assigned, namely, that God finds no righteousness in us to recompense except that which he has freely given to us, but also because, forgiving the blemishes and imperfections that cleave to our works, he imputes to us for righteousness that which he might justly reject. If none of our works please God unless the sin mingled with them is pardoned, it follows that the recompense he bestows on account of them proceeds not from our merit, but from his free and undeserved grace.

Now, let me ask you a question. Has God commanded you to pray? Yes. Have you ever prayed? Yes. Have vile thoughts ever come into your mind while you were praying? Have you ever fallen asleep? Have you ever forgotten where you were in your prayer? If none of those things ever happened to you, you really had not prayed much, I can assure you.

David's Righteous Conduct Toward Saul

The point I'm trying to make is this: in the best of our efforts to please God, there is sin mingled with our efforts and with our works. All Calvin is saying is that if God does not forgive the sin—the blemish on our works—then nothing would be acceptable unto him. Therefore, whatever we do is still justly attributed to God's grace, because it is God's grace that forgives the blemishes, faults, and sins, and accepts them in Christ Jesus as pure and whole. Isn't that amazing?

It does not matter what we do; that is basically what happens. We have sin attached to everything we do, and God must be merciful to us.

With that understanding, and recognizing that David is in reality proclaiming the righteousness of his cause and the righteousness of his actions toward Saul, we can understand verses 20 through 28.

David says, “The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness. According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.” Many says, “For I have kept the ways of the Lord and not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me and I did not put away his statutes from me. I was also upright before him and I kept myself from mine iniquity.”

You know as well as I do that there were times in David’s life when he sinned—in fact, times when he sinned grievously. So you cannot take this passage as though David were saying, “Here I am, the perfect man. I am righteous before God.” That is not what David is saying.

Did God choose David to replace Saul? Yes. Did David want the throne? Yes, he did. But he wanted the throne on God’s terms, in God’s way, and in God’s time. Since David knew that God had chosen him to be king over Israel—because he was anointed and chosen out of all his brethren—the important questions are these: How was David to get the throne, and when was he to get it?

Pastor Bob McCurry, a good friend of mine, has a saying I have quoted many times: “God is the slowest person you’ll ever get hooked up with.”

You have to understand what he means by that. God is not slow. God is always right on time. It is we who consider Him slow because He does not act according to our whims, desires, and wishes. Since things do not happen according to our schedule, we count God as being slow.

Have you ever wanted to help God? I have wanted to help Him out innumerable times. One of the greatest problems every child of God has is the problem of impatience, and I confess that it is one of my problems. I am impatient many times and in many ways. But we must understand this: God still has His perfect timing.

Hold Psalm 18, but turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 18. Let me take you through several passages.

Did God choose David over Saul? The answer is yes. Did David want the throne? The answer is yes. So we ask, how does David get the throne, and when does David get the throne? We can ask another question: Did King Saul act wickedly and unrighteously toward

David? The answer is yes, a thousand times yes. King Saul not only deceived David and broke his oath to him; he purposely and deliberately tried to murder David. For instance, look in 1 Samuel 18, verses 8 and 9: “And Saul was very wroth. And the saying displeased him.” What saying displeased Saul? “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.” Remember, David was a very young man at this time, yet he was already a great warrior. This saying displeased Saul very much: “And he said, they have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands.”

“What can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day forward.” In other words, Saul was now envious of David. David had killed his tens of thousands, while Saul had killed only his thousands, and the people were singing David’s praises. They were ascribing more success to David than to Saul. Saul was the king, and he was envious.

“Now watch verse 10. It came to pass on the morrow” — the very next day — “that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul and he prophesied in the midst of the house and David played with his hands at other times and there was a javelin in Saul’s hand and Saul cast the javelin for he said I will smite David even the wall with it and David avoided out of his presence twice.” Saul, in a rage, a demonic rage, threw a javelin at David, but David escaped.

Why did David not defend himself and kill Saul? David was a mighty warrior. Yes, he was. But he was still a young man, and Saul was still the king. At this time David had no one but himself; he did not even have his six hundred men.

Look in your Bibles to chapter 18, verse 17, and see how Saul planned to kill David: “And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab. Her will I give unto thee, thy wife, only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles. For Saul said, Let not my hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him. And David said unto Saul, Who am I, and what is my life? Or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king.” David was obedient and fought the battles.

“But it came to pass at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite to wife.” Saul lied to David and violated his oath. Then Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved David, and the thing pleased Saul. Why? “And Saul said, I will give him her that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore, Saul said to David, thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in one of the twain.” Saul would give David Michal if he brought a hundred foreskins of his enemies. David went out and killed two hundred. Saul’s plan backfired, and he had to give Michal to David.

But let me show you how intense he was. In chapter 19, beginning with verse 9: “And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand and David played with his hand and he sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence. Then he smote the javelin in the wall and David fled and escaped that night.” So Saul tries to kill him again.

Now watch. Saul sends messengers to David's house: “Saul also sent messengers unto David's house to watch him and to slay him in the morning. And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, If thou save not thy life tonight, tomorrow thou shalt be slain. So Michal let David down through a window, and he went and fled and escaped. And Michal took an image and put it in the bed and put a pillow of goat's hair for his bolster and covered it with a cloth.”

When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, “He is sick.” And Saul sent messengers again to see David, saying, “Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.” And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image and a bed with a pillow of goat's hair for his bolster. Of course, David escapes and gets away. David is now fleeing from Saul, knowing that Saul is intent on murdering him. Yet even though David escapes into the wilderness, Saul still chases him.

Look in 1 Samuel 23, beginning with verse 24: “Now they arose and went to Ziph before Saul but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon on the plain on the south of Jeshimon. Saul also and his men went to seek him and they told David wherefore he came down into a rock and he abode in the wilderness of Maon and

when Saul heard that he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon. And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain, and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul. For Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Hasten ye, and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land."

"Wherefore, Saul returned from pursuing after David, and he went against the Philistines." It seems as if Saul has David surrounded, but just before he can nab him, he receives word that the Philistines have attacked the land, and Saul leaves him alone.

We can safely conclude, based upon the Scripture, that Saul wanted David dead. He had not only tried to kill him; he ordered his men to try to kill him, and he ordered Jonathan to kill him. Saul wanted him dead. I emphasize this simply to illustrate that David did indeed have a biblical right of self-defense. David could have righteously destroyed Saul, because Saul was unrighteously trying to murder him. David had just as much right to defend himself as anyone did.

But see what David did. In 1 Samuel 24, beginning with verse 1, you will understand Psalm 18, when David declares the righteousness of his cause and the cleanness of his hands.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 24:1-15 (KJV)

> It came to pass when Saul was returned from following the Philistines that it was told him saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of En Gedi. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, and there was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet. And David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. And the men of David said unto him, Behold, the day of which the Lord hath said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do unto him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privately. And it came to pass afterwards that David's heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's skirt. And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto

> my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.
>
> So David stayed his servants with these words and suffered them not to rise up against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave and went on his way. David also arose afterwards and went out of the cave and cried after Saul, saying, My lord, the king. And when Saul looked round behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth and bowed himself. And David said unto Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how the Lord hath delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave. And some bade me kill thee, but mine eyes spared thee. And I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand. For in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not. Know thou, and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in my hand, and I have not sinned against thee, yet thou huntest my soul to take it.
>
> The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee, but my hand shall not be upon thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, but my hand shall not be upon thee. After whom is the King of Israel come out? After whom dost thou pursue, after a dead dog, after a flea? The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

"And it came to pass when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. For thou hast showed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me. For as much as when the Lord had delivered me in thine hand, thou killest me not. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore, the Lord reward thee good, for that thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thy hand."

Saul went into the cave to use the bathroom, while David and his men were hiding there. His men said, “This is the day that the Lord said, I’ll deliver your enemy in your hand.” They urged David to kill Saul. Instead, David slipped up behind him and cut off a piece of the garment lying behind him. Then David let him go. David confronted Saul: “Saul, you’re listening to a bunch of lies and rumors. I’m not trying to kill you. You see this piece of cloth? You were in my hand. I could have killed you, but I didn’t. You’re still the king. You’re still the Lord’s anointed.”

Saul was David’s enemy, but David was not Saul’s enemy. David had the opportunity to avenge himself, and his men encouraged him to do so according to verse 4, but he did not. He demonstrated that he could have killed Saul, but he was not Saul’s enemy. God delivered Saul into David’s hands not only once, but a second time.

In 1 Samuel 26: “And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon? Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.” David had just spared Saul, and Saul had just acknowledged that David was going to be king.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 26:3-15 (KJV)

> “And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon by the way, but David abode in the wilderness. And he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. David therefore sent out spies and understood that Saul was coming very deed. And David arose and came to the place where Saul had pitched. And David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host. And Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him. Then answered David, and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, a brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I'll go down with thee. So David and Abishai came to the people by night, and behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and a spear stuck in the ground in his bolster. But Abner and the people lay round about him. Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day. Now

> therefore let me smite him. I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time. And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not. For who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless? David said, Furthermore, as the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed. But I pray thee, take now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster, and they got them away. And no man saw it, and no man knew it, neither awake, for they were all asleep. Now watch this, because a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them. Then David went over to the other side and stood on the top of the hill afar off a great space being between them. And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that cries to the king? And David said to Abner, Art thou a valiant man?"

And who is like unto thee in Israel? Wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? For there came one of the people, and he destroyed the king thy lord. This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster. Saul knew David's voice and said, "Is this thy voice, my son David?" David answered, "It is my voice, my lord, O king."

David said to Saul, "Wherefore doth my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done, or what evil is in mine hand?" Notice what David is saying: What have I done? What evil is in my hand? He continued, "If the Lord has stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering. But if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord, for they have driven me out of this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go serve other gods."

"Now therefore," David said, "let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord. For the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, which one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains." Then

Saul said, “I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day, because I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly.” Of course, David gave the spear back to King Saul.

The point is this: David had a second opportunity to slay Saul, and this time he would not have had to do it himself. Abishai had said, “Let me smite him with my spear to the ground. This once.” He promised that the first shot would be a quick, clean kill. David said no. Saul was still the king, and David was not going to lift up his hand to kill him.

The Principle of Sowing and Reaping

Look back at 1 Samuel 26:9: “And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless? David said furthermore, As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord’s anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.” David was saying that Saul might die, but he was not going to die at David’s hand.

David clearly had the right of self-defense; there is no arguing that. Yet each time David could have killed Saul, his own life was not in danger. Saul did not know he was in the cave, and he did not know that David had taken the spear and the cruse of water, because a deep sleep from the Lord was upon them. David was saying, “Saul is my enemy, but I am not his enemy. He is acting unrighteously toward me, but I am going to act righteously toward him. I am not going to be provoked into violating the law of God.”

David wanted the kingdom, but he did not want it by the force of his own hand. Saul would die when God smote him, when his day came, or when he descended into battle and perished; David did not have to do it. He would not take the kingdom by force, either through his own action or through any of his men. He was waiting for God to give it to him. How many men would be willing to wait for God to make them king? Most men would not. That is why David declared the righteousness of his cause.

When Saul and Jonathan were killed in battle in 2 Samuel 1, David sorrowed and lamented over them. This demonstrated that, although Saul was David's enemy and had acted unrighteously, hatefully, wickedly, and wrongly toward him, David had no animosity in his heart.

Is it normal or natural for a man patiently to wait for the destruction of his enemy? No. Is it normal and natural for a man to wait until God gives him a kingdom instead of taking it forcefully himself? No. It is not normal or natural; it is supernatural. It has to be grace.

Romans 12:18 gives an excellent illustration of what was happening in David's life: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." There are some men with whom you cannot live peaceably, and that is why God said, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you." If there is going to be trouble, do not let it originate with you. You are not to be the troublemaker, the instigator, or the originator.

Then God says, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." If we take vengeance into our own hands, God is not going to move for us. God is not going to exact vengeance twice. He can clean the plows of our enemies a whole lot easier and better than we can clean them. If we clean them ourselves, we should not look for God to do it also. God says, "Vengeance is mine." Step back and let Him act.

"Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirsts, give him drink. For in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." In other words, one of the worst things that you can do to an enemy is to be kind and gracious to him. It messes with his mind. He cannot figure out why he hates you and wants to destroy you so much, and yet you do not really hate him.

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." What did David do? David overcame the evil of Saul with good toward Saul. David did absolutely nothing but good toward Saul. Saul did absolutely nothing but evil toward David.

Psalm 18 is about war and fighting. David is saying that Saul and all of these enemies compassed him about, and God sovereignly, graciously, and mercifully delivered him. When he says, "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness. According to the cleanness of my hands, hath he recompensed me?" he is talking about his actions toward Saul. "For I've kept the ways of the Lord, and I'm not wickedly departed from my God." In other words, he did not take things into his own hands.

"For all of his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. I was also upright before him. I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore, the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight." David is saying, because of God's grace in his life, here is his deportment, his conduct: good works, right living, and obedience. David's life teaches us that God's grace is sufficient even in the most difficult and strenuous times.

David backs up what he has just taught us with a biblical principle: "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful. With an upright man, thou wilt show thyself upright. With the pure, thou wilt show thyself pure. With the froward, thou wilt show thyself froward. For thou wilt save the afflicted people, but will bring down high looks." What could David have said when you read these verses? Here is what David could have said.

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that sows for the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that sows for the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The principle David is enunciating is the same principle taught in Galatians 6:7-8: "With the merciful, thou wilt show thyself merciful. With the pure, thou wilt show thyself pure." In other words, if you want mercy, show mercy. If you want purity, show purity. If you want to be froward—and froward means perverse, wicked—if you want to be perverse and mean and hateful, God will see that people treat you perversely, meanly, wickedly, and hatefully. It is this same principle.

Calvin says, "David is declaring that God has suffered him or helped him on account of the justice of his cause. For in the first place, we must adapt the words to the scope of the whole discourse

and view them as implying that God is so often delivering an innocent man from death when it was near him showed indeed that he is merciful toward the merciful and pure toward the pure. In the second place, we must view the words as teaching the general doctrine that God never disappoints His servants, but always at length deals graciously with them, provided they wait for His aid with meekness and patience."

To this purpose, Jacob said, in Genesis 13, verse 33, "God will make my righteousness return unto me." What is he saying? We must understand that God never disappoints His servants. I have had men attack me, and I could not figure out why. The only thing I had ever done was try to help them and be a blessing to them.

God's Government of the Humble and Proud

Thankfully, Pastor McCurry, a wise man, told me when I was being attacked particularly by one individual, "John. Sit still. When the smoke clears, you'll find there's real problems in this fellow's life." When the smoke cleared, I found out why he was attacking me: he was having an affair with two or three women in his church, and he wanted people looking at others rather than himself. If you will be patient—which we have so little of—God will work it out. The scope of this discourse is that the people of God should entertain good hope and encourage themselves to practice uprightness and integrity, since every man will reap the fruit of his own righteousness.

Spurgeon said it like this: “The dealings of the Lord in his own case cause the grateful singer, that is David, to remember the usual rule of God’s moral government. He is just in his dealings with the sons of men and metes out to each man according to his measure.

“‘With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful. With an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright.’ Every man shall have his meat weighed in his own scales, his corn meted in his own bushel, and his land measured with his own rod. No rule can be more fair, to ungodly men more terrible, to the generous man more honorable. How would men throw away their light weights and break their short yards if they could but believe that they themselves are sure to be in the end the losers by their knavish tricks? Note that

even the merciful need mercy. No amount of generosity to the poor or forgiveness to enemies can set us beyond the need of mercy. Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner."

Every man is going to be weighed in his own scale and measured with his own rod. As you do, so shall you reap. How do we act if we want to be delivered? All of us are under oppression in some way or the other. We may not be surrounded by murderous enemies the way David was constantly and consistently, although we are in many ways. How do we act if we want to be delivered? We must act obediently and righteously. If we want to receive mercy, we must be merciful. We reap that which we sow. Our deportment must be biblical if we desire God to honor us.

Look at Psalm 18, verse 27: "For thou wilt save the afflicted people, but wilt bring down high looks." Here is an illustration of the principle David is enunciating: God will be merciful to the humble, to those who are meek and afflicted, but the arrogant, proud, haughty, and high-minded He will bring down. The Bible says in 1 Peter 4 and verse 19, "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to God as a faithful creator." In James 4, verse 6, and in 1 Peter 5 and verse 7, the Bible says, "He giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Then in 1 Peter, He says, "Likewise you younger, submit yourselves unto the elder."

God as the Source of Light and Deliverance

"Yea, all of you be subject one to another. Be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble." That is exactly what he is saying in Psalm 18 and verse 27. God certainly does govern according to a righteous principle. Then, in verse 28, David says, "For thou wilt light my candle, the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." In 2 Samuel 22 and verse 29, David said, "For thou art my lamp, O Lord, and the Lord will light my darkness." In other words, God is the one who brings us from darkness to light, gives us illumination and understanding, and brings us out of a place of distress into a large, bountiful pasture. It is God who gives light in every situation. That is why David said in Psalm 119, verse 105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." We have to

learn, like David, that God is always the source of our illumination, our mercy, and our deliverance.

There is indeed a correlation between faith and works. Although we have been saved entirely by grace through faith, saving faith always evidences itself in works. James 2:18 argued thusly: "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works, Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." God's faith always produces good works. If you say you have faith, but there is nothing in your life that evidences it, you do not have a saving faith. Saving faith always will produce biblical attributes and characteristics. We do not all have the same amount or measure. Our Lord said some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some an hundredfold, with much in between. But every living tree will produce some amount of fruit. Therefore, there is a correlation between faith and works. Secondly, there is also a correlation between blessings and obedience.

Applications: Faith, Obedience, and Praise

All you have to do is read Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28, and a host of other passages. If we want God to bless us and deliver us, we must learn to be obedient. We must learn to honor God. Do you realize that God has an inherent glory, which is the glory in and of Himself? Nothing I can do can add to that glory, because that is what God is in and of Himself. But God also has an external glory, and my obedience or disobedience does indeed either honor or dishonor Him in His external glory. In fact, God said it like this in 1 Samuel 2:30: "For them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." So if you want God to honor you, you must honor Him. If you fail to honor Him, you shall be lightly esteemed.

I prefer to have God think a lot of me rather than to have man think a lot of me. There is a correlation between blessings and obedience. Lastly, we have to learn to constantly and consistently praise the Lord for all of His benefits toward us. I did this morning. Can you imagine the hours we spent driving yesterday in the rain? We drove all the way to Pensacola, Florida, then most of the way back last night. We were probably up eighteen or nineteen hours,

driving in the rain and preaching. I asked the Lord for safe travel mercies, and I thanked Him and acknowledged that He brought me safely to our resting place. I acknowledged that He brought me here today safely, and I pray that He will bring me home safely tonight.

All I am saying is this: God constantly and continually delivers us, and many times we do not even think about it. David said in Psalm 103:1, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." Then he goes on: "Who daily loaded us with benefits." How about your health?

Your breath, your life, your family, your friends—bless the Lord. David is saying, "He'll light my candle." He has done it in time past; He is doing it now; He will do it in the future. We need to learn to act scripturally, obediently, and righteously in every situation.

Father, we ask that You would help us deliver Thee. Make us holy and godly. May we look to Thee for deliverance, cry unto Thee, and ask for Your mercy and grace to be revealed to us, as well as Your power. We pray that You will overthrow the wicked and the ungodly. Establish Thy kingdom, Thy people, Thy law, and Thy righteousness. Above all, establish our Lord Jesus Christ in this land as King of kings and Lord of lords. In Thy name we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 4

The Abiding of the Law and the Prophets

December 12, 2013

The Abiding Validity of the Law

Our Lord says it like this: "Think not that I'm come to destroy the law or the prophets. I'm not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Introduction: Christ's Authority vs. Pharisaical Traditions

Now the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ was entirely different from the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees. The Bible tells us

in Matthew 7 verse 29 that he taught them as one having authority. Jesus Christ was absolutely totally against the tradition of the elders who were the religious leaders of that day. And since he was against their traditions, they just simply supposed him to be a charlatan and a deceiver going about to destroy the very foundations of piety.

Well, certainly he was going about to destroy foundations, but not the foundations of piety. He was destroying a legalistic, pharisaical foundation, and certainly he was going to establish the law of God. If you read Mark 7 and Matthew chapter 15, he says, "Woe unto you." He said, "Why is it that you with your traditions violate the law of God?"

Jesus said, "In vain you worship me, serving and doing the commandments of men rather than of God." Certainly, Jesus Christ was against all of those traditions. There was either an open accusation or subtle insinuation that somehow Jesus Christ and His teachings were contrary to the law of God. Therefore, in Matthew chapter 5, He sets the record straight.

First, Christ is not pitting the law of God against grace. Do not think for one instance that it is law versus grace. You will find grace in the Old Testament. In fact, the Bible says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." The truth of the matter is that anyone who has ever been saved—Old Testament, New Testament, or past time—has been saved by grace. There is no other salvation. But you also find law in the New Testament: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is the first commandment with promise." Ephesians chapter 6. It is not law versus grace.

What Christ Is Not Doing

Secondly, Christ is not establishing, or even trying to establish, some higher standard than God's law. The Bible tells us in Romans 7:12 that the law is holy, just, and good. In Matthew 5, Christ enforces God's law and establishes it as His standard. Oftentimes, when our Lord preached or witnessed, He used the law of God as well.

There are four points to cover. First, in verse 17, a divine prohibition: "Think not that I'm come to destroy the law or the prophets. I'm not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Secondly, a solemn

affirmation in verse 18. Thirdly, a necessary conclusion in verse 19. Finally, a serious warning in verse 20. We begin with verse 17, where our Lord says, "Think not that I'm come to destroy the law or the prophets."

Divine Prohibition (Verse 17)

"I'm not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Here, then, is divine prohibition. Literally, our Lord is saying, Do not even begin to think. Do not let this enter into your mind: somehow, some way, I have come to destroy the law or the prophets. No, that is not so. It is a clear command. We find in the New Testament that the Apostle Paul often wrote something like this: "God forbid." It is exactly the same phrase as when our Lord said, "Think not." You could read that, "God forbid that it should enter into your mind." Our Lord says, Do not even begin to think this; do not even let it enter into your mind. He says, I have not come to destroy.

The word "destroy" here literally means to annul. It means to abrogate, make invalid, repeal, set aside, or dismantle by taking something apart piece by piece. Our Lord says, Do not even begin to think that I have come to do that. Then he says in verse 17, "Think not that I'm come to destroy the law or the prophets."

Usually, this phrase refers at that particular time to the entirety of the scriptural writings. The Bible tells us in Luke chapter 24 that, when our Lord was walking with those two men on the Emmaus road, "beginning at Moses and the prophets, He expounded all things concerning Himself." This phrase, then, refers to the totality of Scripture. But notice: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, I'm not come to destroy, but to fulfill." In verse 18 he says, "For verily, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." He is emphasizing here particularly the law. When we think about the law, most people want to make distinctions in it. They make it simply like this: there is the ceremonial law, which referred to all those rules and regulations concerning the worship of God as they were in the tabernacle and later in the temple.

There were the judicial laws, which described the ordinances for government and the punishment of offenders. Thirdly, there was

what we would call the moral law, which refers to the Ten Commandments. However, sometimes I do not really like that division. When we say, “Here are God’s Ten Commandments; that is the moral law,” were not the ceremonial laws moral as well? Are not the judicial laws moral? Of course. All of God’s law is moral.

God is simply saying, Do not even begin to think, do not even let it enter into your mind, that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets. “I’ve not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

Let me tell you what Beza said on this passage when he talks about destroying: “Christ came not to bring any new way of righteousness and salvation into the world, but to fulfill that indeed which was shadowed by the figures of the law, by delivering men through grace from the curse of the law, and moreover to teach the true use of obedience to the law, and to engrave in our hearts the force of obedience.”

Matthew Henry said it this way: “The gospel is the time of reformation, not the repeal of the law, but the amendment of it, that is, from its fair sale of corruptions, and therefore, it’s reestablishment.” Obviously, Christ did not come to destroy the law.

When most people read this passage, they think “destroy” simply means to violate. No. What would you do if you destroyed the prophets? You would deny their validity, repudiate their inspiration, and annul their authority so that it had absolutely no binding influence upon anyone. To destroy the law is not simply to transgress or violate it. It is literally to abrogate it, to set it aside, to make it repealed. Our Lord said, No, I never came to do that. I never came to dismantle it, abrogate it, or set it aside. Rather, I came to fulfill it.

The word “fulfill” basically has three meanings. First, it means to fill and to make full.

Secondly, to set forth fully and to cause to abound. And thirdly, to fill up, to keep full, and to put into full force as continuous. Our Lord is saying this: Do not even begin to think that I have come to disannul or abrogate or repeal the law or the prophets. I've not come to do that. I have come to fill it and to put it into full force as continuous.

How Christ Fulfilled the Law

Jesus Christ fulfilled the law by enunciating the law in His teachings. He corrected all of the false interpretations and misapplications of the law by the scribes and the Pharisees. As He enunciated the doctrine of God's law, He clearly set it forth in His teachings. Secondly, Jesus Christ exemplified the law in His life. Do you realize the law demands three things from every individual? The law demands a personal obedience, a perfect obedience, and a perpetual obedience. Jesus Christ is the only one who ever gave to the law that which it demanded.

Which would you say is more important: the circumcision of Jesus Christ or the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? Most people say, well, it's the crucifixion because He died for our sins. But had He not fulfilled the law, the crucifixion would have been useless for us. Jesus Christ has enunciated the law in His teachings and exemplified the law in His life because He rendered to that law a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. But also He now empowers that law in His people, because He gives us a heart to obey Him. He regenerates us. He converts us. He sanctifies us.

He calls us unto himself. Let me point out also that this law is still in effect because it is going to be executed in the reprobates. Do you know what the Bible says? Let me read to you from Galatians chapter 3 and verse 10. I want you to think about this. The Bible says this: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Now, listen: as many, he says—as many as are of the works of the law—are under the curse.

Have you ever stopped to think about this? If the law has been done away with, what is God going to use to judge the wicked? How will He execute His wrath upon them? If the law has been disannulled and repealed and abrogated, how in the world can the wicked be judged and punished?

The Necessity of Christ's Active Obedience

Now, let me show you the absolute importance of how our Lord fulfilled the law. I want you to see this in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, and verse 21. This is, to me, one of the most beautiful passages in the entire New Testament. In this passage, the Bible tells us this: “For he that is God the Father, for he hath made him that is God the Son to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Now, I want you to watch this. Jesus Christ is the only individual that ever gave to the law that which it demanded: a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. Let me ask you a question before I show you this. Let us suppose that the only thing Jesus Christ has done for you—the only thing—is that He just died on the cross to forgive you of your sins.

If Christ only died on the cross so that you could have forgiveness of sins, would that be sufficient to get you into the presence of God? The answer is no. It might keep you out of hell, but it would not necessarily get you into the presence of God. Why? Because to enter God's presence, you need more than forgiveness; you need absolute, perfect righteousness.

What did Jesus Christ do? The Bible says, “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Jesus Christ was made under the law, and he came and gave to that law a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience.

Let us suppose this tube of chapstick represents our sins, and this pocket knife represents the absolute perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. What we have read in 2 Corinthians 5:21 is the doctrine of imputation. The word imputation means to charge to one’s account. It is like a wife who goes to the store, sees a new dress, has no money, and says, “Impute this to my husband’s account.” It means to charge to one’s account.

What did God do in the act of imputation? He took our sins and imputed them to His Son, Jesus Christ, who is our surety, our sacrifice, and our substitute. He placed our sins upon Him, and He suffered in our stead. But Christ had already worked out an absolute

perfect obedience; then God took that obedience of Christ and imputed it to us.

Now we not only have forgiveness of sins; in Jesus Christ we have an absolute perfect righteousness. It is therefore very obvious that the law has not been done away with. I once asked an individual, "Is salvation by the law?" The answer was no. I said, "That is true, and it is not true. It is true that salvation is not by the law for us. Our law keeping cannot save us or help save us. But it is also true that salvation is by the law, because Jesus Christ kept that law, and He kept it perfectly." Thus, our Lord in Matthew chapter 5 confirms that the law is still in full effect as continuous.

Explaining Negative Passages About the Law

"But wait a minute, Brother Weaver. As I read my Bible, there seem to be passages that contradict that." I understand, but consider this: You cannot interpret one passage so as to make it contradict another passage. You cannot interpret one passage of Scripture to contradict another clear passage. If you do, your interpretation is wrong, because Scripture does not contradict Scripture. Moreover, you cannot pit Scripture against Scripture. People have said, "Well now, this is my favorite Scripture."

They will totally ignore everything else. People often ask me, "What's your favorite passage?" I like it all. I know there are passages I especially love and from which I preach, but all of Scripture is true and accurate, and I love it all. You cannot take one portion and say, "I like this, but I don't like that." No, you cannot pit Scripture against Scripture.

Thirdly, let me point this out: all those passages in the New Testament that appear to speak negatively of the law can be explained in one of three ways. If you study them in their context, you will find that one of these three ways will answer every one of those negative passages. First, there are passages that renounce the law as a means of justification.

For instance, Romans 6:14 says, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." We are not under the law as a standard for justification. To understand Romans

6, you must understand that Paul's argument for justification by faith begins in Romans 3 and does not end until the end of Romans 8. He is saying only that we are not under the law's standard for justification. Our works do not save us, and our works cannot help save us. The Bible says very plainly that no man is justified by the law. This is evident.

Let me show you how utterly, totally, and completely impossible it is to be justified by the law. Galatians 2:16 says: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Suppose that from this moment on you became absolutely perfect, never sinned again, internally or externally, and rendered to God's law your personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. What are you going to do with all those sins you committed before you became perfect? It is impossible to give the law that which it demands.

That's why the Apostle Paul, not only in Romans but also in Galatians, says clearly that by the law no flesh shall be justified. There are passages that renounce the law as a means of justification. We are not justified by the works of the law; we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, there are passages that point to the death-dealing nature of sin in relation to the law. In Galatians 3:13, he says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." Many times in Scripture, Paul speaks of being delivered from the law, but he is speaking of being delivered from the curse of the law. We who have been saved by Jesus Christ are no longer under that curse. That is why he said in Galatians 2:19, "For I through the law am dead to the law that I might live unto God."

Here is an illustration. Suppose a man is a murderer and is sentenced to be electrocuted in the electric chair. Before he can be executed, however, he dies of a heart attack. What can the law do to a dead man? Nothing. We died in Christ; we are dead in Him. Therefore, the curse of the law has nothing to do with us.

There are also passages dealing with the ceremonial law, such as Ephesians 2:15. But the law has not been done away with—not even the ceremonial law. You may say, "The ceremonial law is bound to be done away with because I do not go to a high priest, bring a sacrifice, or go to a temple." But if you do not go to an altar, if you do not have a high priest, a sacrifice, and a temple, then you are not converted; you are not saved.

The ceremonial law has not been abrogated. It has been fulfilled. Where you had the type, the emblem, and the shadow, you now have the substance, the reality. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 5 and verse 7, “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” The Bible says in Hebrews 13 and verse 10, “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” The Bible tells us very clearly in Hebrews chapter 4 that Jesus Christ is our great High Priest, and in Revelation 22, He is our Temple.

I still come to a high priest. I still come with a sacrifice. I still come to an altar, and I still come to the temple. But Jesus Christ is all of those things. He is the reality, the substance, and the fulfillment of it. The judicial law has not been done away with. God still demands the death penalty for kidnapping, rape, and murder. Our government may not execute anybody who does those things, but our government is not God. God is still God, and He can do whatever He wants to do. Of course, God’s moral law has not been done away with either.

Now, let me point this out. This is very important. If God’s law has been done away with, let me ask you this question. One of my men came to me some years ago and said, “Pastor, I met a preacher down the road,” and he called his name. “I was talking to him, and he told me the law of God had been done away with.” I said, “Really?” He said, “Yes.”

I said, “Well, he does not believe that.” He bowed up a little bit and said, “Well, he said it.” I said, “I did not say he did not say it. I said he does not believe it.” He said, “I do not know whether he believes it or not, but I know he said it.” I said, “I can prove to you he does not believe it.” He asked, “How is that?” I said, “Go back and ask him for clarification. Ask him, ‘Has the law been done away with?’ If he says, ‘Yes,’ ask him, ‘If that is the case, would it be all

right if I spend the night with your wife?' If he is any kind of a man, you had better get ready to duck, because he is going to be swinging at you. But listen carefully: If the law has been done away with, what is wrong with adultery? What is wrong with theft, fornication, or murder?"

The Law Defines Sin and Leads to Christ

"Brother Weaver, those things are all sin." How do you know that they are sin? The Bible says in Romans 3:20, "For by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." First John 3:4 says, "Whosoever transgresseth the law committeth sin. For sin is the transgression of the law." You cannot sin without transgressing God's law. Sin is the transgression of the law.

The Apostle Paul makes this clear in Romans 7:7: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid." "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law." He continues, "For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, for without the law sin was dead." Then he says, "For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died."

What did Paul mean when he said, "I was alive without the law once"? Remember his pedigree in Philippians 3. He was the Pharisee of the Pharisees and said, "touching the law, blameless." Was the Apostle Paul, before his conversion, truly blameless? No, he was not. The Pharisees believed that as long as one had done nothing externally, it was not sinful. Thus Paul said, "I was touching the law blameless." He was a Pharisee. But then the commandment came. He saw the spirituality and application of God's law; sin revived, and he died. That is how he knew he was a sinner. You cannot know what sin is apart from God's law. Do away with God's law, and you have done away with sin.

Do away with God's law, and you do away with salvation—not only because Jesus Christ kept that law personally, perfectly, and perpetually, but also because, as Paul wrote in Galatians 3:24, "For the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might

be justified by faith." How could the law be our schoolmaster? How could it bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith? A schoolmaster is someone who teaches.

If you were alive and went to one of those old one-room schoolhouses, usually the teacher had something on the board like this: lying, three lashes; stealing, five lashes; fighting, seven lashes. You got caught fighting. You didn't get sent to the principal's office. You were brought before the class. Usually your shirt was taken off, you bent over, and the teacher took the rod up over the board and gave you those seven lashes good and hard. That was the law. The schoolmaster taught, and administered discipline and chastisement.

The law teaches us, first, that we're sinners. We cannot know what sin is except by God's law. Secondly, it teaches us that we cannot save ourselves, because we cannot give the law what it demands: personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. Thus it not only teaches us that we are sinners, but also that we cannot save ourselves.

It teaches us that there is a vast chasm between an infinitely holy God and a wicked, sinful man. Since that chasm is so great, if we ever get to a holy God, it must be on the merits of another. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Jesus Christ. So, without the law, you have no sin; without the law, you have no salvation.

Love Fulfills the Law

Someone says, "But wait. Don't you know that love has replaced the law?" No, I don't know that. Romans 7:12 says that the law is holy, just, and good. Why in the world would God replace something that was holy, just, and good?

You know what love is? Listen carefully. Love is not feeling. Love is not emotionalism. Love is not sentimentality. I am thankful that we can have emotions and affections, but that is not love. Romans 13:10 tells us that love is the fulfilling of the law—indeed, the fulfilling of all.

First John 5:2 says, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." We know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments.

Now, how do I know that I love Sam? Has anyone in this room seen me hug his neck, fall on him weeping, and say, "I love you, I love you, I love you"? No. You have not seen me do that. How, then, do you know I love him?

Suppose I went up to him after service, threw my arms around his neck, cried, and said, "Oh, Brother Sam, I love you. I love you. I love you." Everybody would be looking: "Oh, look how Brother Weaver loved Brother Sam. Isn't that wonderful?" But what you do not see is that, while I am hugging him and telling him that I love him, I have my hand in his pocket, stealing a hundred-dollar bill from him.

What if I am crying all over him and very emotional, telling him how much I love him, but I am stealing from him? Do I love him? Not according to the Bible. Love is the fulfilling of the law.

As long as I honor him, his wife, his children, and his property, and act toward him the way God commands me, I love him. I am never going to do anything to hurt him or his family; I am going to do everything I can to help him. That is biblical love.

First John 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not grievous." The love of God is keeping His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous. First John 2:3 says, "Hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments." How do I know that I know Him? He enables me and empowers me to obey Him, bringing my life into conformity to His Word.

Our Lord said in Luke 6:46, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not those things which I say unto you?" First John 2:3 says, "And hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments." Verse 4 continues, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar. And the truth is not in him."

Where does that leave most church members today? Our Lord said in John 14, "If you love me, keep my commandments." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he is that loveth me." Verse 24 says, "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." Isn't that amazing? Love has not replaced the law; love is the fulfilling of

the law. You cannot love until you obey God's Word toward your fellow man and toward your brother and sister in Christ.

Now, I want you to look in your Bibles to the book of Romans 3 and let me show you something else. Look in Romans 3. Remember, this is the passage where Paul starts his argument of justification by faith alone. And I want you to see what he says in verse 31. Notice, if you would, Romans 3, verse 31, Paul has started his argument of justification by faith alone, and he says, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law." Do you realize any gospel that negates and nullifies the law is not the true gospel of Jesus Christ? Because justification by faith, the gospel of Jesus Christ establishes the law. You know, there's an interesting verse in Matthew 23 and verse 23. I want you to look at that verse. Because Jesus Christ is speaking about the law and he says something very unique, something that most of us have never, ever caught on to. Look in Matthew 23 and verse 23, he says, "Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin and have omitted the weightier matters of the law."

Here are the weightier matters: judgment, mercy, and faith. These ought you to have done and not to leave the other undone. Isn't that amazing? He said faith is one of the weightier matters of the law, just like judgment is. So our Lord says, don't even begin to think, don't even let this enter into your mind that I've come to destroy the law or the prophets. I've not come to destroy, but to fulfill, to put into full force as continuous.

Now, I want you to go back to Matthew chapter five. And I'm not going to preach this long on all my other points. That's just the first point, OK? But look, if you would please, on verse 18 at the second truth. And that is a solemn affirmation, not only a divine prohibition, but a solemn affirmation. He says in verse 18, "For verily I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

Solemn Affirmation (Verse 18)

Now, God is an immutable God. His Word is immutable. Just as God is unchangeable, His Word is unchangeable. The Bible says in Psalm 119, verse 89, "Forever, O Lord, is Thy Word settled in the heavens."

You know what God's law is? God's law is an expression of His will. He says, "This is how I will for you to live. This is how I will for you to act."

"This is my will for you." And it is an eternal law. It is an abiding law because God is eternal and His word is eternal. And since God abides, so does His word.

Now, notice what he said in verse 18: "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Do you know what a jot is, or jod? Psalm 119 is an acrostic. If you look above verse 73, you will see Jod or Jot. The Jod or Jot is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

The Jod is kind of like our comma, only smaller. It is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Jesus Christ said it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet to pass away, of the law, until all be fulfilled. So the Jod or Jot is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

What about a tittle? The tittle is not even a letter. If I wrote the word "little" in English, how would you know which mark was the I and which marks were the T's? I would correct that by putting a little dot over the I and a little cross over the T's, so you could see that it is L-I-T-T-L-E. That little dot and that little cross over the T are not letters. They are small distinguishing marks between letters. So a tittle is just a small distinguishing mark between two Hebrew letters.

Jesus Christ said it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than one jot or one tittle to pass from the law till all be fulfilled. That sounds pretty abiding to me. It sounds to me like it is still valid. All you have to do is read Romans 7 and 2 Corinthians 3, and you will find out that God's Word and God's Law is still in full effect. So here is a solemn affirmation. Our Lord says it is here. Notice, thirdly, in verse 19, a necessary conclusion: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Necessary Conclusion (Verse 19)

Now, this is exactly what the Pharisees were doing. They were teaching the people to violate God's law in order to keep their traditions. Do you realize the same thing is happening today? You go to the average Baptist church—and this is probably true of all the other churches as well—and as long as you're there Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night, and as long as you tithe, they pretty much don't care how you live.

If you want to commit adultery, steal, cheat, or defraud someone in business, if you want to be a corrupt, ungodly businessman, that's fine. You know what we've done? We have substituted man's laws for God's laws.

I never will forget when Alice and I were first converted. We were members of an independent, fundamental, Bible-believing Baptist church, and one of the rules we were told was that we should not go to the movies. We still don't go to the movies; I don't care anything about them. But we couldn't figure out why we should not go. The answer was that we would be supporting corrupt Hollywood by going to the movies.

Then I noticed something. Those people who were so dead set against going to the movies, when those movies came on their television sets, sat at home and watched them. Are you listening to me? You know what the biblical principle is? David said, "I will set no evil thing before my eyes." If it is wrong to watch it downtown in a movie theater, it is wrong to watch it on your television at home. If it is corrupt down there, it is corrupt in your home as well. You have to come to a biblical principle. It is not that you are trying to please man. If you are trying to please the Lord, God's law is far broader and covers far more than man's law could ever cover.

But that's exactly what we're doing. We're teaching people today to disobey God and obey our traditions and commandments rather than obeying God's law. I never will forget one particular church where I preached. I was not a pastor there, but simply preached there. They ran the pastor off after I left, over one of their traditions. He had spoken out against it. One woman stood up in church and

said, “We don't care what the pastor says. This is our church and we'll do what we want to do.”

What was she doing? She was teaching her children and everybody else to violate God's law and keep their tradition. Our Lord says that if you teach men to break one of these, you will be least; if you teach men to keep them, you will be greatest. But look at verse 20. I want to tie this together. Verse 20 is a serious warning. Here's what he said.

Serious Warning (Verse 20)

Matthew 5, verse 20: “For I say to you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

The Pharisees were legalistic. They had their own traditions. They would keep the letter of the law, but not the spirit of the law. Everything they had was external and not internal. Do you realize today that most pastors would give their right arm to have a church full of Pharisees?

If you had a church full of Pharisees, you would never have to ask people to move forward. They would all be on the front pew, always on time, always tithing, and always volunteering because they wanted everyone to see what they were doing. But our Lord said, “Unless your righteousness exceeds their righteousness, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” One of the things that concerns me is this: I have seen plenty of professing Christians who cannot even measure up to the Pharisees. That tells me they are professors without being real possessors.

Now, I want you to see what our Lord does and how He rectifies the misinterpretations and misapplications of the Pharisees. He has already given this teaching in Matthew 5:17, when He says, “Do not even begin to think that I’ve come to destroy the law or the prophets; I’m not coming to destroy, but to put into full force as continuous.” He says it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one jot or one tittle to pass from the law until all be fulfilled. Then He says, “Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of

heaven." Matthew chapter five is a refutation of pharisaical legalism and a reestablishment of biblical law.

In verse 21 He says, "You've heard that it was said by them of old time." That means all the scribes and all the old teachers. Then, in verse 22, He says, "But I say unto you." Here is what they were teaching, but they were wrong; He is telling us what the law really says. Again, in Matthew 5:27: "You've heard it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Here is what they say, how they misinterpreted, and how they misapplied it. There is a spiritual application of God's law.

It is not merely externally stated; it is internal. In verse 31, "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife," and in verse 32, "But I say unto you." Here is what they taught, but now I am telling you what God's law really says. Look at verse 33: "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time." Watch verse 34: "But I say unto you." In verse 38, "Ye have heard that it hath been said," and in verse 39, "But I say unto you." He is showing how the scribes, Pharisees, and others have misinterpreted God's law down through the ages.

They have done that, but God is telling us what the truth really is and how the law really applies. In verse 43, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." Verse 44 says, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Here is what they said; here is the truth.

Application: Walk as Children of the Father

Why do you think our Lord went through this great exercise of showing the misinterpretation and misapplication of His law by the scribes, Pharisees, and elders, and then showing the correct interpretation and how that law is really to be applied? Watch carefully, verse 45: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

I could probably pick out the Ashwood children, and I could pick out Sam's children. When I was much younger and would go to a church for the first time, I would sit on the platform, look out into the congregation, and say to myself, "Now that woman is married to that man. That man and that woman are married." Those children sitting over there belong to those people over here. I would mentally try to place families in my mind, and I was right about ninety-nine times out of a hundred. How did I know? Believe it or not, sooner or later, husbands and wives not only think alike and act alike; sometimes they begin to look alike.

Thank God Alice does not have a beard yet. Children look just like their parents, and they act, walk, and talk like their parents. At our church in the old days, we played the oldie-wed game, not the newlywed game, at family night. Pretty soon, the church people asked Alice and me not to play, because we always won. I tell her I can catch her before she ever does something. I say, "Sweetheart, I can read you like a book," and she says the same thing to me. We have both hit our hands going to a radio, either to turn it on or turn it off.

The point is this: If your children look like you, act like you, and walk and talk like you, our Lord Jesus said, "I'm straightening all of this out. I'm telling you the wicked false misinterpretation and misapplication of My law by these Pharisees, and I'm giving you the correct interpretation. Why? That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven." He expects you to walk like Him, act like Him, and talk like Him: "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

The totality of Scripture is our rule for faith and practice. When people say, "But Brother Weaver, that's in the Old Testament," how many Bibles do we have? We have only one Bible. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul said, "All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished in every good work." He was talking primarily about the Old Testament Scriptures, for the New Testament had not been completed. We have one Bible and one God. The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament.

No part has been done away with, much less whole books and sections. The immutability of God's law teaches us that the issue is either God's law or man's law. William Penn said, "Men must be governed by God, or they condemn themselves to be ruled by tyrants." If you cannot follow God's law in your life, inevitably and invariably a tyrant will arise and make you follow his law. Christ places His seal of approval upon the law of God.

We should love, respect, and obey it out of love for Jesus Christ. This is His word and will, and we're walking it. God has not abrogated His law; we're still answerable, accountable, and responsible.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You. We thank You for Your word, Your truth, Your goodness, and Your love. Father, help us not to sin against You, but to bring our lives into conformity to Your word. We do not desire to be covetous, or idolaters, or adulterers, or effeminate, or whoremongers. Lord, we want to be holy and obedient and godly. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we ask, Amen.

CHAPTER 5

What Does It Mean To Pray In Jesus' Name

June 16, 2015

Introduction: The Promise and the Question

John 14, verses 13 and 14: "And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." Look closely at John 14, verse 13: "And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

Is this promise a mere blank check, as some individuals have not only supposed but clearly taught? What exactly does it mean to ask in Christ's name? Is it sufficient to end our prayers with simply the phrase, "in Jesus' name we ask," or "in Christ's name we ask"? When we end our prayers with that phrase, does that mean that we have automatically asked and prayed in Jesus' name?

Context of the Promise: Comforting the Disciples

Before going any further, consider the context in which verses 13 and 14 occur. In John chapter 14, Christ is in the midst of comforting His disciples. He has told them that He is about to go away, and where He is going, they cannot immediately follow Him. In John chapter 13 and verse 36, He says: "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards."

Peter and the other disciples know that Jesus Christ is about to leave them. Although He is leaving them, they cannot follow Him at this particular time. Therefore, in John chapter 14, Christ begins comforting His disciples. How does He comfort them? First, in verse 1, He says, "Let not your heart be troubled." "You believe in God, believe also in me." He comforts them by identifying Himself as God. Jesus is saying, "I am the one true and the living God. If you believe in God, you believe in me, because I am God. I am the God-man. I am incarnate." But He also comforts them by proclaiming the fact that He and the Father are one.

In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." He continues, "If you had known me, you should have known my Father also," because He and the Father are one. There is one God. "If you had known me, you should have known my Father also, and henceforth you know Him and have seen Him." Philip asks, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus answers, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He asks, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" The words He speaks are not of Himself; the Father dwelling in Him does the works. He concludes, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me, or else believe me for the very works' sake."

Christ therefore says not only that He and God are one, but that He and the Father are one. There is one God, manifested in three persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Christ is claiming to be co-equal with the Father. As the Father is God, so Christ is God.

Christ also encourages and comforts His disciples by saying that they shall do the works He has done, and even greater works. In verse 12 He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father." In other words, because He is God and is one with the Father, those who believe in Him will continue His ministry and work. There is unity of purpose and unity of plan.

Verses 13 and 14 are given in connection with the performance and continuance of these works. Though He is leaving them and going to the Father, they are to continue His ministry. He says, "And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it."

The Meaning of 'In My Name' in Greek

There are a multitude of phrases in the Bible that are connected with the name of Christ. You would not notice all of the prepositions because, in the Greek New Testament, there are different prepositions. Let me show you what I mean. For instance, Matthew 28:19 says, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Jesus Christ tells His disciples to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The preposition is eis, which literally means "baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost." So the phrase is actually "baptizing them into the name."

Luke 24:47 says, "...and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." He is talking to His disciples. The preposition here is epi, which literally means "upon" or "because of" the name. Thus, He says, "...and that repentance and remission of sin should be preached upon or because of His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Then, in John 15:21, we read, "But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent

me." Here the preposition is dia, which literally means, "and all these things they will do to you on account of my name's sake."

But when you come back to John 14:13–14, it is simply, "if you will ask in my name." The Greek preposition is en, which is more often translated "in." So it is not "into the name," or "upon the name," or "on account of the name" in John 14:13–14. It is, "if you just ask in my name."

Warning Against Magical Use of the Name

Does asking in Christ's name simply mean saying, “In Jesus' name we pray”? Turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 19, because if you believe that the mere use of Jesus' name merits something, you have got a rude awakening. I have never really liked the song, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, there's something about that name,” where it says, “In the name of Jesus, I've seen this, and in the name of Jesus, I've seen that.” What does the name Jesus mean? Savior, right? Jesus was our Lord's human name. That's all.

It is from the Hebrew Yehoshua. Who was named that in the Old Testament? Joshua. Joshua means Savior. Jesus is our Lord's human name. Christ is a messianic title, and Lord is a title. When we say the Lord Jesus Christ, that is His full title.

Are there people alive today who are named Jesus? You better believe it. Plenty of them. If you were to go to Cuba, Puerto Rico, or Miami, you would hear, “Jesus! Jesus!” The name Jesus is simply Jesus. Many people today try to use the name Jesus as if it were a magical formula. There is nothing magical about the human name Jesus, any more than there is anything magical about the human name Tom, Don, Mark, John, Tony, or Melvin.

Look what happens in Acts chapter 19 when someone tries to use our Lord's human name as a magical formula. Acts 19:13 says, “Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon themselves to call over them who had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, ‘We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth.’” They were using the name Jesus and calling on demons to come out in Jesus' name. “And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and of the chief priests, which did so.”

“Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?” And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. In other words, the man just beat the devil out of them. They were using Jesus' name, were they not?

They said, "We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth, come out of him." And the man, the demon in the man, says, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" The man leapt upon them and literally beat the devil out of them, and they fled naked and wounded. So simply repeating the name of Christ certainly cannot be praying in Christ's name. Just because we end our prayers in Christ's name, that does not mean that we have literally prayed in Christ's name.

First Meaning: Praying in His Person (Identification with Christ)

So let us go back to John chapter 14 and ask and answer this question: What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name? What does it mean to ask in the name of Christ? I am going to give you three things. First of all, to pray in the name of Christ means that we pray in His person. It means that we pray in His person. That is, we pray as standing in His place, fully identified with Him.

Now listen to this sentence very carefully: When we truly pray in the name of Christ, then Christ Himself is the petitioner. I think that will come to light a little bit more as we look at the Scriptures. To pray in Christ's name means that we pray in His person; that is, we pray as fully identified with Him.

The word identification is the key word. When we pray in Christ's name, we recognize, realize, and acknowledge that we are one with Jesus Christ by virtue of our union with Him. We must realize that by His works of grace, Christ has made us one with Himself—so much so that what He has done, we have done. What He is, so are we.

Let me explain that with the use of Scripture. Look in your Bibles, first of all, holding John 14, but turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter

2, and notice verses 14 through 17: Hebrews chapter 2, verses 14 through 17.

Hebrews 2 verse 14 says: "Forasmuch then as the children—that is the children of God—are partakers of flesh and blood, he—that is Christ—also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore, in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

Christ has taken upon Himself, first of all, human nature. Then the Bible says that He took upon Himself not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham.

Is there any redemption? Is there any salvation for the fallen angels? What is the answer? No. Why is there no redemption or salvation for the fallen angels? Because our Savior never came in their nature and in their form. He came in human nature and took upon Himself the seed of Abraham. Had Christ come in the nature of the angels and suffered for the fallen angels, then there would have been no salvation and redemption for us. So, in order to save us and redeem us, He took upon Himself our nature. Yea, even more so, the Bible says specifically that He took upon Himself the seed of Abraham.

Do you think that was just His physical nature or His spiritual nature? You remember Abraham has two seeds, a physical seed or a spiritual seed. Yea, the Bible even says, in the book of Galatians, that Christ was the seed of Abraham. So naturally then, it would refer to Christ and to the spiritual nature.

Christ has taken upon Himself human nature, but more so, He has come in our place and in our stead. The Word of God emphasizes how closely the Christian and Christ are identified together.

Romans 6 asks, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” Then it says, “Know you not” — in other words, here is something you ought to know — “that as so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?” Therefore, “we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

The physical illustration of baptism is to be a physical picture of a spiritual reality. If I were to take Dr. Holmes and put him under the water, and raise him up again, that would be a physical picture of what is supposed to have happened to him spiritually. He died with Christ, and he rose again with Christ. “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection.”

In other words, we are identified with Him. If we died with Him, we live with Him. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him,” that the body of sin might be destroyed, “that henceforth we should not serve sin.” It does not say that we should not commit sin, but that we should not serve it. Sin is not to be our lord or our master. “Now, if we be dead with Christ,” we believe that we shall also live with Him. Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him. In that He died, He died unto sin once; in that He lives, He lives unto God. Since we died with Christ, rose from the dead with Christ, and were crucified with Christ, this is the application: we are to reckon it so.

"Likewise, reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Paul is saying that we were crucified with Christ. We died with Christ, were buried with Christ, and rose from the dead with Christ. Therefore, there should be in our lives a practical application of Christ's life because we are fully and totally identified with Him by

virtue of our union with Him. He took upon Himself our nature and our sins. He died in our place as our substitute. He was fully and totally and completely identified with His people.

Paul summarizes this exactly in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Paul, are you dead? Yes. When did you die? I died when Christ died. Are you alive? Yes, I'm alive. When did you get alive? I rose in Christ. And the life that I now live, it is not mine per se, he says. It is Christ living in me. I am fully and totally identified with my Redeemer, my Savior, and my Lord.

This is made plain in Ephesians 2: "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins, wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

Paul is talking about our lost condition. Ephesians 2:4 says, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins,” hath “quickened us together with Christ.” In other words, our quickening was with Christ’s quickening. “By grace ye are saved,” and God “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” When Christ was raised from the dead, we were raised from the dead. When Christ was seated at the right hand of God, we were seated at the right hand of God.

Verse 7 says that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace and kindness toward us through Jesus Christ. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

What Paul is saying is this: Christ's death is our death; Christ's burial is our burial; Christ's resurrection is our resurrection; Christ's life is our life; and Christ's righteousness is our righteousness. We are His, and He is ours. Therefore, when we pray in the name of Christ, we are to pray as those who are one with Him, fully identified with Him in His person.

To pray in the name of Christ, being fully identified with His person, necessarily means, first, that one must be a believer in Christ as He is fully revealed and manifested in His Word. In the context of John chapter 14, what must we specifically believe about Christ? According to verse 1, we must believe that He is God. We must believe that He is co-equal with the Father; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God incarnate, the God-Man, and one with the Father, equal to the Father in every way. If you are going to pray in Jesus' name, you must pray fully identified with Christ, believing that Christ is who He said He is, as He is fully revealed in His Word, the Bible.

Can an individual who does not believe that Jesus Christ is God really pray in Christ's name? No. Can an individual who believes that Jesus Christ is subordinate to the Father really pray in Christ's name? Of course not. When you pray in Christ's name, you genuinely believe that Christ is who He said He was and believe what the Word has revealed about Him.

Secondly, the one who prays in Christ's name must be in Christ in saving grace; he must actually be someone who is saved. You could believe intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are co-equal. But can an unsaved man really pray in Jesus' name? No, because he is not united to Him by saving grace. He is not one with Him.

So, to pray in Christ's name, you must not only believe; you must be united. Thirdly, to pray in Christ's name is to represent Christ by virtue of your union with Him. It is true that we do not lose our identification when we are saved. You are still you, and I am still John; God knows who we are. But when God views us, does He view us in ourselves, or does He view us in Christ? He views us in Christ, because that is where we have our union and our righteousness. We represent Christ in the sense that we are in Him and one with Him.

When we come to pray in Jesus' name, we are, in essence, claiming our oneness and unity with Christ.

Second Meaning: Pleading the Merits of Christ Alone

Look in John 14:1. Christ says, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me." Now look at verse 13: "And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Faith in the person of Christ, according to John 14:1, is manifested by prayer in the name of Christ, according to verses 13 and 14. To ask in Christ's name is the same as asking in Christ's person, because we realize our oneness with Christ. When we truly ask in Christ's name, it is the same as if Jesus Christ Himself were the petitioner.

What does it mean to ask in Christ's name? Number one, it means that we ask in His person as fully identified with Him. Second, to ask in Christ's name means that we plead before God the merits of Jesus Christ alone.

Why should God hear our prayer? What standing before God do we have in and of ourselves? In and of ourselves, none. What is the ground? What is the confidence that we have in ourselves that God would hear our prayer? None.

There are a lot of people who honestly believe that they are going to be heard for their much speaking. Matthew chapter 6 ought to take care of that, where our Lord says that heathen do that. In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7, our Lord says that they are not going to be heard for their much speaking. A lot of people tend to think that God simply ought to recognize them and hear their prayer because they are who they are. Does God owe us anything?

The answer is no. You say, "But pastor, you don't understand. I tithe, I give, I sacrifice, I pray, I study, I witness, I work." Look in Romans 11:35. The Bible asks, "Or who hath first given to him that shall be recompensed unto him again?"

You said that you tithed and gave. Who gave you the money that you might tithe and give? You said that you prayed. Who gave you the breath and intellect to pray? You said, "But you studied." Who gave you the breath and intellect to study? Who gave you the ability

to witness? In other words, you cannot first give to God. The only thing that you and I can ever give to God is what He has first given unto us. If we cannot give to God first, we cannot make God our debtor. We cannot bring God under our thumb, so to speak. God does not owe us anything.

If God never gave us another breath, would He be just? Yes. If God never gave us another meal, would He be just? Yes. If God never gave us another healthy day, would He be just? Yes. God does not owe us anything.

Secondly, do we merit anything from God? Can we earn anything from God? Can we work? What does the Bible say in Isaiah 64 and verse 6? All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, or, in plain English, menstrual cloths. We are all as an unclean thing before His eyes.

If you think God owes you something, or that you have earned something from God, or that God should listen to you and grant your request because you have done something for Him, you are mistaken. God will never hear you on those grounds.

Thirdly, can we bargain or make deals with God in any way and thus manipulate and control Him? That is exactly what people try to do: “God, if You will do this for me, then, Lord, I will serve You this way, and I will do thus and thus.” You cannot make deals with God. Read Matthew 20. The man who tried to make a deal with God, God gave him exactly what he deserved.

I will be honest with you: I don't want what I deserve. I want grace and I want mercy. You see, this is why, if we pray in Jesus' name, we have to plead before God the merits of Christ alone. He is the only one who has any standing before God. He is the only one who has any merits before God. He is the only one who has any righteousness before God. We do not plead our goodness. We do not plead our righteousness. We do not plead our works and our deals and our plans and our schemes before God, because they're empty and worthless and useless and to no avail. We have absolutely no standing in and of ourselves to come before God in prayer. If you and I come before God in prayer, we must come in Jesus' name, and that means we must come pleading His merits.

Let me explain that. Two passages show dogmatically that we have no standing in and of ourselves. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand." What is our standing before God? It is only grace in Jesus Christ. We don't stand in our works, in our deeds, in our merits, in what we've earned, or what we've done, or what we haven't done. We can only stand in grace in Jesus Christ.

The same principle appears in Galatians 2:16. Although Paul is talking about justification, it's exactly the same principle. Paul says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

If you cannot be just before God by doing any works, do you think God will hear your prayer because of works that you do? Let us suppose that I spend two weeks counseling Dr. Holmes, just trying to straighten him out. He takes a lot of straightening out, you see. I spend two weeks dealing with him twenty-four hours a day. Can I then come to God in prayer and say, “O Lord, You know I want You to do this. I ask You, Lord, just look what I have done. I have spent two weeks with this man because I have served You so faithfully and worked so hard. O Lord, give me what I am asking”? A lot of people do that. But if works cannot justify you, works cannot produce any standing before God—not only for justification, but even for prayer.

We have to stand in Christ. We have to stand in His merits and His righteousness. I cannot go to God and say, “God, I have not cussed my wife out today. Supply this need, Lord. I have not beaten the neighbor up this day. Lord, supply this need. You know I have tried. I have done my best.” That is no standing before God. We cannot come in our own. We must come and plead the merits of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone.

If we are fully identified with Him, why would we claim what we are anyhow? All we are is sin.

Christ gives us ample reason to come and plead His merits. In John 8:29, He says, “And he that sent me is with me. The Father

hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him." Do you always do the things that please God? But we know One who does, and that is Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ went to pray, He said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest me," always. Does Christ hear us always? No, but He hears Christ always.

At our Lord's baptism, God made this statement concerning Christ; and He said it at other times in Scripture as well. Matthew 3:16–17 records that occasion.

"And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him, and, lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Has God ever looked at you and said that He's well pleased in everything that you say and do and act and think? No. But He's well pleased in Jesus Christ, isn't He?

If Jesus Christ only does those things that please the Father, if the Father always hears Jesus Christ, and if the Father is well pleased in Jesus Christ, it's absolutely foolish for us to come to God in our name, isn't it? We must come in the name of Christ, pleading His merits. Jesus Christ obeyed God the Father perfectly, kept the law of God totally, earned and worked out a perfect righteousness, and was raised from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God the Father to apply what He worked out to the lives of His people.

We have nothing, and Christ has everything. If you were to come to God pleading your works, your good deeds, and your righteousness, it's like a man who has just gone through bankruptcy entering a bank and telling a banker he ought to give him a loan because he can handle money very well. Ridiculous—the banker would laugh at him. When we come before God pleading our works, merits, what we do, what we think, and what we say, we are all on the wrong tangent.

Look at 1 John, chapter 3, verses 20 and 21: "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

If you start claiming before God your good deeds, your merits, and your righteousness, your heart will condemn you. If you are honest, you know that you do not have any righteousness. The only way we can have confidence toward God is to come in the name of Christ, who is perfect, with a perfect righteousness, a perfect grace, and a perfect life. We have to come in Christ. When we come in Christ's name and pray in Christ's name, we plead the merits of Jesus Christ; we do not plead our own.

What does it mean to ask in Christ's name? First, it means that we ask fully identified with His person. Second, it means that we ask pleading His righteousness: "Lord, don't hear me for what I've done. Hear me for Christ's sake. Lord, I don't deserve anything, but Your Son deserves everything. Lord, I stand in Him. I come in Him." It means that we plead His merits.

Third Meaning: Seeking God's Honor and Glory According to His Will

Thirdly, to ask in Christ's name means that we pray for that which is according to His perfections and will be for His honor and glory. Look at John 14:13: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Why? "That the Father may be glorified in the Son."

This promise is given in the context of the continuation of the ministry and works of Christ. Look back at verse 12: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." Then comes the promise: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Thus, the promise is connected with the works and ministry of Christ, and it has a certain limitation: the honor and glory of God.

Now let me ask you at least four questions that will help explain this point. Would Christ ever ask the Father for anything or to do anything that would not glorify the Father? Look in your Bibles to John 17 and verse 1. Jesus, in His high priestly prayer, says this: "These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, The hour is come, watch this now, glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee." The only reason God should really and truly ever

hear us and ever give us any glory at all is so that we could glorify Him. Now can you imagine Jesus Christ asking God to do anything that would not glorify Him?

And yet there are a multitude of Christians who ask God to do things that will not be glorifying to Him, to Himself. Who determines what is glorifying to God? Number one, the first and foremost answer is God Himself. The second answer would have to be the Word of God. But you have to understand that our understanding is imperfect, and we do not have perfect knowledge. That means oftentimes our interpretations of the Word of God, and what we think would be glorifying to God, may not really be so. That's why we need to pray on a lot of things, "Thy will be done." Now let me show you what I'm talking about.

Is it God's will most of the time for our needs to be supplied? Stop and think about that. Is it? Yes, because most of the time our needs are supplied. Therefore, does that mean it will always glorify God to have our needs supplied? Not necessarily. What did Paul say? Paul said, "I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content." Paul went hungry. Paul had to do without. But God let Paul do without to teach him. It's God's will for most of us to be healthy, and most of the time we are. But is it God's will that we be healthy all of the time? No.

How about that man in John chapter 9? Do you remember that he was born blind? The disciples asked our Lord, "Lord, who did sin? This man or his parents, that he was born blind?" In other words, they said, "Lord, he had to do something wrong. Or his parents had to do something wrong. Why was he born blind? Was it his sin or his parents' sin?" And our Lord said, "Neither, but for the glory of God." Now you explain to me how God can be glorified in a blind man.

We could answer the question very simply: Christ miraculously opened his eyes, and there was a great testimony. But, dear friend, there are plenty of blind people today who do not see. There are plenty of what you and I would call mongoloid children who never mature, who never have any understanding, and yet God is glorified in those kids.

I don't understand that, but I believe it. It is God's will for husbands and wives to be together and to have a happy home, according to His Word. But sometimes God separates husbands and wives for His greater glory, and God teaches them. What about the man who's drafted in service? What about the man who's incarcerated unjustly and unlawfully? You see what I'm saying?

There are a multitude of times when we have to come and say, "Lord, Thy will be done. I think this would glorify Thee, but I don't know, and I'm willing to submit it to You. Lord, I want it to glorify You." As Christ would never ask for anything that would not glorify God, neither should we. We think we can understand it, but we don't.

Number two: Would Christ ever ask the Father for anything, or to do anything, that was contrary to His Word? The answer is no. Look in your Bibles to 1 John 5. Verses 14 and 15 say, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him." Now, my question is this: how do we know what is according to His will?

How do we know what is according to God's will? How do we know what would glorify God? Based upon the Word of God.

We must understand our own limited concept and interpretation. We do not have perfect understanding. But he says in verse 14, "This is the confidence"—in other words, here is an assurance that we have in him—that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. To pray in utmost faith, we must know that what we ask is according to the will of God, according to the Word of God, and will redound to the glory of God. Therefore, he says in verse 15, "If we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

Just as Christ would not ask the Father for anything that would fail to glorify him, and would not ask for anything contrary to his Word, neither should we. If we do not have a clear statement or affirmation from Scripture that something is God's Word and God's will, we had better say, "Thy will be done," because we do not know.

Thirdly, here is my third question: Would Christ ever ask the Father for anything, or to do anything, that was selfishly motivated? Christ would not. I could turn the question around: Would we ever ask God for anything, or to do anything, that was selfishly motivated? Look in your Bibles to James chapter 4, because I want to show you one of the big reasons why our prayers are unanswered. James 4, beginning with verse 1: "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"

He is talking about your own wickedness, fighting, and mind. In verse 2 he says, "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not." One of your big problems is that you do not ask me. But look at verse 3: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." So you and I have no right to ask God for something if it is selfishly motivated. Let me ask you a question: How many people in this room want their children to go to hell? Nobody. And so we ask God to save our children. The question is, why do we want God to save them? Do we want God to be glorified, or do we just want to keep our children and ourselves from suffering? Even when we pray for our children's salvation, it is often selfishly motivated.

We are not really thinking about God's honor and glory; we are thinking about saving ourselves from heartache and trouble, and saving our children from that. We are human, and we are selfish, and God knows that. But He tells us that one reason we do not get our prayers answered is because we ask amiss. We are not interested in God's honor and glory; we are interested in what we want and in our own desires, unwilling to submit them to God. "You ask and you have not. Because you ask amiss that you may consume it upon your own lust." We have to understand that our wants are not necessarily God's wants, our wishes are not necessarily God's wishes, and our desires are not necessarily God's desires.

There are even preachers who ask God to do things for a selfish reason. They want people saved and a great work, but not necessarily for God's honor and glory—for their own recognition, esteem, and pride in the community, the state, and among their brethren. Look what Jesus Christ said in John 5:44: "How can you believe, who receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" In other words, desiring selfish honor, praise, and recognition makes faith impossible. When you are selfish, wanting something regardless of God and His will, it makes faith impossible.

So you have to ask: Would Christ ever ask the Father for anything that would not glorify the Father? Would Christ ever ask the Father to do anything contrary to His Word? Would Christ ever pray from a selfish motive? The answer is no.

Although we cannot get rid of our selfishness, what we can do is recognize it, confess it, and ask God to deal with it and help us pray out of a pure motive.

Would Christ ever ask the Father for anything, or to do anything, without asking in faith? No. Why? Because Romans 14:23 says, “For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” If Christ did not ask in faith, Christ would be sinning. Jesus said in John 14:1, “You believe in God, believe also in me.” So if we ask Christ for something, or God for something, and do not believe in Christ, we are not asking in faith. In Mark 11:22, Christ said, “Have faith in God.”

Faith is not feelings. Faith is not emotions. Faith is not sentimentality. You cannot work up faith. You cannot manufacture faith. Everyone has had times when they were so burdened, so weighted down, and in such distress that they tried to convince themselves, “I believe, I believe, I’m going to do it, I’m going to do it, I believe.” Did it work? No, it did not work. You cannot force yourself to believe. You cannot manufacture faith, and you cannot make yourself believe. Faith is the gift of God. If God does not give us faith, it is not going to come to pass; and if we do not ask in faith, it is sin.

If you try to make yourself believe something, if you try to work faith up, saying, “Well, I’m claiming this, and this is going to be it, this is going to be it for me,” you are setting yourself up for disappointment, heartache, discouragement, and frustration. You

simply cannot make yourself believe. Faith is God's gift. You have heard people use the expression, "Pray the prayer of faith."

I have prayed for some folks who were on their deathbed, and they died. I prayed for some other folks on their deathbed, and they lived. God is not going to give me faith to do something that is contrary to His will.

Is it God's will for most of us to recover from our sicknesses most of the time? Yes, because all of us have been sick and have gotten well. But is it God's will that we be cured from our sicknesses every time? It could not possibly be. Because if it were, nobody would ever die. And the wages of sin is death.

If it is Don's time to die, I do not care how much praying I do; he is going to die. God will not give me faith that he will get well when it is not God's will for him to get well. But if it is God's will to heal him, God can indeed give me faith, and I can sincerely believe and assert, based upon the Word of God, that Don will be well, and he will be.

What, then, is faith? Faith is a settled assurance in the Word, the will, and the way of God. Moreover, faith is in God Himself. Faith is when I come to God and say, "Lord, I ask this for Your honor and Your glory. It is according to Your will and Your Word. I am asking, Lord, that You would work it out and bring it to pass. If I never receive recognition or honor, that is fine. You have all the glory."

I believe and trust You to do it because it is for Your glory and according to Your will. I am asking in faith. If it is according to God's Word and God's will, He will give you the faith to believe it.

Conclusion and Applications

Now let me make a couple of applications. Look back to John 14. In verse 12, He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father," and whatsoever you shall ask in His name, that will He do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Prayer addressed to the Father is the same as prayer addressed to Christ.

There is no jealousy in the Godhead. The normal mode is to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. But just because you say, "Dear

Christ," does not mean that the prayer is not addressed to the Father; nor does saying, "Our Heavenly Father," mean that the prayer is not addressed to Christ. The three are one. Prayer addressed to the Father is the same as prayer addressed to the Son, and prayer answered by the Son is the same as prayer answered by the Father. For He said, "That will I do." When Christ answers the prayer, it is the same as the Father answering the prayer.

No one really prays in Christ's name without praying in His person, fully identified with Him, pleading His merits, and seeking His honor and His glory alone. If I come to God in prayer, those are three absolute essential requirements. If I do not come in Christ's name, Christ will never hear me anyway. And if I do come in Christ's name, I must come that way, for Christ alone has standing before God.

Father, thank you for Jesus Christ. Thank you, Lord, that we can love Him and trust Him and believe in Him. And thank you, Father, that He is all that we need. He is our all in all. Lord, help us to be reminded that when you hear us, it's only because of Christ. When you answer us, it's only because of Christ. When you bless us, it's only because of Christ. Without Him, Lord, we can do nothing. Without Him, we are nothing. Thank You for so gracious and merciful promises as Thou hast given us in Thy Word. But help us to remember that every promise is in Christ.

CHAPTER 6

Where We Are and How We Got Here in 2023

February 12, 2023

Introduction and Text

The Bible says, “They that forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep the law contend with them.”

Evidence of National Insanity

It is no secret that we are in desperate straits in America, and the truth is that all the world is in a mess. In all probability, Europe is worse off than America. When you look around, you will notice that immorality is raging. Perversion is accepted. Transgenderism is looked upon benevolently. When you go so far as to believe that men can have periods and produce babies, then you have fallen into absolute insanity.

No matter how many drugs you take, how many surgeries you endure, and how many psychiatrists counsel you, you are still the gender in which you were born. You may change your appearance,

but you cannot change your gender. The fact remains that there are only two genders, male and female. I have often said, if you do not believe that there are only two genders, male and female, just try milking a bull and see how far you get with that. It simply will not work.

Now insanity is reaching even farther, because it is not just transgenders; it is now trans-species. There are adults and even children who are identifying themselves as animals. A couple of news clips picked up this week demonstrate Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 4. The first headline reads, "Kentucky School District, students are dressing and acting like cats. Meade County, Kentucky." The report states: "The Meade County School District is dealing with an unusual situation. A group of high school students attending school is acting like and dressing as cats. The superintendent tells WLKY the situation is being addressed, but according to a concerned grandparent, it is an ongoing problem and has many students on edge."

"Apparently, from what I understand, they are called furries," the grandmother said, asking to remain anonymous. "They identify with animals. These people will hiss at you and scratch at you if they do not like something that you are doing." She said, "This is not a new problem."

The truth is that there are people today who are identifying as deer, wolves, and other animals. In fact, I glanced the headline. I did not take time to read the article where one man who was dressed as a deer was shot. That is very dangerous during deer season—to dress as a deer—but he was identifying as a deer, and he got shot as a deer as well. Here is one that might really surprise you: a headline.

"Killer now identifies as an infant who wears nappies and demands baby food in prison." Sophie Eastwood, who was named Daniel at the time of sentencing, is serving a lifetime at Polmont Prison in Brighton, Scotland, for using shoelaces to strangle a cellmate to death in 2004. Eastwood, who transitioned from male to female while in prison, has demanded that guards hold her hand while she is outside her cell because she identifies as an infant. She has lived as a woman in Her Majesty's prison for the past four years and has been described by sources inside the jail as

attention-seeking and manipulative. She has told chiefs at Polmont Prison that she identifies as a tot and should be allowed to wear diapers and have her meals pureed like baby food. She has also demanded that guards hold her hand while she is escorted to and from her cell.

Prison bosses are taking Eastwood's request seriously and have already supplied her with a dummy, I guess a baby, according to sources cited by the Daily Record. I understand a prisoner milking the system, getting the best of prison life, and at the same time mocking and ridiculing those in authority over him. But what I cannot understand is the ignorance, the stupidity, and the senselessness of bureaucrats who go along with such drivel and wicked stupidity, or who make believe that they are going along with it.

When you stop and think about prisons, you have to ask this question: Where are the chain gangs? Where are the prisoners out working on the roads? Occasionally you see some, but not in chain gangs like they used to be. We have come a long way since the days of *Cool Hand Luke*. You remember Paul Newman in that movie back in the fifties? Even as a boy, I saw chain gangs. I saw prisoners working alongside the road. That was seventy-five years ago, but they were there back then.

I understand that prisons basically are an unbiblical form of punishment. But the truth of the matter is, if you are going to use a prison as punishment, why not make it so absolutely miserable and difficult that once you get out, you never want to go back? Today they have color television, workout rooms, tennis, and everything they can imagine in these prisons. Years ago, I had a friend who had to go into a federal prison for nine months because he had taken a stand against abortion. Of course, they came against him for taking that stand.

I remember him showing me the letter. In fact, I read the letter to our church at that time. They were telling him to report to prison and informing him that they did not supply tennis rackets or golf clubs. If he wanted any of those, he needed to bring them with him for nine months. That was a federal prison. I am simply asking

where we are and how in the world we got where we are in this day and time.

Moreover, crime has increased, while the penalties for crime have decreased. When you look at cities like Chicago, or states and cities such as California, New York, Portland, Oregon, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, these places are now nothing more than hell holes where criminals basically have free reign and free run. They attack at their will and pleasure, and very seldom are they ever punished.

I read where in California three men involved in sex trafficking a hundred women, when captured, were given sentences of three years each: “And three men, Nery Naharo Rodriguez, 42, George Perez Hernandez, 37, and Luis Mata, 30, were sentenced for running a prostitution ring in Northern California, comprised mostly of undocumented women from Mexico who were sold for sex to as many as 20 clients in a single day. Each man received just three years for his involvement in the ring.”

Crime, Punishment, and Injustice

In comparison, many cases involving growing or selling weed, marijuana, receive much longer sentences. In recent months, a California man was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison, an Oregon man to 15, and an Iowa man to 20 years, all for growing or distributing marijuana. Those cases are on the long end for marijuana-related sentences. The average time served for drug-related offenses is about 2.2 years. But they illustrate how desperately, or comparatively, short sentences for pimping can be. Can you imagine trafficking over 100 women and only getting three years?

Here's one that takes the prize. Fox News reported on Sunday, February 5, 2023, that a former Arizona State Trooper would spend five years in prison after pleading guilty to multiple sex-related charges stemming from his actions during traffic stops. Tremaine Jackson, a thirteen-year veteran of the Arizona Department of Public Safety, was initially charged with 61 counts of sex-related kidnapping and fraud charges, according to the Arizona Department of Public Safety website. Here is a man charged with 61 felonies, and he gets five years. He will probably be out in two years, just like these

men who traffic women will probably be out in a year or a year and a half, since they received only three years.

Child Trafficking Epidemic

What in the world has happened to America? It seems like everything is totally out of control. Let me give you one more that is actually worse. John Whitehead, a constitutional attorney and head of the Rutherford Institute, wrote about the trafficking of children in America. He said, "Consider this, every two minutes, a child is bought and sold for sex. Hundreds of young girls and boys, some as young as nine years old, are being bought and sold for sex as many as 20 times per day. Adults purchase children for sex at least 2.5 million times a year in the United States alone. In Georgia alone, it is estimated that 7,200 men, half of them in their 30s, seek to purchase sex with adolescent girls each month, averaging roughly 300 a day. On the average, a child might be raped by 6,000 men during a five-year period. It is estimated that at least 100,000 to 500,000 children, girls and boys, are bought and sold for sex in the United States every year, with as many as 300,000 children in danger of being trafficked each year. Some of these children are forcibly abducted, others are runaways, and still others are sold into the system by relatives and acquaintances. Child rape has become big business in America."

This is America now. We have become a nation absolutely teeming with predators. Lies, wickedness, bribery, injustice, and tyranny are seemingly prevailing. We have lost our minds, our courage, our character, and our common sense. So you have to ask: What has happened, and why has it happened? How far down this road have we gotten?

The Root Cause: Forsaking God's Law

And how much farther will we go? Well, I believe the Bible has the answer, and I think the answer is very plain in Proverbs 28, verse 4. If you look at that verse again, the Bible says, “They that forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep the law contend with them.” Now, the very first question that must be asked and answered in our verse is, whose law, or what law, was Solomon referring to when he

wrote this passage? Clearly, I believe, and obviously, this has to be the law of God, simply because we have already seen that man's law is extremely humanistic and unjust. In fact, man's law is in competition with and in opposition to the law of God.

I want you to hold Proverbs 28, but look in your Bibles, if you would please, to 1 Samuel 8. I've preached on this passage a number of times in times past, but I want you to see it in light of what I'm teaching today. There was one message I preached many years ago, which I entitled, “Trading God for a Man.” And that is exactly what is happening in 1 Samuel chapter 8. Israel is now demanding a man as king when, of course, God was the King. When they asked Samuel to give them a king, it displeased him, and he went and prayed to the Lord. Notice what the Lord said in verse 7: “And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people, and all that they say unto thee. For they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” In other words, they were trading God for a man. They no longer wanted God to be their King; they wanted a man to be their king.

Now, here is the important thing. Skip down to verse 9. God would give them the king they wanted, but He wanted Samuel to show them the difference between His rule and the king's rule—to show them what man's rule would be like. God said, “Now, therefore, hearken unto their voice, howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.” Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king, and he said, “This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you.”

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Samuel 8:11-18 (KJV)

> "He will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and of his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive yards, and the best of them, and give them to his service. And he will

> take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your men's servants, and your maidservants, and your village young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. And he will take the tenth of your sheep, and you will be his servants," or slaves.

"And you shall cry out in that day, because of your king which you have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you in that day." In 1 Samuel 12:12, Samuel repeats the same truth: they had rejected God as their king. He says, "And when you saw that Nahash, the king of the children of Ammon, came against you, you said unto me, Nay, but a king shall reign over us, when the Lord your God was your king."

The only way to understand 1 Samuel 8 is to view it as a transition from one law structure to another law structure. I have told you this repeatedly in times past: a king rules by his law. That is certainly true of God. It is true of any king, and it is true of any ruler, whether he is called a king or not. Whether you agreed with Trump or not is immaterial to that principle.

Is there a difference between the administration of Trump and the administration of Biden? Of course there is. Whoever is elected next, there will again be a difference in administration. Why? Because everyone has his own agenda, and everyone has his own principles from which he is going to run things. Clearly, then, 1 Samuel 8 presents a transition from God's law to man's law.

Look back at Proverbs 28:4. The Bible says, "they that forsake the law." Let me emphasize this: this is God's law, not man's law. Man's law is distinct from, and in opposition to, God's law. The word "law" is the Hebrew word Torah. It not only means law; it refers to God's law. In fact, Torah means authoritative instruction or authoritative direction. The first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, are called the Torah because they are the books of the law. But all of God's Word is Torah, because all of God's Word is authoritative direction and authoritative instruction.

Interestingly, this appears repeatedly in the New Testament, including in the words of our Lord, where the entire Old Testament is called "the Law and the Prophets." Normally, we divide the Old

Testament into the books of the law, history, poetry, the major prophets, and the minor prophets. Yet in the New Testament, our Lord refers to everything as the Law and the Prophets. Thus the poetical and historical books are also labeled as Law.

Look in your Bibles, hold Proverbs 28, but turn to Matthew chapter 5, and let me show you a few of these passages. Begin at Matthew 5:17: “Think not that I'm come to destroy the law or the prophets. I'm not coming to destroy, but to fulfill.” So now He is referring to the Old Testament as the law or the prophets.

Notice Matthew 7:12: “Therefore, all things whatsoever you would do that men should do to you, do you even unto them: for this is the law and the prophets.” That is the golden rule. Once again, it is the law and the prophets. In Matthew 11:13, our Lord says, “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” There it is: the law and the prophets.

Then look at Matthew 22:40. Notice clearly what our Lord says here: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” All the law and the prophets. One more passage is Luke 16:16: “The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time, the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. The Law and the Prophets were until John.”

There are other scriptures, but I think you are beginning to see the truth that this phrase, “the Law and the Prophets,” really refers to the entirety of the Old Testament. And yet, it can also be applied to the entirety of the Word of God, since all of God's Word is authoritative instruction and direction. So when you look at Proverbs 28:4, when he says, “They that forsake the law,” we are talking about God's law.

Here is the question that you must ask in light of this. He said, “When they that forsake the law praise the wicked.” So what happens when the law of God is forsaken? The word “forsaken” refers to that which is denied, that which is left, that which is forgotten, and that which is walked away from. So he said, “They that forsake the law.” What happens when the law of God is forsaken?

Consequences of Forsaking the Law

The truth is that a number of things happen and transpire. You will remember the question asked in Psalm 11:3: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" We have witnessed, and are witnessing in this country, the destruction of the foundations of law, justice, economics, family, education, work, government, welfare, and many other things that have been turned upside down and, for all practical purposes, destroyed. Think of all the monies thrown away on humanistic welfare.

The Scripture has the answer: "If anyone will not work, neither should he eat." All I am trying to say is that today people are paid to stay home, not to work, and not to do anything. Look at our judicial, economic, and educational systems. In fact, Psalm 82 gives us a good example. It is a psalm written for judges and magistrates, a psalm of the judicial system. Verse 1 says, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, he judgeth among the gods." Our Lord, in John chapter 10, tells us that "gods" there refers to judges, magistrates, and rulers.

In context, verse 2 asks these judges and magistrates, "How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked?" Here is what judges and magistrates are supposed to do: "Defend the poor and the fatherless, do justice to the afflicted and needy, deliver the poor and needy, rid them out of the hand of the wicked." But they are not doing that in their ignorance. Verse 5 says, "They know not," meaning they are ignorant of justice; "neither will they understand"—they do not want to listen. "They walk on in darkness." And what happens? "All the foundations of the earth are out of course." By their acts of ignorance, insanity, and injustice, they turn everything upside down. The foundations are being destroyed.

There is absolutely no individual, no family, no church, no community, no state or nation that can exist without law. Everyone must have a law system. The question is not whether you will have a law system; the question is whose law you will have. Will it be God's law, or will it be man's law? The issue really comes down to what is known as theonomy versus autonomy. Theonomy is made up of two Greek words, theos, God, and nomos, law. Theonomy refers to God's

law. Autonomy is made up of autos, self, and nomos, law. Thus, you either have God's law or man's law, or self-law.

When you and I refuse the law of God and the rule of God, we condemn ourselves to be ruled by man. You may say, "I do not want God to rule over me, and I am certainly not going to let man rule over me. I will just rule over myself." Really? That is still man's law. That is still man's rule.

You remember two times in the book of Judges, Judges 17:6 and Judges 21:21, the Bible says, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." In other words, it was self-law. Turn, if you would, to the book of Proverbs, chapter 12, and look at verse 15.

Someone may say, "I will just do the very best that I can." Really? You reject God's law and do the very best that you can. Here is what the Word of God says: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth to the counsel is wise." So, when a man is going to do his own thing, God refers to him as a fool.

The Bible says that when they forsake the law, they praise the wicked. How do we forsake the law? There are different ways that the law of God can be forsaken. One way is to deny its validity or authority, as Pharaoh did in Exodus chapter 5 and verse 2. Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh and said, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, let my people go that they may serve me." It was straightforward, clear, and plain. But Pharaoh responded, "Who is the Lord that I should let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

What Pharaoh was saying was this: "I don't recognize God as sovereign. I don't recognize God as God. I don't even recognize His authority. He has no right to address me and command me to let Israel go. I deny that He is God." Of course, Pharaoh claimed to be a god himself. Thus Pharaoh denounced God, denied God, despised God, and defied God.

There are some people as brazen and rebellious as Pharaoh, but very few. Most people will not plainly say, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, neither will I obey Him." They may forsake God's law by taking that attitude, but most people will simply treat God

contemptuously. They will pretend that God does not exist and that He has not spoken. They will live as if God has no authority to tell them what to do, direct their lives, or tell them how to live. Some will even think they have an absolute right to transgress God's law because they are a god unto themselves.

Unhappily, there are people who profess to be Christians who take this attitude. They may acknowledge God, but they ignore His word. They do not read, study, listen, or obey. Clearly, most people treat God with contempt.

Another reason some forsake the law of God is misinterpretation and misunderstanding. Romans 6:14 says, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you're not under the law, but under grace.” There are several passages like this in the Bible, but we must always take things in context.

People say, “There it is. We’re not under the law. We’re under grace,” and they think that God’s law has somehow been nullified, negated, and set aside. But they never consider the context, nor even the immediate context or the remote context. The Apostle Paul started an argument in Romans chapter 3, teaching justification by faith alone, and that argument runs all the way through the end of Romans chapter 8.

When Paul says in Romans 6:14, “For sin shall not have dominion over you. Why? For you're not under the law but under grace,” he is saying that you are not under the law as a standard for justification. You are under grace as your standard for justification. Although the law is not our standard for justification, it is our standard for sanctification.

Romans 7:12 says, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” Paul is defending the law of God and showing that God’s law was used to convict him of sin. He did not even know what sin was apart from the law of God. The Bible says very clearly in Romans 3:20, “For by the law is the knowledge of sin.” You do not even know what sin is apart from the law of God.

Then, looking back in Romans chapter 3, verse 31, we should first notice verse 24. Romans 3:24 speaks of justification by grace. The law is not set aside by justification by faith; rather, the argument

Paul began in Romans 3 continues through Romans 8, distinguishing the law's purpose in revealing sin and sanctifying believers from its not being the standard by which sinners are justified.

Paul begins his argument for justification by faith in Romans chapter 3: "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Then, in verse 31, he makes this statement: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid," that is, perish the thought. Do not even let that enter into your mind. "Yea," he said, "we establish the law." Any preaching of justification by faith alone, any preaching of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that negates and nullifies the law, is heresy. He said it is only through faith that we establish the law.

If you have forgotten some of these truths, go back and listen to the 23-message series on the promises of the law. If you have never heard it, hear it; if you have forgotten it, listen again. But please understand this: it is impossible to be sanctified and holy without obedience to God's law. Would you count a serial murderer as a holy, sanctified man? Would you count a serial rapist as a holy, sanctified man? Would you count a serial thief as a holy, sanctified man? Of course not.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, he tells you very plainly, "for this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." Sanctification is involved in obedience to the law of God.

Consider Proverbs chapter 28, verse 4. He says, "They that forsake the law praise the wicked." Think about this and meditate upon it. In forsaking, leaving, forgetting, or even denying the law of God, we praise the wicked. We praise that which God condemns. We side against Him. We call that which is detestable and abominable something praiseworthy, something glorious, something to be celebrated, and something to be commended. The word "praise" is the Hebrew word halal and refers to that which is to be praised, that which is glorious, that which is to be celebrated, and that which is to be commended. In forsaking the law of God, we commend that which God condemns. In other words, we end up finding ourselves

not only on the wrong side of history, but also on the wrong side of God.

As they forsake the law, they praise the wicked. I hope you are seeing where we are today and how we got here, because the law of God has been forsaken. Even when you read legal dictionaries, most of them refer to Sir Edward Coke and Coke's commentaries on the law. These had nothing but the Bible in them, because law originally was based upon the Word of God. Consequently, if we forsake the law of God, we will end up praising, glorifying, and commending that which is wicked, wrong, and ungodly.

The Call to Keep the Law and Contend

But now we should look at the second half of this verse: “They that forsake the law praise and celebrate and glorify the wicked, but such as keep the law, contend with them.” The latter part of this verse is equally true and equally applicable today.

First, consider the word “keep.” He says, “such as keep the law.” None of us can keep the law of God perfectly. The law of God demands three things of every individual: personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. None of us can give that to the law; only the Lord Jesus Christ did that. But there is a sense in which we keep the law. The word “keep” is the Hebrew word shamar, which literally means to keep, guard, observe, give heed to, watch, protect, celebrate, and obey.

You remember in Genesis chapter two, God put Adam in the garden, gave him commands, and told him to dress and keep the garden. The word “keep” is shamar. Adam not only had to dress the garden—that is, make it productive—he had to keep it. He had to guard it.

He had to protect it. Of course, he failed to do that when he allowed the serpent in. Remember also that God gave a charge to Aaron and his sons that they were to keep the charge of the tabernacle. The word "keep" means to guard and protect. It is the same word, shamar. God gave the Levites, who were given to Aaron and his sons to help them, the charge of Aaron and his sons, as well as the tabernacle, to keep. Once again, it is the word shamar, which

means to guard, obey, and protect. Therefore, if any stranger came into the tabernacle who was not supposed to be there, the Levites were responsible to take his life. They were guardians and protectors of Aaron and his sons, the tabernacle, and everything around it.

He says, "They that forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep, guard, protect, observe—yea, such as keep the law—contend with them." What about the word "contend"?

The Hebrew word is garah, and it means to fight, contend with, engage in strife, wage war, and stir oneself up or excite oneself in defense. He is saying that only those who obey God and believe God are going to fight for God's law. In fighting, they will fight against the wicked and for that which is good, just, and holy. In other words, those who keep the law are siding with God against the wicked who forsake and violate the law.

It is time that Christians did indeed stir themselves up and get excited—excited for the defense of the faith, the gospel, the Word of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is time that we recognize that the enemy is making war upon us and trying to exterminate us. Some of you may have read this week that the FBI was trying to criminalize Christians. Did you read that they were going to investigate the conservatives in the Roman Catholic Church? We are at war, and we do not even realize that we are at war.

Most people have not even come to the realization that those four lepers came to in 2 Kings chapter 7. They were at the gates of Samaria, and a leper, of course, could not go inside. The Syrians had compassed Samaria roundabout, and there was a famine inside the city. The lepers existed from garbage and scraps thrown over the wall, but nothing was being thrown over the wall because everyone was starving to death. Finally, one leper looked at the others and said, "Why sit we here until we die? Come, let us fall to the Syrians."

"It may be that they will save us a life. But if they kill us, we will but be dead." Here is the rationale: If we sit here, we're dead. If we go in the city, we're dead. Let's go fall to the Syrians. There is a slight possibility they may save us a life, but if they kill us, we're not going to be any more dead there than we're going to be here.

Why in the world are we sitting still? Why are we sitting here until we die? You remember Isaiah 58:1, where God said, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up my voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sin." Do you realize that's exactly what we're supposed to be doing—crying out and lifting up our voices?

And you look around at the pedophiles and the sodomites that are in control of everything, trying to steal all of our children and push transgenderism upon them even in kindergarten. I'm simply asking, why in the world are we sitting still? Do you realize this is where we are in 2023 and how we got here? As a nation, as a people, and as churches, we have forsaken the law of God. We've not upheld God's law, defended God's law, or exposed wickedness and sins. We've sat still.

God Is Looking for Men Who Will Stand

Applications: Rise Up and Stand

And allowed death to come our way. Let me try to tie this together for you. Proverbs 28:4 says, "They that forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep the law contend with them."

First of all, here is my first application: God is looking for men who will stand up and rise up against the wicked, expose their sins, expose their wickedness, and declare His righteousness. Psalm 94:16 asks, "Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?"

Look at that. Who will rise up? Who will stand for God? It is true that once you rise up and once you stand, you are not going to be the most popular man in the county. You are not going to be the most popular man in the state. In fact, you will probably be persecuted and may even be prosecuted. But the truth of the matter is that God will be with you and on your side.

God is asking for men to rise up. God is asking for men to stand against the workers of iniquity and against the evildoers. That is what Psalm 94:16 is all about. That is really what Proverbs 28:4 is all about.

The first application is this: God is looking for men—men who will rise up, men who will stand. Here is the second application, the sad and unhappy truth concerning most communities, churches, states, and nations: there is a lack, a dearth, of real men.

So let us look at Ezekiel chapter 22. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel, chapter 22, and get ready for the second application. Let me show you in Ezekiel chapter 22.

God is condemning Judah and Jerusalem. Look how He begins in Ezekiel 22:25: "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey. They have devoured souls. They have taken the treasure and precious things and have made her many widows in the midst thereof." The prophets are worthless. They are false prophets—prophets for profit, P-R-O-F-I-T.

But it is not just the prophets. Verse 26 says, "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things, and have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean. They have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them." God says, My prophets are no good, and the priests are no good.

Then verse 27: "Her princes," the rulers, "her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves, ravening the prey to shed blood and to destroy souls to get dishonest gain." That is a good description of Congress. God has dealt with the prophets, the priests, and the princes. He mentions the prophets again in verse 28: "And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken."

Now verse 29: "The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy. Yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully."

God has dealt with the prophets, the princes, the priests, and the people. Verse 30 says, "And I sought for a man among them, out of all these groups, I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Therefore have I poured out

mine indignation upon them." Out of all the prophets, priests, princes, and people, God could not find one man. Not one.

There is a dearth of real men. Bishop Hall—he's been dead for a long time—but he said something we need to learn: "It is fearful to sin. It is more fearful to delight in sin, and even worse, to defend sin." When we forsake the law of God, that is exactly what we end up doing: defending sin. If we do not lift up our voices and cry out, if we do not hear, heed, obey, and keep the law of God and protect it, we deserve all the judgment He is going to send upon us. And He will send it. We must never defend sin.

When we hear a message like this, it usually rings a bell in our mind: I cannot control the president or the executive office. I know that, and you cannot. But one thing you can do by the grace of God is keep the law of God and obey it yourself. You may say, "I cannot control Congress," or, "I cannot change the judicial system." I know that. But you can obey God, keep His law, proclaim that law, and say what is wicked and what is righteous.

The truth of the matter is this: God calls upon us to keep His law, and in keeping His law we are fighting against the wicked. Every one of us, every child of God, should desire to be as holy, obedient, and godly as he can be by the grace of God. Because in keeping that law, we are fighting against the wicked. We need to be obedient, to keep the law of God, and to fight against the wicked.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth. Lord, we pray that You will give us men, real men, men that will stand. We pray that You would change the course of this nation and open our eyes. Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned. Quicken us, and we shall call upon Thy name. Enable us, Lord; empower us to keep and obey Thy Word, to bring our lives in conformity unto it, and to honor Thee and glorify Thee. Teach us, we pray, Lord. Build us up. Give us Your grace and mercy, courage and strength. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

How Many Sins Did You Confess?

February 4, 2024

Introduction and the Question of Confession

Please turn to Psalm 106. We will read verse 6. The title of the message is, “How Many Sins Do You Confess?” One of my habits is to read through the Bible over and over for my own edification and pleasure, apart from my study time. Many times, when I am simply reading Scripture, something jumps out at me. This message stems from Psalm 106:6: “We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.” I think about that verse: We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. Sin is the problem.

Confession and repentance are the answers. However, what exactly are we to confess? You may say that we are to confess our personal sins. The interesting thing is that you may know some of your sins, but you may not know all of them. Moreover, other people sin openly. We know of those sins when we see and perceive them, but if other people have secret sins, we certainly do not know them.

So, in light of this verse, do we simply confess our sins, or do we confess the sins of others as well?

Have you ever considered the various types of sin mentioned in the Bible? There are sins of omission, sins of commission, sins of ignorance, secret sins, and presumptuous sins. For instance, in Psalm 90:8, the psalmist said, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance."

Types of Sin in Scripture

David said in Psalm 19, verses 12 and 13, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults, keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me, then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." He is already talking about secret sins, secret faults, and presumptuous sins, but there are more sins. There are indeed family sins. I have two messages on family sins. There are family sins, societal sins, and national sins. It is possible for an ethnic group not only to sin as individuals, but also to sin as a family, as a community, as a society, and as a nation. For instance, in Judges chapter 19, a number of individuals sinned, and then the entire tribe joined in that sin by defending those who had committed those particular sins. So you have all of those, and on top of that, you have governmental sins as well.

Since government happens to be made up of men, and men are sinners, it is not only possible but actually true that men in positions of power collude together, transgress, and violate the law of God. Psalm 83 shows how this works out. The family groups or nations are colluding against God and against God's people. The Psalm says, "For lo, thine enemies make a tumult, and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones."

They said, "Come, let us cut them off from being a nation. Let the name of Israel be no more in remembrance." They have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against God. The tabernacles of Edom, the Ishmaelites of Moab, the Hagarenes, Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre, and Asher are joined with them. They uphold the children of

Lot. Now you have these tribes and nations. They are not tribes of Israel, but they were tribes of people, colluding against God and against God's people.

They were descended from certain individuals. So it is very possible for people to sin as government. Every one of these nations had leaders. The classic passage to me is Psalm 94. In verses 20 and 21, the question is asked, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by law?" A throne speaks of rulership and authority. The throne of iniquity is a wicked civil authority. Shall a wicked civil authority have fellowship with God when that wicked civil authority frameth mischief by a law—that is, when they make sin legal? The passage continues: "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous and condemn the innocent blood." Who are the "they"? He is talking about the throne of iniquity, the wicked rulers. Clearly, then, you can have governmental sins as well.

Governmental and Societal Sins

Do governmental sins, iniquities, and transgressions trouble you? Do you consider abortion, sodomy, transgenderism, theft, political persecutions, tyranny, and the destruction of biblical liberties, freedom, and rights to be sin and wickedness? If you recognize and acknowledge them as sin and wickedness, do you ever confess them?

All you have to do is look at the injustices in our judicial system. Think of those Christians who were arrested for praying in front of an abortion clinic. One was in his 80s and another one's 15, 16. Each one is now facing 11 years in prison for praying in front of an abortion clinic. On the other hand, people are burning down buildings, raping, killing, stealing, and looting, and they are not even prosecuted.

That should bother you and cause you to grieve. How about the immorality prevalent in our country today? Look at the broken homes, adultery, and fornication. Does that grieve you? Have you confessed those sins? Would you consider Deuteronomy chapter 6 a sin when God demands that His children, or our children, be taught the law of God? Instead, children are being taught a steady diet of

Marxism, humanism, and pure paganism. Have you confessed those sins? Have you acknowledged them?

David said it like this in Psalm 119 and verse 53: “Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.” Think about that. Has horror taken hold upon you, or at least enough to lead you to confess and acknowledge the sins of our society as well as our nation?

Confession of Others' Sins Illustrated

You are going to respond, “I did not think I was responsible for anyone’s sins but mine. I did not think I needed to confess any sins except my sin.” But I believe you are mistaken, and I believe I can show you from the Bible that there is more than just your sins that you need to consider.

Let me give you an illustration from Psalm 107. Here is an excellent illustration where confession of the sins of others, I believe, is necessary. Look at verse 8: “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” This same truth is repeated in verses 15, 21, and 31: “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.”

Four times in this psalm we have the same exact truth. Has it ever bothered you that men take advantage of God’s goodness, receive His blessings and mercies, and then fail to praise Him, fail to thank Him, and fail to acknowledge that He is indeed the giver of all good gifts?

I will tell you something: it certainly has affected me. I want to be thankful, and I try to thank Him every day for life and health and a multitude of blessings. I also want to thank Him, and I do thank Him, for His goodness and kindness to my children. Like Job, you remember how Job got up and would offer sacrifices for his children in case, he said, they sinned and he did not realize it.

Oftentimes, when I am thanking the Lord for His goodness to me, I find myself thanking Him even for His goodness and mercies to the wicked, who absolutely refuse to acknowledge Him and to thank Him. I mean, this is what he said four times.

The psalmist says that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men. Have you ever stopped to say, "Lord, I am so sorry that men refuse to praise You for everything that You do for them—the breath You give them, the life You give them, the help You give them, and the abilities You give them—and men totally ignore You"?

The Meaning of Confession

Before going further, consider an implication of confession. I have told you this in times past, but I want to tell you again in light of this message. The Bible says in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The word confess is the Greek word homologeo. Homo means one and the same; lego means I say. Confession, then, is not merely mouthing words, nor is it a flippant or irreverent act. It means saying the exact same thing about sin that God says, and taking the attitude toward sin that God takes. Real confession is not merely naming your sins; it is agreeing with God that your sin is wicked, vile, and a transgression deserving death.

Psalm 106:6 says, "We have sinned with our fathers. We've committed iniquity. We've done wickedly. We've sinned with our fathers." So here is the question: How did they, and how do we, sin with our fathers? Is not each man responsible, answerable, and accountable for his own sins? How, then, have we sinned with our fathers? Sins have consequences. I have said many times in preaching that sins have consequences. Romans 14:7 says, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Our sins have far-reaching consequences, not only for us, but for our children and our children's children.

How We Sin with Our Fathers

In Matthew 23:29, the Lord says, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Why? Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which

killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." Look at what our Lord says in regard to this.

Then he calls them, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" He accuses these people of building and garnishing the sepulchres of the prophets whom their fathers had killed. In other words, there is a connection between the fathers and their descendants.

In Jeremiah 3:25, the Word of God says, "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us. For we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers from our youth, even unto this day have we not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." We and our fathers. When you look at Psalm 106:6 again, he says, "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity. We've done wickedly."

Confession is not simply mouthing words or acknowledging what has been done. It takes sin exceedingly seriously because it acknowledges that sin is iniquity and wickedness. He says, "We've sinned with our fathers." The question that jumped out at me as I looked at that verse was this: How have we sinned with our fathers? How do we sin with our fathers? I want to give you several answers to that question, and I hope you can understand where we are today. First of all, we have sinned seminally with our fathers. That means we were in our father's loins when they sinned. Now let me give you a good illustration.

SCRIPTURE READING - Hebrews 7:1-10 (KJV)

Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 7. Let us begin reading there in verse 1 through verse 10. The Bible says:

"For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is king of peace, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest forever. Now, consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the

spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who received the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham.

"But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes, but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him."

This passage has reference to Genesis chapter 14, where Abraham fought with these five kings and rescued his nephew Lot and the other people as well. Abraham then pursued them with his 318 trained servants that he had trained in his own house, and God gave him the victory. On his return, Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High, comes out, blesses Abraham, and Abraham gives him a tenth of everything. Now the Bible says that Levi, the tribe of Levi, who receiveth tithes, also paid tithes, because he was in the loins of Abraham.

Abraham sired Isaac, and Isaac sired Jacob and Esau, and Jacob sired Levi and his brethren. So now we are talking about grandpa, and here Levi is paying tithes in Abraham because they were yet in his loins.

If the good is attributed to the children and the grandchildren because of being in the loins of their father, would not the evil also be attributed to the children and the grandchildren as well? I want you to understand something. I realize that many traits and characteristics, dispositions, and acts are learned responses from observing fathers and grandfathers. But there does seem to be an inherited tendency as well. Something genetic.

So let me give you several scriptures to meditate upon. The first one is Exodus chapter 20 and verse 5. Listen carefully. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them," talking about idols, "nor serve them. For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of

them that hate me." Now it is true, usually children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren do what their fathers and grandfathers have done. That is true.

But I believe there's also some inherited tendencies and weaknesses, as well as learned responses as well. Here's another one. Listen to Exodus chapter 34 and verse 7. God says, "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation." Wow.

Now I want to show you two, and I want you to turn with me. I want you to turn to 2 Chronicles, chapter 30, and then Zechariah, chapter 1. So you have 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, and then Zechariah is right before the book of Malachi, which is the last book in the Bible. So Zechariah's next to the last book of the Bible. So look, first of all, if you would please, to 2 Chronicles, chapter 30, and let's read verses 7 and 8. 2 Chronicles chapter 30, look if you would please, verses 7 and 8. Look what God says, "And be ye not like your fathers, and like your brethren, who trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as you see."

"Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he has sanctified for ever. And serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you." Isn't that amazing? And be not like your fathers and like your brethren. And then he says in verse 8, "Be not ye stiff-necked as your fathers were." Now, if you will turn in your Bibles to the book of Zechariah, chapter 1, and look, if you would please, at verse 4. Zechariah, chapter 1, and verse 4. Look at it. Again, God says, "Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye now from your evil ways and from your evil doings."

"But they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord." Again, God says, Be not as your fathers. So clearly, obviously, we are all sinners, and the one thing that is going to distinguish an individual from their erring and sinning fathers and grandfathers and everyone else is simply the sovereign grace of God, when God

gives them repentance and faith and draws them unto Himself. We have sinned with our fathers seminally because we were in their loins. Secondly, we have sinned with our fathers imputatively; that is, sin has been imputed to us.

That is certainly true in relationship to Adam, who was our first father. Please remember this. Consequently, in light of original sin, physical life always ends in death. In Genesis chapter 2, verses 16 and 17, the Bible says, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Adam did die spiritually, first of all. Later on, he died physically as well. Death, then, is the consequence of sin. That is why the Bible says in Romans 6, verse 23, "For the wages of sin is death."

We have sinned in our fathers imputatively. Romans 5 and verse 12 says, "Wherefore, as by one man," that would be Adam, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." When you get rid of all the sin, it is passive, which means it has happened once and for all, and it is over with. When did we sin all at one time, once and for all, and it is over with? That would be in Adam.

There is now a comparison between the first Adam and the last Adam, and we see imputation. Romans 5, beginning with verse 14, says, "Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come."

How was Adam a type or figure of Christ? Adam failed when Christ did not, yet the Bible says Adam was a figure of Him that was to come. Romans 5:15 says, “But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” The judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. If by one man's offense death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offense of one, Adam, judgment came upon all men to

condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, Jesus Christ, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. “For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

The proof of imputation and original sin is very simple: death. You can deny original sin and the doctrine of imputation, but the truth of the matter is that you are going to die. That is proof positive that imputation is true and original sin is true.

Original sin always issues forth in actual sin, but we do not become sinners when we sin; we sin because we are sinners, because sin has been imputed to us. We have sinned with our fathers seminally because we were in their loins. We have sinned with them imputatively because their sins have been imputed. That is why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “As in Adam all die.”

Thirdly, we sinned with our fathers representatively. Adam, our first human father, was our head and federal representative. What he did, we did. We were not only in his loins; he represented us. Moreover, we sin with our earthly fathers today in the sense that their sins always affect their wives and children. Whatever the father, who is the head of the house, does affects his entire household. We suffer with the sins of our parents, for they are our representatives, while we are their children.

Paul stated this clearly in Galatians chapter 4, verses 1 through 3: “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all.” If my father happened to have been a multi-millionaire, and I was his only son, yet I was three, four, five, seven, eight, nine, or ten years old, I might be an heir, but I would still be a child, under the discipline of my father. He would be my head and my representative, and what he did, in one sense of the word, I did as well, because he was over me and responsible for me. As a child, I had no control over the actions of my parents.

They did what they did, and that is all there is to it. They are our representatives. Now you are going to say, “But that is not fair.” Before you say that, may I remind you that this is, in reality, the kind of government that we have, or that we are supposed to have? Our

elected officials are our representatives. In truth, they are to represent us, even though they really do not. They are supposed to represent us, and whether we like it or not, whatever they do, we do. Whatever mess they get into, they get us into.

How many of you voted to go to Ukraine and send money to Ukraine? How many voted to send money to Jerusalem or to Israel? How many voted to tear down the wire at the Texas border? You see what I am saying? They are supposed to be representing us, although they are not. Whatever mess they get into, we are in as well. Although that sounds bad, there is something else to consider.

It is true that we have sinned in our fathers representatively, but there is something else to that as well. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, beginning with verse 45, the Bible says: “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul. The last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy, and the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy. As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

Here is a question to consider: How is Jesus Christ called the second man, and Adam the first man, when Jesus Christ existed long before Adam was created, because He is the eternal God? Why is Jesus Christ called the second man? The answer is that Jesus Christ was chronologically second to be the federal Head and Representative of a people. Adam was our Representative; he was our federal Head.

And what he did, we did. When he sinned, we sinned. When he fell, we fell. You may not like that truth, but if you do not like the truth of representation and federal headship, then you do not really like the truth of salvation, because the failure of the first man set the stage for the success of the second man.

The Bible says, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised

up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." The Bible tells us in this passage that we died with Christ, were buried with Christ, and were raised from the dead in Christ. Ephesians chapter 2, verses 5 and 6, teaches not only that we died with him, were buried with him, and raised with him, but also that we ascended with him and were seated at the right hand of God the Father in Jesus Christ.

Why? Because Jesus Christ was our federal head and our representative. In Adam, we lost everything. In Jesus Christ, we got more than we ever had in Adam, because now we not only have perfect forgiveness, but perfect obedience and an absolutely perfect righteousness, because he is our head and our representative. What he did, we did.

Jesus Christ was called the last Adam. There is a contrast between the first Adam and the last Adam. Jesus Christ is called the last Adam because he is the last one to sustain this federal headship in representation with the people. Bad English, bad grammar, but good truth: there ain't going to be another Savior. There is not going to be another way of salvation. If someone is not saved by Jesus Christ, he is not going to be saved, period. So how did we sin with our fathers? We sinned with them seminally. We were in their loins. We sinned with them imputatively.

Their sins were imputed to us. We sinned with them representatively. They were our representatives. Adam was, but so were our parents.

But here is the fourth one: we sinned with our parents nationally. In order to understand this, you must understand that Israel was a nation. However, you must understand something else. A nation, according to the Bible, was and is a family or a specific ethnic group. Bill Evans, one of my good friends, said it like this: “Biblically, however, nation or ethnos, which is the Greek word, is not an amalgamated conglomeration of people from different linguistic, cultural, political, or religious persuasions. It is a particular people group akin to a large extended family.”

That is certainly true. In Psalm 83, there were the Philistines, the Hagarenes, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Amalekites. All of these are extended families. They may be nations, but they are people who were related to each other. So when God told Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 and verse 2, “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing,” the nation that God promised Abraham would be those of his family or descendants.

Nations or families act together in many ways and in many areas. There are family groups that sin against God, hate the Lord Jesus Christ, and despise the law of God. Look at the Muslims. Look at the Chinese. Now, I am not saying that there are no exceptions. All I am saying is that this is a general rule. They do not worship the Lord Jesus Christ, obey him, or concern themselves with his law. Just as there are family groups and ethnic groups that hate him, there are those that love him and want to obey him as well.

David had to fight the Moabites, the Philistines, and different kinds of nations. So he prays in Psalm 43:1, “Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation.”

"O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man." I do not know what nation he was praying about or against in this particular psalm, but he was praying against a people group, a family that hated him and hated God. Isaiah describes Judah and Jerusalem, the southern kingdom, as "a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters." They had forsaken the Lord, provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, and gone away backward.

Isaiah identifies this as the vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. What were Judah and Jerusalem? They were an ethnic group of people. They were descendants of Jacob: Benjamites, Judahites, and Simeonites, all living in the southern kingdom. They were a people group.

Everybody knows the passage in Psalm 33:12: "Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." If you read Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 22,

you will discover that God consistently condemns a nation, usually by condemning the prophets, the priests, the princes, and the people. He lists them all and condemns them as people, but it is one nation. That is why, in Jeremiah 5:23, God says, "But this people have a revolting and rebellious heart. They are revolted and gone."

This people, this nation, has a rebellious and revolting heart. All you have to do to understand this is look around in America. We do not have to consider illegal immigrants, or people who come with different religions and cultures. Look at what happened to America before all of this transpired. We were going downhill, downhill, downhill. We are going faster now, but I do not care which country you look at. Look at Germany, Spain, or Mexico. Nations sin nationally because nations are made up of ethnic groups and families of people, and those people either love God or hate Him. They either love His law or hate His law. Period.

So, yes, we've sinned with them seminally, we've sinned with them imputatively, we've sinned with them representatively, we've sinned with them nationally, and here's the fifth one: we've sinned actually with our fathers. Now, we end up committing the same sins that our fathers committed. History does not repeat itself. It is sin that repeats itself and brings the same consequences, conditions, and judgments. Hence we say history repeats itself. It's not history. You may charge it to history, but sin is the culprit. The truth is that we often not only commit the same sins of our fathers, but we go over and above and beyond those sins and we make them worse.

Look in your Bibles, first of all, to the book of Nehemiah. After 2 Chronicles, you will come to Ezra, and then Nehemiah. Look at Nehemiah chapter 1 and verse 6. Nehemiah is praying, and here is what he says: "Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants." Now look: "And confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee, both I and my father's house have sinned." Do you realize he is not only confessing his individual sins? He is confessing the sins of his people, the children of Israel, and those of his father's house. Nehemiah chapter 9 and verse 2 says, "And the

seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers."

Biblical Examples of Corporate Confession

So they are not just confessing their individual sins. They said, Our fathers have sinned too. They helped get us into this mess. We are here together; we have sinned. Not only do we commit the sins of our fathers, we go over and above and beyond those sins many times. In 1 Kings chapter 14 and verse 22, the Bible says, "And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed above all that their fathers had done." They were worse than their fathers. In 2 Kings chapter 15 and verse 9, speaking of Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam, the Bible says, "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done. He departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

Turn to Daniel 9 and look at verse 16, at what Daniel is praying. He says:

“O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain, because of our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.”

He is asking forgiveness for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers.

Now go back to Psalm 106. We have sinned with our fathers in many ways. I have shown you where many people repeat the sin of their fathers, and sometimes are worse than their fathers. When you get home this afternoon, you may finish reading Psalm 106. It is a wonderful psalm.

Let us read verse 6 again: “We have sinned with our fathers. We have committed iniquity. We have done wickedly.” How did our fathers sin, and how is it that we sin like them? Look at verse 7: “Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt. They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.”

Have you ever meditated on the wonders of God? Not just in times past, not just in history, but on the wonders of God being performed today? Have you ever thought about the fact that it is a miracle that you are spared? It is a miracle that your family is spared. It is a miracle that God lets any of us live. And they remembered not the multitude of His mercies. How many times God has been merciful to us, and we have never thanked Him or thought about it. We take it for granted.

Skip down to verses 13 and 14. Here we are today: “They soon forgot his works. They waited not for his counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert.” They soon forgot His works. Is that not amazing? I could tell you people right now who begged God and prayed to God for a miracle for their children, their wives, their husbands, their family, and their friends.

And, “Lord, if You do this, I will serve You. I will be faithful.” And God does that, and then they are faithful for about two weeks or a month; then it is over. That is exactly what he is saying here: They forgot His works and did not wait for His counsel. How many of us, when we want something badly and say we are going to seek the Lord, do not really wait? We want what we want, and we want it right now. Consequently, we are committing the sins of our fathers. Read the rest of this psalm. You can see how we are committing some of the exact same sins today that these people committed long ago.

Application and Call to Confess

Here is the first application: Do you confess your sins? That is a good question. Do you confess the sins of your fathers? Do you confess the sins of your society, your family, and your nation? I would encourage you to read Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel. You will find that these men not only confess their individual sins, but the sins of their families, tribes, and nation, over and over.

One author said it like this: “We have sinned with our fathers, that is, like our fathers, after the similitude of their transgression. We have added to the stock of hereditary guilt and filled up the measure of our father's iniquity to augment the fierce anger of the Lord.” What he is saying is that we are doing the same thing, even worse.

We are augmenting, building up, and storing up the fierce anger of God against us.

Now go back to Daniel chapter 9 and watch this. Begin with verse 4, so you can see his prayer. “And I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession. And said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him and to them that keep his commandments. We have sinned.” Notice, it is not merely that I have sinned. He includes himself.

“We have sinned and have committed iniquity and have done wickedly and have rebelled even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments. Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants, the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces as at this day to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel that are near and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespasses that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings and to our princes and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets, yea, all Israel, oh, look at this, have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice.”

"Therefore the curse is poured out upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, because we have sinned against him." Notice what he is doing. He is confessing not just his sins, but the sins of his people and the sins of his nation. I understand that you may not be able to repent for the sins of your family members. You will not be able to repent for the sins of society or the nations. But you may recognize those sins, acknowledge them, and confess them, saying, Lord, I'm powerless to do anything, but this is a slap in thy face. This is dishonoring to thy great and holy name. I acknowledge that; it grieves me and hurts me, and I don't want this. O Lord, arise and do something. Either be merciful and

grant us repentance, or bring thy chastening and thy judging hand against a sinful and wicked nation.

In other words, we must recognize not just our sins, but the sins of others, and acknowledge that they are sins against God and deserve His displeasure, His anger and His wrath, or, if He pleases, His mercy and His grace. So how many sins do you confess? Just yours? Or those of your family, your society, your church, and your nation? These men prayed, "Have mercy, O Lord."

"We have sinned against Thee. All Israel has sinned against thee." Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word and your truth. We acknowledge, Lord, that we've sinned in so many different and grievous ways. It is not just each one of us as individuals. Collectively, we've sinned against thee in our churches, in our communities, in our society, in our states, and in our nation. Lord, may we recognize that these sins are grievous in thy sight and bring forth your anger, your wrath, and your judgment. Although we may be helpless to turn people from those sins, thou art not. May we grieve over them, Father, because they grieve Thee. Give us Your grace and Your mercy, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. In His name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

The Weightier Matters of the Law

January 27, 2012

Introduction and Context

In Matthew 23:23, our Lord is speaking to the scribes, the Pharisees, and the hypocrites: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.” These, He says, “ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

In this passage, our Lord pronounces curses and woes upon the Pharisees. The word “woe,” used over and over in this passage, is an exclamation of misery, grief, and condemnation. Beginning with verse 13, He says, “But woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.” For they neither go in themselves, neither suffer those who are entering to go in.

He continues: “Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayer. Therefore you shall receive the greater damnation.” In verse 15: “Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites.” In verse 16: “Woe unto you, you blind guides, which say…” In verse 23, “Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites.” In verse 25, “Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites.” In verse 27, “Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites.” Finally, in verse 29, He says again, “Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites.”

Very obviously, he is condemning them in each one of these verses. Out of all the condemnation that our Lord heaps upon these scribes and Pharisees, calling them hypocrites, there is only one brief commendation. That commendation is also in the context of rebuke and neglect, and it is found in verse 23: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." Now watch this commendation: "These ought ye to have done," but here is the rest of it, another condemnation, "and not to leave the other undone."

Our Lord is commending them for their careful tithing, even of their herbs. The Pharisees were remarkably scrupulous and punctilious in the performance of all their duties, especially the tithe. They were tithing even the tiniest and smallest herbs. Mint, of course, is a garden herb familiar to everyone. It is agreeable in flavor, is put in food and tea, and was even used in those days to sprinkle the floors of houses and synagogues in order to give them a pleasant fragrance.

The Pharisees' Scrupulous Tithing

Anise here is commonly known as dill. It has a fine aromatic smell and is used by confectioners and perfumers as well. Cumin is a plant of the same genus as fennel and was used for similar purposes. These three herbs were of very little value; they were common and consequently worth very little.

In Deuteronomy 14:22, according to the law, they were commanded to tithe the fruits of the earth. However, there was a debate as to whether tithing the fruits of the earth included the

herbs, since they were so common, small, and insignificant. But the Pharisees tithed even the smallest of these herbs. This tithing showed their extraordinary strictness.

You remember in Luke 18:12, when the publican and the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray, the Pharisee prayed thus with himself: "I thank thee, Lord, that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican." Then he said, "I give tithes of all that I possess." On the one hand, one might say that these Pharisees were trying to give God the benefit of the doubt as to whether these herbs should be tithed, and so they were going to tithe them.

In all probability, they tithed the herbs to demonstrate their own self-righteousness. In Luke 16:15, our Lord condemns the Pharisees: “You are they who justify yourselves before men. But God knoweth your heart, for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” Our Lord, in one sense of the word, commends them for their precision in small matters, but they were majoring on the minors and neglecting what He called the greater things which the law enjoined.

Calvin's Commentary on the Law

They were precise in their rites and ceremonies, but they were neglecting the soul, the spirit of practical godliness.

Calvin said of verse 23: “He therefore acknowledges that whatever God has enjoined ought to be performed, and that no part of it ought to be omitted but maintains that zeal for the whole law is no reason why we ought not to insist chiefly upon the principal points. Christ therefore affirms that he has no intention to lessen the authority even of the smallest commandments though he recommends and demands due order in keeping the law. It is therefore our duty to preserve entire the whole law which cannot be violated in any part without contempt for its author.

“For he who has forbidden us to commit adultery, and to kill, and to steal, has likewise condemned all impure desire. Hence we conclude that all the commandments are so interwoven with each other that we have no right to detach one of them from the rest. Wherefore it is written, cursed is everyone that performeth not all

things that are written, by which words the righteousness of the whole law without exception is enforced. But this reverence which we have said does not take away the distinction between the commandments or the true desire of the law to which those who truly observe it in their mind that they may not merely amuse themselves on the surface."

Calvin is simply saying that our Lord, on the one hand, requires all of God's laws to be enforced, but that does not mean the principal parts are not to be emphasized. Our Lord emphasizes that all of God's law is important.

At the same time, he emphasizes that there are portions that are heavier, or more weighty, than others. Does the Word of God demand sacrifice? The answer is yes. But would our Lord prefer a great sacrifice or obedience? Very obviously, in 1 Samuel 15:22, Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice."

Christ commends them for all their strictness in tithing, but then says that they have omitted the weightier matters of the law. He names three of them: judgment, mercy, and faith.

I am sure that many of us have read this passage and passed over it without due consideration. Justice is easily explained. Mercy is just as easily explained when we consider the law. But how does the law teach faith? Each of these details requires examination and explanation.

Before doing so, remember what the Apostle Paul wrote concerning God's law in Romans 7:12: "We know that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." In other words, God has ordained the law. The law is His expression for our lives. He has ordained how we are to live, and we are to bring our lives into conformity with it. Remember that a king rules by his law.

God's Law Teaches Justice

Our Lord said that these Pharisees had neglected the weightier matters of the law, and the first one is judgment, or justice. God's law teaches justice. Psalm 89:14 says, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face." Justice and judgment are the habitation of God's throne. God is a

God of justice; consequently, He not only teaches justice but also demands it.

When we think of justice, we immediately think of our judicial system. But justice does not refer only to the administration of justice in the courts. It also refers to putting into execution good judgments, righteous laws, and statutes. It includes protecting and relieving the injured and the oppressed, doing what is right and equitable between man and man. Therefore, when we think about justice, we must think not only of the court system, but also of our relationships with each other and with others.

The Pharisees were punctilious in their tithing. They tithed down to the minutest herb. Have you ever seen a dill seed or fennel seed? Yet where did they derive some of their income? How much justice is there in making sure that you tithe from that which you steal and defraud, especially when you are destroying widows and their homes? You see the double standard. They were making sure that they tithed, but they were tithing from that which they devoured from others.

Overall, God's law was designed to protect the widow, the stranger, the homeless, and the fatherless. In Exodus 22:22, God says, "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child." Again, in Deuteronomy 24:17, "Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge." In Deuteronomy 24:19, God says, "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands." And in Deuteronomy 27:19, God says, "Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, the fatherless, and widow." And all the people said, "Amen."

It is true that God ordained the tithes. Who lived off the tithes? The priests and the Levites. But if you are going to be just toward the priests and the Levites while defrauding, lying to, and stealing from everyone else, is that justice? That is not only injustice; it is nothing less than mocking God and deceiving ourselves.

We have got to understand that justice and righteousness go together. Justice does not simply apply to the judicial branch. It does not apply only to the legislative branch or to what we would call the executive branch.

It applies to family conduct, ecclesiastical conduct, and personal conduct. I told you just three Sundays ago that the Hebrew word for righteousness and the Hebrew word for justice are one and the same. You cannot have justice without righteousness, and you cannot have righteousness without justice. When something is right, it is just; when something is just, it is right. Therefore, when anyone denies justice, he is at the same time denying righteousness. When anyone denies righteousness, he is at the same time denying justice. You cannot mock justice or deride righteousness without at the same time mocking and deriding the author of justice and righteousness, which is God Himself.

Justice and Righteousness Inseparable

These principles apply to the civil realm. Is it just to allow a murderer to go free? The answer is no. Is it just to allow a murderer to live out his natural life at the taxpayer's expense? The answer is no. I am not preaching on this today, but I have heard many arguments, including that the death penalty is so expensive. What? I can buy a good rope for under ten dollars. You can buy most ammunition for less than fifty cents each. It is not expensive. The only reason it is expensive to execute a man is because of our unjust judicial system.

Genesis 9:6 says, "Whosoever shedeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

Numbers 35:16 says, "And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer. The murderer shall surely be put to death. And if he smite him with a throwing stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer. The murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he smite him with a hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer. The murderer shall surely be put to death. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer when he meeteth him. He shall slay him." Then he goes on to tell about those who slay without intent.

But notice that every time God says the murderer is to be put to death, it is neither justice nor mercy to allow a murderer to live. When the murderer lives, justice and mercy are denied to society. Think of all the people who have been killed by men who were already convicted of murder and yet got out of prison on probation or parole. When justice is denied, society dies.

You have to consider the fact that humanistic laws are contrary to God's laws. Are all of these humanistic laws just? The answer is no. Are they righteous? No. The problem that existed in Bible times is the same problem that exists today. The leading cause of God's judgment upon Israel was this: they substituted man's law for God's law. If you read 2 Kings 17, verses 7 and 8, you will find that God said He judged them and destroyed them because they followed the laws of man. If you read Hosea 5, verses 11 and 12, once again, the princes of Judah removed the bound—that is, they removed the boundaries of God's law. Therefore, God said His wrath was poured out upon them like water.

In Micah 6 and verse 16, He condemns them for following the statutes of Omri, who was the father of Ahab. In other words, judicial, legislative, and executive injustice prevails simply because our leaders are lawless according to God's law.

Now let us take this principle and apply it not only to our civil rulers but also to our personal lives. Remember, our Lord said that the Pharisees had omitted the weightier matters of the law. We are talking about the first weighty matter, justice. If I steal from my neighbor, have I treated him justly? If I steal from my neighbor, am I righteous? No. If I seduce my neighbor's wife, have I treated her, her family, my wife, and my family justly? No. If I seduce my neighbor's wife, am I righteous? No.

Personal Applications of Justice

If I dishonor my parents, refuse to speak to them, refuse to love them and support them, am I treating them justly? Am I righteous when I violate the fifth commandment? If I ignore my parents, mock them, ridicule them, or refuse to resolve conflicts with them, am I treating them according to God's law? What's the answer? No. Am I wicked or am I righteous? Obviously, I am not righteous if I am

violating God's law, for sin is a violation of the law of God according to 1 John 3 and verse 4.

If I slander and spread rumors and lies concerning my neighbor, am I just? Am I righteous? It does not matter whether you believe them or not, nor whether they are true or not. Leviticus 19:16 says, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tail bearer among thy people. Neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor. I am the Lord." If I know something is true, if I am absolutely positive it is true, and yet I cannot be part of the solution, why should I be part of the problem by telling other people about it—people who are not involved and have absolutely no business knowing what the problem is?

What am I doing if I go around telling people about Henry's problems? Why should they know about Henry's problems if they cannot help resolve them? Why should I know about your problem if I cannot help resolve it? Spreading rumors, spreading lies, even spreading the truth when you have no business spreading it, is like hitting a skunk in the road with your car. When you hit him, he stinks. Let another hundred cars go through him, and then you go through him; it is even worse. The more you run over him, the more he stinks. The more you talk, the worse it gets.

Here is a lesson we need to learn and a Scripture we need to memorize and put in our hearts. Proverbs 21:23 says, "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles." As one man said, God has given us two ears and one mouth, and we should listen twice as much as we talk. In other words, if we cannot be part of the solution, let us not be part of the problem. Whoso keepeth his tongue in his mouth keepeth his soul from troubles. The principle is clear: listen.

You and I cannot be just unless we are righteous. Are you listening? And we cannot be righteous unless we are just. Listen to Micah 6:8: “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?” Wow. He has shown you what the Lord requires. What does He require? To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.

God's law teaches justice. Our Lord was condemning the Pharisees because they were punctilious in their tithing, but they neglected justice in their personal lives, because they were devouring widows' houses, and anyone and everything else. Our Lord also said, "You also neglected mercy."

God's law not only teaches justice; God's law also teaches mercy. Now, in reality, listen now, justice and mercy go together, just as justice and righteousness go together. We extend mercy when we act justly toward others. We are to do justly, according to Micah 6:8, and love mercy. Mercy includes all acts of compassion toward the distressed: relieving their necessities, distributing to their wants, and showing all kindness and beneficence to the poor and needy according to God's law. In relieving their necessities, in distributing to their wants, and in showing kindness and beneficence, we are acting according to God's law.

God's Law Teaches Mercy

Matthew 22:35 says, "Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" This question concerns God's law teaching justice and God's law teaching mercy.

When our Lord was asked which was the great commandment of the law, He did not quote one of the Ten Commandments. Isn't that interesting? What He answered was a summation of all God's law. Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

The greatest commandment is to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. The second is to love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Thus, our Lord says that the greatest commandment is love for God, and the second is love for your neighbor as yourself; on these hang all the law and the prophets.

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 10:25-37 (KJV)

Look in Luke chapter 10. Here is a story that everyone knows. Verse 25: “And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

“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. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, whom the Jews hated, as he journeyed, came where he was.”

“And when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him. And whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three thinkest thou, was the neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?”

“And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, go and do thou likewise.”

Note that the priest passed by. The priest was one of the highest religious leaders. Then a Levite came by. The Levite was a religious leader. Both of them ignored their brother. But here came a Samaritan, who was referred to as dogs. He came over, took care of the man, used his own ointment, his own wine, put him on his own beast, took him to an inn, and paid the innkeeper to take care of him. He said, “I'll come back this way and whatever else you pay, I'll take care of the expense.” Our

Lord asked which one showed mercy, and the answer is, the one who took care of the man.

The priests and the Levites should have been merciful, but they were not. The Samaritan not only showed mercy; he also showed justice. He treated the fallen man justly by taking care of his needs and doing what he was obligated to do according to the law of God. He also treated the innkeeper justly. He paid for the man's room and board rather than expecting the innkeeper to pay. Moreover, he said, “Whatever else you spend on him, I will reimburse you.” Here was a man who was both just and merciful.

There is a difference between charity and an act of mercy. I am not going to preach on that today, but charity is to undergird the society of faith. An act of mercy is shown to anyone, regardless of who they are or what they believe. If there is a car wreck in the street and people are lying there crying for help, some of them possibly dying, I do not run out there thinking, “Let me ascertain if they are Christians or not before I help them.” I do not ask, “Are you saved? Do you believe in the Lord?” I get them out and call for help. If they need CPR, I try to give it to them. If they need something to stop their bleeding, I try to do that. That is an act of mercy, not an act of charity.

Mercy Must Align with God's Law

This Samaritan certainly did not believe the way this man did, but when he saw him, he went over and helped him. He treated him not only justly, but mercifully as well. Is it merciful toward someone to violate God's law in responding to them? No. Justice and mercy go together. God establishes both the principle of justice and the principle of mercy, and mercy is not mercy unless it is in conformity to the law of God. Here is a good case in point: a man on the street corner begging.

And he says, “Will you please help me? I haven't had anything to eat in three days.” You need to find out why he is begging and why he has been hungry for three days. There is a difference between someone who cannot help themselves and someone who will not help themselves. If the man has been sick, has lost his job, or has tried everything to get work and cannot, I'm willing to help him. But

if he's just too lazy, slothful, and indolent, I don't want to help him, and I won't help him.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 tells us, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” Is it merciful and compassionate to feed and support the lazy, the indolent, and the sluggard? No. It's not merciful. It's a sin.

It is a violation of God's law to support those who will not work. He must either learn to work or learn to starve. How many do you think are going to starve? They will do something. Think about the lack of justice and the lack of mercy our government shows in extending benefits to people and keeping them on the welfare rolls, teaching them that they need not work, need not have self-discipline, and that they will be fed. Is that mercy? No.

You know what it teaches them? It teaches them to be parasites and thieves, because it teaches them to expect others to take care of their every need. Let me show you another application of this. We are talking about mercy. There are some mighty big churches in this country with thousands of people in them. If I were to take just the series I did on the biblical doctrine of repentance and preach it in those churches, how long would I last as a preacher there? And how long would I have thousands in attendance? Is it merciful and compassionate to tell sinners that they need not repent, only believe?

Think about this argument given by so-called theologians: If we make it too difficult for them to make a decision, they will not come to Christ. I have news for you, folks: a decision has never saved anyone. Our Lord Himself said in John 6 and verse 44, "No man can come unto Me except the Father who sent Me draw him."

How can telling a lie be merciful and compassionate? If I water down the Gospel, pervert the Word of God, or corrupt the message of life, am I merciful to those who are unsaved? No. The truth of the matter is this: it is not mercy toward those who are without Christ to pervert the message of the gospel. It is for their destruction.

We are merciful people, and we are to be known as merciful people, but we cannot pervert the Word of God or the gospel to try to be more merciful than God Himself. We cannot even show mercy to

those whom God forbids us to show mercy. Think about that. God forbids us to show mercy to those who will not work.

But how about this argument? You get this from all these whiny, sympathetic, soft-nosed, ignorant, professing Christians: when it comes to executing a murderer, “Oh, we can't execute him because he's unsaved. We would be sending him to hell without giving him a chance to receive Christ. Let him spend the rest of his life in prison, and maybe he'll hear the gospel and be saved.” I don't know if you've heard that argument. I've heard that argument.

First of all, let me clarify something. No one is saved by chance. Everyone that's ever been saved, and everyone who ever will be saved, is saved by grace. You're not saved by chance.

Secondly, God forbids mercy toward a murderer. Deuteronomy 19:13 says, “Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.” Put him to death: “Thine eye shall not pity him.” Deuteronomy 19:21 says, “Thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” It is an insult to God, but also a most dangerous attitude, to try to be more merciful than God. God said, “Don't have any pity for him; execute him.” Instead, what we want to do is let the murderer live and society die.

Zechariah 7:9–10 puts all these concepts together: “Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother. And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, nor the stranger, nor the poor, and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.” Notice that true justice, true mercy, and true compassion go together. They are not contradictory; they complement each other. Showing mercy and compassion to every man is in the context of executing true judgment. Executing true judgment is also treating others the way that God demands.

God's Law Teaches Faith

It is to treat the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger as God says, and not imagine evil in your heart against your brother. So our Lord condemns these Pharisees because He said, You are punctilious in

these teeny tiny little things, and you should do those teeny tiny little things, but you have omitted the heavier matters of the law: judgment, mercy, and faith.

Thirdly, I want you to understand that God's law teaches faith. We know that, in some way, God's law teaches faith, for our Lord declared it to be a weightier matter of the law. Faith includes not only faithfulness in a man's keeping his word and promise, and fidelity to a trust given to him, but it also includes faith in God as the God of providence and the God of mercy and grace, believing His word and promises, and worshiping Him, which the law requires.

Now the question that we have to ask is this: How does the law teach faith, especially in light of certain Scriptures? For instance, look in your Bibles to the book of Galatians, chapter 3 and verse 12. Here is a verse that raises the question, How do you explain this verse? Galatians 3:12 says, “The law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them.” The law is not of faith. Wait a minute. Did not our Lord just say in Matthew 23:23 that one of the heavier matters of the law was faith? How do we reconcile that with our Lord's words? Let me give you two short comments on Galatians 3:12. The first is by John Calvin; the second is by Adam Clarke. Then I am going to explain it. But listen to what Calvin says.

The law evidently is not contrary to faith; otherwise, God would be unlike Himself. But we must return to a principle already noticed: Paul's language is modified by the present aspect of the case, that is, the context. The contradiction between the law and faith lies in the matter of justification. You will more easily unite fire and water than reconcile these two statements: that men are justified by faith and that they are justified by the law. The law is not of faith; that is, it has a method of justifying a man wholly at variance with faith.

If you want to be justified by the law, you must give the law that which it demands: a personal, perfect, perpetual obedience. The law is not of faith. In other words, it does not justify a man by faith. He is not saying the law does not teach faith; he is saying that the method of justification by the law is not of faith.

Adam Clarke says, “And the law is not of faith. It promises no forgiveness to believing, but requires obedience. It is not, What do

you believe? but, What have you done? The man that doeth them perfectly at all times and all places, he shall live in them. But if in any case he fails, he forfeits his life." The law requires this: "Thou shalt live." But when you do not, the opposite is, you die.

Galatians 3:12 says, "And the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them." The law was never given for justification; it required works, not faith, as its standard. Salvation was not to be by the law.

Look down in verse 21. Do you realize that God never intended for the law to save? Galatians 3:21 says, "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid." That means, perish the thought. Do not even let it enter your mind. "Is the law against the promises of God? God forbid. For if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."

Law cannot give life. The law was not necessarily against the promises of God, but it cannot give life; it was never meant to give life. Since you understand that even God's law was not designed to give life, think how arrogant and ignorant modern-day men are, especially our politicians, who think that we can be saved by law. If God's law cannot save us, I can assure you man's law will never save us.

Had there been a law that could have given righteousness, Christ would not have needed to come and die. Since our Lord said in Matthew 23:23 that one of the weightier matters of the law was not only judgment and mercy, but faith, you have to ask: How does the law teach faith? First, it must be remembered that the law actually taught faith throughout the Old Testament.

The Law as Schoolmaster to Christ

Romans 1:17 says, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Galatians 3:11 says, "But no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, for it is evident, The just shall live by faith." Hebrews 10:38 says, "Now the just shall live by faith. But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

When you get to Romans 1:17, it says, "as it is written." When you get to Galatians 3:11, it says, "it is evident." Where is it written, and where is it evident, that the just shall live by faith? The answer is that it is written in the Old Testament, the book of the law, in Habakkuk 2:4.

Let me read it: “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith.” You find that in Habakkuk. When the Apostle Paul quotes, “the just shall live by faith,” in both Romans 1 and verse 17 and Galatians 3 and verse 11, he is referring back to Habakkuk.

Let me quote a couple of other verses. There are some I want you to see, but listen to this. In Hebrews 11, verses 1 and 2, we read: “Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, for by it, by faith, the elders obtained a good report.” Everyone in here probably can quote verse 6: “But without faith, it is impossible to please Him. For he that cometh to God must first believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

Those are just three verses out of Hebrews 11. If you were to read all of Hebrews 11, you would read about the faith of Abraham, the faith of Abel, the faith of Noah, the faith of Isaac, and the faith of many others. Is the law against faith? How could it be, if all of these Old Testament saints were men of faith? Think about this. Just think of the first four commandments: “Thou shalt not have any other god before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

How could you keep the first four commandments without faith? You have to have faith to believe there is only one God. You have to have faith not to turn aside to idolatry. You have to have faith not to profane the name of God. You have to have faith to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. I am simply saying the law did indeed teach faith. Although the law did not teach faith as a standard of justification, it did indeed lead us to faith in Jesus Christ. The law said, “this do and thou shalt live.” So the law had a different standard for justification than faith. The law is not of faith; it does not have that standard. It has the standard, “this do and thou shalt

live." But I want you to note that the law specifically spoke of Jesus Christ.

Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 18. I could multiply scriptures on this subject, but look in Deuteronomy chapter 18, and let us begin reading there with verse 18. God says: "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, like, that is like unto Moses, and will put my words in his mouth."

"And he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." God said, "I'm going to raise up a prophet like unto Moses. I'm going to put my words in his mouth. And whosoever will not listen to Him, I will require it of him."

This prophet, of course, is none other than Jesus Christ. The Bible specifically shows us what the law of God teaches. Galatians 3:24 says, "Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." What? Christ said the law taught faith. Now the Bible says the law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The word schoolmaster is the Greek word paidagogos, or pedagogue, translated as schoolmaster and instructor. The law, then, is our schoolmaster, instructor, and teacher, to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. How, then, does the law teach us? How is the law our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? First, the law teaches us that we are sinners. We have violated God's law.

We deserve death, condemnation, and damnation. We are under the curse of the law because we have not rendered to the law that personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience it demands. We are sinners. The law has already counted us down and out.

Secondly, the law teaches us that we cannot save ourselves. How does it teach us this? Because none of us are perfect. We cannot be perfect, and we cannot give to the law that which it demands. If you were able to be perfect from this second forward and never commit another sin, neither inwardly nor outwardly, what about all those sins you committed before you became perfect? The law not only

teaches us that we are sinners; it teaches us that we cannot save ourselves.

Thirdly, the law teaches us that there is a great chasm, a great gulf, between a holy God and wicked, ungodly, rebellious sinners. We are separated from God and alienated from God. We cannot get to Him. The fourth thing the law teaches us is that, if that chasm is to be breached, if there is to be a reconciliation, if we are to be saved, it must be through the merits of someone else. We have no merits, and we cannot give to the law that which it demands. Hence, Jesus Christ, the only one who ever kept God's law personally, perfectly, and perpetually from His birth, is the only one who can save us.

The Pharisees' Unbelief and Application

The Pharisees, although they boasted of keeping God's law, were unjust, unmerciful, and unbelieving. They thought they were keeping God's law, but in reality they were violating it. They hated Christ, refused Him, and rejected Him. Our Lord said that the law taught faith. Notice what He says in John 5:44: “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” Then He says, “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.” The law leads us to Christ.

In Luke 16, the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment, while Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom. The rich man said, “Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; that is, send Lazarus; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they come to this place of torment.”

“And Abraham said unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” Moses and the prophets spoke of Christ.

Remember the two walking on the Emmaus road? They said concerning Christ that they thought He was Messiah, but now it was the third day since He had been crucified. In Luke 24:25-27, our Lord said, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.” The law spoke of Christ.

In John 5:39, our Lord told these unbelieving Jews, “Search the Scriptures. For in them you think you have eternal life. That is your interpretation. You search them. For in them you think you have eternal life. They are they which testify of Me.” When Christ told them to search the Scriptures, He was referring to the Old Testament Scriptures, for that was all they had at that particular time.

Our Lord says, “You Pharisees, you’re so punctilious, tithing the smallest herbs, and yet you’ve omitted the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith.” The law does teach faith, although it does not have faith as its standard or as a means of justification, because the law demands personal obedience. Yet if we believe God’s law, it will lead us to Christ. The law will be our schoolteacher, teaching us that Christ is the Son of God, the only Savior, the only Lord, and the only salvation.

Conclusion and Prayer

Think of this by way of application. You cannot be personally just and personally merciful unless you are in Jesus Christ and believe and follow the Word of God. God's law teaches us what true justice is—not only in our civil life, but in our personal life, our ecclesiastical life, and every area. It teaches us what true mercy is, and what true faith is. If you believe the law of God, as it is clearly and fully taught in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, it will have to be your schoolmaster to bring you to Christ. If it does not bring you to Christ, then you do not understand the law of God. The law is our schoolteacher, and it teaches us that we are sinners, that we cannot save ourselves. There is a vast chasm between a holy God and a wicked, rebellious sinner. If we ever get to God, it must be through

the merits of another, and that other is none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Let us pray. Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us and teach us. Show us, Lord, indeed, the weightier matters of the law. Teach us how to be just, how to be merciful, and, Lord, to exercise faith in Thee and in Thy Word. Give us grace and mercy, that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

The Law Is No More

February 21, 2012

SCRIPTURE READING - Lamentations 2:1-9 (KJV)

Introduction and Reading of Lamentations 2:1-9

Open your Bibles to the book of Lamentations chapter 2. The title of the message is “The Law Is No More.” I think you are going to be surprised as I show you this from the scripture and yet show you how the law is still in existence as well. Lamentations is right after the book of Jeremiah and right before the book of Ezekiel. Let us begin reading with verse one.

“How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger! The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; he hath brought them down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof. He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire,

> which devoureth round about. He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all that were pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire. The Lord was as an enemy: he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces.
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> "He hath destroyed his strong holds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden: he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest. The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the LORD, as in the day of a solemn feast. The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together."

"Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD." What an absolutely amazing statement Jeremiah made when he said, "the law is no more." How in the world could Jeremiah say such a thing? How could such a statement possibly be true?

The Abiding Validity of God's Law

For many years, I have preached concerning the abiding validity of the law, endeavoring to teach and demonstrate that God's law has not changed and is applicable to each of us today. So the question has to be asked: in light of verse 9, was I wrong? The answer is absolutely no. A thousand times no. We know, based upon the Word of God, that the law of God has not been abrogated, nullified, set aside, or destroyed.

How do we know that? First of all, in Matthew chapter 5, our Lord sets forth the true teaching of His law in contrast to the false

teaching of the Pharisees. He says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." He continued: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Our Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall not pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." A jot, or jod or yod, is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It is like our comma—a little mark, not even quite the size of our comma. Thus our Lord said it is impossible for the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet to pass from the law till all be fulfilled.

What about the tittle? In Hebrew, the tittle is not a letter, but a small distinguishing mark between two Hebrew letters. It is like writing the word little, L-I-T-T-L-E, making the I short and fat and the L's tall and fat. How do you know which is the I? That is no problem; you go back and put a dot over it. How do you know which is the T? You put a little bar across it. Now you know it is L-I-T-T-L-E. The dot and the little bar across the T are not letters; they are small distinguishing marks between two letters.

Our Lord said it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, in the law, and the smallest distinguishing mark between two letters to pass away. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the very smallest, most minute letter or distinguishing mark. Obviously, the law did not end in Lamentations 2:9. How, then, could Jeremiah say, "the law is no more"? We certainly know that the law was, and still is, in full effect. In Romans 7:12 the Apostle Paul said, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." We also know that the law was not replaced by the gospel.

The Law and the Gospel are not enemies. They are not at enmity with each other, and they are not contrary to each other. Rather, they complement each other; that is, they complete each other. The Apostle Paul is probably the greatest teacher in the New Testament on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In Romans 3, he is speaking about the gospel and justification by faith alone: “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.” Then he says, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

“Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

Obviously, the gospel of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of justification by faith are not contrary to the law of God. If you truly preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and justification by faith, then the Apostle Paul says that you establish the law. Any so-called gospel that negates, nullifies, denigrates, or destroys the law is not the gospel of Jesus Christ, nor is it true teaching on justification by faith alone, for real gospel truth establishes the law.

The Law as Schoolmaster and Its Proper Use

The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 3:24, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The law teaches us that we are sinners, that we cannot keep it as it demands—with personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience—and that we cannot save ourselves. It teaches us that there is a vast chasm between a holy God and sinners, and that if we ever reach that infinitely holy God across that chasm, it must be through the merits of another: the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are pointedly told in Romans 3:20, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” God's law was never given for justification or as a means of salvation.

What about those people in the Old Testament? They were saved by faith, looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, just as we are saved by faith, looking back to the Messiah's finished work. They were never saved by law or by their works. We are never saved by law or by our works either. Those in the Old Testament were saved by faith exactly as we are; they did not depend upon their works or upon keeping the law.

In Philippians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul explains what he had in his flesh. He said, “Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.” What could Paul trust in, in the flesh?

He said, “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” Paul was not perfect, and Paul was not sinless. But according to the pharisaical teaching, he had it. Look what he said: “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

The Apostle Paul was saying, “I’m not counting on anything that I ever did. I’m counting solely upon the righteousness and the obedience of Jesus Christ.” You must remember that this righteousness and obedience is imputed to us by faith.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, the Bible says, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” As Christians, we do not trust in our own works, our own law-keeping, or our own obedience. The only one in whom we trust is Jesus Christ, for He is the only one who has ever kept the law of God personally, perfectly, and perpetually. He has worked out a perfect righteousness, and it is given to us by faith.

How is the law connected with the New Testament? The word testament literally means covenant. We have the Old Covenant, and

we have the New Covenant. In Hebrews chapter 8, verse 10, we can see this connection. If there were time, we could also turn to 2 Corinthians 3, but this will be sufficient.

The Law in the New Covenant

Hebrews chapter 8 and verse 10 says, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” In 2 Corinthians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul shows the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, the law of God was written in a table of stone. Now the law of God is written in our hearts and in our minds. Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 16 repeats God’s promise: “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;”

"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." So we know that God's law is still in effect, not only because of the teaching of Christ, but because of the teaching of the Apostle Paul and the teaching of all the other apostles. Moreover, according to Hebrews 8 and 10, the law is now written in our hearts and our minds. In light of that, we have to ask this question: How could Jeremiah truthfully and accurately say, "The law is no more"?

Interpreting Lamentations 2:9 in Context

How do we explain that? How do we interpret it? How do we understand it? We must remember that every verse of Scripture must be taken in its context. Most preaching today takes a verse out of context and uses it as a pretext to teach about anything one wishes to teach. Therefore, we must consider the verse in its context. There is always an immediate context, and there is always a remote context.

Secondly, we cannot take one passage of the Bible and make it contradict another plain passage of the Bible. We must interpret a passage within the analogy of faith—that is, within the scope of the whole teaching of Scripture. If you see a verse and say, "This means that," but what you have said it means contradicts other plain

passages of the Bible, the Bible is not wrong; you are. One passage cannot be made to contradict another plain passage.

Now let us look at Lamentations chapter 2, especially verse 9, and see whether we can understand what Jeremiah meant when he said, "The law is no more." Let us see whether we can explain this statement in light of the immediate context, the remote context, and the overall scope of Scripture. In order to do that, we must have an understanding of the overall picture by observing the purpose of the book of Lamentations.

As a result of Judah's continued unrepentant idolatry, God allowed the Babylonians to besiege, plunder, burn, and destroy Jerusalem and Solomon's temple that had been standing for 400 years. The temple was burned to the ground. Most of Jerusalem was burned. The wall was broken down. The prophet Jeremiah, who is known as the weeping prophet, was an eyewitness to all of this happening. That's why he wrote the book of Lamentations. It is a lament over what happened to Judah and Jerusalem.

Lamentations describes the funeral of a city. It is a tear-stained portrait of a once proud Jerusalem, now reduced to rubble by the invading Babylonian hordes. There are five chapters in the book of Lamentations. Actually, they are five poems, a five-poem dirge which not only exposes the emotions of Jeremiah but also tells us exactly what happens in the death of Jerusalem, as Jerusalem lies waste and barren.

Chapter 1 deals with the destruction of Jerusalem. It is a lamentation by Jeremiah over the destruction of Jerusalem. This city has been left desolate because of her sins, and her enemies have mocked her downfall. Chapter 2, or the second poem, concerns the anger of Jehovah. Jerusalem's desolation has been brought about because of the righteous anger of God. God is using the Babylonians as His instrument to punish and to destroy the city.

Chapter 3, or the third poem, is a prayer for mercy. We do not have time to read all of these, but the first 18 verses of chapter 3 deal with the miseries and the despair of the people of Jerusalem. In the latter portion, Jeremiah begins to reflect upon the faithfulness and goodness of God. That is where we read, “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."

When we get to chapter 4, it is the siege of Jerusalem again. Once again, Jeremiah describes the suffering and starvation of the people, the causes of the siege, the sins of the people, and the prophets and the preachers, or the priests. Then in chapter 5, there is a prayer for remembrance. Jeremiah prays and cries out to God, telling us about the degradation of Jerusalem. He tells us that strangers have taken their inheritance.

Their houses are occupied by others. They are having to buy their own drinking water and their own firewood, while the young and the old are mercilessly destroyed. From this brief overview of Lamentations, we can see that our text occurs in chapter 2, verse 9, which deals with the righteous anger of God. How, then, do we explain the statement, "the law is no more"? I want to give a number of ways that statement could be understood, each of them a biblical interpretation and explanation.

Jeremiah writes, "Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD."

Four Ways to Understand 'The Law Is No More'

Let me begin by saying that Jeremiah's statement could be understood literally, in light of the destruction of the city, and especially the destruction of the temple. Do you remember where the original copy of the law was kept?

In Deuteronomy 31:9 we read, "And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel." Where did they place that law? Within the ark.

Verses 25 and 26 continue: "And Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee." The ark, then, contained the original copy of the law.

When the temple was destroyed, all of the vessels were carried away into Babylon. In 2 Kings chapter 20, we remember how the princes of Babylon had come to Hezekiah, and Hezekiah had shown them everything in his kingdom. Notice what the prophet Isaiah said to Hezekiah, beginning with verse 15: “And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

Everything was to be taken away, and Nebuchadnezzar basically did that. He took everything. Notice 2 Kings 24:13: “And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.”

What does the Bible say? He carried out all the treasures of the house of the Lord. Anything that was any valuable, that had any value to it, he took it away. Look at 2 Kings 25:13. To show you how thorough he was: “And the pillars of brass that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brazen sea that was in the house of the LORD, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the brass of them to Babylon.” So everything was carried into Babylon.

In 2 Chronicles 36 and verse 7, the Bible says, “Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.” So everything that was in the temple, Nebuchadnezzar took. When Jeremiah said, “the law is no more,” he could have been speaking literally. The law, which was written in tables of stone, could have been destroyed, either broken by fire or taken into Babylon. So he could have been speaking literally.

Secondly, Jeremiah’s statement could also be considered practically. When Jeremiah said the law is no more, we could

understand that with a practical application. If the temple was destroyed, there would be no more sacrifices, no more ceremonies, no more rituals, and no more worship demanded by the law. How could there be? Everything was destroyed. Practically speaking, it was all over. It was done for. There was no way that the demands of the ceremonial law could any longer be met.

You have to remember that God demanded, if anyone was going to worship Him in the Old Testament, that they come to the tabernacle prior to the temple. Once that tabernacle was done away with and the temple was standing, they had to bring their offering to the temple. Leviticus 17 shows how, practically speaking, what Jeremiah said—the law is no more—could be very, very correct. The LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, "Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, saying, What man soever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp, And bringeth it not unto 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 hath 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 them unto the LORD, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest, and offer them for peace offerings unto the LORD." Notice what God said: it has to be brought here.

In Leviticus 17:9, God speaks of the man who brings his offering not to the tabernacle: "And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the LORD; even that man shall be cut off from among his people." Deuteronomy 12:27 likewise says, "And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh." Everything was to be offered at the tabernacle and later at the temple.

So when Jeremiah said, "The law is no more," he could have been speaking literally, in the sense that the original tablets were

destroyed or taken into captivity. He could have been speaking practically, because they could no longer worship or sacrifice; they could no longer do anything that the law demanded. Practically speaking, it was over. Thirdly, Jeremiah could have been speaking prophetically when he said the law is no more.

Let me ask you a question: When Jerusalem fell, where were the priests and the prophets? What happened to them? The two main offices are represented by priests and prophets. The Levitical priests had the duties and obligations of what we would call the ordinary preaching and teaching of the Word of God, or the Law of God. The prophets had the extraordinary office of revealing and preaching divine revelation as it was given to them before the Word of God was completed. Most of the priests and most of the prophets were killed or taken into captivity because of their rebellion against God. Let us take the priests first.

Malachi 2:7–9 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.” But God then says to the priest, “But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.”

"Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people." The priest did not keep God's law. They did not teach God's law. The priest should have been teaching God's law, but they refused to do so.

In Ezekiel 22:26, God says, "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them." What did God say? Her priests have violated God's laws. This is one way that you may understand the law is no more—not only literally, not only practically, but also prophetically.

In Jeremiah 2:8, concerning the priests, we read, "The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit." So

we know the priests were corrupt. That's what God says. But what about the prophets? The prophets were equally corrupt as well.

Jeremiah 4:9 says, "And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder." These were the prophets who were supposed to be declaring the revelation of God to the people. Yet the priests would be astonished, and the prophets would wonder, showing the condition of those who should have been leading and declaring God's truth.

Jeremiah 5:13 says, "And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them." The prophets are nothing but blowhards. Why? The word of God is not in them. In verse 31, God says, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" The prophets prophesied falsely, the priests ruled by their means, and the people loved to have it so.

The LORD said unto Jeremiah, “The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.”

In Jeremiah 23, 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. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.”

God asks, “How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart.” If you need any more convincing of the corruption and

depravity of the prophets, read Jeremiah 26. There you can find how they substituted their word for God's word. They lied to the people, taught their own visions and their own dreams, and refused to teach the word of the Lord.

When Jeremiah writes in Lamentations 2 and verse 9, “the law is no more,” he could have been speaking literally, practically, or prophetically. Those who were to teach and preach the law were either dead or gone into captivity because they had forsaken God.

Fourthly, Jeremiah's statement, “the law is no more,” may also be understood judicially. To be honest, I think this interpretation has a great deal going on, though I believe all the others are correct. In Lamentation 2 and verse 9, God says concerning Jerusalem, “Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD.” Here is what happened: God refused to speak to them because they refused to hear God.

What God does is basically withdraw His hand and withdraw Himself, exactly as He did during the book of Hosea. He said in the book of Hosea, “They went to seek the Lord, but they found Him not.” He had withdrawn Himself. Do you have any idea what happens when God’s restraining hand is taken off a people or from a nation?

I want you to hold Lamentations 2, but look to 1 Timothy chapter 1, and let me show you one of the main uses of God’s law. In 1 Timothy 1:8, the Apostle Paul writes, “But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;” There is a lawful use of the law, and there is an unlawful use of the law. An unlawful use of the law is when someone tries to use it for justification or salvation. It was never meant for that.

Now watch. He says, “We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for

perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."

Verses 9 and 10 compass all ten of the commandments. He said the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient. What does he mean by that? I have no problem with the law as long as I am obedient. But when I become disobedient and rebellious, then the penalty of that violated and broken law falls. One proper use of the law is that it restrains.

Have you ever wondered what keeps a lot of people from breaking into a house and stealing everything there? The law, on one hand, because they realize that if God's law were followed, they would be much worse off having stolen and gotten caught than they were before they stole, because they would have to make restitution. Moreover, according to God's law, a man has the absolute right to defend his person and his property. Somebody who breaks into a house when there is an armed homeowner there is definitely going to be restrained.

One of the uses of the law is that it restrains. What happened in Judah and Jerusalem is this: they had burst the bonds of the law and thrown off its restraining power. They were at the point where they could care less what God said or what man said. They were going to do exactly what they were going to do.

They refused to be restrained, disciplined, or chastened. You remember I read this passage last week from Isaiah 1 and verse 5, where God asked, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." In other words, you are not going to listen, no matter what I do to you.

So what does it mean when I say that, when Jeremiah said, the law is no more? He could have been speaking judicially. It meant that there was no more restraining influence of God's law. The people were flaunting it, throwing it to the wind, and doing what they pleased. Now God had withdrawn himself, and the only thing left for them was absolute judgment and destruction.

Judicial Removal of the Law and Its Consequences

Look in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel, chapter 5. I want us to begin reading with verse 5 and read through verse 9. This is what I am talking about, how Jeremiah could say, judicially speaking, the law is no more. Ezekiel 5, verse 5: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations. And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations." What did God say? You have perverted everything. You refuse to listen. Therefore, said God, I will wipe you out.

Turn to Jeremiah 18, where we will end up, but first go to 2 Chronicles 15. If you would like a clear picture of what it is like in a country, nation, or society where the people have thrown off God's law and its restraining power, look at 2 Chronicles 15, beginning with verse 1.

"And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

That is, if you refuse His law, He will forsake you; He will withdraw Himself. You will not listen to Him, and He will not listen to you.

"Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law." How could they have been without a true God or without law? They were without the true

God because they were not listening to God's law. You must remember that a king rules by his law. As long as the priest was not teaching God's law, they were basically without God.

They were a godless country, even though they were a covenant people. They were a godless nation, even though they were a covenant nation. “But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity.”

Let me ask you a question. Looking at our country, what about those who travel, those who go out and come in? What about great vexations—not only physically, but mentally, emotionally, financially, and spiritually? What about nation being destroyed? How many wars are we involved in? City against city. Look at the cities that are about to declare bankruptcy: Birmingham, Alabama. Great vexations. “For God did vex them.” Why?

Because they had forsaken Him and His law. Jeremiah 18:18 shows the arrogance, hypocrisy, and wickedness of the people in Jeremiah’s day—the people that God destroyed. Jeremiah 18:18 says, “Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.” They claimed that the law would not perish from the priest, while plotting against Jeremiah and refusing to heed his words.

They also planned to kill him. “For the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet.” The law shall not perish, they said, but what they were about to do was contrary to the law. It had perished, practically speaking, because they were violating it when they planned to destroy Jeremiah, the only one speaking truth to them.

These people were absolutely sure and certain that the law would not perish from the priest or prophet, so they slandered Jeremiah and killed him. Ezekiel 7:26 says: “Mischief shall come upon

mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients." God says, You cannot stop Me or My judgments. Judicially, you will be left alone—left to your own counsel, advice, wisdom, and rebellion.

You will die on your sins. You will be carried into Babylonian captivity. For He said, "The law is no more." I am not speaking to the priests; I am not speaking to the prophets. What happened? Judah and Jerusalem went into Babylonian captivity. When they came out, they no longer had the Torah, God's law. They now had the Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud, and that is what they have followed from then until now. Thus Jeremiah said accurately, literally, practically, prophetically, and judicially, for those people, "The law is no more."

Applications: The Greatest Judgment and the Law's Penalty

I have two applications. The first is this: the greatest judgment God can pronounce upon a people is the removal of His Word. Do you know what God did with Elijah, the only prophet preaching the truth in Israel? He moved him out of the land. Moving Elijah out of the land was a picture of what was happening there. There was a physical drought, but also a spiritual drought, for God had removed His preacher from the land. They were without the Word of God and under judgment. In Jeremiah's time, God kept Jeremiah in the land; He simply shut his mouth. In Jeremiah 7, 11, and 14, God says, "Pray not for this people."

"But I'm not going to hear you." Finally, He tells them in Jeremiah 14, "I'll let you pray. You want to pray for them? But you pray that I'll destroy them, because that's exactly what I'm going to do." The greatest judgment that can befall a people is when the law is no more. Where is God's law in our country? Look at the abortion, the sodomy, the fraud, the corruption, the Marxism, the communism, and the socialism. What can we say? The law is no more. What awaits us? Judgment—more judgment. We're already under judgment—more severe judgment.

My second application is this: God's law does not really disappear, vanish, or go away. God may withhold its truth or its application from us, but He does not withhold its penalty from us.

David said in Psalm 119:89, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." God's law does not disappear; it is there. When we as a people turn our backs upon God and His Word, the only thing we know about it or receive from it is judgment—the penalty of the broken law.

We may desire God's law and its proper application to our lives, live obediently, and have God's blessings; or we may despise God's law, refuse its application, and live disobediently and rebelliously. Still, we will receive something from the law: the penalty for violating that righteous law. I'd rather have the power and application of God's law in my life through obedience than its penalty through disobedience. Although the law still existed, even when Jeremiah was alive, he correctly said of those people at that time, "The law is no more."

Father, we bow to Thee this day, thankful for Jesus Christ, for His perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience to God's law. We need not trust in our own obedience or law-keeping, but in the law-keeping and obedience of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We're thankful for His perfect sacrifice: He washed away our sins, cleansed us, satisfied and placated the wrath and anger of a righteous God, and gave us a robe of righteousness. Lord, help us see the trouble in our country and make proper preparations in our hearts, homes, and lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

Who Are You Justifying?

December 3, 2012

Introduction: The Doctrine of Justification

Job 25:4 asks, “How then can a man be justified with God, or how can he be clean that is born of woman?” Although this is not the text from which I am going to preach, the subject is there.

We understand the word condemn, or at least we should, because if one stands condemned, he stands guilty before the law. Each person in prison has been condemned; that is, he has been found guilty in light of the law. Some may have been condemned unlawfully, unjustly, and unrighteously, yet they were still condemned. When I was a boy, we referred to those people as convicts. Why? Because they had been convicted by the law and judged to be guilty before the law.

So we understand the word condemnation. But do you understand the word justification, or the act of justifying? Justification is basically the opposite of condemnation. The one who is pronounced justified is pronounced innocent before the law. The

law does not condemn and cannot condemn the justified one, for the justified one is freed from the penalty of the broken and violated law.

Usually, when we talk about justification, we are referencing the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. Justification is indeed an act of God alone, uniquely the act of God the Father as Judge. It is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which He pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight—not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ imputed to them by God and received by faith alone. God alone is the author of justification because God alone is able to justify. Only God the Father may pronounce a man righteous in light of the law and in His sight.

It is God alone who can justify. Romans 3:24 states, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." So it is God who justifies. Romans 3:30 says, "Seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith." Romans 5:1 declares, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Galatians 3:8 demonstrates that justification is indeed an act of God: "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Notice that the Scripture foresaw that God would justify the heathen through faith. It was not merely predicting that people would attempt to justify themselves; it was foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith.

It is impossible to be justified in any other way than by God's sovereign act and work. We cannot be justified by our work, by our deeds, or by our acts. We cannot justify ourselves. Romans 3:20 says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The law does not provide a means by which we can establish our own righteousness; it gives the knowledge of sin. Verse 28 concludes, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

Galatians 2:16 says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." It is impossible, then, to work your way into heaven. It is impossible to be saved by doing good and doing right. No work, deed, or act can become the ground of our justification; justification is God's sovereign act and work, received by faith and not by the deeds of the law.

It is impossible to be justified before God with anything that you are or anything that you do. Turn to the book of James, because there is no discrepancy or conflict between the Apostle Paul and the Apostle James. Many individuals have misinterpreted or misunderstood the book of James, to their own detriment and destruction. The apostle James does not teach salvation by works. Period.

In James 1:18, James says very clearly, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." James acknowledges up front that salvation is the work of God alone.

Although salvation is the work of God alone, the God who saves us has ordained that we bring forth fruit that will evidence our salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." But verse 10 continues, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Therefore, when the Bible says that we are not saved by works, but by grace through faith, and that this is not of ourselves but is the gift of God, it goes on to say that God has ordained and created us unto good works, that we should walk in them. Those who have been saved by grace through faith will inevitably and invariably evidence and manifest that faith by obedience and good works. If we are saved by grace through faith, there will be evidence. James is clarifying this in chapter 2.

Beginning with verse 14, James asks, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."

James asked, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say that he hath faith?" In other words, the only evidence is the man's word. "What doth it profit though a man say that he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" You have to understand James' question. He speaks clearly and definitively. However, if you insert three little words, you will understand exactly what he is saying: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works? Can that kind of faith save him?" The kind that does not produce works. Can that kind of faith save him? The answer is absolutely not, because it is a dead faith. That is what he proclaims a little later. That is why James says, in verse 18, if you tell me that you have faith, go ahead and show me your faith. You cannot show faith. You cannot pull it out of your head and say, "Here it is." You cannot pull it out of your body. No. He said, "You show me your faith and I will show you my faith by my works." In other words, real saving faith always works.

James gives two examples, Abraham and Rahab. He asked, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" Or mature, or evidenced. "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” James is dealing with people who say they are saved

but never live it or obey it. Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. How do we know Abraham had faith? Because he obeyed God and was willing to offer his son Isaac as God commanded. Rahab was saved by faith; we know this because she hid the messengers of God. Her works were commensurate with her faith; they evidenced her faith.

James makes it simple: if you take the spirit out of the body, the body is dead. If you take works, that which God has ordained, away from real saving faith, it is no longer saving faith, but merely a dead faith. James is not teaching that grace plus works saves us. He is teaching that real biblical grace and faith always produce obedience, which evidences itself in good works.

A dead faith is absolutely worthless. It has never saved anyone. Someone says, "But I believe in God." James 2:19 answers, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." Just because a man says he believes in God, or says he believes in Jesus Christ, does not mean that he is genuinely saved. A person can have an intellectual faith that is nothing but a totally dead faith. If you have real saving faith, it will always evidence itself. Our works do not save us, do not help save us, and do not add to our salvation. They merely evidence, manifest, and demonstrate that we have a real, genuine, saving faith.

We can sum up the doctrine of justification by faith with these four points. First, the originating or moving cause of justification is the free grace of God. Secondly, the meritorious cause of justification is the person and work and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Thirdly, the implemental cause—that is, how God implements it—is by imputation. God imputes to us. Fourthly, the instrumental cause is faith alone. It is received by faith alone. Thus, the originating or moving cause is the free grace of God; the meritorious cause is the person and work of Jesus Christ; the implemental cause is imputation; and the instrumental cause is faith alone.

Civil Justification and the Role of Judges

There is another area of justification we need to talk about before we get started. It is equally true that, in a civil and judicial sense, magistrates have been ordained by God to justify and condemn

based upon God's law. For instance, look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 25 and verse 1. Deuteronomy 25 and verse 1 says, "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they," that is, the judges, "shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked."

So God has established magistrates to judge and condemn. He has established them to justify the righteous and condemn the wicked. If you will turn right back to Deuteronomy chapter 1 and look at verse 17, notice what is said concerning the judges. God says to the judges, "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great."

“Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's.” And then Moses added, “And the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.” But notice he said, “the judgment is God's.”

Do you know what God said to the judges in 2 Chronicles 19 and verse 6? God said to the judges, “Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.” So judges then had been set up by God, ordained by God to judge for Him. There is indeed a grave and solemn duty imposed upon the judges, and they will answer to the judge of all the earth for their flippancy, their injustice, their abuse, their perversion, and their misuse of their authority.

In Proverbs 17 and verse 15, God says this; listen carefully: “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the LORD.”

When you get home today, you ought to read Psalm 82. Psalm 82 is a warning as well as an indictment against all unjust and ungodly judges. You will be surprised to learn that God imposes the death sentence upon all unjust judges for their wicked rebellion against Him and His law. Such acts of injustice, even as we see going on today, turn the world upside down. In fact, in Psalm 82:5, the Lord described it like this: “All the foundations of the earth are out of course.”

Did you read or did you hear what that stupid Indiana judge did? I use the word stupid correctly. The stupid Indiana judge ruled that if

a policeman wants to enter your home without warrant, without reason, you cannot resist him. He can come in any time and do anything he wants to do.

That is not only contrary to history, contrary to Magna Carta, contrary to the Constitution, and contrary to the Bible; it is contrary to common sense. One author wrote that he hopes some constitutionally concerned law-enforcement officers in Indiana will barge into the judge's home, especially during supper time or nighttime, and do whatever they want to do. Perhaps then he might change his mind.

I am saying this to point out the fact that God said the whole foundation of the earth is out of course. God pronounces grievous woes against all who pervert justice. Isaiah 5:20–23 says: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, and put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!"

Justifying Sinners by Our Wickedness

Why does God pronounce the death penalty upon wicked and corrupt judges in Psalm 82 and pronounce such solemn and grievous woes upon them in Isaiah chapter 5? Because it is impossible for society to exist without true biblical justice, and when you destroy justice, you destroy society.

Why is there so much anarchy, confusion, and chaos in our land? Because there is no true justice. Why are there so many repeat offenders—quote unquote, repeat rapists and repeat murderers? Because there is no justice. God says, very obviously, the whole foundation of the earth is out of course when true justice is denied.

The question and title of this message is, Who are you justifying?

We May Justify Sinners by Our Wickedness

We may justify sinners by our wickedness. This point requires explanation. It is not that we pronounce sinners righteous in the

sight of God's law. It means that, comparatively speaking, when our sins are more wicked, more vile, and more rebellious, we justify those who are not as wicked, not as rebellious, and not as vile as we. They will look upon us and say, “Ha! Well, at least I am not as bad as old so-and-so over there. At least I do not do what he does. At least I do not live like she does.”

In Ezekiel, chapter 16, beginning with verse 44, God shows us how we justify sinners by our wickedness: “Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.” Then He says: “Thou art thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite. And thine elder sister is Samaria,” the capital of Israel, “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.”

He says, "Your elder sister is Samaria, your younger sister is Sodom. 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. 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. Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters."

Was Sodom righteous? The answer is a resounding no. Was Samaria, the capital of Israel, righteous? No. Yet compared with

Judah and her transgressions, they were more righteous. Judah's extreme wickedness, in a sense, justified Sodom and Samaria. By committing the same abominations, and greater ones, Judah countenanced their wickedness, effectively declaring that they had done right. Exceeding them in sin, Judah made them appear righteous by comparison and gave them opportunity to excuse their sins, since they had not been as vile as Judah.

Now let me repeat what I just said in another way. Judah justified Sodom and Samaria comparatively speaking. In reality, listen carefully, Sodom and Samaria were not more righteous. They were just simply less vile and less wicked. And so Judah's extreme wickedness then, comparatively speaking, made Sodom and Samaria look righteous because they were just simply less wicked. But Judah's sins did not extenuate or excuse the sins of Sodom or Samaria. They're going to be judged for their sins. Look what our Lord said in Matthew 11. Turn over to Matthew 11. And look if you would please, beginning there verse 23. Matthew 11 and verse 23. Our Lord said it like this: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

Capernaum, like Judah, had sinned against light, knowledge, and opportunity. Their sins were far more heinous and far more wicked than those of Sodom. And so Sodom will be punished less severely, although she will be punished, because her sins were not as wicked and as vile as Capernaum's and as Judah's.

Now, go back in your Bibles to the book of Jeremiah chapter 3, and look if you would at verse 11. By the way, since you're in the New Testament, go ahead and find the book of Luke, if you would, just find the book of Luke because we're going there after Jeremiah 3. I want you to see this. Look in Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 11. Then we'll go to the book of Luke chapter 12. I'm just showing you that we may justify sinners by our wickedness. Look in Jeremiah 3 and verse 11.

Here the Lord says it again, "And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah." Well, how could backsliding Israel justify herself? Because her sins were not as grievous and not as vile and not as wicked as the sins of Judah. It's not that Israel was going to get away with their sins or that they were not sinners. They just were not as bad as Judah.

You know, I want you to stop and think about this. This not only has to be an awful thought, it must also be a blasphemous act to justify the wicked by being more wicked than they are. You stop and think about that. Look in your Bibles to Luke chapter 12, and let's begin reading there verse 47. Luke 12, verse 47. I want you to see what our Lord says. Luke 12, verse 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. 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." What did our Lord say? That servant who knew his Lord's will and did it not had truth. He sinned against light, against truth, and against opportunity. He shall be beaten with many stripes. But the one who did not know shall still be beaten, though with fewer stripes.

That is why our Lord said it would be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom than for Capernaum or Judah. We must remember that the greater the light, the greater the knowledge, and the greater the opportunity are always accompanied by greater responsibility and accountability.

So we may justify sinners by our wickedness, and justify self by excuses. If you remember the first part of this message, I said that justification is an act of God alone. That is true: only God can justify. Yet we always endeavor to justify ourselves by our excuses and extenuating circumstances. We offer excuses for our failures, sins, and shortcomings, and somehow think that those excuses are acceptable not only to ourselves, but also to others and to God.

We May Justify Self by Excuses

Job said in Job 9:20, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse."

In Luke 10:25, we see what is meant by justifying ourselves: "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him. And whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Look back at verse 29. After our Lord had told him to obey God's Word, the scripture says, "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" The lawyer was desirous to vindicate himself before God and before God's law. He was endeavoring to convince our Lord, as well as himself, that he was not a sinner and that he had kept the law, because there was a controversy over the word "neighbour." "Who is my neighbour?" He wanted to point out that the term "neighbour" could not be easily

settled and that there was a question as to exactly what was meant by the word "neighbour."

The reason this question was so intense was because of what the Pharisees taught. The Pharisees taught it was perfectly righteous to love your neighbour and to hate your enemies. In fact, our Lord in Matthew 5 and verse 43 said it like this: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." Thus the law-giver is endeavoring to destroy the law by questioning its meaning, its intent, and its spirituality. Instead of bringing his life in conformity to the law of God, he wants to pervert the law of God and bring it down to his standard because he wants to determine who his neighbour is and who qualifies as a neighbour.

The story of the Good Samaritan shows us who the neighbours really are. A priest came and walked by, a Levite came and walked by, and a Samaritan, whom the Jews absolutely despised and hated, walked by, saw the man, bound up his wounds, took care of him, took him to an inn, and took care of his expenses. In our Lord's time, the Jews and the Samaritans were at such odds. In John chapter 4, when our Lord went and sat on the well where a Samaritan woman was drawing water, He said to her, "Give me to drink." She asked in John 4 and verse 9, "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

The whole point of the story of the Good Samaritan is that it does not matter where an individual comes from. It does not really matter, in one sense of the word, what he believes or even what nationality he is. If he is in distress, if there is an emergency situation, he has a claim upon your kindness and your mercy. If you are in his part of the country, you would want him to treat you the same way.

Your neighbour is not necessarily the man who lives right next door to you, but someone who is in need. If there is an emergency situation, a distress, it is like sitting here and seeing a car wreck outside, with the cars catching on fire. We do not run outside and say, "Are you a Christian?" before we try to rescue them and pull them out. What their faith is, is immaterial. Where they are from is

immaterial. We try to get them out of the cars before the cars explode.

Our neighbour is whoever happens to have needs. It is possible to justify self. In Luke 16:13, our Lord says, "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

"And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." The Pharisees were covetous. They believed that they could serve God and mammon. Have you ever noticed how our government always seeks to justify its wicked acts?

We had to invade them, for they have weapons of mass destruction. We have to invade them because Gaddafi is killing innocent people. How many have we killed in saving them? It is just like Janet Reno in Waco: We have to save the children, and murdered seventeen of them. What we do as individuals, families, and churches, so does the nation.

Adam Clarke said this about the Pharisees in Luke 16: "You endeavor to make it appear to men that you can still feel an insatiable thirst after the present world, and yet secure the blessings of another; that you can reconcile God and mammon, and serve two masters with equal zeal and affection. But God knows your hearts, and He knows that you are alive to the world and dead to God and goodness. Therefore, howsoever you may be esteemed among men, you are an abomination before Him."

One may appear before men as just and strict observers of the law, or predicate of themselves that they are just. As our Savior said, you make a fine show and great brags amongst men. But God's eye goes deeper. He knows the heart.

What pride and covetousness and hypocrisy lies there? Men do not know your hearts, but God knows them. One may excuse his sins and his rebellions and his wickedness a thousand times over, and it may all be well and good before men, but not before God. Our own

government can justify itself to all the nations in the world and to all of the American people. But that does not mean that God accepts those excuses and justifications. When we offer our puny, flimsy excuses for disobeying God's law, somehow we think that God accepts them. “Well, the reason I ran off with this woman was she was more spiritual than my wife.” That's so trashy. “Well, the reason I stole, he's got so much and I have so little and I knew he would never miss it.” We are trying to justify our sins and rebellions. We may justify sinners by our wickedness; we may justify self by our excuses.

We May Justify the Sovereign by Confession and Repentance

Thirdly, we may justify the sovereign by confession and repentance. How in the world do I justify God? Is it possible to justify God? What does it mean to justify God? How can it be done? How often should we justify God? Look in Luke chapter 7, beginning with verse 19: “And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?”

“And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John. What went ye out into the wilderness for to see?”

“A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

"And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." How did the people justify God? They justified God by repenting of their sins, exercising faith in the Messiah, and believing the preaching of John the Baptist. They considered God right, righteous, and just in everything He said and demanded. They said that God would be righteous and just to destroy them, and anyone else, because of His holiness and justice. They justified God by believing Him, repenting of their sins, and confessing and acknowledging that God was righteous and true. They evidenced this by submitting themselves to the baptism of John, which God the Father had ordained.

The Pharisees refused to do this. They did not believe John's preaching, the Word of God, or the Messiah; they rejected the counsel of God against themselves.

John Calvin said it like this: "Those who respectfully embrace the Son of God and assent to the doctrine which he has brought are said to ascribe righteousness to God. We need not therefore wonder if the Holy Spirit everywhere honors faith with remarkable commendations, assigns to it the highest rank in the worship of God, and declares that it is a very acceptable service. For what duty can be deemed more sacred than to vindicate God's righteousness? The word 'justify' applies generally, no doubt, to everything connected with the praises of God and conveys the idea that God is beheld with approbation and crowned with glory by the people who embrace that doctrine of which he is the author."

Since faith justifies God, unbelief must be blasphemy against Him and a disdainful withholding of the praise due His name. Men are never brought into complete subjection to the faith until, disregarding the flesh and sense, they conclude that everything which comes from God is just and holy, and do not permit themselves to murmur against Him, His Word, or His works.

How do we justify God? By submitting to Him, obeying Him, and confessing and acknowledging that everything He has said is right. It is possible to glorify the Word of the Lord. Acts 13:48 says, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

In every situation and circumstance, we must acknowledge that God is right and that we are wrong. We acknowledge this by repenting of our sins, believing Him, confessing and acknowledging Him, and bringing our lives into conformity to the Word of God. So the question is, Who are you justifying?

Applications: Justifying God in All Things

In everything you say and do, you are either justifying sinners, yourself, or the Sovereign. You cannot escape the act of justification in that sense of the word. If you are living wickedly, you are justifying someone who is less wicked than you. If you are making excuses for your sin and rebellion, you are justifying yourself. If you are repenting, believing, and submitting to the Word of God, you are justifying God.

We must learn at all times to justify God by saying, "He's right. He's righteous. We're wrong," and submitting to Him. Read Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9. In those chapters, Ezra and Nehemiah confess and acknowledge the sins of the nation while it is under the judgment and wrath of God. They say, "Thou art right and we're wrong. You are holy and unto us belongs confusion of faces, for we have sinned against Thee." They are justifying God, saying that they are receiving everything they deserved and less than they deserved. The Lord is holy and right; they are sinners, wicked, wrong, and violators of His law. If He were to wipe them off the face of the earth, He would still be right and they would be wrong.

We may justify God by looking around at our nation, seeing everything that is wicked, vile, and wrong, and confessing it. It is a wonder God has not killed all of us. It is not merely the floods out west, the drought here, the tornadoes, the hurricanes, and the tsunamis. We have to come to the realization of what the Apostle Paul taught: "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha."

I am thankful He has left us a remnant. We need to understand that we must justify God in all of His judgments by saying, He is right and we are wrong.

The second application is this: Anyone who seeks to be justified by any other means than faith in the finished work and person of Jesus Christ shall perish. There is no justification outside of God the Father through Jesus Christ. Romans 5:9 tells us, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” If we are justified only by His blood and saved from wrath only through Him, outside of Him there is no justification, no salvation, and nothing but the wrath of a holy, righteous God. We must either justify sinners, self, or the Sovereign. To paraphrase Joshua, “As for me and my house, I prefer to justify God. He is right. We are wrong.”

We need to repent and obey. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. How holy, righteous, and just Thou art. Lord, Thou hast dealt with us far less than our iniquities deserve—not only individually, but familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally. We are sinners by nature and by choice, having sinned against Thee in every way imaginable.

We ask for repentance and faith. Turn us, and we shall be turned; quicken us, O Lord, and we shall be quickened. Enable us to acknowledge Thy righteousness, holiness, and truthfulness by repenting of our sins, believing Thy Word, and bringing our lives into greater conformity to Thy truth. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

What Are You Lacking?

March 4, 2013

In Matthew chapter 19, beginning with verse 16, we read: “And behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”

He said unto him, “Which?” Jesus said, “Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, honor thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The young man said unto him, “All these things have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?” Jesus said to him, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me.” But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, “Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.” When his

disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, “Who then can be saved?” But Jesus beheld them and said unto them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Introduction: The Question of Lack

There is a series of commercials advertising a bank card in which the question is asked, “What is in your wallet?” The message today does not center on money, credit, or debit cards. It does not center on social etiquette, charm, education, or any other published need in which so many are lacking. Yet the truth is that every one of us is lacking in something. The message centers on the question raised by the rich young ruler: “What lack I yet?”

He instinctively knew that somehow he was not prepared to die and face the righteous Judge of all the earth. I am reminded of the scene in Pilgrim’s Progress when Pilgrim is fleeing from the City of Destruction, weeping uncontrollably. An evangelist meets him and asks why he is weeping. He replies, “Sir, I perceive from the book in my hand, the Bible, that I must die and I must face God.” Then he says, “I’m unwilling to do the first and unable to do the second.” This young man realized that he was lacking something, and he was certainly not ready to face God, the Judge of all the earth.

The Hypocrite's Hope

There are so many people that just simply hope that everything will work out right for them when they die. And yet the truth of the matter is there's no basis for that hope. Many have pretended to be Christians, but they're not Christians. They were never saved. Hypocrites lack the basic essentials. That is, they lack righteousness and true holiness. I want you to hold Matthew 19. We're certainly going to come back there. But I want you to turn very quickly to the book of Job, chapter 8. Now let me just show you several passages in this book that refer to the hypocrite and the hypocrite's hope. Look in the book of Job chapter 8, if you would please.

And let's begin reading there with verse 13. Job 8 and verse 13. The Bible says, "So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." Notice that the hypocrite's hope shall perish. Look in Job chapter 13 and verse 16. Job 13 and verse 16. In

this passage, the Word of God says, "He also shall be my salvation." That is, the one true and the living God.

"For a hypocrite shall not come before Him." That is, a hypocrite has no standing to come before God. Look in Job 20 and verse 5. Job 20 and verse 5. "That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment." So the hypocrite's joy is just very temporary. And then one other passage, Job 27 and verse 8. Look at this very powerful, powerful verse. Job 27 and verse 8. Here the Bible says, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? So the truth of the matter is there are many people that just simply hope that things are going to work out all right, but they have no basis for that hope at all. The truth of the matter is this.

Pharisees' Righteousness vs. Required Righteousness

Most, or I shall say many, professing Christians, or a lot of professing Christians, would not even make good Pharisees. Now that may surprise you, but let me show you why I make that statement. Our Lord is telling us something that we are not to think: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Now watch what our Lord says: “For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Our Lord was indeed admitting and confessing that the Pharisees did indeed have a righteousness, but it was superficial, it was insufficient. But He tells His disciples, except their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, they’ll in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. I hope you’re going to see why I’m saying that many, or an awful lot of professing Christians today, would not even make good Pharisees.

Our Lord is talking about two individuals that went to the temple to pray: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.”

The Pharisee said, “I thank thee that I am not as other men. I’m not an extortioner, I’m not unjust, I’m not an adulterer. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” And our Lord said, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

What can you conclude from this? The Pharisees were clean, honest, and religious. They were not saved, but they had a self-righteousness. They prayed faithfully and gave tithes of all that they possessed. You never had to beg a Pharisee to attend a religious service; he was always there, early, and always on the front row. You never had to ask him to volunteer, because he was always eager to do it in front of everyone else, so everyone would know that he was a volunteer.

The Pharisees had an external righteousness, a righteousness of their own making. Their praise was from the praise and recognition of men. What they lacked was an internal righteousness and true holiness. They lacked faith.

The Bible says in Romans 10:3, “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.” So you have man’s righteousness, and you have God’s righteousness. Israel was ignorant of God’s righteousness; consequently, they went about to establish their own righteousness and did not submit themselves to our Lord’s righteousness.

Paul's Pharisaical Past and Conviction

The apostle Paul, before he was converted, was a Pharisee. In Philippians 3, verses 4 through 7, he gives his pedigree: “Though I

might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

The apostle Paul says that, as touching the righteousness which was in the law, he was blameless. How could he say that? He certainly was not blameless. He certainly was a sinner. But, since he was a Pharisee, he was claiming the external righteousness by which he had lived ever since he was able to live by whatever he said.

When God convicted him, Paul demonstrated that this external righteousness was absolutely nothing. In Romans chapter 7, beginning with verse 9, we see what he finally saw when God truly convicted him: "For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin."

Now what did Paul mean when he said in verse 9, "For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died"? When Paul said, "I was alive without the law once," he was talking about his pharisaical state. He had all of his righteousness as touching the law blameless, he thought. He had not stolen, committed adultery, or murdered—or so he thought. But when the spirituality of God's law came—when the commandment came in its spirituality—sin revived and he died. That was when Paul understood that if he had looked and lusted, then he had committed adultery; if he had coveted, then he had stolen; and if he had hated, then he had murdered.

In other words, that which he thought was ordained to life, he found to be death, because he understood that he had violated God's law all of his life instead of keeping God's law all of his life.

Now, let me repeat what I said earlier. Modern-day Christians, or at least most modern-day professing Christians, cannot hold a candle to the Pharisees. But our Lord said in Matthew 5 and verse 20, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

If you are going to get into heaven, if you are going to see the Lord Jesus Christ, you had better have something more than that which the Pharisees had. You had better have something more than a profession of faith, greater than godly parents or ancestors, and greater than church membership and or baptism. So here is my question: What are you lacking?

The Rich Young Ruler's Qualities

This rich young ruler, when he came to our Lord, realized he was lacking something. He did not know exactly what it was, but he knew that he was lacking something. This story is very important. It occurs in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Let me point out some things about this rich young ruler and the things he had going for him. First of all, he had manners—and that is far more than most people have, far more than most young people have, and far more than most adults have. This rich young ruler came running, kneeled to our Lord, and addressed Him as good master or good teacher.

He recognized our Lord’s superiority and position, and he intended to honor our Lord with his manners, which he did. Respect should always be given to authority. That is why children are called upon to honor their parents and grandparents. There is no one higher in authority than our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He honored Him with his manners and was respectful to Him.

Let me ask you a question. How do you behave yourself in the house of God? How do you behave yourself in Bible study, in prayer, and in preaching and teaching the Word of God? Do you listen submissively and obediently? Are you paying attention to the Word

of God? We are always to watch our manners, or mind our manners, when we are in the presence of God. In one sense, we are always in His presence, since He is omniscient. But the Bible says, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them." There is a special presence of God when God's people are joined together. So we need to mind our manners.

This young man had manners, but that is not all. He had motivation. Mark 10:17 says, "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Note this: the man came running.

He did not come treacherously, as did the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians. He came from a desire, with great urgency and a great need in his life. He was eager to get to the Lord. I have always said that I would like to meet someone with the eagerness, intensity, and desire this young man had. He did not need coaxing, urging, or prodding.

He wanted to hear; he wanted to be told. Basically, he asked for a witness. I have really only had—and I could probably count them on one hand—the people in my lifetime who genuinely asked for a witness. But this young man had motivation. He came running. He truly wanted to hear the Word of God. You know what most people want today?

Ball games, baubles, and bubble gum. We just came from Jacksonville, Florida. There is a big billboard put out by Zaxby's or somebody, I do not know. Here is what it said: "Watch football, eat wings, repeat." That is all the billboard said. "Watch football, eat wings, repeat." That is what most people want. They want ball games, bubble gum, and all kinds of baubles. But here was a young man who not only had manners; he had motivation.

He genuinely wanted the Word of God. Thirdly, he had meekness. His meekness was evidenced not only by the fact that he kneeled to our Lord and addressed Him as "Good Teacher," but also by the fact that he was willing to be taught. He was willing to listen and be instructed. He sought out help and counsel. He did not come to

teach; he came to be taught. He did not have a know-it-all attitude. He came as a student, willing to listen.

So this young man had manners, motivation, and meekness. Fourthly, he had money. In fact, the Bible says that he had great possessions. The word possessions refers to property, land, and estates. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the word possessions is preceded by the word much. He had a lot of it. He was really rich. Our Lord acknowledged that he was rich. Matthew 19:22 says, "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." Mark 10:22-24 says that the young man was sad at that saying and went away grieved, for he had great possessions. Jesus looked round about and said to His disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." The disciples were astonished at His words. Jesus answered them again, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God." Here was a young man with money—lots of money and possessions. He had manners, motivation, meekness, and money.

There was a fifth thing he had: might. Luke 18:18 says, "And a certain ruler asked him, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" This young man was a ruler. He had power and position.

When you mix might with money, you have an individual who has a great advantage as well as a great influence over others. His position also evidences and speaks of his meekness, because here is a ruler willing to condescend, step down, listen, and be taught. How many of our civil rulers are willing to listen and be taught? The last one I ever remember reading about was Davy Crockett. Davy listened and Davy learned. But today, no one is willing to listen or be taught. Here this ruler, with all his might, was willing to step down and listen.

There is a sixth thing that he had. If you look back in Matthew chapter 19, he had morals. Beginning in verse 17: "And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." He saith unto him, "Which?" Jesus said, "Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear

false witness, honour thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The young man said unto him, "All these have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?" Notice this question: "All these things have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?" He evidently had lived a pure life. If he was married, he was faithful to his wife. He must have been a wonderful son, because he genuinely believed that he had honored his parents all his life.

Undoubtedly, his money was either inherited or earned honestly. When our Lord said, "Thou shalt not steal," He included that; the young man had neither stolen nor defrauded anyone. How many today could say, as this young man, that they have lived an outwardly pure, decent, moral, and upstanding life since childhood? The word young here refers to youth, or one who was youthful in age or a child. Ever since he was a small child able to understand, he had kept the Word of God outwardly and externally, and thus he had a self-righteousness. This is what the world would call an ideal youth.

He was moral, honest, respectful, caring, considerate, concerned, obedient, and submissive. These words describe him. Yet, for all he had, he knew he was lacking something. He did not know what, but he knew he was lacking something. Truthfully, I would imagine there are many people who know they are really lacking.

They are empty, powerless, unconcerned, and undiscerning. They have no regard for the Word of God, the house of God, or the truth of God. Many people have told me in my years of preaching, "I cannot understand the Word of God," or, "I do not receive any benefit from the preaching or teaching of the Word of God," or, "I do not derive any benefit from studying or reading the Word of God." The truth is, they have no desire for anything spiritual. They are lacking in understanding and discernment, and in an awful lot of things.

Look at Matthew 19 and verse 20: "The young man said unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?" What lack I yet? The Bible says this young man came running. He asked, "Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Why Jesus Told Him to Keep the Commandments

He wanted to do something to earn and merit salvation. He believed, and no doubt had been taught all his life, that salvation was by works. I talked to a friend on the phone just Friday, and he told me about his brother. “My brother is lost,” he said. His brother believed that when his time came to die, his good works would outweigh his bad works, and the Lord would accept him.

This young man had attempted to keep the law. In all probability, he knew full well that he had failed miserably, even though he would be what you and I would call a decent human being. He thought he might not enter into heaven or receive eternal life, and he wanted to do something to make sure and be certain that he had eternal life.

Have you ever wondered why our Lord answered the young man as He did? In verse 16, the young man said, “Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” Our Lord answered, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” Our Lord was not saying that He is not God. What He was saying is this: if you recognize Me as good, then you must recognize Me as God. And if you recognize Me as God, you do not come running into My presence demanding something of Me. Would you, as Christians in prayer, demand that God do something? Of course not. If I am good, then I am God; and if I am God, you do not come running into My presence demanding something of Me. But since the young man had asked, “What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” our Lord gave him the answer: “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”

Why did our Lord answer this young man as He did? When the young man asked which commandments he was to keep, Jesus said, “Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, honour thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” The young man said, “All these things have I kept from my youth up.” Why did our Lord tell him to keep the commandments? Why did He not answer him as the Apostle Paul answered the Philippian jailer, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” Why did

our Lord not answer this young man as He answered Peter and the rest of the disciples: “Have faith in God”?

So the question has to be asked: Why did our Lord tell this young man to keep the commandments? The answer is simple. The young man wanted to do something to earn or merit salvation. He said, “What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” That was the question. Our Lord gave him the right answer: Keep the commandments. If you want to earn or merit salvation, you must keep the word of God and the commandments of God, personally, perfectly, and perpetually. Our Lord gave an honest answer to an honest question.

When the young man responded, “All these have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?” our Lord gave another direct answer to a direct question. He said, “What do I lack?” “Jesus said, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me.”

Several questions must be asked. Why did our Lord tell this rich young ruler to sell everything he had, give it away, and follow him? Where is that requirement found in scripture? Since our Lord said this to the young ruler, does this requirement apply to everyone? Did you sell everything you had and give it away when you were converted?

And the answer is no, you did not. So why then did our Lord tell this young man, “If you want to be perfect, you go and sell everything that you have and you give it to the poor and you follow me”? Why did He do that? Because our Lord had just finished quoting the commandments: “Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery, honor thy father and thy mother.” The quoting of the law made no impact upon this young man because he thought he had kept those things. Now our Lord is applying the law of God.

This young man wrongly believed that he had kept the law of God from his youth up. Our Lord was showing him that he did not sense his own ruin. He assumed that he was capable of doing good, had no sense of sin, and regarded eternal life as a result of man's work. Instead of the young man keeping the commandments, as he

supposed, our Lord showed him that he had not even kept the first commandment.

What is the first commandment? Exodus 20 verse 3: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” When our Lord said to this young man, “If you want to be perfect, you go and sell everything that you have, and you give to the poor, and you come and follow me,” what does the Bible say? He went away grieved, for he had great possessions.

Here was a young man who thought that he had kept the law of God perfectly from his youth. He had not even kept the first commandment. His money was his god. His possessions were his god. Our Lord said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of God.” I know that there are some people who are rich and genuine Christians, but our Lord said, “how hardly.” Lord, they are few and far between. Why is it they are few and far between?

The Danger of Trusting Riches

The answer is this: The tendency of fallen man is to trust in his riches. Riches get them by in this life; thus they are led to think that riches will get me by in the next world as well. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:17, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” Paul said to charge the rich people that they do not trust in uncertain riches, but make sure that they trust in the living God. That living God is the one who gives us all things richly to enjoy. Whatever we have, He has given us to enjoy.

The tendency of the rich is to trust in their riches. Psalm 49, verses 6 through 8, says, “They that trust in their wealth and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, for the redemption of their soul is precious and it ceaseth forever.” Notice Psalm 49 verse 6: “They that trust in wealth and boast themselves in the multitude of riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother.” None of us can by any means redeem his brother.

Everything in this world God created. If God wanted more of it, He would create more of it. Wealth cannot purchase salvation.

This young man, with his great wealth, asked, "What lack I yet?" I'll tell you some things that he lacked. He lacked a real, genuine, biblical salvation. He lacked conviction for his sins. He lacked repentance. He lacked faith. He lacked the blood atonement. He lacked a propitiation. He lacked reconciliation. He lacked the righteousness of Christ. For Christ and Christ alone is salvation. No one is saved or can be saved apart from Jesus Christ. Salvation is not based upon what we do, but is based upon what Christ has done.

What the Young Man Lacked: Salvation in Christ

When our Lord cried in John 19:30, "It is finished," He had purchased salvation with His life and death. His life was lived in perfect obedience to the Father, and in that perfect obedience He was working out a perfect righteousness for His people. The Bible says in Galatians 4:4–5, "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." Why was Jesus Christ made under the Law? He was made under the Law so that He might render to the Law all of its demands and pay the price. He had to render to the Law a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. Those who try to be saved by their works, good deeds, or merits instead of by faith in Jesus Christ end up under the curse of the law.

Galatians 3:10 says, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. For it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them." In other words, you have to give to the Law a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. If you do not, you are under its curse, and that curse is death—eternal death. In order to be saved by the works of the Law, you must give that personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience.

No one except Jesus Christ has ever done so. Galatians 3:11–13 makes this clear: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident. For the just shall live by faith, and the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath

redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.” The apostle therefore makes it very clear that no one can be saved by his own works.

In Romans 9, verses 30 through 32, listen carefully. The Apostle Paul asks, "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, and they stumbled at that stumbling stone." So what did Israel do? They did not seek the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. They sought the righteousness of their own works, and they stumbled and fell. The truth is that salvation is not by works. It is by faith in the finished and perfect work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ kept the law perfectly for his people. Salvation is only in Christ. Christ lived a perfect life in order to give us a perfect righteousness, and perfect righteousness is found only in Jesus Christ. In Romans 4 and verse 5, the Bible says, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Justification by Faith Alone

Now notice what he said: "...but to him that worketh not." My works do not save me; they do not help save me. My works can manifest and evidence the faith that I have in Jesus Christ, but none of the works that I do can save me. In Galatians 2 and verse 16, the apostle Paul said, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Over and over, he tells us, it is not by our works.

In Titus 3 and verse 5, the Word of God says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." So, here is how our Lord is salvation. Our Lord not only lived a perfect life, He died a sacrificial and substitutionary death.

His death was a sacrifice in that He gave His life. It was substitutionary in the fact that He died in our place. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 5 and verse 7, "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." In 1 Peter 3 and verse 18, the Bible says, "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." So Christ then propitiated our sins.

He placated, appeased, and satisfied the righteous anger of God, the Judge of all the earth. Romans 3:25 says of Christ, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” God set Jesus Christ forth to be a propitiation. First John 4:10 says, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” So what is a propitiation?

The word propitiate means to placate, to satisfy, and to appease. Jesus Christ was made of a woman and made under the law. Being made under the law, He rendered to the law a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. He fulfilled every demand that the law made. In His perfect obedience, Christ earned, or merited, a perfect righteousness.

The problem is that we need more than righteousness; we also need forgiveness of sins. God is righteously and justly angry at us because of our violations and transgressions of His law. Jesus Christ came, was made under the law, and earned and worked out that perfect righteousness. Then He stood in our place. When the wrath of God came down upon Him on the cross, He endured the wrath and justice of God in our place. He suffered exactly what we should have endured ourselves. When our Lord took the full heat of the wrath, justice, and righteous anger of God, He propitiated—that is, pleased, placated, and satisfied—the anger of God on our behalf.

The Necessity of the Incarnation and Propitiation

Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man. Only God can please God. It was man who sinned, and man who must suffer. The incarnation of Jesus Christ was an absolute must in order to purchase our salvation. If Jesus Christ had not been man, He could not have suffered in our stead. If He had not been God, He could not have endured or appeased the wrath of God. Therefore, the

incarnation is a divine must, and there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ. I do not care what religion you are, how sincere or genuine you are, or how good you claim to have been. The truth is, there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ. Period.

The question, then, must be asked: How is this perfect righteousness and forgiveness of sin obtained? The answer is twofold: by imputation and through faith. Faith is the means by which one receives and applies the finished work of Jesus Christ to the heart. Imputation is the method; faith is the avenue.

Second Corinthians 5:21 says, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” That is imputation.

Here are our sins, and here is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has already earned, merited, and worked out a perfect salvation. God then takes our sins and imputes them to Jesus Christ. He charges them to His account, places them upon Christ, and Christ suffers, bleeds, and dies.

Now we have a ground for forgiveness, but we need more than forgiveness to enter the kingdom of God. God takes that perfect righteousness which Jesus Christ has earned and imputes it to us. Thus, we have not only forgiveness of sins, but the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

This is obtained only through imputation and through faith. Our sins were imputed, or charged, to Christ’s account; the righteousness of Christ was charged, or imputed, to our account. Imputation is an act of God.

It is not something that man can do. It is the work of God alone. Therefore, it must be by faith alone. Paul said in Romans 3:28, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Faith in the perfect and finished work of Jesus Christ saves us. It is not our good deeds, merits, or works. Our righteousness is of Christ, who worked out a perfect salvation. Romans 4:5 says, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

Now turn to Philippians 3. We read about Paul's credentials: he was the Pharisee of the Pharisees, touching the righteousness which

is in the law, blameless. Yet he says, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” All his pedigree, learning, works, and everything else he counted loss for Christ. “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,” for whom he had suffered the loss of all things and counted them but dung, “that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Here are the two righteousnesses. You may have your own righteousness, your feeble, finite attempt to keep the law, which you cannot do. If you violate it in one point, you have broken it in all. You may claim your works and have a self-righteousness, but that righteousness is worthless. Or you may have the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who kept God's law perfectly, obediently, personally, and perpetually. In Him we have a perfect righteousness.

Believers Lack Nothing in Christ

This young man asked our Lord, "What lack I yet?" He lacked salvation, repentance, faith, conviction, righteousness, and reconciliation—an awful lot of things. But do you realize that those who are in Jesus Christ lack absolutely nothing? The Bible says in Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Jesus Christ worked out a perfect righteousness. He died a sacrificial, substitutionary, propitiatory death. He died, was buried, and was raised from the dead, and is seated on the right hand of God now to ensure that salvation. He is able to save from the guttermost to the uttermost, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. Christ lived to give us a perfect righteousness, died to give us forgiveness, and was raised from the dead and now lives to ensure that perfect salvation.

Therefore, the apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." What

was Paul saying? "I know whom I have believed. And I know He's able." How is He able? Because He ever liveth to make intercession for the saints of God.

So the question has to be, are you lacking anything? What are you lacking? There are many who never read their Bible, pray, seek God, or attend the preaching of the Word of God. They profess to be Christians but have no evidence and no fruits whatsoever, hoping that somehow, when they die, they'll make it into heaven. It will not happen. It cannot happen. Because the hypocrite's hope shall perish.

Conclusion and Application

Only those who are in Jesus Christ are saved. Only those who are in Jesus Christ will see eternal life. What are you lacking? What is in your heart? Where are you falling short? If you are lacking a perfect righteousness, true holiness, and obedience, you need to come to Jesus Christ. For in Christ we lack nothing. He and He alone is salvation.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask that You would speak to our hearts. Lord, I pray that You would apply the message. I ask that the Holy Spirit of God would be pleased to work in each heart and help us, Father, to trust Thee with everything we are and everything that we have. For without Thee we are absolutely nothing. As the old song goes, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.” It is Christ and Christ alone. Without Him, Father, we are all lost. Thank You for the salvation that is in Jesus Christ; herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins. And we give Thee praise in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

The Necessity of God's Law in Society

April 1, 2013

SCRIPTURE READING - Ezekiel 22:1-22 (KJV)

Introduction: Jerusalem's Judgment and America's Parallel

"Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Now thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? Yea, thou shalt show her all her abominations. Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord God, The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself. Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed, and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years."

"Therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all the countries. Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed. Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to

> their power to shed blood. In thee have they set light by father and mother. In the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger. In thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow."
>
> "Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God. Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee."

“And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you.”

The interesting thing is that when I first read this passage and came to verse 1, where he says, “Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Now thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city?” the bloody city is Jerusalem. Jerusalem was basically a city of God’s own choosing. It was considered to be His delight. Yet we are reading what became of that city, what it turned into, and how God would judge it.

Most of you know that the founders of this country referred to America as the new Israel, as a city set on a hill, or the new Zion. I do not know if you remember the song, “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks I Stand and Cast a Wishful Eye.” I think the man who wrote it was William Stennett. When he wrote that song, he was standing on the banks of the Mississippi River, looking westward. He was looking to the new Israel, basically, and talking about America.

So you have to ask, What in the world has happened in our country? What has happened in our society? I want to show you from the Word of God exactly where we are and exactly what has happened. I know that I have preached many times on the subject of the Law of God.

Christ Did Not Abolish the Law

I am not necessarily going to re-preach those messages. However, I am going to remind you of several things in order that you might see, in the context, the proper application of this message. Our Lord did not come to destroy, nullify, or negate the Law of God.

In Matthew chapter 5, verses 17 through 19, our Lord said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." When He says "think not," it literally means this: do not even let it enter into your mind. He continued, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Our Lord said very plainly that He had not come to destroy the law or the prophets; He had come to fulfill it. That is to put it into full force as continuous.

You and I both know that there are people today who are referred to as antinomians. The word "anti" means against, and "nomos" is the Greek word for law. It simply refers to people who are against God's law. In Romans chapter 7 and verse 12, the apostle Paul said, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

If God pronounces His law holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good, it is beyond my comprehension how anyone can deny God's law or stand against God's law. Faith does not negate the law of God. Let me show you. Look in your Bibles to Romans chapter 3, verses 30 and 31. Look what the Apostle Paul writes.

It cannot be any plainer. Romans chapter 3, verse 30, says, "Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Any faith that nullifies or negates the law of God is not a biblical faith. Biblical faith always establishes the law of God. Paul teaches the doctrine of justification by faith from Romans 3 all the way through Romans chapter 8. He says, "We establish the law."

Our Lord did not come to nullify, negate, abrogate, or set aside the law of God; rather, He came to fulfill it by putting it into full force as continuous. How any Christian could be against the law of God I cannot understand. You would have to ask yourself this question: why would God set aside that which is holy, just, and good? And why would any Christian be against that which is holy, just, and good?

Lawful and Unlawful Uses of the Law

The truth of the matter is this: most of us have failed to understand and to perceive the proper uses of God's law in its theological, personal, societal, and national usage. Paul says in 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 8, "But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully." This tells us, first of all, that there are some lawful uses of

God's law. It also tells us that there are some unlawful uses of God's law. One of the unlawful uses of God's law is that fallen man tries to use God's law as a standard of justification or as a standard of salvation. Let me put it to you very bluntly: God never ever gave His law as a standard for salvation. No one has ever been saved by keeping the law.

Not in the Old Testament and not in the New Testament. The Old Testament saints were saved by faith, looking forward to the coming Messiah, just as we are saved by faith, looking backward to the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. You must remember that the law of God demands three things of every individual. It demands personal obedience, perfect obedience, and perpetual obedience.

Galatians 3:10 says, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. And that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident. For, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.”

If you are going to live in the law, you must constantly and continually keep the law; and if you do not, you are under the curse of God, which is the curse of the law. No one has ever kept that law personally, perfectly, and perpetually except the Lord Jesus Christ. It is therefore obvious that we cannot be saved by the law. Christ did keep the law perfectly, and He worked out a perfect righteousness.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” God then imputes to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Paul, before his conversion, was Saul the Pharisee, and Saul believed that he had kept the law of God perfectly. At least, he had tried to keep it externally. But Paul realized, when God convicted him, the difference between his imperfect righteousness and the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. In Philippians 3:9, he said, “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

If you try to keep God's law to be saved, you will have a very imperfect righteousness, and it will never stand before God. As you read through the New Testament, you will find some negative passages concerning God's law.

If you will study the context of every negative passage, you will find that practically every negative passage can be explained in one of three ways. The context will tell you which one is applicable. First, there are passages in the Bible that deny the law as a means or standard of justification. God never gave His law as a means of salvation. Therefore, Galatians 3:21 says, "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." The Apostle Paul says there is no law that can give life. That is why Romans 3:20 says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight."

It is absolutely, totally, and completely impossible to be saved by the law. Therefore, many people take Romans 6:14 out of context, where the Apostle Paul says, "We're not under the law, but under grace." What does he mean? Take the context. He is talking about justification by faith. The law is not our means of justification. We are under grace as a means and standard of justification. The reason the law cannot condemn us is that the law is not our standard. Grace is our standard. Thus, some passages negate the law as a standard of justification or salvation.

God never gave it for that. Secondly, there are passages in the Bible that refer to the death-dealing nature of sin in relationship to the law. We read one of them in Galatians chapter 3. He said, "If you do not obey the law, that is personally, perfectly, and perpetually, you're under the curse of the law." What is the curse of the law? It is death. Cursed is everyone because you will die; you are a debtor to the law, and the curse is death. The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 2 and verse 19, "For I through the law am dead to the law."

Now, the apostle did not mean that therefore he could commit adultery, steal, lie, and cheat. No, no, no. When he said, "For I through the law am dead to the law," he meant that Christ had already taken the wrath and anger of God for him because he had violated that law. Therefore, the wrath of God had been propitiated,

appeased, satisfied, and placated by the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the law cannot curse him; the law cannot condemn him.

So there are those passages. Then, thirdly, there are passages that refer to the ceremonial law. Look in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 14 and 15. The Bible says concerning Christ, "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity," now watch, "even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

The Bible does not say that He abolished the law. It says that He abolished the law of commandments contained in ordinances. What ordinances is he talking about? When you go back and look at verse 14—"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us"—that refers to the middle wall in the tabernacle and in the temple. So he is talking about the ordinances, the ceremonial ordinances.

Some say, “We do not go to a priest and we do not bring a sacrifice.” Listen, God’s law has not been abrogated. The ceremonial law has not merely been abrogated, nullified, or set aside; it has been fulfilled. We now have a great High Priest, Jesus Christ. We still come to God the Father with a sacrifice: “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

We come to an altar; Jesus Christ is our altar. We come to a temple; Jesus Christ is our temple. In other words, Jesus Christ has fulfilled all those types, emblems, and symbols in the Old Testament that surrounded the tabernacle and the temple. Hebrews 13:10 says, “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.”

What is the apostle saying? If you want to go back to the types, shadows, emblems, and symbols, you have no right to Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ fulfilled all of them. Jesus Christ is reality. Jesus Christ is true and truth. Why would you want to go to a shadow? I would rather hug my wife than her shadow. I would rather have the real thing than the shadow, and I would rather have

Jesus Christ than all the ordinances in the Old Testament. He is the fulfillment.

Every negative passage in the New Testament can be explained either as denying the law as a means of justification, as referring to the death-dealing nature of sin in relation to the law, or as referring to what we call the ceremonial law. The law has not been nullified or set aside.

It has not been abrogated. Now, if you want to argue with that, listen to Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." If you want to argue that the law has been totally done away with, try to avoid death. Just do not die. You know why you die? Because you are a sinner. You know why you are a sinner? Because you violated God's law. And the curse of God's law for violating it is death.

Since the law of God has not been nullified, abrogated, or set aside, we must understand that the law has many uses. There are some lawful uses to God's law. First of all, Galatians 3:24 tells us that "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The law was our schoolmaster.

The law teaches us, first of all, that we are sinners. Secondly, it teaches us that we cannot save ourselves. No matter how hard we try, we cannot give the law what it demands.

Thirdly, the law of God teaches us that if we are ever to be saved, if we are ever to cross the great chasm between a holy God and an unholy sinner, we must go through a mediator, through someone else. We cannot cross that chasm in ourselves. The law teaches us that we are sinners, that we cannot save ourselves, that there is a huge chasm between a holy God and a sinner, and that if we ever get to God, it must be through the merits of another. So the law is our schoolmaster.

The old Puritans used to say, "The sharp needle of the law must precede the scarlet thread of the gospel." If you do not know that you are a sinner, you are not a candidate for salvation. The law has to convict and condemn in order for you to see your need of a Savior.

Secondly, the law of God teaches us and gives us the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20 says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall

no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." How do you know what sin is? God tells you. When God says, "Thou shalt not steal," any form of theft, fraud, or deceit is stealing. We know that it is wrong because God says, "Do not do this."

Many people try to take the law and apply it only externally. That was the problem with the Pharisees. They never saw the spiritual application or the spiritual intensity of the law. But Romans chapter 7 shows how the law affected the apostle Paul. He says, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid!" That is, do not even let that thought enter your mind. "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law."

Stop and think about this: "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead."

Paul says, "For I was alive without the law once," when he was a Pharisee thinking he had kept the law. "But when the commandment came," when he saw its spirituality and truth, "sin revived, and I died." Paul found that sin was far more than something external. Sin is internal. It is a disposition and an attitude. Sin is in our lives and in our hearts. He had been a Pharisee who, as he said in Philippians chapter 3, was "touching the law," what? "Blameless." Was he blameless? No. But he thought he was, because he saw everything as external. When the commandment came, he said, "sin revived, and I died."

When God forbids any sin, He also forbids every act that would lead up to that sin. When God says, "Thou shalt not murder," He forbids anger, wrath, and hatred that would lead to murder. When God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," He also forbids covetousness and lustfulness. Our Lord clarified this in Matthew 5: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." When God forbids adultery or fornication, He forbids the covetousness, lustfulness, and everything else that would lead to that act.

Saul, the Pharisee, thought that he was pretty good and that he had kept the law blameless until the commandment came—that is, when he saw it in its true light—and he said, "sin revived, and I died." It was the law of God that revealed his wickedness.

Every sin is a transgression of God's law. You cannot sin without violating God's law. First John 3:4 says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." The law teaches us what sin is. It is a lawful use of the law. The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, yes, but it also teaches us what sin really is.

Thirdly, the law of God is a rule, a standard, a measuring rod for the Christian. We normally divide the Ten Commandments so that the first four refer to our Lord and our duties to Him, while the last six refer to mankind and our duties to mankind. If we would know how to act, interact, and treat each other in a biblical, godly, and holy manner, we must know the law of God. It is that simple.

The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 6:16, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." The word "rule" is the Greek word "canon." We spell it C-A-N-O-N, not C-A-N-N-O-N, the kind that shoots. A canon is a rule or a standard. We speak of the canon of Scripture, the Old Testament canon, or the New Testament canon. Paul is talking about the Word of God. In Greek, "canon" literally means a measuring stick, a measuring rod, or a rule.

The Law of God is our rule and our standard of living. We are to live by God's Law. It is a means of sanctification. It is true that the Holy Spirit is the agent in sanctification, but you cannot be a sanctified person if you are committing adultery, stealing, lying, and murdering. There is no such thing. Sanctification must be in obedience to the law, as well as having the Holy Spirit of God work in our hearts, lead us, and guide us. Those are proper, lawful uses of the law.

God gave the law to restrain the corruption of the unregenerate and the wickedness of the wicked, because the law forbids sin. God not only uses His law to forbid sin; He also uses His law to threaten

the sinner by showing him the just desserts and the just punishments for violating His law.

The Law Restrains Evil in Society

In Deuteronomy 17:7, concerning the death penalty, Moses says, "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people." Then he gives the reason: "So thou shalt put the evil away from among you." The hands of the witnesses must be first upon him, and afterward the hands of all the people; thus evil was to be put away from among them.

Consider the man who perjures himself. Deuteronomy 19:19 says, "Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you." Verse 20 continues, "And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you." Then the penalty is stated: "And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

God says that evil is to be put away from among them, and those who hear and fear shall henceforth commit no more such evil. In Deuteronomy 21:21, concerning the penalty for a rebellious son, He says, "And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear." Look in chapter 22 and verse 21.

"Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house." This is the young woman who has played the whore. "They shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her 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."

Deuteronomy 22:24 says, "Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you."

Anytime God's law is applied, one of its functions is to restrain evil. It not only condemns evil and sin; it shows the just and

righteous punishment that follows those sins. God says to execute the one who needs to be executed in order that others may hear and fear and not do any such wickedness, and that you put the wicked away from among you.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the hearts of the sons of men in them are fully set to do evil.

How is it that someone can murder not just one individual, but sometimes an entire family, and be on death row for 25 or 30 years? Sometimes they are never executed. I told you about the man I talked to in Iowa. The pastor and I went to visit him after he had gone through a very bitter divorce. The pastor said, "He's a very angry, very bitter man."

We went by to invite him to the meeting, and I never will forget his words. He immediately started talking about his divorce, and then he said with great anger, "I should have killed her. I should have killed her. I should have killed her." He said, "If I had killed her, I would have been in jail and out in seven years."

He said, “Now I've got to pay her alimony all my life.” Why was he thinking like that? Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily. If they had taken that murderer, or any murderer, and executed him quickly after he had been proven guilty, the truth of the matter is this: if you apply God's law, it restrains sin and sinners. If you fail to apply God's law, it condones and encourages such wickedness.

Do you realize that most murderers, most thieves, and rapists are repeat offenders? I have a friend who is an officer with the Sheriff's Department in our town. I saw him this week and said, “How's business?” He said, “Well, it's steady. We have a lot of repeat customers.” And that's a fact.

1 Timothy 1:8-10: The Law Is for the Wicked

“But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.” So there is a lawful use of the law and an unlawful use of the law. “Knowing

this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."

Now, how can Paul say that the law is not made for a righteous man? We have already seen that one use of God's law is as our standard for sanctification, in the sense that we are to walk obediently and submissively to God's law. So how can Paul say, then, that it is not made for the righteous man?

The answer is really simple. When Paul says the law is not made for the righteous man, he is teaching and showing us that the righteous man has already been made righteous in Jesus Christ, who has kept the law perfectly. He has fulfilled every requirement of the law. Our righteousness is not in our own obedience; our righteousness is in Jesus Christ. That is why Romans 10:4 says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

How can Christ be the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth? Very simply. I do not keep the law in order to be saved, nor because I want to be made righteous. I keep the law in honor, respect, and obedience to our Lord, who has fulfilled every requirement of that law, and my righteousness is in Christ. He is my perfect righteousness.

The word "end" is the Greek word "telos," which signifies that thing by which something is finished. It is closed; it is the issue. It means to set out a certain point or definite goal. All that Jesus Christ has done was His goal and definite purpose: He fulfilled every requirement of the law. Thus, He is the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe. I believe in Him, and He is my righteousness. We now obey the law of God out of grace, obedience, and for His honor and glory. This does not mean that we do not keep and obey it. We are not trusting in our obedience; we are trusting in His righteousness.

Here is a second question: How can Paul say that the law was made for the wicked? He says, “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient and ungodly,” and he goes down the line.

He says in verse 8, "We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless." The word "lawless" describes those who have no law, who refuse law, who are transgressors. So the law is made for the lawless. Secondly, he says, "for the disobedient." The word "disobedient" describes those who are insubordinate, lawless, and refractory. It properly refers to individuals who are not under any submission or authority.

Then he says, "ungodly." Look in verse 9: "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly." The "ungodly" are those who have no faith in God and do not honor or worship Him. They are without God in the world. The law of God is against all who do not worship the one true, living God. Then he says in verse 9, "and for sinners."

A sinner is one who violates God's law in every area. This includes sins of omission as well as sins of commission. Then he refers to the "unholy." The "unholy" are those who fail in their duty toward God. They have no piety, respect, or reverence for God. They are irreligious.

Then he says, "the profane." The law is made for the profane: those who are impious, scoffers, and mockers, who treat God and His Word with scorn and contempt. They are like Esau. Hebrews 12:16 says, "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." Esau despised his birthright and spiritual things; he was profane.

The word "profane" comes from the Latin pro, meaning before or in front of, and fanum, temple. A profane person is outside the temple, with no regard for the temple or anything inside it. Esau had no regard for God or the things of God.

Then he says in verse 9 that the law was made for “murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers.” These are those who have reached the apex of depravity. It is the height of ungratefulness,

unthankfulness, and rebellion against God—a despising of God and God's authority. Why? Because God delegated authority to fathers and mothers. In the Bible, God demands the death penalty for striking or cursing a parent. If striking and cursing a parent merits the death penalty, how much more when one murders his father or mother? Then he uses, in verse 9, the last word, "manslayers," referring to murderers.

Then he talks about "whoremongers, and for them that defile themselves with mankind," that is, sodomites; "for menstealers," kidnappers; "for liars, for perjured persons." Then he says, "and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." The law of God condemns all these things.

Here is what the Apostle Paul is trying to get across to us: There is no sin which man will not commit if he is unrestrained. It is absolutely incomprehensible for us to conceive how wicked, vile, corrupt, and rebellious individuals can be without the restraining power of God and without the restraining law of God. We are often flabbergasted when we hear of the wickedness of people. We cannot believe that people could be that evil or do those things. And yet they do.

Ezekiel 22: A Nation Unrestrained

Turn back in your Bibles to Ezekiel chapter 22. I have not forgotten my text. I said all that to show you what is happening in Ezekiel chapter 22. If you are really going to understand this chapter and put it in its proper perspective—if you want to know what happened to Jerusalem, and what happened to America—you need to see not just individuals, but an entire nation unrestrained, lawless, disobedient, ungodly, unholy, profane: sinners, murderers of fathers and mothers, manslayers, whoremongers, liars, perjurers, sodomites, and thieves. You need to see a society in anarchy, mayhem, and rebellion. Ezekiel 22:1: "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Now thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? Yea, thou shalt show her all her abominations."

Show her all of her abominations. Jerusalem! Judah! "Thus saith the Lord God; The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it." Murder.

“That her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself.” Idolatry. A lot of this involved child sacrifice.

“Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near,” that is, judgment, “and art come even unto thy years. Therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all the countries. Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed.”

“Behold the princes of Israel.” Behold the congressmen, the president and his cabinet, the judicial system—every one were in thee to their power to shed blood. What did they use their power and authority for? Murder and corruption.

“In thee have they set light by father and mother.” Oh my soul, what is happening today? “In the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger. In thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths.” Are we talking about Jerusalem, or are we talking about America?

“In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness.” “In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness.” Not even the family is safe. “In thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution, and one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God.” Every one of these sins, corruptions, and abominations that were in Jerusalem and Judah are here in America. Keep in mind that Jerusalem was the capital of Judah.

It was the holy city, the place where the tabernacle was and later the temple. Judah and Jerusalem were where the priesthood was, where the law was, and where the law was supposedly taught. Yet here was a city with all the advantages of the priesthood, the law, the

temple, the ordinances, and the sacrifices. God says they were guilty of murder, idolatry, contempt of parents, oppression of the stranger, oppression of the fatherless and the widow, neglect of holy things, profanation of the Sabbath, talebearing, lewdness, incest, uncleanness of every sort, bribery, usury, extortion, and dishonest gain.

Forgetting God Leads to Judgment

They denied, denigrated, denounced, and disannulled the law of God in their lives and in their society. They became a perverted, corrupt, wicked, ungodly people. The word of the Lord came unto Ezekiel: "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you."

What happened in Jerusalem? Why was the city set on a hill suddenly the object of God's wrath and anger and a target for God's destruction? What turned their society and nation into a wicked, vile, putrid, and contemptible society—so contemptible that even the heathen mocked and scorned them? Here is the answer: look at Ezekiel 22:12, the latter part.

And God says, "and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God." And hast forgotten me. Do you realize when a nation forgets God, it rejects His law? When a nation forgets God, it replaces His law. When a nation forgets God, society crumbles and descends into anarchy, rebellion, and a cannibal mentality. When a nation forgets God, it destroys itself and incurs the wrath and anger of God. You know what God said to Israel in Hosea 13 in verse 9?

Let me just quote it. He said, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." I want you to turn in your Bibles, first of all, to Jeremiah. I want to show you what happens when a people forget God. We're going to look at several passages right quickly. Look in Jeremiah chapter 18 and verse 15. Jeremiah 18 and verse 15. God says, "Because my people have forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity."

"They have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up." God said, when my people forgot me, they fell into idolatry. They left my paths. That is, they left my law. They left my way. And they walked in a way not cast up. In other words, there was no safety rails. You could fall over instantly. And that's what happens. When a people forget God, they either reject His law or replace His law.

Look in Ezekiel chapter 23 and verse 35. Ezekiel 23 verse 35. Ezekiel 23 verse 35. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms." What did he say? When you forget me and cast me behind your back, you're going to be filled with lewdness and whoredoms. Look what is happening in our society. Look at the adultery and the fornication and the sodomy. We rejected God and His law. Look in your Bibles to the book of Hosea. If you would turn to Hosea chapter 13 first, we'll look at a couple of verses. Hosea chapter 13, notice if you would verse 6. Hosea 13 verse 6, God says, "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me." Prosperity, plenty, and pride. We don't need the Lord. We've got it. Look at Hosea 4 and verse 6.

Hosea 4:6 says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” God's law is the expression of His will. Our children are the expression of our will. God says, “You forget Me, I forget your children.” That's the lex talionis, the law of retribution—perfect justice.

Hosea 8:14 says, “For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples.” We have churches on every corner, but we've

forgotten God. We have forgotten God's law. The law of God is absolutely necessary in every aspect of life and essential to society, for without God's law, society will collapse. If you really want to know what is happening in America, look around, and then look in the Word of God. We have rejected God, rejected His law, replaced His law, and forgotten Him. All we have now is pure humanistic law.

We're destroyed as a nation, and most people are absolutely oblivious to the cause of our destruction. They do not know what to do or where to turn. Since we have forgotten God, God may justly and righteously forget us. We're alone, left to ourselves and left to our will. Hosea 4:17 says, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”

Applications: Personal Obedience and Dependence on God

One of the greatest judgments that God can inflict upon any society, nation, or people is to leave them alone. God does not have to raise His hand in judgment against us; all He has to do is leave us alone. That is judgment, and we'll destroy ourselves. Can you imagine being left alone by God? Can you imagine crying to God and God not hearing? One of the greatest judgments is when God just leaves us alone.

The second thing is this: You must understand that we cannot live for other people. In reality, we do not have any power over other people. But by God's grace, we can live for ourselves and be obedient, whether anybody else is obedient or not. That is beside the point. I'm responsible for myself first and foremost, and for my wife secondly. But I'm responsible for myself, she's responsible for herself, and you're responsible for yourself. If you and I are not going to obey God's law and live righteously, how in the world can we expect everybody else to do it?

How can we complain about the corruption of our government if we're a corrupt citizenry? When we do that which provokes God, we're forgetting God. We forget how dependent we are upon Him. If you don't think you're dependent upon God, just ask Him not to give you breath for the next thirty minutes. The truth of the matter is, when we refuse to be ruled by God, we condemn ourselves to be ruled by man.

Patrick Henry said, "It is when a people forget God, that tyrants forge their chains." I believe he got the principle from the Word of God. We must be ruled either by the Bible or by the bayonet, by the strong arm of man or by the Word of God. As for me and my house, I prefer to be ruled by God and to be in submission to His law and His Word. You need to be as holy, godly, and obedient as you can be. As wicked as Sodom and Gomorrah were, God was willing to spare them if He found ten righteous people. There are more than ten in this room. We must obey God. God's law is absolutely necessary in our society. Without it, we perish.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your Law. We ask, Father, that You would help us, make us obedient and holy, and give us understanding and discernment, that we may walk according to Thy will and Thy Word. We pray for those on the prayer list, Lord, and ask that You would undertake for them. Again, Father, give grace and mercy. Help us to live for Thee, and we'll give Thee all the honor and praise and glory. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

Seeking The Kingdom Of God

August 17, 2015

Introduction and Reading of Matthew 6:33

Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” We will cover a whole lot of other verses a little bit later, but we are going to start with this verse. It may surprise you how the Word of God tells us where to seek the kingdom of God.

I suppose that many of you probably can quote this verse, and those who may not be able to quote it certainly have heard it quoted by others, especially by pastors. But have you ever really contemplated or meditated upon this verse?

Defining the Kingdom of God

We have to ask several questions. First of all, what is this verse exactly commanding us to do? What is the kingdom of God? How do we seek it first? What are the benefits from seeking first the kingdom of God?

The expression “the kingdom of God” is found sixty-one times in the Synoptic Gospels. That would be Matthew, Mark, and Luke. If you combine the parallel expressions, it occurs eighty-five times in the Synoptic Gospels. It should be pointed out that when we talk about the kingdom of God, we must consider it both as a present reality and also as a future certainty.

Let us consider the Scriptures first. In Matthew 12:28, our Lord talks about the kingdom of God being a present reality: “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” In other words, the kingdom of God was there. So it is indeed a present reality.

But the kingdom of God is also a future certainty, for our Lord said in Mark 14:25, “Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” So the kingdom of God then

The kingdom of God is referred to not only in the present tense, but in the future tense as well. We could say it like this: the kingdom of God has come. It is here, and it is coming. It has come and it is here, but it is going to be coming in its full and final manifestation when our Lord returns.

In explaining the phrase “the kingdom of God,” there is indeed an unlimited view or expression and a limited view or expression. In one sense of the word, if you talk about the kingdom of God, you are talking about God’s sovereign rule over everything and everyone. If we went through the Bible, we could show where it teaches that God rules over the heathen. He rules over the wicked. He rules over the ungodly. So certainly, in that sense of the word, that would be an aspect of the kingdom as well. But in the limited expression of the kingdom of God, it refers to those who are indeed redeemed, regenerated, and converted.

If we ask, “What is the kingdom of God?” we can answer it like this: the kingdom of God is that kingdom over which God rules by His law and by His power. Certainly, that would be true in the unlimited expression of this, but it is certainly true in the limited expression as well. It is a kingdom which recognizes Him, submits to

Him, bows to Him, honors and worships Him. So it is a kingdom that also has a gospel.

Mark chapter 1, verses 14 and 15, says, “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Notice that Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. So the kingdom of God does indeed have a gospel.

How are we going to define the kingdom of God? Remember, I am talking about the limited expression of it. The kingdom of God is indeed a spiritual kingdom, and that spiritual kingdom manifests itself in the lives of its subjects. For instance, Romans 14:17 says, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” It is not something physical in that sense of the word; it is spiritual.

Again, our Lord said in Luke 17:20–21, “And when He was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should appear, He said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” In this sense, He is talking about a spiritual kingdom. But it is a spiritual kingdom that has power and authority, a kingdom with power and authority over everything and everyone.

Matthew 12:28 says, “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” Notice, “if I cast out devils.” If you read through the New Testament, every time our Lord spoke, He spoke with authority. With authority, the Scripture says, He commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed Him. So it is a spiritual kingdom, but it is also a kingdom of power and authority.

The Bible also teaches that no one can enter this kingdom except by the supernatural power and grace of God. Any individual who is in this kingdom is there by the supernatural power and grace of God. You remember Nicodemus, a ruler of the Pharisees, who came to Jesus by night. Our Lord said to him in John 3:3, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Until you are born again, you cannot even see the kingdom of God. Then He said in John 3:5, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee,

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." In order even to see or enter the kingdom of God, you must be born from above by the supernatural power and grace of God. It is impossible to enter the kingdom of God in any other way.

For instance, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:50, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." So we, by nature, are corruptible. We are flesh and blood. Anything with corruption and flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

When we are talking about the spiritual aspect of the kingdom of God, you have to understand that the wicked and the unrepentant are therefore cut out of the kingdom of God. This business about, "Well, we're all brothers regardless of what we believe," is certainly not true—not true by any stretch of the imagination.

Galatians 5:19 says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these;" and note that all these are works of the flesh. They are not works of the devil; they are works of the flesh. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. "Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

That means the wicked and the unrepentant are cut out of the kingdom of God. Ephesians 5:5 states it again very clearly: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." So he has absolutely no inheritance there.

The kingdom of God, in this sense of the word, in Matthew 6:33, is that kingdom where the sovereign God of heaven and earth is recognized, honored, obeyed, and worshiped by those whom He has redeemed, regenerated, and converted. In this sense of the word, the kingdom of God could also be referred to as the kingdom of the saints, because it is the saints who inhabit this kingdom.

The Kingdom as the Kingdom of the Saints

Daniel chapter 7, verse 18, says, “But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.” Daniel gives this statement three times. The saints of the most High shall take the kingdom and possess it. It is the kingdom of the saints. Verse 22 says, “Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” Verse 27 says, “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” Obviously, the kingdom of God is certainly where God rules, but He rules over His people.

In this sense, they are in the kingdom. It is the kingdom of the saints as well. There is a passage in Obadiah chapter 1, verse 17, where the Bible says that Jacob, speaking of God’s people, shall possess their possessions. Likewise, in the New Testament, since we are talking about the kingdom of God as the kingdom of the saints, we are, in essence, to possess our possessions. We are to have everything that God has granted to us and given to us.

The Command to Seek First

Think about this, because it poses a question in light of Matthew 6:33. I have told you that the kingdom of God has come, the kingdom of God is here, and the kingdom of God is coming. I have also told you that the saints are in the kingdom. We are citizens of this heavenly kingdom, that is for sure. So here is the question: If we are already in the kingdom, how do we seek it first? Why would we seek something that we already possess, something that we already have? Look at Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

The word “seek” is a present active imperative. When you hear the word “imperative,” you must understand that it is a command. It is not good advice, counsel, or a suggestion. If I looked at David and said, “David, put on your glasses,” I would be commanding him to do something. He might disobey me, but I would still be commanding him; I would not be suggesting it. God is telling us here that this is

something we must do. It is a present active imperative, meaning that God commands us to do it consistently and constantly. In other words, we should be doing it all the time. We are to be seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Go back to verse 33 and look at this. We should always be actively seeking the kingdom of God according to this verse, and I will go farther: we should always be seeking the kingdom of God first. The word "first" is from the Greek word "protos," which literally means first in time or place; first in any succession of things or persons; first in rank, influence, or honor; that which is first, foremost, and chief. He is telling us that we are to chiefly seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We are to do it first and foremost.

It is to be our priority and the goal of our life: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Since we are already in the kingdom of God, how do we seek it, and what does it mean to seek it first? Look at verse 33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." The phrase "and His righteousness" explains literally what it means to seek the kingdom of God first. If we reverse part of this phrase, it explains itself: "But seek ye first the God of the kingdom and His righteousness." If you are seeking first the kingdom of God, in reality you are seeking first the God of the kingdom. In other words, you are seeking Him and His righteousness.

Matthew 6:33 commands us to seek Him first, foremost, and chief in our lives. We are to place Him before everything else, ahead of everything else. He is to be our priority, our focus, and our driving influence. We are desiring His will, His way, and His word, bringing our lives into conformity to Him. In doing so, we are seeking His righteousness. When we seek His righteousness, we are doing that which is acceptable

If we are doing that which is acceptable in His sight, we are bringing our lives into conformity to His word and to His will. The purity of life, the virtue, and the holiness that God demands of us can all be summed up in seeking His righteousness. Do you realize that righteousness and justice are synonymous terms? In fact, they are from the same Hebrew word in the Bible. Have you ever stopped to think about this? If something is just, it is right; if something is right,

then it is just. Therefore, if we are seeking His righteousness, we are seeking that which is just, holy, and right in His sight.

He is telling us to seek Him first. In Matthew 10:37, we read: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."

He said, "And he that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me." Does not God command us to honor our father and our mother and to love them? Does not God command us to love our children? Of course He does. But He said we cannot love them more than Him. Do you realize that if I said I love my wife more than heaven itself or the Lord Himself, that would be idolatry? I am to love my wife, my father, and my mother, but not more than the Lord. I am to love my children, but not more than the Lord. If we say that we love our children, but love the Lord more, how would that manifest itself? If we really loved our children, and loved the Lord first and foremost, having Him chief, would we not bring our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

Would we not teach them? Would we not discipline them? Would we not raise them the way He commands us? If we let our children go wild and do whatever they want to please us, and never ever try to teach them the Word of God, what do we do? We are loving our children more than we love the Lord. So He tells us in Matthew chapter 10 that this is basically the same truth He communicates in Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." In other words, we have to put Him absolutely first.

Our Lord is demanding and commanding that He be first in our lives. It is easy to say that we are seeking the kingdom of the Lord. It is easy to say that we are seeking the God of the kingdom. It is easy to say that we are placing the Lord first and foremost in our lives. It is easy to say, but to say and to do are two totally different things. Obedience is far more than talk.

Go back to Matthew chapter 6, because this shows us exactly how practical this really is. This is so absolutely amazing. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." In the context of Matthew 6:33, we can discover what it means to seek the God of the kingdom and the kingdom of God first. We can discover that from verses 19 through 34. We can take these one at a time and try to analyze them.

Practical Outworking: Treasures and Masters (Matthew 6:19-24)

Notice Matthew chapter 6, beginning with verse 19. Our Lord says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." God has commanded us not to lay up for ourselves treasures upon the earth, but to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

God is certainly not telling us here that we're not to have money, but He's telling us what the real treasure is supposed to be. You could be a multi-billionaire in electronic digits and it all disappear in an electronic moment. Or you could have billions of dollars of paper, and it turn out to be absolutely worthless.

I read years ago, probably closer to fifty years ago when I first started preaching, about a man who lived in an old house with a small but fairly large crack in the wooden wall. Every time he passed that crack, he put a twenty-dollar bill in it because it was his savings. Month after month, year after year, he put twenty-dollar bills through that crack. Finally, when he retired, he decided he needed to get the money. He took a crowbar and started prying the boards loose.

When he got down to where the money was, the rats had chewed it all up and made nests out of it. So he lost everything. That's an excellent illustration of what our Lord is saying about laying up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust and thieves get in and break through and steal. You can have a lot of things, but if

they're stolen from you, they're just gone. You can have equipment, but a $100,000 piece of equipment will rust up just like a $20 piece of equipment.

So, lay not up for yourself treasures on earth. That's not your primary focus. Your primary focus is to lay up for yourself treasures in heaven. How do you do that? The answer is found in verse 33: Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

There's nothing wrong with having money if the Lord gives you money, as long as you use it for His honor and His glory. The old Puritans used to have a saying that when a Christian gets rich, God either gains a fortune or loses a man. Our primary focus is not to be on laying up treasures here. I don't care if you're a multi-billionaire; one of these days, you're going to die, and you're not going to take any of it with you. It's going to all be gone.

Our Lord spoke concerning an individual who had a great deal of wealth in this life but did not prepare for the life to come. Our Lord called this rich farmer a fool.

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." And that's true. "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

So what is our Lord saying? You're an absolute fool if you just prepare for this life, but not for the next life. It's worthless. If we want to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, then we have to seek His kingdom first. If God gives us earthly treasures while we're seeking His kingdom first, that's wonderful. But our primary focus is not to be on the earthly treasure, but on the heavenly treasure.

Talk is cheap. This is where the rubber hits the road. How we react, how we act, how we respond to those tasks and those tests and those temptations that face us every day—it's what we really truly are. If you want to lay up treasures for yourself in heaven, fine. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Now look, if you would please, verse 22 and

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

So here is my question: How can you serve God with a single eye or with a single heart? The Bible says in James chapter 1 that a double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways, or a double-hearted man is the same thing. Jeremiah 17 tells us that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? But God is telling us here that we must serve Him with a single eye, and that our whole body shall be full of light if we do. If we do not, then our eye is going to be evil and our body is going to be full of darkness. You just cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon. You are either going to hate the one and love the other, or hold to the one and despise the other. It is just that simple.

It is like the story I heard long ago about the little boy walking to Sunday school. His mother had given him two quarters: one to give to Sunday school and one to buy an ice cream with on the way home from church. As he was juggling those quarters in his hand while walking across the bridge, he dropped one. It hit the bridge, rolled over, and went right into the river. The little boy said, "Well, Lord, there goes your quarter." That is the way most of us are. We are going to either hold on to one or let the other go.

How do we make sure that we are serving the Lord with a single heart or a single eye? The answer is very simple: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." How are you going to do that? You have got to do that every day, sometimes every hour, sometimes every minute. It is something that you should be doing

consistently and constantly. Remember, it is a present active imperative. You are never, ever to get tired of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 6:25-32 (KJV)

Practical Outworking: Freedom from Anxiety (Matthew 6:25-34)

> Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

"For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Look back at verse 25. Our Lord says, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought." How do we interpret that? "Take no thought for your life." With all the trouble that we have in this land, with all the illegal aliens and the rape and murder and pillage and plunder, "Take no thought"? What is our Lord saying to us?

"Take no thought" is also a present active imperative, which means it is a command. Since it is present active, it is something that we are to be doing constantly and consistently. The word "thought" refers to being anxious, troubled with cares, seeking to promote oneself, or being overly anxious concerning food and clothing. We would probably use the word "worry." Where our Lord says "take no thought," we would say, "Do not worry about life, about food, etc."

But let me ask you a question: not only is the average American, but how about the average Christian? Are we not basically worried about tomorrow? We are worried about money, health, family, friends, neighbors, promotions, jobs—everything.

Our Lord is not saying, "Do not think on these things." He is saying that we are not to be overly anxious and overly concerned about them, because obviously it is sinful to do so. In verse 25 He says, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

What is He telling us? Anxiousness, or worry, is ungratefulness. If you are worried about what you are going to eat, wear, or have tomorrow, you are not thankful for what you have today. You are not grateful. That is where most of us are, and where most Christians are. We are totally and completely ungrateful. It is impossible to be overly anxious and to please and honor God. Worry is pure, pure ungratefulness.

Now look in verse 26. It is not only ungratefulness; it is unreasonable. He says, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

You look at the little birds. Do you realize the richest man in the country, or in the entire world, would be broken in twenty-four hours if he had to feed all the birds for a week? God feeds them every day. We have bird feeders, and God uses people too. If you put a gallon of feed out there, they will eat a gallon. Put out five gallons, and they will eat five gallons. You put the feed out there, and two little birds will soon multiply into fifty.

What does our Lord say? They do not sow; they do not reap. I have never seen a sparrow driving a tractor or a crow spreading seed. I have seen crows taking seed up. A friend once planted about an acre or two of watermelons, expecting to make a lot of money. The seed was uncoated and unprotected, and the crows came along and ate every one of those seeds. He got only two or three vines out of the

whole acre or two acres, because the crows ate the seed. These birds do not sow nor reap.

And what did our Lord say? "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" Fear not, He said; you are worth more than many sparrows. Here is why worry is unreasonable: if God takes care of birds and brute beasts, is He not going to take care of His own children? Obviously He is.

So worry is ungrateful and unreasonable. Look in verses 27 and 28. In fact, we could go through verse 30, because here it is unavailing. He says, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" It is unavailing to worry. "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" How can you say, "I'm not as tall as I'd like to be, so I'm going to concentrate, and I'm going to add a half inch to my stature"? Concentrate all you want; it is not going to happen. Some of us have said, "We're overweight. We're going to lose five pounds. We're going to concentrate." You can concentrate all you want until you diet or do something else. You are not going to lose any weight. You cannot change anything.

And notice what He said: "And consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Alice and I, of course, come through Jasper. As you get outside of Jasper coming to Interstate 75, on both sides of the road there are black-eyed Susans, not only beside the road but in the fields—acre after acre of nothing but these black-eyed Susans. They are beautiful. He said, "Look at this. These things just come up, and today they're here, tomorrow they're gone." Then He said, "Even Solomon was not arrayed like one of these." And then He said, "Shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

So it does not do any good to worry. We can say, "What's going to happen in this country?" We know what's going to happen in this country, but I am not going to worry about it. I am going to do what God commands me to do, keep living for Him, and honor Him. He said, "Take no thought over these things. Take no thought over life and food and raiment and all these kind of things. No, take no thought." Let me answer this question from verse 25 through verse 32. I left out verse 31. "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

Worry and anxiety are uncivilized. When He says, “For after all these things do the Gentiles seek,” He means that pagans are seeking these things. Why should you be seeking them? You are not a pagan. “For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” The answer to all this anxious thought concerning life, health, food, and raiment is found in verse 33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Then verse 34 says, “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

God said, do not be worried about tomorrow. Tomorrow is not even here. What you should be concerned about is doing right today. You may not be here tomorrow, or tomorrow may not come, but you have to do right today. It is just that simple. How, then, do we live our lives without anxiousness, ungodly worry, turmoil, and trouble? By seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. How do we take no thought for tomorrow and remain unconcerned? By seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness today.

In Matthew chapter 6, Jesus Christ is not telling you how to become a Christian. He is telling you how to live as a Christian. Here is our problem. “Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about with much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that

she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

The Example of Mary and Martha

Stop and think about what He is saying. Martha was cooking dinner. Does dinner not need to be cooked? Of course. Does food not need to be eaten? Of course. There is a time to cook and a time to eat. Martha was concerned: "I've got this company here and I've got to have it on the table by a certain time."

Our Lord said, "No, that's not true. You don't have to have it on the table by a certain time, and I'm not going to make Mary get up and go help you. There's only one thing needful, and she's chosen that good part." What was our Lord doing? He was teaching. What was Mary doing? She was sitting at His feet, listening and learning, loving Him, serving Him, and worshiping Him. He said, "That's the most important. We can eat later. We can eat anytime."

Not one of us is going to starve if we eat five after twelve, or one o'clock, or two o'clock. Our Lord is saying that we get too cumbered and too anxious over things that really don't amount to a hill of beans. That which really amounts, that which really counts, is seeking first the God of the kingdom and His righteousness.

"Wait a minute, Brother Weaver. If I spend my time seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, how am I going to live? How am I going to pay my bills?" You have to understand that He is not telling us to quit our jobs or not to work. He is telling us that we are still to seek Him first. Whatever we do, we are to do for His honor and His glory and for the good of His people. It is just that simple.

There used to be a time in this country when things were made right and made to last. I am still driving an old, probably '64 or '65, Ford 5000 tractor that my father gave me years ago. It still runs wonderfully well. Look at the modern-day tractors and the el cheapos. Look at the cars. More than forty years ago, when our youngest daughter was a baby, we had an old Oldsmobile. Alice was

driving down the road with the children in the car when a man ran up behind her and hit her, driving thirty or forty miles an hour. It never even made a dent in the bumper of that Oldsmobile. His vehicle was damaged, but ours was not. Run thirty or forty miles an hour into a car today, and it will be torn to pieces. I hit three deer that ran out in front of me, and each time it took twenty-five hundred dollars to fix the car, though it remained drivable. All I am trying to say is this: when we work, whatever we do, we are to do it for God's honor and

Benefits and Applications

God's glory, to the best of our ability. If it means losing our job because we are doing that which pleases God, then we lose our job. It is just that simple. We are to seek Him first.

What are the benefits of seeking the God of the kingdom and His righteousness first? Matthew 6:33 says, "And all these things shall be added unto you." What things? All the things discussed from verses 19 through 34: life, health, food, raiment—whatever you need. What did He say? "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." It is like 1 Samuel 2:30, where God said, "Them that honour me I will honour, saith the Lord."

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 1:7-12 (KJV)

> "And they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." So if we honor God, God is going to honor us. Let me give you a good illustration of what I'm preaching in the life of Solomon. God came to Solomon and told him, "Ask what you will, and I will give it to you." Listen to the scripture:
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> "In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee? And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great? And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or

> honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast thou asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like."
>
> What did he say? "Ask what you will." "Well, Lord, what I want is Your wisdom and Your knowledge to serve You and to serve Your people." God said, "I'm going to give you that. Now I'm going to give you riches. I'm going to give you a long life. I'll give you your enemies. I'll give you everything."

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." John Calvin wrote: "He who assigns the first rank to the kingdom of God will not carry beyond moderation his anxiety about food. Nothing is better adapted to restrain the wantonness of the flesh from breaking out in the course of the present life than meditation on the life of the heavens. The word 'righteousness' may be either understood as applying to God or to the kingdom, for we know that the kingdom of God consists in righteousness (Romans 14:17), that is, in the newness of spiritual life. All other things shall be added. This means that those things which relate to this present life are but favorable appendages, and ought to be reckoned greatly inferior to the kingdom of God."

Even our physical life, health, food, raiment, and money are favorable appendages, given by God to assist us in serving and worshiping Him.

One author stated it succinctly: "Ask great things, little things shall be added unto you. Ask heavenly things, and earthly things shall be added unto you." Certainly that is what Solomon did. Our Lord knows our needs, and as we honor Him, He will honor us.

First Timothy 6:6 is applicable: "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Can we be content with what God has given us? If we can be godly and contented, He says that is great gain. First Timothy 4:8 says, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and

of that which is to come." We are seeking first the God of the kingdom and His righteousness; it is profitable in this life and that which is to come.

It does not profit us to gain the whole world and lose our souls, to live for this life and neglect the life to come, or to live for ourselves and lose our lives. In seeking our Lord, His kingdom, and His righteousness first, we not only save our lives, but lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

When our Lord said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," He meant that in every situation or circumstance, disturbing or encouraging, we should think first about the Lord: what He would have us do, how He would have us resolve the problem, rejoice, glorify Him, or serve Him. We should seek His righteousness in all things daily and first, because only our Lord's kingdom will last. The Bible says, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." We are in the kingdom, but must seek it first and foremost. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You this day. We thank You for Your word, grace, mercy, goodness, and kindness. Help us live for Thee, honor Thee, and glorify Thee; may Your will be done in our lives. May we seek Thee and Thy righteousness. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 14

Tyranny And Self Defense

August 23, 2015

Introduction: The Nature of Tyranny

Romans 13 begins: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.”

When we speak of tyranny and self-defense, we must understand that tyranny is not always heavy-handed. Tyranny can oftentimes, and most likely is, incremental in nature, much like that proverbial frog in the water. You turn the water up and heat it slowly, and the frog sits there until he cooks to death. You put him in hot water, and

he will immediately jump out. We are finding ourselves today in the same predicament that our Founding Fathers found themselves in, facing King George III of England.

The Declaration of Independence says: “Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.”

We are basically finding ourselves in this same predicament because we are willing to suffer while it is bearable. But we have to ask ourselves: Have we suffered? The answer is yes. Have we really suffered enough? We must understand that the interests of governments are not necessarily the interest of the people, because governments desire more and more control, while the people oftentimes desire more and more liberty, freedom, and certainly privacy.

Constitutional attorney John Whitehead of the Rutherford Institute makes an appropriate and applicable statement in his book, *A Government of Wolves*. He says:

The Current State of Tyranny in America

“For those of us who have managed to survive 2014 with our lives intact and our freedoms hanging by a thread, it has been a year of crackdowns, clampdowns, shutdowns, showdowns, shootdowns, standdowns, knockdowns, putdowns, breakdowns, lockdowns, takedowns, slowdowns, meltdowns, and never-ending letdowns. We've been held up, stripped down, faked out, photographed, frisked, fracked, hacked, tracked, cracked, intercepted, accessed, spied on, zapped, mapped, searched, shot at, and tasered, tortured, tackled, trussed up, tricked, lied to, labeled, libeled, leered at, shoved aside, saddled with debt not of our own making, sold a bill of goods

about national security, tuned out by those representing us, tossed aside, and taken to the cleaners."

"As I point out in my book, *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*, we've had our freedoms turned inside out, our democratic structure flipped upside down, and our house of cards left in shambles. We've had our children burned by flashbang grenades, our dogs shot, and our old folks hospitalized after accidental encounters with marauding SWAT teams. We've been told that as citizens, we have no rights within 100 miles of our own border, now considered Constitution-free zones. We've had our faces filed in government databases, our biometrics cross-checked against criminal data banks, and our consumerist tendencies catalogued for future marketing overtures."

"Cleverly, it worked for the dark side. The corporate media isn't going into great detail about the recent discovery that the Chicago Police Department has for years been operating a secret, off-site, extrajudicial, unconstitutional detention and interrogation center in a nondescript warehouse on the west side of the Windy City. Americans, so the talking heads would have us believe, have more important things to busy ourselves with. The protest against this outrage is growing, however, because at Homan Square, as it's known, the local police disappear American citizens before charging them with any crime."

They hide them there for hours or days without the knowledge of their lawyers, family, or friends, interrogating, threatening, abusing, and at times coming up with cleverly inhumane ways to torture them. Think Gitmo. Think Abu Ghraib. Think Pol Pot. Think Mao. And when you read something like that, what can you say except, he has put his thumb exactly on where we are today?

C.S. Lewis pointed this out: "Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep; his cupidity may at some point be satiated. But those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own consciences."

Certainly that is true. Alexander Hamilton gave this warning: “Liberty is a gift of the beneficent Creator to the whole human race. Civil liberty cannot be wrested from any people without the most manifest violation of justice.” So we look around and see tyranny emerging on every hand and despotism arising. We have to ask ourselves: Can we defend ourselves? Are there biblical answers? If there are biblical answers, what are those answers, and how do we defend ourselves biblically from such?

Biblical Philosophy of Freedom

The biblical philosophy of freedom is far more than simply demanding that government get out of our lives. We have to get the tyranny out of our own lives before we can get the government out of our lives. Usually, when people do things with which we disagree or that we do not like, these words come right out of our mouths: “Well, there ought to be a law against that,” or “They should stop that.” What we fail to realize is that whenever we begin to tyrannize and regulate other people, we set a precedent for our own tyrannization and regulation.

Biblical Answers to Tyranny: Deception

We are not talking about sin, wickedness, and ungodliness, but about the right to work, the right to pursue your own happiness, the right to be left alone, and the right to privacy. Obviously, we have to get tyranny out of our hearts. Arthur W. Pink said, and I certainly agree with him, “One of the main reasons we don't like the Pope is because we want to be the Pope ourselves.” In other words, we want to be the ones telling everybody exactly what to do, and that is certainly true.

There are biblical answers to tyranny. I cannot cover them all, and I will not be able to develop even three answers in such a way as to satisfy everyone. Therefore, I encourage you to do your own research and studying and try to discover these answers in depth on your own. What is the first way, biblically speaking, to deal with tyranny? The first way is deception.

First Biblical Response: Deception

When I say the word “deception,” I can hear the gasps from pietistic believers everywhere: “No Christian should ever deceive!” My response is, “Really? Have you read your Bible lately?” There is a difference between a wicked, vile, ungodly deception, which Scripture condemns, and a deception intended for the benefit of yourself and others, whereby you are trying to keep others from violating God’s law and doing that which is wicked and evil itself. There is a deceit intended to save life and obey God’s law.

We must remember that all warfare involves deceit. In fact, all warfare is deception. I have a book in my library, and I think its title is *Camouflage in World War II*. I read it many years ago. A lot of our air bases, tanks, and other equipment photographed by the enemy from the air were nothing more than cardboard cutouts and plywood. That is deception: trying to make them think we have all this equipment when in reality we had none of it, or very little of it. Camouflage is deception. That is why, when you go hunting, you put on camouflage clothing. You do not want the animals to see you. That is deception.

You have to understand that when you smile at someone while you are really infuriated with them, you are deceiving them. What you are thinking is, “I’d like to rip your heart out,” while you smile and pretend that everything is all right. Telling your wife that she looks lovely in a lovely dress is deception, plain and simple. Obviously, you have to understand this.

Do you think tyrannical and despotic governments will be truthful, honest, and upright with you? They will not say, “We’re going to enslave you. We’re going to make you our own little slaves.” Instead, they will deceive you and develop their control over you incrementally, little by little, deliberately and purposefully. Once they have you in their tentacles, they will tell you that this is for your own good and protection. They will not be honest; they are the deceivers.

Did you know the Bible says in Job 12:16, “The deceived and the deceiver are His”? The deceived and the deceiver are His. Therefore, we have to ask: Can a Christian use deceit? Has deceit ever been

practiced in the Bible by believers? More importantly, can God—and has God ever—used deception? I am going to try to answer those questions.

To save time, I will tell you where certain things are in Scripture and quote some of them; there is not time to cover every answer in detail. Consider Abraham, known as the father of all those who believe, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. In Genesis 12:12–20, Abram, the friend of God, deceived Pharaoh by telling him that Sarah was his sister. Truthfully, she was his half-sister, but she was more than a half-sister: she was his wife. In Genesis 20:1–12, he deceived Abimelech by telling him that Sarah was his sister. In Genesis 26:1–9, Isaac followed in his father's footsteps, telling Abimelech that Rebekah was his sister. Of course, Abimelech found out that she was not his sister.

Now you would have to ask this question: Why would these men deceive these rulers? If you read each of these passages in its context, you would find that both Abraham and Isaac reasoned like this. They said, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place." They said, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place." What do they mean by that?

Well, Pharaoh is a law unto himself. He does what he wants to do. Abimelech was a law unto himself. He was a tyrant. Here were their little family and Pharaoh and Abimelech with large armies. What in the world can they do? How can they resist them? They are using deception to save their lives. Moreover, you have to understand that in those days, no one could take a woman for a wife unless he went to the family.

Since Abraham and Isaac would have been the brother who was there, they would have had to have contracted with the brother. So it was a way then of not only saving their wives but saving their own lives. Surely they reasoned, "The fear of God is not in this place," and so they were deceiving the tyrant. You'll remember in Exodus chapter 1, verses 15–21, there were two midwives by the name of Shiphrah and Puah. They had been given a direct order by Pharaoh: when you find a male child, you kill him. But they spared the male children. They saved the male children alive. They did not murder

according to Pharaoh's command. So when Pharaoh found out that they were sparing these male children, he asked them why.

Here is what they answered in verse 19: “And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.”

Stop and think about that. They said the Hebrew women were not like the Egyptian women. Why? The Hebrew women had their babies by the time the midwives arrived. Remember that there were approximately a million Hebrew women in Egypt at that time. Do you mean to tell me that not one of them ever needed help delivering a child, and that all of them delivered their children before the midwives ever got there?

What were they doing? They were deceiving Pharaoh. They were pretending that all these women could deliver their children by themselves, never needing any help. The Bible says that God blessed the midwives and built houses for them. Did they use deceit? Of course they did. They deceived their tyrant.

There is another plain illustration in Joshua chapter 2. The spies had gone into Jericho and entered Rahab’s house. She took those spies and hid them on the roof of her house. She not only deceived her king; she deceived the king’s soldiers. Joshua 2:4–6 says: “And the woman”—that is Rahab—“took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: and it came to pass about the time of the shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not.”

“Pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.” What did she tell them? “They went that-a-way. I saw them; that’s the way they went. If you hurry, you can catch them.” Obviously, she was deceiving them. They had not gone anywhere; she had hidden them.

She was using deception to fight tyranny and save the lives of these individuals. The Lord not only saved and honored her; He put her in the genealogy of Christ. But that was deceit. Read through the

Bible and you will find that many biblical heroes used deceit. Look at Ehud, the left-handed man. He put the dagger on his right side, because most men were right-handed.

And he pretended that he had no weapon. When he got to Eglon the Moabite, the king, he took that dagger out and killed the tyrant.

Look at Gideon. Gideon pretended that he had a vast army when he had only 300 men. They were blowing trumpets and breaking pitchers, making everybody think, "Man, here are thousands." No, there were only 300.

And look at Samson. Samson had taken foxes, set their tails on fire, burned down all the standing corn of the Philistines, killed some of them, and then went up to the mount. The Philistines invaded the land and surrounded everything. The Judahites asked, "Why in the world did you come up against us?" They answered, "To get Samson." So Samson's own family went up to the mount and said, "Look what you've done." Samson asked, "Are you going to kill me?" They said, "No, but we're going to deliver you to the Philistines." They were willing to deliver their deliverer to the Philistines. Samson said, "It'll be all right."

He asked them to promise that they would not fall upon him. They agreed, tied him with ropes, and he walked down behind them as meek and helpless as he could be—pretending. When the Philistines shouted against him, the Bible says he broke those ropes as though they were nothing. Then he picked up the jawbone of an ass and slew a thousand Philistines. That's deceit. He deceived them into thinking he was weak when in reality he was strong.

So the question is this: Does God ever use deceit, and has God used deceit? You have to remember the *lex talionis* of Scripture, Latin for the law of retribution. That is where God makes the punishment fit the crime.

In Ezekiel 14:9, God says, "And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel." God said that if a prophet is deceived, He has deceived him for the purpose of destroying him. That is exactly what God said He would do to the false prophets.

Now watch this in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, beginning with verse 10: “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.” Why are they perishing? “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

Verse 11 says, “And for this cause”—because they received not the love of the truth—“for this cause God shall send them strong delusion,” or strong deceit, “that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” The Bible says that God shall send them a strong delusion. What is a delusion? It is a deceit.

You are delusional if you think you can jump off the Empire State Building and live. You are deceived, because when you hit the concrete below, you will be dead. It is just that simple. When individuals think they can jump off, fly, or land safely, they discover that they cannot. They are simply deceived.

Does God use deceit? Obviously He does. He sends people a strong delusion who refuse the truth. If you refuse the truth, the only thing open and left for you is delusion. If you are not going to receive the truth, you are going to be deceived. It is only the truth that will set us free.

Look in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 16. To understand this passage, you have to understand what happened in chapter 15. God sent King Saul on a mission to kill all the Amalekites: man, woman, ox, suckling, boy, girl, and ass. But Saul spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, as well as the best of the oxen and sheep. Then he played the hypocrite, saying to Samuel, "Blessed be thou of the LORD, I have performed all the commandment of God."

About that time, something went "baa" and "moo." Samuel said, "If you have obeyed God, what meaneth the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen in mine ear? If you had obeyed God, everything would be dead." Samuel told Saul, "God hath rejected thee, because you have rejected the word of God." When Samuel turned to walk away, Saul caught his garment and it ripped. Samuel said, "God hath rent the kingdom from you, and hath given it to another."

In chapter 16, God orders Samuel to go to Bethlehem and anoint David as His king: "And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons."

Samuel asked, "How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me." The LORD answered, "Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee." Notice the question: God tells Samuel to anoint David, and Samuel says, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he's going to kill me. He's rejected You. He's a tyrant."

"Your word, Your law is not binding on him in this sense of the word. He's already rejected Your word. He'll kill me." God says, "Just say that you're going to do a sacrifice." Now here's my question: Did Samuel make a sacrifice when he got there? Yes, he did. Was that the purpose why God sent him? No. He sent him to anoint David to be king. The giving of the sacrifice, or the making of the sacrifice, was just the cover story. So what is this?

This is using deceit to deceive a tyrant. It's using deceit to get around someone who could care less about God's law and is willing to violate God's law. Now, let me show you another principle: sometimes when God deceives someone, He tells them that they're being deceived, and they still won't believe Him.

In 1 Kings 22, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, who is basically a godly man, has gone to join affinity with Ahab, a wicked, reprobate king of Israel. Ahab asks Jehoshaphat to go to war with him. Jehoshaphat stupidly says, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people." Then he asks, "Are there not any prophets here of the LORD that we may inquire of them?"

Ahab says, "I got plenty of prophets." So he brings out all the prophets of Baal, and they're all telling Ahab, "Go up and prosper, go up and prosper." Jehoshaphat asks, "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah?" Ahab says, "There's one. But I hate him. He never prophesies anything good concerning me." Jehoshaphat says, "Let

not the king say so, but bring him." Ahab orders them to fetch Micaiah the son of Imlah.

Now here's my question: How did Ahab know where the prophet of God was? The answer is, because Ahab had him in prison. Afterward, Ahab said to the man who brought Micaiah out, "Take this man back to the governor of the prison, and feed him with the bread of affliction and the water of affliction, until I return in peace." I would encourage you to read this passage when you get home today.

He knew exactly where Micaiah was; he had him in prison. When the man went to get Micaiah, he said, “Look, all the prophets have prophesied well concerning Ahab, so let your word be as theirs.” Micaiah replied, “As the LORD liveth, I can only say what He allows me to say.”

When Micaiah stood before Ahab, he said sarcastically, “Go up and prosper, go up and prosper.” Ahab knew he was being sarcastic and said, “How many times must I adjure you to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?” Micaiah answered, “You want the truth? I’ll give it to you.”

In 1 Kings 22:19 he said, “Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.”

“And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.”

Here Micaiah told Ahab that God had sent a lying spirit into the mouths of all his prophets, that they were deceiving him, and that he would die at Ramoth-gilead. Ahab then commanded, “Take this man back and put him in prison, and feed him with the bread of affliction

and water of affliction until I return in peace." Micaiah replied, "If you return in peace at all, the LORD hath not spoken by me."

God used deceit. He sent a lying spirit into the mouth of His prophets. I want you to understand something about deceit. When I tell you there is a time to use it, you must understand this principle: You must always give the truth to those to whom you owe the truth. But you do not owe the truth to someone who is going to abuse and misuse it.

If I am walking down the street and a man jumps out of the alley, puts a knife to my chest, and says, "Give me all your money or I am going to kill you," I may reach into my pocket, pull out three Federal Reserve notes, and hand them to him. If he looks at those measly three bucks and says, "Is this all you got?" I am not going to stand there and say, "I cannot tell a lie. I have six hundred bucks hidden in my left shoe." What if I told him the truth? I would be aiding and abetting his theft and robbery, his violation of the law of God. I do not owe that man the truth because he is going to misuse and abuse it. It is an illustration, but it is to the point: here is a man who is your enemy.

You have tried to reconcile with him and to do what is right, but he refuses to make things right. Finally, you see him on the street one last time and say, "Look, I know there have been hard feelings and bitterness between us, but I really want us to work things out. I want us to be friends again." He says, "Get out of my face. If I ever see you again, I am going to kill you."

He storms off. That night, while you are having supper, you hear tires squealing and look out the window. The man jumps out of his truck and runs toward your door with a double-barrel shotgun. You have no weapon in the house, so you dive under the bed and hide. He knocks on the door with the butt of the gun and says, "Let me in or I am going to blow this door down." Your wife, shaking, goes to the door and opens it. As she does, he comes in with that shotgun.

He says, "Where's that blankety-blank rascal? I'm gonna blow his head off." Now, here's my question: At that point, do you want your wife to say, A, "I cannot tell a lie, he's hiding under the bed," or B, "You're 30 minutes too late, he just took a plane to Timbuktu"? Do

you realize that if your wife told the truth at that point, she would be an accessory to murder?

She would be complicit in helping that man violate the law of God. So the principle is, you must always tell the truth to those to whom you owe the truth. But when someone is going to abuse and misuse the truth, you do not owe him the truth. Certainly, it would be right to deceive that individual who is going to murder and violate God's law. Deception, then, is a means of dealing with tyranny.

There's a second one, and that is what I'm going to call avoidance or flight. If it is possible, you should always try to avoid or pass by tyranny. We are told in regard to sin—and tyranny is sin, by the way—in Proverbs 4:15, "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

Second Biblical Response: Avoidance or Flight

If we can stay off the train track where the locomotive of tyranny is running down the track at full speed, we need to stay off the track. It's just that simple. If we can avoid it, go around it, or bypass it, we certainly need to do that.

When I'm talking about flight, do not think that flight makes an individual a coward. It's not. There are multitudes in the Bible who have fled and have done so intelligently, bravely, and, I might also add, biblically. Moses fled from Pharaoh—forty years in the Midian desert. The Apostle Paul himself fled in 2 Corinthians 11:32. Because the governor and the king was seeking his life, they let Paul down in a basket over the wall so he could escape. What was he doing? He was fleeing. He was getting out of harm's way.

May I remind you also that our Lord Himself fled at the first instance at the commandment of God the Father, because God told Mary and Joseph, "Take the child and flee into Egypt, because Herod is going to seek his life." Of course, when our Lord came back and began His ministry, in John 7:1 the Bible says, "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him."

What is He doing? He is staying out of their way, avoiding them, and passing them by. That is a form of flight. There are plenty of

people who fled in the Bible. All you have to do is read Hebrews chapter 11, and you will find a multitude there.

When we are talking about avoidance or flight, we must understand that there are several problems with them. First, when we think of tyranny, we tend to think of our federal government or some government in third-world countries. We never stop to think that tyranny can be local or individualized. Brandon Smith writes, "Tyranny is not a wholly definable condition. There are many forms of tyranny and many levels of control that exist in any society at any given time. In fact, the most despicable forms of tyranny are often the most subtle. The kinds of tyranny in which the oppressed are deluded into thinking that because they have choices, that necessarily makes them free. Tyranny at its very core is not always the removal of choice, but the filtering of choice, the erasure of options, leaving only choices most beneficial to the system and its controller."

If you have a choice to vote for Socialist A or Socialist B, what difference does it make? You are still voting for socialism. He also says, "There are many forms of tyranny and many levels of control that exist in any one society at any given time."

The state government can become tyrannical. The county government can become tyrannical. The city government can become tyrannical. Look at what has been happening in Arizona, that little town where there has been an uproar for years over the city or county council there. It is crazy. We also fail to realize that any individual who has power can become a tyrant. Look at what is happening to our law enforcement agencies. I have friends in law enforcement, including godly men whom I believe are constitutionalists and patriots. I understand that. But overall, as a whole, look at what is happening in our law enforcement agencies. Look at the citizens who have been shot and killed by law enforcement, many of them shot in the back.

How can a law enforcement officer really and truly say that he is in fear for his life when the man is running away from him? The website www.killedbypolice.net reports how many people have literally been killed by the police. According to one such article, the tally for 2014—that is, the number of people killed by police in this

country—was 1,100 people killed by those sworn to protect. That is an average of three people a day.

Do not mistake this as saying that those who were killed were innocent. However, when we look at violent crime in this country, we can see that it is at an all-time low. While violence among citizens has dropped, violence against citizens carried out by police has been rising sharply. When we look at citizens killed by police over the last two years, deaths have increased by 44 percent in this short time: 763 people were killed by police in 2013 and 1,100 in 2014.

As a comparison, the total number of U.S. troops killed in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2014 was 58. Fifty-eight. In a war zone, 1,100 here in this country. Fewer soldiers were killed in war than citizens back home in the land of the free in 2014, by a large margin. So why is that? Is this some natural tendency of police in free societies to kill their citizens more in an effort to maintain this freedom? Hardly. And hardly is the United States a free country.

According to the 2014 Legatum Prosperity Index, released in November, in the measure of personal freedom the United States had fallen from ninth place in 2010 to twenty-first place worldwide, behind Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Uruguay, and Costa Rica. Other ranking systems showed the United States as low as number 46. Consider our immediate neighbors to the north, Canada. The total number of citizens killed by law enforcement officers in 2014 was 14, 78 times fewer than in the United States. In the United Kingdom, one person was killed by police in 2014 and zero in 2013. English police reportedly fired guns a total of three times in all of 2013, with zero reported fatalities. From 2010 through 2014, there were four fatal police shootings in England, which has a population of about 52 million. By contrast, Albuquerque, New Mexico, with a population one percent the size of England's, had 26 fatal police shootings in the same period.

China, whose population is 4.5 times the size of the United States, recorded 12 killings by law enforcement officers in 2014. From 2013 to 2014, German police killed absolutely no one. So you stop and think: 1,100 citizens killed last year; in Germany, not one citizen was killed; in China, 12. What in the world is happening in this country?

Gerald Celente said it like this: "It's cops gone wild because the nation has gone wild. The nation can only think of war and slaughter. The militarization of America, when you bring it all together, it's a collapsing third world country. That's the way police behave in third world nations."

Arthur Reeser, a former police officer and member of the military, said: "If we're training cops as soldiers, giving them equipment like soldiers, dressing them up as soldiers, when are they going to pick up the mentality of soldiers? If you look at the police department, their creed is to protect and serve. A soldier's mission is to engage his enemy in close combat and kill him. Do we want police officers to have that mentality? Of course not."

While I disagree with Ayn Rand's theology, here is a quote I think is great: "The only proper functions of a government are, number one, the police to protect you from criminals; number two, the army to protect you from foreign invaders. But a government that initiates the employment of force against men who had forced no one, reverses its only moral purpose and switches from the role of protector to the role of man's deadliest enemy, from the role of policeman to the role of criminal, vested with the right of wielding violence against the victims, deprived of the right of self-defense."

Now, let me explain what I'm saying. I am pulled over by an arrogant cop who is not only unbiblical but unconstitutional, violating statutory law and everything else. He pulls his pistol and kills me. The only thing he has to say is, "I was in fear for my life." On the other hand, if he starts to pull his pistol and kill me, and I pull out a pistol and kill him before he kills me, and I say, "I was in fear for my life," where am I headed? Not only to jail, but probably to the electric chair, unless there is some video recording or witness somewhere that says, "Yes, the cop did it." In other words, when you turn everything upside down, those who should protect

You now become those who punish you, and they do so freely and without any problem, while you have no right to defend yourself against them. Certainly, one of the problems we have with avoidance and flight is that we do not understand that sometimes tyranny is everywhere. It is not just in the big governments; it can be in local governments as well.

The second problem with flight and avoidance is that sometimes it does not always work. You have to remember this: not everybody can flee. And if you could flee, where would you go? How can you take your family? How can you move a whole church, a whole community, a whole society, or an entire state? Many times, flight can be a failure at any point, even when you consider it successful.

Consider Jeremiah 26. A man by the name of Uriah was a prophet of God, preaching and teaching exactly the same thing that Jeremiah was preaching and teaching. Jehoiakim the king was a tyrant, and he did not like what Uriah was preaching. Jeremiah 26:20–23 says: "And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city"—Jerusalem—"and against this land"—Judah—"according to all the words of Jeremiah."

"And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt; and Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, namely, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him into Egypt. And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people."

Uriah made it out of Jehoiakim's jurisdiction. His flight was successful, initially, until Jehoiakim sent his men down into Egypt, kidnapped Uriah, and brought him back. Then Jehoiakim murdered him. Flight is not always possible, and sometimes it is not always successful.

Third Biblical Response: Physical Resistance and Self-Defense

That brings us to the third response: physical resistance, or self-defense. President John F. Kennedy said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." You have to understand that self-defense is a God-given right. It is the right of an individual, a family, a church, a society, a state, and a nation.

If you deny it in any one of those, then you deny it in all the rest. If I do not have the right to defend my life, what then does a family have the right to defend their lives, or a church, or a society, or even a nation? If an invading army comes in, and we have no right to defend ourselves, then obviously they are going to kill us and take everything. You cannot deny self-defense in one area without denying it in every area.

You have to remember Exodus 20:13: God says, "Thou shalt not kill," or "Thou shalt not murder," or "Thou shalt not take life except on God's terms." When you read through the Bible, you will find that there are 21 lawful reasons for taking life. Life can be taken lawfully, on God's terms, under 21 particular reasons listed there. Granted, many of these are given to the state as the executioner and minister of justice, but still that is the lawful taking of life. This is all through the Bible.

So many people have never thought about self-defense or studied what the Bible teaches about it. When you are in it up to your neck, it is too late to sit down and determine, "What can I do under God, and what can I do and obey the Scripture?" It is too late when you must do something just to save your life.

We are in the mess that we are in because of our ignorance. Ben Franklin said, "A nation of well-informed men who have been taught to know and to prize the rights which God has given them cannot be enslaved. It is in the region of ignorance that tyranny begins." We are ignorant of our Bibles, history, the Constitution of the United States, our state constitution, our laws—ignorant of everything. That is the realm in which tyranny actually begins.

If you are going to defend yourself, you must have knowledge, weapons, and training in the use of those weapons. If you are not trained, your weapon is basically useless. Aristotle, a pagan philosopher, said, "It is also in the interest of a tyrant to keep his people poor, so that they may not be able to afford the cost of protecting themselves by arms, and be so occupied with their daily tasks that they have no time for rebellion."

Stop and think about this. Do you realize the average American today is so poor he could not put down six or seven hundred dollars

for a brand new rifle? Most Americans are working their fingers to the bone from daylight to dark, sometimes in two or three jobs, just to keep their heads above water. They cannot think about resisting tyranny; they are just trying to live.

Of course, when you read the Bible, you find out a tyrant also tries to forbid the use of weapons. That is why there is such a stress today on taking away our weapons, because how can you defend yourself? How can you fight tyranny if you have nothing to fight tyranny with?

When it comes to physical resistance, we must use wisdom and discretion. It is possible to win a battle and lose the war. I would much rather lose a few battles and win the war. You have to know why you are fighting, who you are fighting, what you are fighting, and what the war is really all about.

I want to encourage you, when you get home, to look this up and read all of it. This was written on July the 6th, 1775, by our founding fathers. The title is, "The Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms." Our forefathers sat down and wrote this declaration. They said, "Here is why we are going to fight. Here is why we are going to resist." Listen to the concluding paragraphs:

"Our cause is just. Our union is perfect. Our internal resources are great, and if necessary, foreign assistance is undoubtedly attainable. We gratefully acknowledge, as signal instances of the divine favor toward us, that His providence would not permit us to be called into this severe controversy until we were grown up to our present strength, had been previously exercised in warlike operation, and possessed the means of defending ourselves. With hearts fortified with these animating reflections, we most solemnly, before God and the world, declare that, exerting the utmost energy of those powers which our beneficent Creator hath graciously bestowed upon us, the arms which we have been compelled by our enemies to assume, we will, in defiance of every hazard, with unabating firmness and perseverance, employ for the preservation of our liberties; being of one mind, resolved to die as free men rather than to live as slaves."

Initially, the colonies did not want to separate from England. That is what this paragraph is about: "Lest this declaration should disquiet the minds of our friends and fellow subjects in any part of

the empire, we assure them that we mean not to dissolve that union which has so long and so happily subsisted between us, and which we sincerely wish to see restored."

"Necessity has not yet driven us into that desperate measure, nor induced us to excite any other nation to war against them." In other words, we are not looking for partners right now. "We have not raised armies with ambitious designs of separating from Great Britain and establishing independent states. We fight not for glory or conquest. We exhibit to mankind the remarkable spectacle of a people attacked by unprovoked enemies, without any imputation or even suspicion of offense that is on our part. They boast of their privileges and civilization, and yet offer no milder conditions than either servitude or death in our native land."

"In defense of the freedom that is our birthright, and which we ever enjoyed to the late violation of it, for the protection of our property, acquired solely by the honest industry of our forefathers and ourselves, against all violence actually offered, we have taken up arms. We shall lay them down when hostility shall cease on the part of the aggressors, and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed, and not before." They said, "We are forced to take up our arms." They did not want to do it, but they had taken them up and would not lay them down until the war was over and there was no opportunity for their enemies to rise up against them again. It would be to the end, to the death.

What many people do not understand is that when the government becomes tyrannical, it loses its authority. Not only does it lose its authority, but it is actually making war on its own people. John Locke wrote several treatises on government. In his second treatise, written in December of 1690, he said: "Whenever the legislators endeavor to take away and destroy the property of the people, or to reduce them to slavery under arbitrary power, they"—those legislators, that Congress—"put themselves in a state of war with the people, who

Are thereupon absolved from any further obedience, and are left to the common refuge which God hath provided for all men against force and violence. What did he say? When your Congress, when your government, tries to deprive you of your property and your

rights, and seeks to enslave you, it has entered into a war against you. It absolves you from all obedience to them. Furthermore, you are now left with the only refuge which God has provided, and that is self-defense.

Let me make this clear: tyranny is never a God-ordained form of government. So when you look at Romans 13, and when he says, "Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God," he is not talking about a tyrannical government. If you study Romans 13, you will find the kind of government that God has ordained: one where government is His deacon, His servant, His public worship, and one that enforces His law.

What you are seeing today is a rise of arbitrary power. Malcolm Gladwell put it like this: "The excessive use of force creates legitimacy problems. And force without legitimacy leads to defiance, not submission."

All you men have to do is think back to when you were boys. When that bully came up to you, put his hand on your chest, and pushed you back, did you immediately get down on your knees and say, "Sir, what can I do for you? How can I please you? How can I help you today?" No. You put your hand on him and pushed him back harder. If he pushed you back, then you went to bloodying his nose and beating him any way you could. Why? Because excessive force creates legitimacy problems. When he has no authority and does it without legitimacy, it creates defiance, not submission.

The more illegitimate force is used in this country, the more defiant people are going to become. It will not create submission; it will create revolution. One last passage: Psalm 94. I have explained this passage before, but it fits exactly with what I am saying. Look at verses 20 and 21. Here is the question.

It is a throne, which speaks of government, power, and authority. Notice that it is a wicked throne of iniquity, a wicked civil government. Here is the question: “Shall this wicked civil government have fellowship with thee?” What does this wicked civil government do? It “frameth mischief by a law.” Mischief is another word for sin in the Bible. Literally, “Shall a wicked civil government have fellowship with thee, which makes sin legal?”

So it is legal in this country to murder babies as long as you do it before they are born. Evidently it is legal to sell murdered baby parts, for that is exactly what Planned Parenthood is doing. It is legal in this country to be a thief if you are in governmental service or have power.

"Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law," or makes sin legal? The answer is no. Verse 21 tells what that wicked civil government does: "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood." God never ordained tyranny as a legitimate form of government. Such wicked, tyrannical governments that destroy righteousness, murder their own citizens, and enslave people—that is not the ordinance of God. Since it is not the ordinance of God, it may be lawfully and biblically resisted.

One must defend himself, his family, his church, his community, his society, his state, and even his nation. Does the Bible have answers? Yes, it does. There are more than these, and they can be examined in greater detail and depth, but it is important to know that the Bible has answers to every one of our problems, so that we will know how to apply them when the time comes.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth, and that there are answers in the Word of God. Help us, Lord, understand them, learn them, apply them, keep them in our hearts, and not forget them. Give us grace, we pray.

We pray for our people in this country and for our nation. As the psalmist prayed, may the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, and that Thou would establish the just. May Your Word have free course and speak to our hearts. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

The Religion Of Robert E. Lee

January 22, 2016

Introduction and Scripture Reading

The title of the message is “The Religion of Robert E. Lee.” James 1:26–27 says: “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. 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.” Mark that passage, because we will return to it.

I was asked to deal with the title, “The Religion of Robert E. Lee.” In our day, the word religion carries diverse meanings. When we talk about religion today, we may be referring to the Hindu religion, the Buddhist religion, the Muslim religion, or Christianity. However, the word religion in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries referred primarily to Christianity.

Historical Meaning of 'Religion'

While there were various denominations in the country, they were all Christian as well. If you look at all the colonial charters and colonial constitutions, you will find that each one demanded Christian rulers. In fact, you could not be a ruler unless you professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and believed in the inspiration of both the Old and the New Testament.

Here are a couple of illustrations of how the word religion was used in those days. George Washington was talking to the Delaware Chiefs and telling them that they would be a happier and more prosperous people if they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, “You do well to wish to learn our arts and our way of life and above all the religion of Jesus Christ. These will make you a greater and happier people than you are.” Thus, he spoke of the religion of Jesus Christ.

Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story said this in 1851: “Probably at the time of the adoption of the Constitution and of the First Amendment to it, the general, if not the universal sentiment in America was that Christianity ought to be encouraged by the state, so far as it was not incompatible with the private rights of conscience and the freedom of religious worship. Any attempt to level all religions and to make it a matter of state policy, to hold all in utter indifference, would have created universal disapprobation, if not universal indignation.” He was speaking of religion, and he was speaking of Christianity in 1851.

This was understood in the founding of our country as well. James 1:26–27 delineates the difference between a vain religion and what we would call a pure religion. A vain religion leaves parts of life unaffected, subdued, uninfluenced, and unyielding to the Word of God. A pure religion, on the other hand, brings life totally into submission to God.

For instance, verse 26 says, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.” Here is a man who may have a lot of good things going for him, but the one thing he does not have is a

bridle for his tongue. He does not have that tongue brought into conformity to the Word of God.

The Tongue and Vain Religion

James emphasizes this truth about the tongue in chapter 3: “Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. So is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.

“For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

Interestingly, the Apostle says in verse 3, “Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body.” If you look again at verse 26 of chapter 1, he says, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue,” the bit and the bridle go together. The bit is in the horse's mouth, and the bridle, of course, fits around the horse's head. With that bit and bridle, you control that horse. You turn him whithersoever you want him to go. And so the Apostle James is telling us here that a man who may have a lot of things going for him, if he has never ever learned to bridle his tongue, then his religion is in vain.

When he uses the word bridle in verse 26, it literally means the word bridle. It is the same thing that a horse and mule is restrained with.

Hold James 1, but go back in your Bibles to Psalm 34 to begin with. I want to show you about four verses. We will look at three in the book of Psalms, and then one in the book of Proverbs. I want you to see how this is emphasized in Scripture. Notice Psalm 34 and verse 13. Look what God commands: "Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile." It is usually our tongues that get us into trouble.

Look at Psalm 39 and verse 1. David said this. Watch carefully now and notice the words that he uses: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." He is not only going to take heed to his ways; one of the ways that he is going to take heed is that he sin not with his tongue. Then he said, when the wicked is before him, he is going to make sure that he has a bridle over his mouth. It is just like the three rules for dealing with bureaucrats. The first one is shut up, the second one is shut up, and the third one is shut up. That is what David is talking about when he says that he will keep his mouth with a bridle while the wicked are before him.

Psalm 141:3 records an interesting prayer request that David makes and that would do us well to make our own: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." Verse 1 gives the setting: "Lord, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." Then comes this specific request: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." It is an interesting prayer request, and one that every believer would do well to make his own prayer.

Proverbs 21:23 sums this up: "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles." I think everybody understands exactly what God is saying here. How many times have you said things that you wished you had never said? Or how many times have you given your word to someone and then thought, "Boy, I should have never done that. I've stepped into it this time"? And so God says that whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from trouble. How many times have you spoken too quickly and found yourself in trouble because of your words?

Now go back to James 1 and ask yourself this question. In verse 26 he says, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” Was James trying to deal with some specific sin at the time he wrote this letter to those who were scattered abroad? Was he addressing the matter of the tongue and the damage it can do when it is not restrained?

Is James saying that this is generally a problem everyone has? When you read James chapter 3, I think he is saying that this is something everyone needs to be aware of. I heard one preacher describe it this way after reading James chapter 3: “The tongue is nothing less than an automatic sewing machine set on fire out of hell.” When you stop and think of how fast an automatic sewing machine goes, that is the tongue many, many times.

But I think what James is really showing us in verse 26 is this: if there is any area in our life that is really unsubdued, or that we are unwilling to subdue and bring into conformity with the Word of God, our religion is in vain. In other words, if there are areas of open rebellion in our life, obviously we have problems. A man can appear to be in a good relationship with the Lord and appear to honor Him, but if he cannot bridle his tongue, then he has real problems. His religion is in vain.

When you read Psalm 73, Asaph speaks about the wicked, whose tongue walks through the earth and goes through heaven. Here is a man totally unafraid to curse God or man. A man may boast of his good works, but while boasting—an expression of pride and arrogance—he can still use his tongue to speak ill of his brethren, backbite them, and hurt their names and characters by private insinuations. He can use that tongue to defame them publicly. He cares not what he says; he gives his tongue absolute liberty to walk through heaven and earth. In doing so, he dishonors God and man as well. James is saying that this man's religion is in vain.

Now look at verse 27: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

Pure Religion Defined

Albert Barnes says of James 1:27, "If a man is truly benevolent, he bears the image of that God who is the fountain of benevolence. If he is pure and uncontaminated in his walk and deportment, he also resembles his Maker, for he is holy. If he has not these things, he cannot have any well-founded evidence that he is a Christian, for it is always the nature and tendency of religion to produce these things."

Real religion, biblical Christianity, has nothing to do with pomp and circumstance, rituals, and ceremonies. It has nothing to do with theatrics. It is practical obedience to God and service to man. James says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

You can go into some of these great and grand cathedrals and humongous church buildings. There is a church building that Alice and I passed on I-75 going out of Atlanta, and I often remark that I would like to have just one Federal Reserve note for each brick in that building. The building is humongous. You could go inside a building like that and see stained-glass windows, organs, and all kinds of pomp and circumstance. You can be awed by those things. But how do people live when they leave that building?

Usually, when you have huge buildings like that, the lives of most people who are there are not practically biblical. They are not practical Christians. They are there for pomp, circumstance, ritual, and ceremony. James says no. True religion before God and the Father is to visit the widows and the orphans and to keep yourself unspotted from the world.

In fact, Micah 6:8 says, "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?" That is basically what He said in James 1:27. One of the things that I really enjoy about history is reading the lives of these great men and women.

Whether you study our colonial ancestors or our Confederate ancestors, you cannot help but be impressed with the practicality of their lives and the practicality of their Christianity. Read some of their diaries. Read the letters of Abigail Adams, Sam Adams, and

John Adams. It is almost as if they were taking their words directly from Scripture; their prayers were so biblical it was unreal. When you stop and think about our colonial and Confederate ancestors, you have to say this: We could probably learn a great deal by studying their lives.

Lee's Intimately Personal Faith

The religion of Robert E. Lee was certainly that of Christianity. Lee and Jackson, as well as many of our other Confederate ancestors, were thoroughgoing Christians. I hope you remember this. General Jackson's prayers were the instrument to the conversion of General Richard Stoddard Ewell. General Ewell had been in a war conference and had left his sword in Jackson's tent. He remembered his sword and turned around to go back and get it. Jackson was on his knees in prayer inside his tent. No one else was around. Ewell heard him praying from outside and stood there. He never went into the tent, and he never interrupted Jackson. When Jackson finished praying, Ewell said, "Oh God, if this is religion, if this is Christianity, I must have it. I must have it. I must have it." Thus Jackson's prayers led to the conversion of General Ewell. I want to point out two things today about the religion of Robert E. Lee.

The first one is this: It was intimately personal. Lee often spoke of his personal faith, not only in the Lord Jesus Christ, but in the Bible as well. The Bible was his favorite book. Lee said, "The Bible is the book of books, a book which supplies the place of all others and cannot be replaced." A little bit later Lee said, "There are many things in that old book that I may not be able to explain, but I accept them as the infallible Word of God and receive its teaching as inspired by the Holy Ghost. I prefer the Bible to any other book."

"There is enough in that to satisfy the most ardent thirst for knowledge, to open the way to true wisdom and to teach the only road to salvation and eternal happiness. It is not above human comprehension and is sufficient to satisfy all desires." So Lee was a man of the book. Again Lee said, "In all of my perplexities and distresses the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength."

Stop and think about this. Lee said, “In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength.”

You have to remember all of the battles he was in, all the war, and all the horrors of that war. One of the stories that I am not going to be able to relate simply because of time is that he lost a daughter, Annie, who died.

He could not even go to her funeral because he was involved in the war and in battles. He wrote a letter to his wife, and the letter was absolutely wonderful and glorious. Here was a man who lost his daughter and could not even go to the funeral, yet he said that in all of his perplexities and all of his distresses, the Bible had never ceased or failed to give him light and strength.

Again Lee testified, “My trust is in the mercy and wisdom of a kind providence who ordereth all things for our good.” General Lee joined the Episcopal Church in 1853 and remained there all of his life. The Episcopal Church back then was not what the Episcopal Church is today. In fact, it was very gospel-oriented. Its rectors were in line with the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and even the Methodists. General Polk, the Episcopalian general who started School of the South in Suwannee, Tennessee, was a fine, godly man. The Episcopal Church has certainly changed over the years.

When Lee joined that church, he said, “My chief concern is to try to be a humble, earnest Christian.” That was at the bottom of everything General Lee did. Pastor Beverly Tucker Lacey, who was also a Confederate chaplain, confided in Lee that all of the Confederate chaplains were concerned about him and were praying for him. General Lee responded, “I can only say that I am a poor sinner trusting in Christ alone for salvation, and that I need all the prayers that I can get.” You listen to some general today and see if he will say something like that.

Let me give you just a simple prayer that Lee prayed. Listen to what he said.

"Help me to be, to think, to act what is right because it is right. Make me truthful, honest, and honorable in all things. Make me intellectually honest for the sake of right and honor, and without thought of reward to me." That is almost like the prayer that Solomon prayed that pleased the Lord when Solomon basically said, "Lord, I don't have sense enough to come in and out of the rain."

Solomon prayed for wisdom to govern the people, and this is exactly what Lee was praying for: biblical wisdom.

To show you the personal faith of General Lee, when General Meade came over to Mine Run and the Southern Army was marching to meet him, Lee was riding along in the woods with his staff officers when he came upon a party of Confederate soldiers holding a prayer meeting on the eve of battle. The artillery was already booming, shells were already bursting, and these Confederate soldiers were praying. Lee stopped his horse, dismounted along with all his staff officers, walked over to where the men were praying, uncovered his head, and began to pray with them. He remained there until the prayer meeting was over. Here was a man who would humble himself and pray with anybody who wanted to pray.

Lee then became the president of Washington College, which later became Washington and Lee University. When Dr. White, a Presbyterian pastor, was passing General Lee's house on his way to the chapel, General Lee joined him, and they began talking about Christianity. Remember, Lee was now the president of Washington University, or Washington and Lee. He said to Dr. White, "I shall be disappointed, sir, if I shall fail in the leading object that brought me here. Unless all the young men become real Christians, I wish you and others of your sacred profession to do all you can to accomplish this result." Lee said, "I came to this college to try to make sure that all of these young men embrace the Christian faith." Isn't that amazing? Where is a general today that wants that?

After the war, General Lee was indicted for treason and rebellion. Nothing ever came of it, but he was indicted. Jefferson Davis, of course, spent two years in prison before he was released, and he was in prison without trial. They could not try him because they knew that, if they did, the North would be found at fault, because secession was indeed constitutional and legal and right. Lee never had to go to prison. A pastor visited Lee after he had been indicted and expressed great bitterness and resentment over this action. General Lee just brushed it off and said, "Well, it matters little what they may do to me."

"I'm old and have but a short time to live anyhow." Then he changed the subject. After they had talked a while, the pastor got up to leave, and Lee followed him to the door. There Lee said, "Doctor, there's a good old book which I read, and from which you preach, which says, 'Love your enemies, bless them that persecute you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.' Do you think that your remarks this evening were quite in accord with this teaching?"

General Lee was preaching to the preacher. He confronted the pastor's bitterness and resentment. J. William Jones, the author of *Christ in the Camp*, a Baptist preacher and chaplain in the Confederate Army, wrote concerning General Lee: "If I've ever come in contact with a sincere, devout Christian, one who seeing himself to be a sinner, trusting alone in the merits of Jesus Christ, who humbly tried to walk the path of duty, looking unto Jesus as the author and finisher of his faith, and whose piety constantly exhibited itself in his daily life, that man was General Robert Edward Lee."

Here was a Baptist chaplain saying that Lee was essentially the greatest Christian he had ever known. Lee's faith and religion were intimately personal.

The second thing I want to share is that his faith was intensely practical. It exemplified James 1:27. There is nothing worse than truth unapplied. As long as truth remains in the head and never descends to the hands, the feet, and the life, it is extremely impractical and totally worthless. Lee practiced what he preached. He lived his faith, and his life was a shining example of intimate personal faith. His faith was exhibited every day and was intensely practical.

Lee's Intensely Practical Christianity

General Lee is regarded as an American hero and an outstanding Christian, but humble Lee always described himself simply as a poor sinner trusting in Christ alone for salvation. Lee's son said that General Lee's Christianity was everyday and practical. Consider this saying of General Lee: "The trite saying that honesty is the best policy has met with the just criticism that honesty is not policy. The

real honest man is honest from conviction of what is right, not from policy."

Stop and think about that. You are honest not because of policy but because of conviction. You are honest because of what the Word of God teaches, and you know and understand it. Again Lee said, "You must study to be frank with the world. Frankness is the child of honesty and courage. Say just what you mean to do on every occasion and take it for granted that you mean to do what is right." You have to be frank and honest with the world.

I have preached several messages on General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Before his conversion he was a cusser; there are no two ways about that. He would accentuate his statements with curse words, that is for sure. But in one sense, what General Lee said actually happened with General Forrest. You might disagree with what Forrest said, but you could never misunderstand him. He told you exactly where you stood and what he was going to do. Lee is saying that we must do the same thing. We do not have to do it with profanity or cursing, but we have to be frank and honest.

Everything Lee did was very practical. You could see the practicality of Lee's Christianity even in his sacrifice. Most of you know that General Lee sacrificed not only his wealth but his home. Each one of us has heard of Arlington National Cemetery. Arlington was General Lee's home, and that home and property were stolen from him. Union soldiers were buried there so that he would never want it back. They literally took it from him.

General Lee did everything he could to get it back originally. Some of the wonderful things there were stolen and never returned. General Lafayette had given Washington a sword, and Lee was in the family of Washington through his wife. The sword was stolen as well, though it was an important artifact. A lot of things were stolen, but Lee continued to sacrifice all his life.

One of my favorite stories is that General Ewell was visiting Lee, and they had a little conference. Lee invited General Ewell to stay for dinner. Ewell said he could not stay because he had to get back. Lee insisted that he take his supper and eat it on the way, so he handed

the supper to General Ewell in a sack. General Ewell mounted his horse and rode off.

When he opened the sack, what he found for Lee's supper was two small, cold, sweet potatoes, which happened to be General Lee's favorite food. But that was all he was going to have for supper, and so he gave them to General Ewell instead. Our ancestors suffered. On another occasion during the Siege of Petersburg, General Lee was invited to a fine home for a Christmas dinner.

The hostess, of course, served turkey. General Lee was not used to having all the food around him, and she caught him hoarding his turkey rather than eating it. Asked whether something was wrong, he said, "No, there's nothing wrong with it. I wanted to save this portion so that I could carry it to one of my staff officers who's been ill and has eaten nothing but cornbread and had sweet potato coffee."

Here was a man who could have filled his stomach, but he did not. After Lee returned to camp, the same hostess sent an entire barrel of turkeys to General Lee—one for him and one for each staff officer. When they opened it and received their turkeys, Lee said, "Put mine back into the barrel. I want it sent to the wounded men in the hospital so that they may eat." The other staff officers put theirs back as well, and the whole barrel went to the wounded. That was practical Christianity and practical sacrifice.

In his book America Through British Eyes, Alan Nevins records a conversation Lee had with a British traveler. The traveler said, "When he, that is General Lee, spoke of Jackson, I was struck with the emphasis he placed on his piety. One cannot indeed be with Lee without finding his Christian character revealing itself almost unconsciously in his manners and conversation. I remember with peculiar distinctness the solemnity with which at table, standing before his family, he asked God's blessing on the food. Also, when he referred to a gentleman whom he wished me to see in Richmond, his saying that he had rarely met with a nobler or more Christian man. It was only a word, yet it showed by what standard he gauged a man's worth."

Can you imagine an army officer today, general or no general, recommending someone because he is one of the finest Christians who ever lived? This is how Lee gauged a man. He also had a lighter side and indeed enjoyed humor.

One of Lee's favorite illustrations concerned an old Negro cook at Petersburg. The cook came to General Lee, wanting to see him as a soldier. Lee asked whether he belonged to the Union Army or the Southern Army. He replied, “Oh, General, I belongs to your army.” Lee asked whether he had been shot. “No, sir, I ain't been shot yet.” Asked how, since nearly all their men got shot, the cook explained, “I ain't been shot, cause I stays back where all the generals stays.” Lee frequently told the story against himself.

Since Lee and Jackson were Christians, they did everything they could to prevent profanity and often rebuked fellow officers for swearing. Jackson told Captain Imboden, “Nothing can justify profanity.” General Richard Taylor tells a story against himself in his book. Taylor was the son of Zachary Taylor, President of the United States, and was a Confederate general.

The Yankees had occupied a mountain with cannon and infantry and were firing down on the Confederate soldiers. Jackson ordered Taylor, “Take your men and get up that mountain and silence those rifles and those cannon.” When they rushed to the foot of the mountain, the Yankees opened fire. It was a withering fire, but the Confederates were safe because neither the cannon nor the rifles could tilt down at the right angle to reach them. The men huddled behind rocks and trees, yet they were not going up the mountain. Taylor had commanded, “Go up the mountain and follow Jackson's”

Lee's Understanding of the Gospel

When General Taylor saw that his men were not going up the mountain, he shouted, “Men, I get up that mountain and silence those guns. If you don't move, I'll make you stand here one damn hour under this withering fire.” Afterward, Taylor felt someone staring at him. He turned and saw Stonewall Jackson sitting on his horse beside him. Jackson reached over, put his hand on Taylor's shoulder, and said, “General Taylor, I'm afraid you're a very wicked man.” Then he turned and rode off.

General Lee once upbraided General Wise about his cursing. Wise replied, “General Lee, you and Jackson can do all the praying for the Army of Northern Virginia, but for heaven's sake, let me do the cussing for one small brigade.” Lee tried to apply his Christianity every day. Two illustrations picture perfectly Lee's understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Illustrations of Lee's Gospel Understanding

The first occurred on the battlefield of Gettysburg and was related by a Union soldier named Richard G. Williams. Williams had been shot and was lying on the ground. He said, “I had been a most bitter anti-South man and fought and cursed the Confederates desperately. I could see nothing good in any of them. A ball shattered my left leg. I lay on the ground not far from Cemetery Ridge, and as General Lee ordered his retreat, he and his officers rode near me. As they came along, I recognized him. Though faint from exposure and loss of blood, I raised up my hands, looked Lee in the face, and shouted as loudly as I could, ‘Hurrah for the Union.’ The general heard me, looked, stopped his horse, dismounted, and came toward me.”

“At first I thought he meant to kill me. But as he came up, he looked down at me with such a sad expression on his face that all fear left me, and I wondered what he was about. He extended his hand and grasped mine firmly. Looking right into my eyes, he said, ‘My son, I hope you will soon be well.’ If I lived to a thousand years, I shall never forget the expression on General Lee's face. There he was, a defeated man, retiring from a field that had cost him and his cause almost their last hope.”

"And yet he stopped to say words like those to a wounded soldier of the opposition who had taunted him as he passed by. As soon as the general had left me, I cried myself to sleep there upon the bloody ground." Can you imagine that? General Lee simply said to the man taunting him, "My son, I hope you will soon be well." He was not bitter or vindictive, but humble, kind, and gracious, demonstrating James 1 and verse 27.

The second illustration came from a book called Cry Heart. During the winter of 1862 and 1863, Colonel A.C. Battle of the Confederate Army presided over a court-martial. Case after case was

quickly disposed of until Edward Cooper, a young artillery man charged with desertion, was called. May I remind you that desertion carried the death penalty?

The prisoner pleaded not guilty. When the judge advocate began the prosecution, the court asked Cooper who was his counsel. "I have no counsel." The specifications were read and sustained by the evidence, and he was told to introduce his witnesses. "I have no witnesses." Colonel Battle was astonished at the prisoner's calmness and asked, "Have you no defense?"

"Is it possible that you abandoned your comrades and deserted your colors without any reason?" "There was a reason," replied Cooper, "but it will not avail me in a military court." "You may be mistaken," said Colonel Battle. Cooper trembled, tears filled his eyes, and he handed Battle a letter: "Here, Colonel, this is what did it." Battle read it, tears running down his cheeks, then handed it to the other members of the court-martial; soon all were weeping. It was from Mary, Cooper's wife: "My dear Edward, I've always been proud of you and since your connection with the Confederate Army, I've been prouder of you than ever. I would not have you to do anything wrong for the world, but before God, Edward, unless you come home, we must die."

"Last night I was roused by little Eddie crying. I called and said, 'What's wrong, Eddie?' And he said, 'Oh, mama, I'm so hungry.' And Lucy, your darling Lucy, she never complains, but she's growing thinner every day. Unless you come home, we must all die.'

'What did you do when you received the letter?' asked Colonel Battle.

'I applied for a furlough,' was the prisoner's answer.

'What was the response?'

'The application was rejected.'

'What did you do then?'

'Again, I applied for another furlough. It, too, was rejected. And I applied for another furlough. It, too, was rejected. Then one night,' he said, 'as I wandered back and forth through the camp with Lucy's eyes on me and her mother's words burning in my brain, I was no

longer a Confederate soldier. I was the father of Lucy and the husband of Mary. And if every gun in the Confederate Army had been trained on me, I would have gone home.'

He said, 'I went home. Mary ran out to meet me and wrapped her arms around me and whispered, "Oh Edward, I'm so happy and so glad that you got your furlough."' He said, 'She must have felt me shudder. She turned pale as death and, catching her breath at every word, said, "Oh Edward, go back, go back. Let me and the children go down to the grave, but save the honor of your name." And here I am, not brought back by the military power, but in obedience to Mary's command to abide the sentence of your court.'

Moved as the officers were at the court-martial, they did their duty, and each one, in turn, pronounced the sentence guilty. Thankfully, the proceedings of the court were reviewed by the commanding general, and he endorsed the record with these words: 'Headquarters of the Army of Northern Virginia, the findings of this court are approved. The prisoner is pardoned and will report to his company, Robert E. Lee, General.'

The Bible says in Psalm 85 and verse 10, 'Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' This one illustration demonstrates to us that General Lee really and truly understood the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you could think for a moment and put yourself in the place of Edward Cooper, we're guilty. We violated the law. We deserve death. We've earned and merited the penalty.

Application and Call for Godly Men

The only way out is through a pardon from our great Commander-in-Chief, the Captain of our salvation. The Bible says in Romans chapter 3, verses 24 through 26, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Although we are legally guilty, we have been

gloriously and righteously pardoned because the Lord Jesus Christ came as our substitute.

Psalm 130, verses 3 and 4, says, “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” If God marked every one of our iniquities, who could stand before Him? But the next verse says, “But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” Certainly, that is true.

One of our problems today is that we do not have men like Lee and Jackson, men who had their faith. We need to learn to return to the old ways, as Jeremiah 6:16 says: “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” Unhappily, the rest of that verse says, “But they said, We will not walk therein.” We have started a generation of rebellious, wicked individuals who refuse to obey God. Where are the men who will follow in the footsteps of Lee and Jackson? We are in a mess because we do not have godly, righteous men willing to stand for truth, liberty, and freedom.

Look where we are in this country. What we need is the religion of Robert E. Lee, which was nothing less than biblical Christianity. If God would be pleased to give us men, we need men like Lee, Jackson, Ewell, and Stuart. Can you imagine what even half a dozen of these men would do in our state capitals or in Washington, D.C.? Biblical Christianity—pure religion before God and the Father—is this: to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. It is practical. It is something that we must live every day. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee.

We thank you for your word and truth. We thank you for men like Lee and Jackson and Ewell and Stuart and others, Lord, who've given us godly testimonies and godly characters that we may emulate and follow. I pray today, Lord, that you'd help us and teach us. Build us up in the most holy faith. We pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

Walking With The Lord - Part 12 - Walking In The Spirit

May 25, 2016

Walking in the Spirit

SCRIPTURE READING - Galatians 5:13-26 (KJV)

> "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.
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> "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of

> the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

Introduction and Series Review

> In bringing the concluding message in this series on walking with the Lord, let me remind you where we have been. I began this series with a message on walking before the Lord. We found out that, of course, Enoch walked with God and Abram walked with the Lord. And God told Abram, "I am the Lord thy God; walk thou before me, and be thou perfect." And I pointed out you can't walk with the Lord until you learn to walk before Him. Then we dealt with walking in faith and showed you from the Word of God. And then, of course, walking worthily—there were at least three messages on that passage from Ephesians chapter 4. And then, of course, walking differently and several messages on that from Ephesians chapter 4. And then I pointed out also how we're to walk in love and walk in light and then walk accurately. So I would just suggest if you are not comfortable with your understanding on these 11 messages, that you go back and listen.

Paul prayed for the Colossian Christians in Colossians 1:10, giving this petition: "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." If we are going to walk worthy of the Lord and pleasing unto the Lord, there is one aspect of our Christian walk that will guarantee it: walking in the Spirit. That is, we must walk in the person, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the third person in the triune Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He will lead us, guide us, and direct us in that which is pleasing unto the Father through the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, He will teach us the truth of

Micah 6:8, where God says, "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?"

The Pitiful State of Modern Christianity

Christianity as a whole today is in very pitiful shape. Our churches are basically filled with unbelievers. Compromise with sin in the world has made the church user-friendly and worldly-oriented. Instead of seeking to preach and teach the whole counsel of God, most churches have opted to entertain the world and have swallowed political correctness to the absolute extent that they do not wish to offend or upset anyone at any time.

The truth of the matter is that there is an offense to the Gospel. In Galatians 5:11, the Apostle Paul says, "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the cross ceased." The Word of God is offensive to unbelievers. Men who are in rebellion to God do not wish to hear of God's sovereignty, His lordship, His law, His commands, and His demands. Obviously, there is an offense to the gospel.

Our churches are not only in pitiful shape because they have many unbelievers and have left the Word of God. We also have, in our churches, true believers walking in the flesh rather than in the Spirit. The fact that they are walking in the flesh is evidenced not only in their individual lives, but in their families, their churches, and their societies.

We are not to walk after the world. We are not to walk after the flesh in any sense of the word.

The Bible says in 1 John 2, verses 15 and 17, “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.” He explains what is in the world: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” He talks about all that is in the world being the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

The Command to Walk in the Spirit

There are specific Scriptures that actually command us to walk in the Spirit. Romans chapter 8, verse 1, says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Here is a verse that tells us that some walk after the flesh and some walk after the Spirit. Verse 4 says, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

We will come back to Romans chapter 8 and to passages close to it, so keep that passage in mind. Galatians chapter 5 and verse 16 says, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” Then, in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 25, the apostle says, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Now go back to Galatians chapter 5, beginning with verse 13, and see the condition of the church.

The Misuse of Christian Liberty in Galatia

In Galatia, you cannot really understand what Paul is saying unless you understand the condition of the church in Galatia. The church in Galatia resembled our modern-day churches in a multitude of ways. There were true believers in the Church of Galatia, but they were not walking in the Spirit; they were walking in the flesh because they misunderstood and misapplied the doctrine of Christian liberty.

Look at verse 13: “Ye have been called unto liberty.” That is a fact. There is a principle. There is a precept. There is a truth. There is a doctrine of Christian liberty. “Ye have been called unto liberty.” But then Paul adds this: “only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” Liberty means that we have been delivered from sin and wickedness. Liberty is not licentiousness. Christian liberty does not mean that we are allowed to do as we please; we are free now to do as God commands us.

What the Apostle Paul is saying in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 13 is that you cannot use Christian liberty as a cloak and as a veil for the sins of the flesh. Now, if you look in chapter 5, verse 1, here is the principle Paul gives: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke

of bondage." Certainly, we are free in Christ. We are free from man's laws and man's traditions. We are free from days and times and customs and rites and rituals that are religious in nature, but not necessarily biblical. It is true that we have been set free in Jesus Christ. It is also true that we are not under the law as a means of justification. We are not trying to work our way into heaven or earn our salvation in any sense whatsoever. But just because we have been set free from sin, tradition, rules, and regulations does not mean that we are free to sin. Hold Galatians 5 and go back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 6.

Paul asks in Romans 6: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" In other words, someone might say, "I was a wicked sinner and God's grace abounded to me." Then some would reason, "If we want more grace, let us sin more greatly." Paul says, "God forbid"—perish that thought; do not even think it. That is absolutely ridiculous. Why? "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Paul is talking about the fact that we are dead to sin. This is what he refers to in Galatians 5 when he says, "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty, only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh." We are not debtors to the flesh or to sin; by love we are to serve one another.

If you want to understand the doctrine of Christian liberty, study Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8. We do have Christian liberty, but that liberty does not give us the right to sin or to licentiousness. It does not give us the right to despise, ignore, misuse, or abuse each other. Paul says, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Our Lord said the two great commandments were, first, to love the Lord with all your heart,

and second, to love your neighbor as yourself. Paul then gives a very serious warning in the next verse.

He says, “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” This is an illustration taken from animals. Animals bite—wild animals and tame animals—and they end up devouring things. This week we were laughing because Belle, our oldest bulldog, caught and killed a squirrel, then guarded it on the hill. The other two dogs, including one far bigger than Belle, stood back looking at the squirrel; she would not let them near it. Finally, she brought it to the driveway, and Alice took pictures of her guarding it. Belle became distracted and ran to the barn. Then Bedford, the larger dog, picked up the squirrel and ate it. He devoured it. It was just that simple.

She wanted to guard it and kill it, kill it and guard it, but he wanted to eat it. So this is what he is saying: “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”

Biting and devouring refers to slanders, accusations, reproaches, every kind of offensive language, and acts of injustice arising from fraud or violence. Let me put it to you bluntly: here is what was going on in the Galatian church. They were fussing, fighting, and feuding. Do you realize we have not changed at all? Such is still par for the course. You look in the average church and you will find cliques, schisms, divisions, parties, feuds, and contentions. They are so commonplace that very little can be done in the average church. Usually, you will find in someone in the average church a Diotrephes attitude.

If you do not understand what a Diotrephes attitude is, look in the little book of 3 John, right before Jude and Revelation, at verses 9 and 10. John had to deal with a man by the name of Diotrephes. John wrote, “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.” He would not even listen to the apostles. “Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.”

What was his attitude? “I'm running this thing. You're gonna do what I say, and if you don't, I'm gonna kick you out or you're going home. I'm just not gonna put up with it. I'm in charge.” Do you understand that? That is the Diotrephes attitude. When you look back in Galatians 5:15, he says, “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” I've threatened for years to preach an entire message just on this verse. I already had the title picked out: “Cannibal Christians.” And that's exactly what happens.

We turn into cannibals. We have a chicken mentality. That does not mean that we are afraid, but those who have ever been around chickens know that if one gets sick, gets hurt, or has a little blood, what does the rest of them do? They peck him to death. Christians are the only ones who will slay their walking wounded. We are the only ones who attack our own.

Look in your Bibles at Galatians 6, verses 1 and 2. Very seldom do we fulfill this command: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault”—that is, he has gotten caught up in trouble or sin—“ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

This church in Galatia was having problems. Our churches are having problems, and individual Christians are having problems. So here is the question: What is the answer to our individual, familial, and ecclesiastical problems? The Apostle Paul tells us that we are to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. That is the answer. In verse 16 he says, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Walking in the Spirit as the Antidote to the Flesh

Here is the first point I want to emphasize: Walking in the Spirit is the antidote to walking in the flesh. We have been looking at this series, “Walking with the Lord,” for twelve weeks. During that time, I have pointed out repeatedly one simple truth: your walk is your way of life. It is your lifestyle, what you do every day, how you function, and how you live. He tells us to walk in the Spirit, and we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Now look again at verse 25: “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Living in the Spirit indicates the person, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit, while walking indicates our outward actions. Living in the Spirit simply means that the Holy Spirit of God indwells us, possesses us, leads us, and that we are under His influence and direction.

Romans 8:9 says, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” If God the Holy Spirit indwells us, we are in the realm of, in the sphere of, the Spirit. The latter part of verse 9 says, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Anyone who is not indwelled by the Holy Spirit is not a Christian. He is not regenerated. He is not converted. He is unsaved.

Verse 10 says, “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Romans 8:4 says that “the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Verse 5 continues, “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.”

Paul is showing us a division right here. There are those who mind the things of the flesh and those who mind the things of the Spirit. There are those who walk after the flesh and those who walk after the Spirit. So my question is this: How then do we understand the term “flesh”? You see, the word “flesh” is used several different ways in the Bible.

It can refer to all humanity. “All flesh is as grass”—that would refer to all humanity. It can refer to the flesh on our arms, on our bodies. It can refer to a lot of things. But when we look at it in the context of Romans 7 and 8 and Galatians chapter 5, it refers to what I would call our depraved nature, our evil inclinations, and our wicked propensities. The Apostle Paul said it like this in Romans 7:18: “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.”

He goes on to say, “For to will is present with me”—that is, to will to do that which is right—“but how to perform that which is good I find not.” In other words, I cannot do it in my flesh. I might know

better, but I cannot do it in my flesh. So he said, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.”

When the Apostle says, “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh,” you have to ask, What is minding the things of the flesh? It means that we are interested in and concerned only with our fleshly desires and our natures. The Greek word is phroneo. Literally, it is translated as “mind,” but it means to think, to regard, to savor, to direct one’s attention, to seek one’s interest and one’s advantage, and to cherish and strive for a thing. If you are minding the flesh, you are cherishing it. It is your chief interest. You are savoring it and delighting in it. You want it more than anything in the world.

Walking after the flesh seeks to fulfill its desires, its lust. To walk after the flesh means that you are forever pursuing, desiring, and doing the things that please your flesh, whatever that may be.

We can walk down the street and see, lying in the gutter, a drunk—filthy, unwashed, unkempt, wallowing in his own vomit. We turn our heads and say, “Ah, I would never live like that. I would never do that.” Or we look around at some adulterer or some fornicator. What we normally do is look at the grosser things of the flesh and say, “Ah, I don’t want that.” But what we do not understand is this: the flesh can be

The Pharisees, you remember, were following after the flesh. What did the Pharisee pray in Luke 18? "I thank God that I am not as other men. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. I thank God I'm not like that old publican over there." That's flesh. That's pride. That's arrogance.

When we're minding the things of the flesh, it doesn't mean that we're minding wallowing in the gutter in our own vomit. It doesn't mean that we're minding adultery and fornication. It means that we can have a cultured, refined, even religious flesh, and we mind that. When we're minding how people think of us—"I'm going to do what's right because if I don't, someone might think I'm a hypocrite or someone might think bad of me"—we're not doing it to please the Lord. We're doing it to please our flesh. So, minding the Spirit

means that we're savoring and have our interest in the things of the Holy Spirit.

What does the Holy Spirit do? Our Lord says in John chapter 16, verse 13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

The Holy Spirit teaches us the Word of God. He leads us in reference to the Word of God. He leads us to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are minding the things of the Spirit, those who are walking in the Spirit, are thinking of the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, His honor, His glory, and seeking to bring their lives into conformity to His Word. In other words, minding the Spirit and walking in the Spirit is basically what the Apostle Paul said in Colossians chapter 3, verses 1 and 2: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth." If we wish to please our Heavenly Father, then we need to walk in the Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit is indeed the antidote to walking in the flesh. That brings me to the second thing. Look in Galatians 5 and verse 17: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Walking in the Spirit is contrary to and antagonistic to the flesh. The word "lusteth"—"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit"—literally means that the flesh fights against the Spirit. The Greek word here is epithumeo, which means the flesh places all of its desire and passion against the Spirit. Scripture tells us in verse 17 that they are contrary the one to the other. The word "contrary" is the Greek word antikeimai, and it means to be opposed to, to be contrary to, and to be an adversary.

The Flesh and Spirit are Contrary Adversaries

The flesh is the adversary of the Spirit, and the Spirit is the adversary of the flesh. When God says that these are contrary the one to the other, this sets forth a clear and decisive truth: You cannot walk in the Spirit and walk in the flesh at the same time. You will walk in one or the other, but you cannot walk in both at the same time.

It is true that we are in the flesh, and it is true that we will not be able to walk in the Spirit perfectly in this life. But it is impossible for you to walk in the flesh and walk in the Spirit because they are contrary. They are opposites. They are adversaries. You walk in one or the other. It is just that simple.

Our fallen natures prefer the realm and sphere of the flesh. Our renewed natures prefer the realm and sphere of the Spirit. This is why the Apostle Paul emphasizes that our old man has been crucified with Christ. Romans chapter 6, verse 5: "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him." The old man is what we were in Adam, what we are in Adam. Our old man is crucified with Him. Why? "That the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."

Dead to Sin's Dominion

"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 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."

Likewise, "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law—that is, as a means of justification—but under grace.

Our old man has been crucified with Christ. “He that is dead is freed from sin.” Romans 6:12 says, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” He did not say, “Let not sin therefore be in your mortal body.” We are sinners; sin is there. Sin is not deranged. This whole passage teaches that, when our old man was crucified with Christ, we were delivered from the dominion and power of sin.

Let me say it bluntly: sin is not our Lord. Jesus Christ is our Lord. Here is the difference between a saved man and an unsaved man. When sin speaks to an unsaved man and demands that he jump, the old unsaved man has to say, “Yes, master. Yes,” because sin is his lord and master. When sin speaks to the Christian man, the Christian man can look at sin and say, “I don’t have to obey you. I’ve been delivered from your dominion. Jesus Christ is my Lord, and I choose to obey Him.”

Romans 6:11 says, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The word “reckon” means to count; it means to impute. What do we do in reference to sin? We count ourselves dead. We reckon ourselves dead because our old man has been crucified with Jesus Christ.

How much influence can the world, the flesh, sin, and the devil have over a dead man? You cannot tempt a dead man. I do not care how big a drunk a dead man was; when I hold a fifth of liquor over his grave, it is not tempting him at all. He is dead. That is the truth of Romans chapter 6, and it is what the Apostle Paul emphasized in Galatians chapter 5 about walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh. We are dead indeed unto sin.

Romans 6:16 says, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Then verse 17 says, “But God be thanked, that ye were”—past tense—“the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin”—free from its dominion—“ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh.”

Here is what the Apostle Paul is saying: if you do not understand what I have already told you, I am going to spell it out and make it very simple. Watch what he says in verse 19: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." He says, do you remember when you were unsaved? Do you remember that before your conversion you eagerly, willingly, readily, and joyfully plunged into sin? You yielded your members, saying, "Here I am. I want you." Now, just as you did that to sin, you do that to the Lord Jesus Christ. You eagerly, willingly, readily, and joyfully say, "Lord, I am going to obey You. I eagerly sought sin; now I am eagerly seeking righteousness."

Now watch. He says in verse 20: "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." There was no righteousness in you. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin"—that is, free from its dominion—"and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." So the apostle is telling us that we are dead to sin.

Two of the greatest truths that I ever learned in my entire life are, first, the sovereignty of God—that God is absolutely sovereign and in control—and second, that I have been delivered from the dominion and power of sin. Am I a sinner? Yes. Are you sinners? Yes. Do we have to sin? No. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we have the ability to say no to sin. It is just that simple.

We have no obligation to sin. We have no obligation to the flesh. We have no obligation to the world. We have no obligation to the devil, none whatsoever. If you have never read Pilgrim's Progress, I would encourage you to do so. I want to give you a brief quote, one of my favorite passages. It is where Pilgrim meets Apollyon, the devil. Pilgrim is escaping from the City of Destruction and is headed to Mount Zion. Apollyon: "Whence came you, and whither are you bound?" Christian: "I am come from the city of Destruction, which is the place of all evil, and I am going to the city of Zion." Apollyon:

"By this I perceive that thou art one of my subjects, for all that country is mine, and I am the prince and god of it. How is it, then,

that you have run away from thy king? Were it not that I hoped thou mayest do me more service, I would strike thee now at one blow to the ground." Christian: "I was, indeed, born in your dominions. But your service was hard, and your wages such as a man could not live on, for the wages of sin is death.

Therefore, when I was come to years, I did as others considerate persons do, look out if perhaps I might mend myself." Apollyon: "There is no prince that will thus lightly lose his subjects, neither will I as yet lose thee. But since thou complainest of my service and wages, be content and go back, and what our country will afford, I do hereby promise to give thee. I'll make you richer." Christian: "But I have let myself to another, even to the King of princes. How can I with fairness go back with thee?" Apollyon: "Thou hast done in this according to the proverb, changed a bad for a worse. But it is ordinary for those who have professed themselves to be his servants, after a while, to give him the slip

and return again to me. Do thou so also, and all shall be well." Christian: "I have given him my faith and sworn my allegiance to him. How then can I go back from this and not be hanged as a traitor?" Apollyon: "Thou didst the same to me, but I am willing to pass by all, if thou wilt yet turn and go back." Christian: "What I promised thee was in my nonage. And besides, I count that the Prince under whose banner I now stand is able to absolve me, yea, and to pardon also what I did as to my compliance with thee. And besides, O thou destroying Apollyon, to speak the truth, I like His service, His wages, His servants, His government, His company and country better than thine.

Therefore leave off to persuade me farther. I am His servant and I will follow Him." Isn't that amazing? And that's the attitude that we have to take when it comes to sin, Satan, and the world. No, we are His servants. We must determine to follow Jesus Christ regardless of sin, the flesh, the world, and the devil.

Walking in the Flesh

The Naturalness of Walking in the Flesh

Here is the third truth: walking in the flesh is that which we do normally and naturally. Walking in the flesh is so normal and natural that, as verse 17 says, if we are walking in the Spirit, "so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Every one of us was taught as a child. We were taught various things, many different things, but no one ever had to teach us how to sin. You picked that up naturally. You just did it. It was part of you because it was in you. We are sinners by nature, proud and arrogant by nature.

I saw a little four-year-old girl. She was a pretty little thing, and I asked her, "Did anyone ever tell you that you're pretty?" She looked at me and said, "I'm not pretty. I'm beautiful." I smiled and said, "And vain too, aren't you?" She was shaking her head; she had no idea what vain meant. But that is natural. We do that normally.

It is absolutely normal and natural to please, pamper, and satisfy the flesh. What the Apostle Paul is saying is that if we walk in the Spirit, we cannot do the things that we would. Those things that we would are those things that we have determined, purposed, planned, and desired—all to please the flesh.

In fact, the Greek word there is thelo, which means, "I will." "I will to do this. I will to do that." This is even so in the business world. You remember what James said: "Say not thou, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." The flesh says, "I'm going to do this." No.

God says we cannot do the things that we normally would do by nature. Now listen to me, be honest. If Steve stood up in the presence of everybody and cussed me out—I know the correct word is "curse," but in South Georgia it is "cussed"—what would my nature want to do? If Steve stood up and cussed me out, my nature

would want to cuss him back. Rip him up one side and down the other. “I’ll show him.” If he hurts me, what is my normal, natural response? I’ll get revenge. Hang on. Yeah, stop at the post office, that’s my revenge. I will not stop at the post office. That is for sure. All such normal and natural responses are sin, wickedness, and ungodliness. What we normally would do by nature is in the flesh.

So what Paul is saying is that we cannot allow our old man to be resurrected. No, by nature, if we are cursed, we curse back. But what God tells us is that we must mortify the deeds of the flesh.

Mortifying the Deeds of the Flesh

Go back in your Bibles to the book of Romans chapter 8, beginning with verse 11. Romans 8 and verse 11. Watch carefully. “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.” We do not owe our flesh anything. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Now watch that: “But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

What does “mortify” mean? It means to make dead. It is where we get our English word “mortician” from. The word “mortgage” is related to that as well. If you, by the Spirit, mortify—make dead—the deeds of the body, you shall live.

Led by the Spirit

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

Paul has been talking in Romans chapter 8 about walking in the Spirit and minding the things of the Spirit; now he adds being led of the Spirit. That brings me to my last point. In Galatians chapter 5,

verse 18, he says, “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” We are not under the law as a standard of justification.

What does it mean to be led of the Spirit? Walking in the Spirit is the same as, identical with, and synonymous with being led by the Spirit. How does the Spirit of God lead us? He always leads us in agreement with and in accordance with the Word of God. The Holy Spirit never leads us to violate the Word of God or the law of God.

Being Led by the Spirit

He does not lead us into sin, to satisfy and pamper the flesh, or to glorify the flesh. He leads us into obedience and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. Does the Holy Spirit prompt us? Of course He does. He prompts us to pray, witness, study, obey, worship, and perform many other godly and holy exercises, but every prompting is in conformity to the Word of God. He never leads us contrary to Scripture.

The Holy Spirit has been, and continues to be, blamed for a multitude of sins. So many people misunderstand, misuse, and misapply the leading of the Holy Spirit. They do some of the stupidest, craziest, most wicked things and then blame them on the Holy Spirit. I know of one pastor who left his wife and ran off with a woman in the church. When confronted, his excuse was that the Holy Spirit led him to run off with her because she was more spiritual than his wife and he needed a godly helpmate in the ministry.

May I tell you what that is? That's hogwash. That's a lie. That's sin. The Holy Spirit does not lead us to violate God's law.

Some of you will remember a few years back, I think it took place down here in Florida, there was a woman who took her grown son to an indoor gun range. As he was shooting his pistol, she stepped up behind him, shot him in the back of the head, and killed him. When asked why she did it, she answered that the Holy Spirit led her to do it because she wanted to save her son from all the trouble that was coming in the world. Can you imagine that?

When I was in college many years ago, there was a woman in Greenville, South Carolina, who caught her husband asleep on the

couch. She came up, put a .38 revolver to his temple, pulled the trigger, and killed him. Her excuse was that the Holy Spirit led her to do it. Ever since that time, when Alice tells me to get my feet off the couch, I do, and I try not to go to sleep on the couch.

But you understand what I'm trying to say? It's absolutely stupid. It's ridiculous to blame the Holy Spirit for our rebellion, wickedness, and lust. And yet people do that all the time. It is hogwash. God the Holy Spirit leads us, that is true, but He always leads us in conformity to the Word of God.

The leading of the Holy Spirit is the act or ministry of God the Holy Spirit whereby He brings us into obedience and submission and into greater conformity to the Word of God. He enables us, empowers us, and enlightens us. If there is any holiness, godliness, obedience, or submission in us at all, it is because of His work, not because of our flesh. First Paul said, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."

The leading of the Spirit is the same as walking in the Spirit. Paul said, if you want to save yourself from a lot of heartache, learn to walk in the Spirit. It is the antidote to walking in the flesh.

It is impossible to walk in both at the same time. We may be in the flesh and unable to walk perfectly in the Spirit right now, but there is a vast difference between walking in the Spirit and walking in the flesh. How can we tell whether we are walking in the flesh or in the Spirit? Suppose Steve asks me a question and I answer him. How can I tell whether I gave him an answer in the Spirit or in the flesh? What if we have a disagreement? How can I tell if it is a fleshly disagreement or one based upon spiritual reality?

Discerning the Walk: Works of the Flesh vs. Fruit of the Spirit

The answer is simple. Our fallen nature prefers the realm of the flesh; our renewed nature prefers the realm of the Spirit. Each realm manifests itself by producing its own fruits. Are you walking in the flesh? Galatians 5:19 says, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife,

seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Everybody tries to say, when it comes to adultery, fornication, witchcraft, and all this kind of thing, "The devil made me do it." The devil did not make you do anything. That was your stupid flesh. The flesh does not have to be only adultery and drunkenness; it is also hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, and revellings.

How do I know I am walking in the Spirit? Verse 22 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." If we are desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, or envying one another, we are walking in the flesh, not in the Spirit. The antidote to 99.9% of our problems is to learn to walk in the Spirit, not the flesh. Walking in the flesh exacerbates and makes our problems worse; walking in the Spirit resolves them.

We need to learn to walk in the Spirit. If we are walking in the Spirit, we are mortifying, making dead, the deeds of our flesh. If we walk in the Spirit, we are walking worthily and pleasingly to our Heavenly Father.

Conclusion and Prayer

Father, we do ask You today to help us to walk in the Spirit. We pray, Lord, that You would indeed teach us to mortify the deeds of the flesh, that we may honor Thee in all that we do. Give us understanding, open our minds, illuminate us, enlighten us, teach us, and make us holy and godly. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 17

Receiving the Grace of God in Vain

September 6, 2019

Introduction and Text

In 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 1, the Apostle Paul says, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

If you are a Christian, you are one only by the grace of God. Grace is God's gift. Grace is not just simply unmerited favor; grace is something that is given unmerited, of course, but to those who are positively undeserving and deserving only of judgment. Practically everyone can quote Ephesians 2:8 and 9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

So it's only by God's grace that God gives us faith in order to believe, to repent, and to turn from our sins, and to come savingly to Jesus Christ. No one comes to God savingly except by His grace through the faith that He gives.

The Astonishing Statement

In light of that, Paul makes an astonishing statement in verse 1 of 2 Corinthians 6. He says, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." So he is beseeching the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. And the implication is that the grace of God can be received in vain.

Now the word "vain" is the Greek word kenos, and it literally means that which is vain, that which is in vain, that which is empty, fruitless, without effect, and has no purpose. So he is beseeching them to receive the Word of God not in vain, that is, not worthlessly, uselessly, without fruit, and without purpose.

Now, I don't know if a thought has ever occurred to you, but is it possible that there are people who receive the grace of God in vain? Is it possible that we as Christians commit this sin regularly and do not even realize it? So you have to ask, what does it mean to receive the grace of God in vain?

Distinguishing Effectual Calling from Common Calling

Obviously, scriptures that I'm going to share with you here relate in one sense to the word of salvation. For look at verse 1 again. He says, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

When you come to Hebrews chapter 2, especially verse 3, we are admonished: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” You have to determine what grace is being spoken of in verse 1, where he says, “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”

When you read “the grace of God” in verse 1, the apostle is not talking about the grace in regeneration. He is not talking about the grace in what we would call effectual calling, where God sovereignly and powerfully calls sinners unto Himself. Let me give you several verses to consider.

First, Romans 1:6 says, “Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.” It may surprise you that one of the names for saints in the Bible is “the called ones.” You remember in Revelation 17, the Lord comes back on that horse with the title King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Bible says those who are with Him are “called, chosen, and faithful.” Many times in Scripture, saints are simply referred to as the called ones.

In 1 Corinthians 1:9, the Bible says, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Here is a calling that actually results in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what we would call an effectual call. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 1, and you will see a calling equated with being saved. In verse 8, Paul tells Timothy, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.” Now notice what God has done according to His power: “who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Note the first part of verse 9: “who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling.” Here is a holy calling that actually results in salvation. Effectual calling, in Christian soteriology—soteriology simply refers to the doctrine of salvation—means this effectual call.

Soteriology refers not only to the doctrine of salvation, but effectual calling is also a stage in what is known as the ordo salutis, that is, the order of salvation, where God does for us each thing that is needed and necessary to draw us unto saving faith. Out of curiosity, when I was studying and preparing this message, I wanted to see what a dictionary would say about effectual calling. I was absolutely surprised when I looked up Merriam-Webster's definition: “action of the Holy Spirit in producing conviction of sin, and bestowing the gift of faith in Christ.” I thought, Well, that is an accurate definition. Then they went on to say, “according to Calvinistic theology,” but it was still an accurate definition.

Romans 8:29–30 shows that there is a difference between what you and I would refer to as the common call, or the general call, and

the effectual call. Look carefully at Romans 8, beginning with verse 29:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Now watch verse 30: "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." The order in verse 30 is that those whom God predestinated, He called; those whom He called, He justified; and those whom He justified, He glorified. Obviously, not everyone who is called, quote-unquote, externally, generally, in a common sense, ends up justified and glorified. Verse 30 therefore has to do with what you and I would refer to as the effectual call: God calls us unto Himself in such a way that He justifies us, and He speaks of our being glorified already in a past-tense sense.

Historical Confessional Support

The first quote is from the Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith. The Old London Confession of Faith was developed in 1689, almost word for word with the Westminster Confession of 1644 and 1648, except in its doctrine of the church and in its teaching concerning baptism. In 1744, one hundred Baptist pastors met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and adopted the Old London Confession of 1689 as their Confession of Faith. This quote comes from that 1689–1744 Confession of Faith:

"Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, He is pleased in His appointed and accepted time effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of the state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by His almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ, yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace."

Effectual calling is not God reaching over, grabbing Gary, and saying, "Boy, you're going to be saved whether you like it or not,"

dragging him into Heaven, kicking and screaming. No. God sovereignly and powerfully works in his heart so that Gary is willing, wants, longs, and loves to come.

One of my favorite illustrations concerns two women sitting on a front porch. One was the mother of a young man, and the other was her next-door neighbor. The young man came out in a suit, shirt and tie, polished shoes, combed hair, and clean fingernails. He leaned over, kissed his mother on the cheek, and said, "Well, Mother, I'll see you about 11, 11:30." Then he got in the car and drove off. The mother said to her neighbor, "Isn't that absolutely disgusting?" The neighbor replied, "I'd give anything if my son dressed and acted like that."

"No, no, no," she said. "That's not what I'm talking about. What I'm trying to say is it took a little blonde-headed, blue-eyed girl, five foot two, to do in a week what I couldn't get him to do in 14 years." Something made him willing to do all that and to change. That is what God does to us. God makes us willing.

What I am about to tell you today is not something that I came up with. This is something that has been taught down through the ages. The first of two quotations is by John Gill, who is commenting on 2 Corinthians 6 and verse 1 concerning receiving the grace of God in vain. He says, "By the grace of God"—speaking of receiving not the grace of God in vain—"is not meant the grace of God in regeneration and effectual calling which can never be received in vain, for the grace of God never fails of producing a thorough work of conversion, nor is it ever lost, but is strictly connected with eternal glory."

If receiving the grace of God in vain is not connected to regeneration, and is not connected to effectual calling, what is it? There is indeed a common call, or a general call, or an external call. The general call, the common call, or the external call is merely connected with the preaching and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It tells men that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord, that He is indeed Savior, and that He is the substitute, the surety, and the sacrifice, and that there is no salvation apart from Him. When I preach and teach, it is basically what you and I would refer to as a general, common, or external call. Even our Lord Himself in Matthew 22 and verse 14 said, "For many are called, but few are

chosen." John Gill has already said that this has nothing to do with regeneration or the effectual call.

He goes on to say: "By it is meant either the doctrine of grace, the Gospel of Christ so called because it is a declaration of the love and grace of God to sinners, ascribes salvation in part and in whole to the free grace of God, and is a means of implanting and increasing grace in the hearts of men."

"Now this may be received in vain by ministers and people, when it is but notionally received, or received in word only, when it is abused and perverted to vile purposes, and when men drop, deny, and fall off from it." What he is saying is that receiving the means of God, or receiving the grace of God in vain, relates to the preaching and the declaration of the truth of God.

It has nothing to do with regeneration or effectual calling. But it does have to do with the declaration, preaching, and teaching of the Word of God.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

The second quote I want to give you is by Matthew Henry. Everybody loves Matthew Henry. He has some great commentaries, and they are usually very succinct. But what many people do not know is that a lot of his commentaries were written as he took notes from his father at family worship. That is how many of his commentaries became written. His father was a very excellent theologian, that is for sure. Here is what Matthew Henry says: “The Gospel is a word of grace sounding in our ears. The gospel day is a day of salvation, the means of grace, the means of salvation, the offers of the gospel and the offers of salvation. And the present time the proper time to accept these offers. Tomorrow is not ours; we do not know what will be tomorrow nor where we shall be. We now enjoy a day of grace; then let us all be careful not to neglect it. Ministers of the gospel should look upon themselves as God’s servants, act in everything agreeable to that character.”

The Apostle did so much by patience and afflictions, by acting from good principles, and by due restraint in behavior. Believers in this world need the grace of God to arm them against temptations, in

order to bear the good report of men without pride and their reproaches with patience. They have nothing in themselves but possess all things in Christ. Of such differences is a Christian's life made up, and through such a variety of conditions and reports is our way to Heaven. We should be careful in all things to approve ourselves to God.

The gospel, when faithfully preached and fully received, betters the condition even of the poorest. They save that which they righteously spent and diligently employ their time for useful purposes. They save and gain by religion, and are so much made rich, both for the world to come and for this, when compared with their sinful state before they receive the gospel.

Now, the interesting thing again is that Henry is saying that once again receiving the grace of God in vain really and truly has to do with the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Let me show you the context. Look in your Bibles at 2 Corinthians chapter 5, since that precedes chapter 6. In verses 18 through 21, the Apostle Paul says, “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

The Ministry of Reconciliation and Ambassadorship

In verse 18, the Apostle Paul says, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." Reconciliation is an act of God, something that God does and has done through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But note the latter part of verse 18: "...and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." If God has accomplished reconciliation in Christ, the only thing we can do is proclaim that reconciliation. Therefore, in verse 19, he says, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not

imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

In verse 18, it is called the ministry of reconciliation; in verse 19, it is called the word of reconciliation. Why is it called the word? Because it involves preaching, teaching, and speaking. The doctrine of reconciliation in Jesus Christ is being taught and proclaimed. What God has done is called both the ministry of reconciliation and the word of reconciliation.

Verse 20 should be the absolute clincher: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Who are the "we"? First, obviously, the apostles. Secondly, they are ministers and preachers whom Christ has called according to Ephesians chapter 4. These men whom Christ called, appointed, and sent are referred to as His ambassadors.

An ambassador is a diplomat, someone with authority to speak on behalf of the one who sent him. We use the word loosely and do not really comprehend its impact. Suppose we took a trip to England. We are all American citizens, and we go to Windsor Castle and ask one of the guards for a meeting with the queen. The guard asks, "Who are you?" We answer, "We're ambassadors." He asks, "Where are your credentials?" We reply that we represent the American people and merely want to convey goodwill to the queen. The guard would tell us to leave before he called additional help, because we had no authority to be there or to request a meeting with the queen. We might say, "But we're ambassadors." Yet ambassadors may convey goodwill; without diplomatic papers, we have no authority.

If the president or even Congress appointed someone as an ambassador to represent this country before the Queen of England, the ambassador could petition the Queen and say, “Look, there’s a problem between America and England, and we need to resolve this thing. We need to sit down together and discuss it.” The Queen would probably say, “Yes, you’re speaking for America, and I’m speaking for England,” or the Prime Minister would be there. In other words, the ambassador would be someone with real authority who had been appointed.

This is exactly what the Apostle Paul is pointing out when he says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ." I remember when I was a boy, the Southern Baptist Convention had a group called the Royal Ambassadors, where little boys were taught. That is a very loose term, because here it is applied primarily to preachers.

Look in verse 20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." The ambassador Paul is talking about is a representative of God. The voice of the ambassador, in proclaiming the message given to him, is the voice of God. The voice of the ambassador proclaiming the message his sovereign has given him is the voice of the sovereign. If you understood that, it would make you undertake preaching more seriously.

Then he makes this statement: "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The word "stead" is the little Greek word huper. It is translated "in the place of," "on behalf of," and "for the sake of." He says, "We're here in Christ's stead." Where is Jesus Christ right now? He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. He is no longer physically on this earth, but He has appointed ambassadors who are here on earth in His stead. Let me tell you how this word is used.

You remember in the book of Philemon, Onesimus was a runaway slave. He ran away from Philemon. He not only ran away from Philemon, he stole from Philemon. If you will remember a message I preached a while back, Onesimus and Philemon were brothers. You say, "Well, how in the world can a brother hold his brother as a slave?" You have to go back and listen to the message because I explain all that, and there are reasons why he was a slave. Obviously, one of the reasons was that he was a thief, and another was that he was indolent. He ran away to Rome, got arrested, and was thrown into a dungeon. That happened to be where the Apostle Paul was, and he was converted under Paul's ministry.

When you read the book of Philemon, Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon, and he says in verse 13, "Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel." Paul said, "I would love to have kept Onesimus here so that he could have ministered to me in your place, instead of you." Philemon evidently had ministered to Paul many

times. Then Paul went on to say, “Without your knowledge I would do nothing.” So he sent him back. But he says, “I would keep him here in your stead.”

Now, turn in your Bibles to the book of Romans, chapter 5, and look at verse 8. Romans 5 and verse 8. This is another verse that a lot of people can quote. It is a very beautiful verse. Romans 5, verse 8: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. You know what that little word “for” is in the Greek? It is the word huper. What does it say? “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died in our stead. He died for our sake. He died in our place.”

In 2 Corinthians 5:20, Paul says, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead.” Just as Jesus Christ was our substitute, dying in our place before God the Father, now we are His representatives to preach and proclaim His truth, since He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. Paul continues, “As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

Those who preach the truth of God, who are truly called by Jesus Christ, are representatives and ambassadors for God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. When they preach and teach the Word of God, it is as though God is beseeching you through that ambassador, through that preacher. That preacher is there in the stead of Christ as he expounds, explains, and applies the Scriptures.

Receiving the Word as God's Word

I realize that not every preacher expounds, explains, and applies the Scripture. A person can preach and say many good things without really preaching the Bible. I was talking with a brother about preachers and said that I have always thought a preacher who did not really preach the Scripture, and who did not want to offend or upset anyone, would have to do an awful lot of work just to come up with a sermon that did not mention God or Christ or upset anyone. Can you imagine how much work that would involve?

Such a man is not an ambassador or representative of God. It is only as we expound, explain, and apply the Scripture that we serve in that capacity. If we understood this, we would look more earnestly upon and listen more intently to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, because it is not merely the preacher who is preaching; it is God beseeching you through the preacher's voice.

Paul nailed this in praising the Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 13, these are the words Paul used in thanking God without ceasing: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing. Because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Isn't that amazing? Already he says, we continually praise God for this.

When Paul and Silas, or Paul and Barnabas, or whoever was with him, preached to these Thessalonians, they did not say, "That's just what Paul says. That's Paul's opinion. That's what Paul thinks." No, he said, "When ye heard us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

There is a way to hear the word of God that is very blessed, and there is a way to hear the word of God that is very cursed. If you take the Word that is being preached and taught as the word of men, it profits you nothing. But if you take it as the Word of God, then it does indeed profit you greatly.

Our Lord basically said the same thing. In Matthew chapter 10, verse 40, when our Lord sent His disciples out, He said, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." Our Lord put it to you like this: if you receive the one that I send, that is my representative, my ambassador, if you receive him you receive me. If you receive me, you receive the Father.

Now, He said the same thing again in John chapter 13, verse 20: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." If you receive the one that Jesus Christ sends, you receive Jesus Christ. If you receive Jesus Christ, you receive the Father who sent Jesus Christ.

Old Testament Example and Urgency

The opposite is also true. If you refuse the one that Jesus Christ sends, you refuse Jesus Christ. And if you refuse Jesus Christ, you refuse the Father who sent Christ.

We see this in the Old Testament in 2 Chronicles 36:15–17: "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand."

Go back to verse 15: "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers"—that is plural. He sent more than one prophet, more than one preacher—"rising up betimes, and sending." Why did God send the preachers? Verse 15 says, "because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place." When God is ready to have compassion upon someone, He always sends a preacher. He sends someone who will declare His Word and His truth.

Now watch verse 16: "But they mocked the messengers of God." The word "messengers" is plural. There was more than one. That is why verse 15 says God was "rising up betimes, and sending": He sent different men at different times. Yet Scripture says they despised "his words"—singular, God's words. The representatives and preachers God sent were preaching His Word. He sent multiple preachers, but the Word was one; the Word was God's; the Word was from Him. The evidence that they despised God's Word is that they mocked the messengers of God.

How did they mock them? They ridiculed them. They refused to listen to them. They beat them, slew them, killed them, and murdered them, until the wrath of God arose against His people until there was no remedy. So God sent His preachers, and they

refused to hear the preachers. They were accused of despising God and His word.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18, we read: “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” So we are talking about preaching: “to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us”—preaching—“we pray you in Christ's stead”—preaching—“be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” So we are talking about preaching.

Verse 1 of chapter 6 says: “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” What grace of God? The grace of God which is the common call, the external call, the general call—the preaching of God's Word, the truth of God's Word. Here is why he said in verse 2: “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

The grace of God in this instance is the blessing that each one of us has in order to be alive, to hear, and to be present under the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. We take so many things for granted. Have you ever stopped to think of the multitudinous grace God has given you, and you have not even paid any attention to it? I remember years ago—I taught a class all day on Friday and all day on Saturday. I never had a bit of problem. I woke up Sunday morning and could not even use this left hand. It was totally dead.

I couldn't move it; it was worthless. Thankfully, by God's grace I got most of the use of that hand back. What if you woke up in the morning and you had lost your hearing, or you lost your sight? You see what I'm saying? It is only the grace of God that allows us to be alive and to hear and to be present under the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

James emphasizes this strongly: "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." You've been driving down the road, a highway, and you look up ahead and you see all of the heat rising. It's like a vapor and you get there and it's gone. And this is what he says your life is like. It's here and then it's gone. It's over with.

And so it's the grace of God that gives us the blessed opportunity of hearing the teaching and preaching of the Word of God. Albert Barnes, speaking about 2 Corinthians 6 and verse 1, said: "The sense is that it was possible that this offer"—we're talking about preaching—"this offer might be made to them and they might hear of a Savior, be told of reconciliation, and have the offers of mercy pressed on their attention and acceptance, and yet all be in vain. They might notwithstanding all this be lost. For simply to hear of a plan of salvation or the offers of mercy will no more save a sinner than to hear of medicine will save the sick. It must be embraced and applied or it will all be in vain."

And that's true. That's why when there's preaching and teaching the truth of God, if the Holy Spirit of God does not make it effectual, no one profits from it. You might think it's a good sermon. You might say, "I enjoyed it." But if you do not hear it, believe it, embrace it, and apply it, it does you absolutely no good at all.

“Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.” The word for “offence” here is the Greek word proskope, which means an offense, an occasion of stumbling, or something that would lead someone else to stumble or fall into sin. The word “blamed” means to find fault with, to give grounds to mock or ridicule.

The ambassador sent by Jesus Christ, who represents Jesus Christ and stands in the place of Jesus Christ, must have purity, sincerity, genuineness, and holiness in his life. If someone does not receive the preaching and the teaching of the Word of God, the blame cannot be

placed upon the ministry or the minister. The blame would be solely upon those who heard, walked away, and did absolutely nothing.

Applications for Believers

The gospel is a word of grace sounding in our ears, and it will be in vain for us to hear it unless we believe it, comply with it, and obey it. My duty as a preacher, my duty as an ambassador, and my duty as a representative is to proclaim the message that God has given. Your duty, obligation, and responsibility as a hearer is to hear, obey, and apply. If I have a duty to teach, you have a duty to listen. If I have a duty to preach, you have a duty to listen, hear, and obey.

This is astounding concerning those who represent Jesus Christ and stand in His place. In 2 Corinthians 6:1, the Apostle Paul says, "We then, as workers together with him." Have you ever stopped to think about that—working together with God, working together with Christ? In fact, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 9, Paul says, "For we are labourers together with God." We work with Him. How do we work with Him?

By simply preaching and teaching that which is given in His Word, we must learn that the present time is the only proper time to apply the truth of God. Suppose you say, "That was a very interesting message. I'm going to think more on it next week, and perhaps the week after that I'll start trying to work it out and apply it." Really? What if you died tonight? The only proper time we have is right now, because we do not know what tomorrow will bring. We do not even know what the next minute will bring.

I just read about a young couple, childhood sweethearts, who got married. There was a picture of him in his black suit and her in her white wedding gown. They had just been married by a justice of the peace, got into their car, and pulled onto the highway. A truck hit them and killed both of them instantly. One was nineteen and the other was twenty. No one knows what the future holds.

Now is the only time we can apply the truth of God. You remember what Jesus Christ told those Pharisees? They did not believe, but He said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

Obviously, we have an opportunity now. That is why He says, “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” I once read that most people who plan to be saved at twelve o’clock die at eleven fifty-nine. Well, that is true. You have no idea.

How does this apply to Christians? Whatever is taught from the Word of God—whether salvation, economics, education, or anything else—as long as it is from the Word of God and is being expounded, explained, and applied, if you hear it and do not act upon it, embrace it, and apply it to yourself, it was in vain. You have received the grace of God foolishly, worthlessly, uselessly, because God allowed you to live and hear, and you took the truth and walked away from it. Christians can commit this sin of receiving the grace of God in vain when we do not take His words seriously and apply them as we should.

We need to learn to think whenever any situation or circumstance comes up: What does Scripture say? How am I to act? How am I to apply this? What am I to learn from this? How may I serve and honor the Lord Jesus Christ in this circumstance or situation? Do not receive the grace of God in vain. Apply the Word and bring your life into greater conformity to Jesus Christ.

Father, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word, for your life, and for that which you've taught us. Lord, I pray that you would help us to hear your word, but not in vain. Do you hear it fruitfully? Do you hear it believingly? Do you hear it and apply it to our lives, so that we may be holy and be made conformable to the image of Jesus Christ? We commit our works unto thee and ask you to establish our thoughts. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 18

Chilled Or Frozen

March 7, 2020

Habakkuk chapter 1, beginning with verse 1: “The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

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

Introduction: Chilled vs. Frozen

Each one knows the difference between that which is chilled and that which is frozen. If something is chilled, it is movable; if something is frozen, it is immovable. If it is chilled, it may be warmed up; if it is frozen, it must be thawed. I have heard people say, “Well, I was nearly frozen to death.” Usually, that is not true. They were chilled or cold, but they were certainly not frozen to death.

In reality, once you begin to freeze, you are literally unable to move. Interestingly, when one becomes extremely cold, prior to freezing, he becomes exceedingly lethargic and unable to move, and the brain slows down immensely. Consequently, people do irrational things. For instance, people in the final stages of hypothermia engage in what is known as paradoxical undressing. Because the brain is not functioning correctly and they are almost freezing to death, it tells them that somehow they are hot. They begin to disrobe and throw their clothes off to cool off, when in reality they are freezing to death.

Because the heart pumps less blood, the brain is deprived of oxygen, and hallucinations begin. Improper functioning of the heart also reduces blood flow to the organs, placing the body in shock and sometimes causing absolute kidney and liver failure. Naturally, the pulse slows down. When that pulse begins to slow down, it shows that one is really near death.

Interestingly, our text in Habakkuk chapter 1 tells us that societies and nations die exactly the same way as when one is freezing to death. Societally and nationally, we have become apathetic, lethargic, unmoved, uncaring, and uncompassionate. The truth of the matter is that we are in a state of shock and cannot think clearly or rationally. Bluntly stated, we have lost our collective mind.

You just have to understand: we are hallucinating. Our body begins to shut down when we are freezing, and likewise, our society and our nation begin to shut down. We begin to think, “Well, everything is still OK. Everything is rosy. Everything’s going to work out,” when indeed we are dying. We do not feel anything because our nerves are frozen. The harder the cold, the more quickly we are numbed, and the more quickly we lose our sense of direction, safety, and rationality.

The Burden of Habakkuk

Our times, I believe, are parallel to the times of Habakkuk. Habakkuk, in verse 1, speaks of a burden: “The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.” A burden is that which is heavy, weighty, and presses down upon one. It is difficult to carry and often creates frustration, consternation, and discouragement. Usually,

when someone has such a burden, he wants it lifted or taken away. Since Habakkuk is talking about a burden, what was the burden pressing him down? If you look in verses 2 and 3, he tells you.

He says, “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save. Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.” Habakkuk was praying, crying, beseeching, and begging God for relief from violence, corruption, injustice, and wickedness. Seemingly, his prayers were unanswered. God almost shut heaven up, it seems, and Habakkuk complained, “Lord, I don’t understand this.”

In verse 2, he asked, “How long, O Lord, shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? Even cry out unto thee of violence.” The Hebrew word for violence is chamas. It is translated in our Bibles as violence, cruelty, wrong, injustice, and unrighteous. It refers to that which is false, wicked, and ungodly.

Violence and Government Corruption

The prophet is also complaining in this passage of what you and I would call violence done by the abuse of the sword of justice. He is referring to violence done to the people by their own government, and to violence and corruption done by people in power. Matthew Henry, commenting on this passage, says: "That no man could call what he had his own, but in defiance of the most sacred laws of property and equity, he that had power on his side and had a mind to would take what he wanted, though he had no right on his side."

Here he is talking about people who are in power, who have the power to take, but not the right to take. I read this week of one trucking company that sent one of its employees by plane to another state in order to purchase trucks for the company. He was carrying about $200,000 in cash. The Department of Homeland Security and the TSA confiscated the money. They stole it and left him $10,000, saying that no one could have that much money unless he was involved in drug deals.

Interestingly enough, the company that sent him had evidence that it had withdrawn the money from its own account, as well as a purchase order for the trucks. Nevertheless, the government still refuses to return the money. A lengthy and very costly court case will probably develop, which means the company may lose the money because it would cost more to sue for it and recover it. So they may simply end up losing it, and it may destroy the company as well. Who knows? But this is what Matthew Henry is saying was happening here.

Those who have the power to take do so even though they do not have the right to take. Henry continues: "The land was full of violence as the old world was. The prophet cries out of violence, iniquity and grievance, spoil and violence in families, and among relations and neighborhoods and among friends and commerce and in courts of the law, everything was carried out with a high hand."

"And no man made any scruple of conscience of doing wrong to his neighbor." In other words, it did not bother him to steal, defraud, or extort, so that he could "make a good hand of it for himself." That was all he was concerned about. It does not appear that the prophet himself had any great wrong done to him. "In losing times, it fares best for those who have nothing to lose, but it grieved him to see other people wrong. And he could not but mingle his tears with those that were oppressed."

"Note, doing wrong to harmless people, as it is iniquity in itself, so it was a great grievance to all those that are concerned for God's Jerusalem or God's people who saw and who sigh and cry for the abominations of this kind."

He complains that the wicked doth compass the righteous: one honest man, one honest cause, shall have enemies besetting him on every side, with many wicked men in confederacy against it who run it down. Nay, one wicked man, with so many various arts of mischief, sets upon a righteous man that he perfectly besets him, or basically destroys him. So Habakkuk is crying to God because of all the corruption, violence, and wickedness that he sees.

The Complaint of the Righteous

It is much like Job in Job 19:7. Job said, "Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment." Job was saying, "God, why don't you do something? I don't understand why I'm suffering this because I've done no wrong." This is exactly what Habakkuk is saying: I do not understand this, because this is wicked and wrong, and You know it is wrong, and I know it is wrong.

What is exceedingly egregious in such a situation is that the wicked man has the power, while the righteous knows that everything happening is contrary to the law of God. Moreover, he knows that God cannot and does not approve of it in any way. In verse 13, Habakkuk says of God, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Then comes the question: "Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?"

Now, let me explain verse 13. Habakkuk says of God, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” We do know that God does behold evil, and God does look upon iniquity, but He beholds it and looks upon it to condemn it and to judge it. So what does Habakkuk mean? Here is what he means: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil approvingly, and canst not look upon iniquity condoningly.” In other words, God only is holy. Therefore, God cannot condone it. God cannot approve it.

Therefore he asked this question: “How in the world can you sit quietly when the wicked is devouring a man more righteous than himself?” It is much like the truth that is found in Psalm 7:9. I quote this passage almost daily, and I pray this in my prayers. The Bible says, “Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.” It is a lawful, biblical request to ask that the wickedness of the wicked come to an end. I do not know about you, but I would like to see the wickedness of the wicked come to an end in Washington, D.C., and in our state governments and in our local governments as well. That is what he said: “Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish thou the just.”

It is heart-rending for a child of God to see evil and wickedness prevail and triumph. He knows the suffering that it is ultimately going to bring.

Modern Parallels and Public Wickedness

Now, just as in Judah, Jerusalem, and Israel of old, there were divisions and strifes and factions, just like there are today in America, and just as there were separations in old Jerusalem, old Judah, and old Israel, so today there are also these same destructions that we are witnessing in our nations. We see the wickedness; we see the violence; and all of this is done in defiance of law and justice. Usually, when someone stands up and exposes all of the corruption, wickedness, and violence, he is rewarded by being arrested and imprisoned himself while the wicked go free and the corrupt ones remain unjudged. The truth of the matter is that those who are in power and those who are corrupt despise those who would expose them, rebuke them, and reprove them.

It says, speaking of the corruption, "That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought." Now let us go back to verse 21: "That make a man an offender for a word." Do you realize there are laws in this country that will make you an offender if you call someone by the wrong gender? It is like the man in England who was fired from his position. He was a doctor, and he was fired because he refused to call a six-foot bearded man "ma'am." That is what he is talking about: "That make a man an offender for a word."

What is the next part of this verse? "And lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate." What does it mean by reproving in the gate? Where did the king sit? Where did those in power sit? In the gate. In other words, it was an open government, so to speak. When someone came along to rebuke or reprove those sitting in the gate, those in power laid a snare for him. They did not like it; they despised it. Then, in the latter part of verse 21, he says, "and turn aside the just for a thing of nought." In other words, they would take a bribe to turn aside the innocent, the righteous, and the just.

Clearly, we have the same problems today that they had then. The major problem is that wickedness today is not only plain; it is also

public, and absolutely nothing is being done about it. It does not matter whether it is the Black Panthers intimidating voters at a voting station, even being armed there; Antifa riding through and blocking streets and attacking those who oppose them; or the corruption in Congress among those who have taken an oath to uphold the Constitution but violate it on every hand. The corruption is not only plain; it is public. Although sometimes it is exposed, it seems that absolutely nothing is ever done about it.

Jeremiah complained about the same exact thing that Habakkuk was complaining about. Jeremiah witnessed the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. In Jeremiah 9, beginning with verse 1, he says, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

The words basically say, "I've cried until I can't cry anymore. My prayer is that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I could keep on weeping because my people are being killed. They're being slaughtered." Then he says, "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them!" If he could get away from all that violence, corruption, and filth, he would do it. Why did he want to get away?

He explains: "For they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity."

"Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord." We have reached the stage in this country where lawlessness, wickedness, and rebellion are not only insolent and impudent; they are now brazen and in your face. It is utter, complete contempt and defiance, daring you to do anything about it.

Habakkuk complains that God is not answering him, that there has been no redress of grievances, and that nothing has changed. He says, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!" He asks, "Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention."

In effect, he is saying, "Why have you cast my lot in such a time and in such a place? Why do I have to sojourn among these people? Why do I have to live among all of this trash? Lord, I'm crying out to you. I'm begging you. I'm beseeching you. But Lord, you're not answering. You're not saving me. You're not saving the people. Lord, I don't understand this. You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity. So I don't understand it." He is crying and asking the Lord for redress of grievance.

How did Judah and Jerusalem get in such a state? What brought them to the position that violence, corruption, and wickedness were rampant and evident and had the high hand and the high position? More personally, what has brought America to the place where we are today?

There are at least two people in this room older than I am, but I know this: things have changed in this country since I was a boy, and they have not changed for the better. They have changed for the worse. What brought Judah and Jerusalem to the place where they were eventually destroyed? And what is bringing America to the place where we are being destroyed?

The Cause: The Law is Slacked

The answer is in verse 4: “Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.” First, let me explain what he means when he says, “Therefore the law is slacked.” The Hebrew word for law is Torah. Torah usually refers to the first five books of the Bible, the books of the law, but it actually means authoritative direction or authoritative instruction. The Torah, the law of God, is God giving us authoritative instruction and direction as to how we live, walk, and please Him.

Many times you hear people say, “That’s the law of Moses.” No, it is the law of God as given through Moses. Moses was merely the mediator, but it is indeed the law of God. Micah 6:8 says, “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?” Where do you learn to do justly? Where do you learn to walk humbly with your God? How has He shown you that which is good? The answer is from His law.

May I remind you that in Romans 7:12, the apostle Paul said, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” The gospel of grace, the gospel of justification by faith alone, has not nullified the law. That is why in Romans 3:31 Paul asks, “Do we then make void the law through faith?” Then he says, “God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” The law of God instructs us how to live, walk, and please Him; it tells us what is right and wrong, holy and unholy. The law also restrains. There is the restraining aspect of the law.

How does the law restrain? By the penalties God demands for violating it. The Bible says the murderer shall be put to death. In Genesis 9, God said, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” In Numbers 35:31, He says, “Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.” When a man murders, God says he is to be executed.

If a man were contemplating murdering another man and knew absolutely for certain that, once caught, he himself would be executed, it would tend to make him think twice before committing murder. The problem today is that a murderer knows he is probably not going to be executed. Usually he will receive a life sentence, which means he can probably be out in seven years. You know what the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 8:11? "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Someone today who murders, if he is found guilty and sentenced to death, may spend years on death row and still never be executed because there will be an appeal after appeal after appeal.

Years ago, probably forty years or more, I was preaching in a little country church and referred to Ecclesiastes 8:11. I said, "You know, in the old days when a man was guilty and found guilty, usually within a week, two weeks, or a month, he would be taken out and hanged." After I finished preaching, an older man came to me and said, "Preacher, young man, I attended as a boy the last hanging in this county." He said, "The man was condemned one week and he was hanged the next week." He said, "It made a mighty impression upon me." That is exactly what the Scripture says.

So the word Torah here refers to God's law. He says in verse 4, "Therefore the law is slacked." We are talking about the divine law, God's law. The Hebrew word is "pug," which literally means to be slacked, to be made feeble, to be made faint—to numb and to become benumbed. Since the word means to numb or become benumbed, we could also say that the law is frozen or paralyzed. When we think of the word slack, we mean that no one is paying any attention to it.

I used to ride horses all the time. I would drop the reins down over the saddle horn and not even hold them in my hand. The reins were slack; that meant the horse had to go wherever she wanted to go unless I picked them up and pulled her in. When we understand the word slack, we are saying that the law is where no one pays any attention to it. It has lost its vigor, its restraining and correcting power, because it is not being executed.

When you think of the word slacked here as being translated as numb, to become numbed, frozen, or paralyzed, you would have to think about Matthew 24:12, where our Lord said, “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” The Greek word is psucho, which literally means to grow cold or become cold, and it speaks of a waning love. It should be obvious today that our modern-day politicians, governments, philosophers, professors, educators, and even many ecclesiastics have no love for the law of God. They do not even think about it or desire it.

The divine law is the source of all right. When it becomes chilled or frozen in the people's hearts, the people become numb to that which is right and true. There cannot be any real justice or judgment apart from God's law. The sentence of human courts should be in

conformity to the sentence of the divine court. The sense of justice and the sense of right and wrong are powerless when the love of God's law is frozen or paralyzed in our lives.

Just this past week, I was listening to our Christian radio station, and Ravi Zacharias was on. He gave a quote that stuck with me. He had been watching a television program where Judge Robert Shapiro was being interviewed. The interviewer asked the judge about justice, and Judge Shapiro answered, “There is a moral justice and there is a legal justice. The courts always consider the legal justice.”

What he meant was very clear. Judicially speaking, legal justice is not necessarily moral. It has been cut loose from the law of God, and there is absolutely nothing moral about it. It now revolves more around political correctness, politics, and legalese. It can be legal and yet immoral because it has no reference to God. Morality, ethics, and righteousness have now fallen before the idols of political correctness and legal declarations.

Psalm 82 is a psalm to the magistrates and judges. It says, “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.” The word gods there does not refer to idols; it refers to the judges. In the book of John, our Lord interprets this because He referred to the judges as gods.

This is what he is doing. Look at the context: “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the judges,” because He is the Judge of all the earth. We know it is referring to the judges by verse 2: “How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked?” This is what judges are supposed to do: “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.”

But will judges do that? No. “They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.” When there is no moral justice and all there is is legal justice, it basically turns the world upside down and throws everything out of course. That’s exactly what he’s talking about in the book of Habakkuk.

Judges are to rule for God and uphold His law. Deuteronomy 25:1 says, “If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.” The judges shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked. How does a judge know what is righteous? How does a judge know what is wicked? Who determines what is just and what is unjust? Who determines what is righteous and what is wicked?

According to the Bible, it is God who determines, declares, and details that which is right and that which is wrong. Consider 2 Chronicles 19. King Jehoshaphat had done what he should do: he had brought the people back to God. “And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers.”

He also set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, and said to them, “Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.” What did he tell the judges? They were not judging for man, but for the Lord. The law has slacked. The law has become chilled and frozen.

Why? The answer is because our love for God and his law has been chilled and frozen. We have in our country today a very faint pulse. Old John Trapp, the Puritan, said this on verse 4: “Therefore the law is slacked. An elegant metaphor from the pulse, which in a dying man beats faintly. The law, that is God's law, is the pulse of the commonwealth. If it stir not at all, the commonwealth is dead. If it have but slow motion, the commonwealth is weak. But if it keep an equal course, the commonwealth is in good constitution. Lex lux, the law is a light, said Solomon. But the deluge of sin had well nigh put out this light in Israel, who was now grown in a manner lawless through long impunity.”

That is exactly what has happened in our country. Our country has grown lawless through long impunity because the law of God is neglected. In Habakkuk 1:4, there are three consequences for a

chilled, frozen, slackened, paralyzed law: “Therefore the law is slacked”; “and judgment doth never go forth”; “for the wicked doth compass about the righteous”; “therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.”

Consequences of a Frozen Law

The first consequence is that judgment doth never go forth. It is never pronounced, issued, pointed out, or performed. Justice is therefore arrested, distorted, and essentially denied. That which is moral, godly, and righteous falls in the street. Depravity, oppression, and tyranny hold sway.

Hold Habakkuk and turn back in your Bibles to Isaiah 59. We are considering the first consequence, judgment never going forth. Isaiah 59:13 says: “In transgressing and lying against the Lord.”

That is what people do when they deny His law: “In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God.” They speak oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. Judgment is turned away backward, justice standeth afar off, truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey. The Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment. What did he say? They had departed from the Lord, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. Judgment is turned away backward. Justice standeth afar off. Truth has fallen in the street. Equity, that which is right, cannot enter. This is the first consequence of the law being slackened: true judgment and true justice do not really go forth.

Secondly, the second consequence is that the wicked encompass the righteous. The Bible teaches clearly that when wicked men rise, the righteous hide themselves. Why? Because the wicked are in power and hate and despise the righteous. As a crown encircles the head, so the wicked encircle the righteous. They hem them in and seek to overthrow them; they surround and besiege them.

It is like walking on the street and coming upon a gang of thugs. What do they do? They surround you and fix it so that you cannot

escape. There is an interesting verse referring to our Lord in Psalm 22:16, concerning His crucifixion: “For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.” The dogs have compassed Him about.

In the New Testament, the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Herodians were always after Him, tempting Him and seeking to ensnare Him. Likewise, the Judaizers pursued the Apostle Paul. Even today, the wicked still plan and scheme to destroy the righteous. When some of these plans and schemes are exposed, I think, “Who in the world could ever dream up such a wicked, vile scheme?” Yet that is what they do; that is their life.

The Bible says in Psalm 31:18, “Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.” These are lying lips speaking against the righteous. Psalm 94:21 says, “They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.” And Proverbs 24:15 says, “Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous.”

“Spoil not his resting place.” So they lay in wait. And God says, “You better not do that.” The second consequence of the law being numbed, paralyzed, or slackened is the fact that the wicked encompass the righteous.

The third one is this. Look in verse 4: “Therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.” When the law is chilled, frozen, or slackened, not only does justice and judgment never go forth, and not only are the righteous encompassed with the wicked, but wrong or wicked judgment always proceeds. It is not truth that proceeds, but error; not that which is right, but that which is wrong; not that which is moral, but that which is legal.

Old John Trapp said it correctly: “A judge is to retain the decency and gravity of the law, to do nothing of partiality or popularity, to proceed not according to opinion or appearance, but as a just law is a heart without affection, an eye without lust, a mind without passion, so should he be. Else wrong and wrested judgment will soon proceed to the prejudice of the righteous.” Wrong judgment, perverted

judgment, means that innocence is condemned and the guilty are acquitted.

Thus the judges are swords in the bowels when they should be shields over the bodies of the righteous. What is he saying? When you have a corrupt judiciary, they end up slaying the righteous populace. This is exactly what Jeremiah was complaining about, exactly what Habakkuk was complaining about, and now we have it in Zephaniah. Zephaniah describes the same condition: “Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God.” So what is the result? “Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.”

"Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. The just Lord is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame." You look at the corrupt politicians. They are not shamed. I read something recently that compared Trump with other politicians. It said, "It's amazing that people will complain about a billionaire who became a public servant," talking about Trump, "but they do not complain about public servants who become millionaires." How do you become a millionaire making $80,000 or $100,000 a year? In order to become multimillionaires, there has to be corruption somewhere and somehow.

This is exactly what he is talking about in Zephaniah chapter 3. John Gill, the great Baptist expositor, summarizes the phrase "therefore wrong judgment proceedeth" this way: "And judgment doth never go forth, at least not right, to the justifying of the righteous, acquitting the innocent and giving the cause on the right side, condemning the wicked and punishing offenders as their crime deserves. It never appears as it should do. It is either not done at all or done badly or perversely. The cause is given on the wrong side against a good man and for a wicked man. All these things the prophet saw with grief and complained of to the Lord."

That is why Habakkuk is saying, "Lord, I do not understand why you are not answering me." Here is the question that must be asked

in light of Habakkuk's day and our situation as well: What shall we do? Or, as Ezekiel asked, "How then should we live?" Let me give you three answers. There could be plenty more, but I am going to give you three.

The Believer's Response

The first answer is this: We must trust in the Lord with all of our heart. Ultimately, everything that he allows is going to be for our good and for his glory. We know the truth of Romans 8:28: all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Not everything may be good to us, but everything is good for us. When judgment does not come forth from the seat of government on earth, it will inevitably come forth from the seat of government in heaven. We still must trust in the Lord with all of our heart.

Go back to Habakkuk chapter 3 and verse 17. Here is what he said: “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat. The flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

He said it does not matter what happens; he is still going to trust in the Lord with all his heart. If everything else fails, he is still going to trust in Him. The first answer is that we must continue to trust in the Lord.

The second answer is that we must continue to hold on to our ways, which are supposed to be the ways of righteousness. We are not going to change or follow a multitude to do evil. It does not matter what everybody else is doing or where everybody else is going. We are going to maintain the ways of the Lord.

The Bible says in Job 17:9, “The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.” It also says in Proverbs 24:16, “For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.” A just man may fall, but he gets up and keeps on doing that which is right.

The first answer is that we must trust in the Lord. The second is that we must continue to do that which is right. The third is that, like David, we must learn to love the law of God. David said in Psalm 119:113, “I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.” You know what a vain thought is? I can give you two illustrations.

Have you ever been praying, and all of a sudden some stupid, ridiculous, fleshly thought comes into your mind? Where did that come from? You were not even thinking anything like that; you were praying. That is a vain thought. It just happens in your mind.

Here is another vain thought: when someone thinks that he can sin and escape God's judgment. It is ridiculous. It is not going to happen. He who sins will suffer. It is a vain thought to think that somehow you can live your life in rebellion to God, trample His Word under your feet, despise the Lord Jesus Christ, and escape His judgment. David said, "I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love." Then in Psalm 119:163 he said, "I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love." Loving God's law means that we read it, meditate upon it, study it, and apply it in our lives, in the lives of our family and friends, and even in our society.

We are in the mess that we are in now because the love of God and His law has grown cold in our hearts. It has become chilled and frozen.

Conclusion: Whose Law Will Govern?

In 2 Chronicles 15:3, we read: "Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law." How was Israel without the true God? Because they did not have God's law, and they did not have anyone to teach God's law. Verse 4 says, "But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them." Then verse 5 says, "And in those times," referring to the time when they were without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law, "there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in."

"But great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for

God did vex them with all adversity." Why? Because of their rebellion against him and his law. Do you realize that when the law of God is chilled, slacked, or frozen, society disintegrates?

It is impossible to live without law. You cannot exist personally without law; you cannot exist as a family without law; and you certainly cannot exist as a society or a nation without law. It is not a question of whether you will have law. You will have law. The question is, whose law will you have? Will you have God's law or man's law?

Robert Winthrop was a former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives. In the nineteenth century, he said: "Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled either by a power within them or a power without them, either by the word of God or by the strong arm of man, either by the Bible or the bayonet."

If you will not govern yourself according to the law of God, the strong arm of man and the bayonet will come by and make you. So the question is, whose law will you have? Will it be man's law or God's law? Will you govern yourself, or will you be forcefully governed by another?

We are in the mess that we are in this country because the law of God has been frozen in the hearts of the people. We have become numb to wickedness, sin, unrighteousness, and ungodliness. Most people no longer have any idea what is right and what is wrong.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word and your truth. We ask, Lord, that you would indeed teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, and give us a warm, loving, and glowing heart for thy law and for thee, Lord. May we walk pleasing in thy sight. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 19

Speaking Against God

January 21, 2021

Introduction: The Reality of Speaking Against God

The title of the message is “Speaking Against God.” At least verse 19 is going to be our text. Psalm 78:19 says, “Yea, they spake against God. They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” If I were to ask for a volunteer in this room to stand up and speak against God, I doubt that I would get a volunteer. So I could just ask you several questions. The first one would be, would you criticize God? Would you question God? Would you condemn God? Would you speak against God? And the truth is that many do indeed condemn and speak against God on a regular basis. Have you ever even considered the fact that there are various ways to condemn God and to speak against Him without actually denying Him or cursing Him?

In fact, Elihu was one of the men that was with Job. He was not one of Job’s three friends that was condemned in the Scripture. But Elihu asked Job a specific question in Job 34:17: “Shall even he that hateth right govern? And wilt thou condemn him who is the most just?” So he’s asking Job, do you think you’re going to rule and reign, and are you going to condemn God? Now it seems as if this

perception by Elihu is that which worked him up so greatly in order to make him confront Job and his three friends. For in Job 32:2, the Bible says, “Now let me just simply point something out.” A failure to justify God means that you actually condemn God. And oftentimes, we condemn God by justifying ourselves. We justify our attitudes, we justify our actions, even when our actions and attitudes are contrary to Scripture, because we just simply declare ourselves right. We say that we are right in the sight of God, and we’re right in the sight of God’s law, even though our attitudes and our actions are completely contrary to God and His Word.

Justification as a Legal Declaration

Justification is a legal term. It is a term of the law courts, a forensic term. Thus, when we justify ourselves, what we are doing is legally saying that we are right and God is wrong. At the most, we are stating that we are right and God is wrong; at the least, we are stating that we have a right to violate His law, given our circumstances and situation. We are professing ourselves to be right and righteous in light of God and His law.

How do we know that justification is simply a legal declaration? The answer is because Scripture tells us. Deuteronomy chapter 25 and verse 1 says, "If there be a controversy between men, and they come to the judgment, and the judges judge them, then they, the judges, shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked." When the Bible says that the judges shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, it demonstrates that justification and condemnation are both legal, forensic declarations—that is, declarations of a law court.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that justification is an infusing of righteousness into someone, which is totally and completely unbiblical. When the Bible says that the judges shall justify the righteous, they are not making him righteous; they are simply declaring him righteous. When the Bible says they shall condemn the wicked, they are not infusing wickedness into him; they are simply declaring him wicked.

Proverbs 17, verse 15, says, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the

Lord." If justification is an infusement of righteousness into someone, why would God have a problem with that? The wicked would need to be infused with righteousness if he was wicked. No, it is a legal declaration. When a judge justifies the wicked, here is a man who is guilty, yet he is legally declared right before God in the law. Here is a man who is totally righteous and innocent, yet he is condemned—simply declared guilty before the law.

Justifying God vs. Justifying Self

Consider Luke 7:29: "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John." The Bible says that the people and the publicans justified God. If justification is an infusing of righteousness, how do you infuse righteousness into God? Moreover, since God is already perfectly and absolutely righteous, He cannot be made more righteous. How, then, did the people and the publicans justify God? The answer is very simple: they declared that God was right and they were wrong. They believed the preaching and teaching of John the Baptist. They said, God is holy; we are unholy.

God is righteous; we are unrighteous. God's word is true; our word is false. By justifying God, they were pronouncing God legally right, and at the same time they were condemning themselves. They acknowledged the truth about God and themselves rather than attempting to alter God's righteousness or excuse their own condition.

Now consider Luke 16:14-15, because here we are dealing with the Pharisees. Verse 14 says, "And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him." Jesus Christ was teaching and preaching, and when the Pharisees heard what He said, they mocked Him, derided Him, and made fun of Him. Verse 15 says, "And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts. For that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

He says, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men." What does that mean? It certainly does not mean that they were infusing righteousness into themselves. What they were doing was saying to Jesus Christ, "We're right and you're wrong." That is why they

mocked Him and derided Him. They were saying that God was wrong, while they and their traditions were right. They were actually justifying themselves before God, declaring before men, "We are right; God is wrong." Every time you justify yourself, you are basically condemning God, unless you are perfectly righteous; and there is no perfection in us.

With that in mind, return to Psalm 78:19. In this verse we have actually a condemnation of God, a failure to justify God. The Bible says, "Yea, they spake against God. They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?"

Speaking Against God Through Questioning

The Hebrew word for “spake” is dabar, which means to speak, to declare, to pronounce, and to utter. They were pronouncing, uttering, speaking, and declaring a certain thing.

Look closely at verse 19: “Yea, they spake against God, they said. Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” In this instance, speaking against God is questioning. It is questioning His ability, His power, His love, His mercy, and His grace. One expects the wicked to speak against God, against God's servants, and against God's people.

A good illustration is found in Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, in 2 Chronicles 32:16: “And his servants spake yet more against the Lord God and against his servant Hezekiah.” Here you have the wicked speaking against God. We understand that. We expect the wicked to condemn God, God's preachers, and God's people. But the interesting thing about Psalm 78 is that it is not the wicked condemning God or speaking against Him. It is His own covenant people.

Go back to Psalm 78 and look at verse 1: “Give ear, O my people, to my law.” “Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.” At the very beginning of the Psalm, he speaks about my people and wants them to hear his law and the words of his mouth.

As you read through this passage, look at verse 3: “which we have heard and known and our fathers have told us.” In verse 5, he established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel. In verse 9, “the children of Ephraim being armed and carrying bows.”

He is not only speaking about Jacob and Israel; now he is naming Ephraim. Ephraim happened to be the leading tribe of the twelve tribes, and sometimes in Scripture the word Ephraim is used to represent the whole of Israel. Thus, throughout this psalm, he is talking about his people.

How do we speak against God by questioning Him? Have we ever noticed that the first question asked in Genesis chapter 3 was speaking against God? For instance, turn back to Genesis 3, beginning with verse 1.

Biblical Examples of Questioning God

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." Watch: "And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Did God really say that? If God said that, there must be something wrong with Him. Here is not only a questioning of God, but an insinuation that God is either evil or is withholding something good from Adam and Eve, something He selfishly does not want them to have.

So when you skip down to verse four: "And the serpent said to the woman, Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know in the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." In other words, God just does not want you to become a god. He wants this position all for Himself, and therefore God must somehow be evil because He is withholding this fruit from you, though you need it and deserve it.

It is easy to see in this passage how the serpent speaks against God by using questions. There are several questions in the Bible where people actually spoke against God, perhaps not intentionally. For instance, in Mark chapter 9, a father has a child who is demon possessed. The disciples try to cast the demon out, but they cannot. Our Lord comes, and in verse 22 the father says, "And oft times it hath cast him into the fire and into the waters to destroy him." But look what the father asks our Lord: "But if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

Can you imagine someone asking the Lord Jesus Christ, "if thou canst do anything"? This may not have been a question asked to

insult our Lord, but its implications are very clear: Christ may or may not have the power to do anything. He may or may not have the love, compassion, or concern to do anything. Probably the question was asked out of sheer desperation, because the spirit often cast the child into the fire and water, the disciples had tried to cast it out and could not, and the father said, “if thou canst do anything, please help me.”

Certainly, from the standpoint of the deity of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ could do something; He could do anything that He wanted. The question, although probably asked out of desperation, is very poorly framed, and its implications are very clear.

In Matthew chapter 8, a leper posed a better question to our Lord: “When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” In other words, Lord, I know You have the power and ability. I know You are God. If You are willing, You can make me clean. It is up to You; it is Your will. I am submitting to You.

That is a much better way of asking a question of our Lord than saying, “if thou canst do anything.” At least the leper was confessing our Lord’s ability, His power, His mercy, and His grace, simply saying, “Lord, it is up to You.”

In Numbers 21:4, the Bible says, "And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea to the compass land of Edom, and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." Note the next verse: "And the people spake against God and against Moses, Wherefore have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread, the manna. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died."

Now look again at Psalm 78:19. Here is the question: "Yea, they spake against God. They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" First of all, the word "can" in this question refers to ability, power, strength, and might. It is a questioning of God's

omnipotence, of His power. Secondly, they ask, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?"

The word "furnish" is the Hebrew word arach, which means to array, to order, to prepare, to furnish, to set in place, and to arrange. Some of you may have a marginal reading with the word "order" for "furnish." It is one and the same thing. But once you understand that "furnish" or "order" means to arrange and set in order, it means even more. Can God furnish, or order, or array a table for a feast in the wilderness? In other words, they wanted a feast—something provided for them that was not necessarily necessary. They wanted it for their lusts and desires.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said this on the verse: "To question the ability of one who is manifestly almighty is to speak against him. These people were basing up to say that although their God had given them bread and water, yet he could not properly order or furnish a table. He could give them coarse food, but could not prepare a feast properly arranged so that they were ungrateful enough to declare."

As if the manna was a mere makeshift and the flowing rock stream a temporary expedient, they asked to have a regularly furnished table, such as they had been accustomed to in Egypt. Alas, how have we also quarreled with our mercies and querulously pined for some imaginary good, counting our actual enjoyments to be nothing because they did not happen to be exactly conformed to our foolish fancies. They who will not be content will speak against providence even when it daily loaded them with benefits.

So they asked in verse 19, “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” Can God give us a plentiful table in this wilderness, as well as drop manna about our tents? If He can, why does He not do it? And if He will not do it, why will He not do it? Is it because He does not have the ability or the power, or because He does not love us enough? This is how they spoke against God by asking, “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?”

The Sin of Unbelief

The sins of speaking against God are clearly revealed in this passage. First of all, there is the sin of unbelief. Although these people claimed to be the covenant people, they did not believe in God, or at least they did not believe in the God of Scripture. Verse 22 says, “Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation.” Unbelief is always expressed in questioning God. Whenever anyone questions God’s integrity, power, grace, ability, might, or love, it is a sign of unbelief.

There is a prerequisite for coming to God, revealed in Hebrews 11:6: “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

Now stop and think about this. "But without faith, it is impossible to please God." Faith is going to admit at least two things. Number one, that God is. And number two, that God does indeed bless those who seek Him. He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. So let me spell it out for you. Faith is belief. Doubt is unbelief. And usually questions stem from unbelief in that they express always some dimension of doubt or mistrust. One that does not believe always doubts. One that believes does not doubt. To question God is to doubt God. To believe God is to trust God. So the man who has faith believes, he trusts, he rests, and he waits. Now let me tell you something about faith. First of all, faith is not some blind hope.

It is not some crazy idea. I want you to look in your Bibles to Hebrews 11 and verse 1 because there are two verses or two words there that I want to emphasize for you. Hebrews 11 verse 1. Many of you may be able to quote the verse, but here it is. Hebrews 11 verse 1.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." So faith then is not some blind belief or hope. Faith is described as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

Now the word for "substance" is the Greek word hypostasis which actually refers to that which is under. So it refers basically to a foundation, something that is real, something that has substance, something that engenders confidence, trust, and assurance. Actually,

this word that deals with reality, substance, and existence is used in contradistinction to that which is unreal, imaginary, and deceptive. So he says faith is the substance. That is, it is something that is real. It is something that is genuine. It is foundational. And then he says, secondly, that it is the evidence of things not seen. Elegchos is the Greek word. And it refers to that which is a proof or that which is evidence.

So if I visited Steve and I asked him, "Do you own this house?" And he said, "Yes." And I would say, "Prove it to me." And he would reach in a drawer and pull out a title deed and said, "Here's the deed. And here it is in my name. I own this house."

Now, the reason I say that is that is exactly what the word "evidence" means. So you could read Hebrews 11 and verse 1 like this.

"Now faith is the substance. It is the foundation. It is the very basis of things hoped for, and the title deed of things not seen." Faith, then, is not some blind belief. It always rests solidly upon a foundation, and that foundation is the person and work of God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, as it is revealed in His Word. Unbelief speaks against God because it is a denial of God's person, His power, His position, and His perfections. Mark it down: anytime anyone begins to speak against God, it is an expression of unbelief.

The Sins of Ungratefulness and Unthankfulness

There is a second thing in Psalm 78. Not only is there the sin of unbelief expressed in questioning God; secondly, there are the sins of ungratefulness and unthankfulness expressed in questioning God. Psalm 78 says, "And forgot his works and his wonders that he had showed them." Then it names some of them: "Marvelous things did he in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea and caused them to pass through, and He made the waters to stand as a heap. In the daytime also He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire."

"He clave the rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock and caused waters to run down like rivers. And they sinned yet more

against Him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. Yea, they spake against God. They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock that the waters gushed out and the streams overflowed. Can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for the people?"

Here were a people so completely ungrateful and unthankful that it is unimaginable. They did not rejoice in his deliverance from Egypt. They were not thankful for his leadership and direction in the wilderness. They were unappreciative of his provision of manna and water. They totally ignored, forgot, and failed to remember all that God had done for them.

When we think of someone being unthankful or ungrateful, it disturbs us, but we have not really seen the depth of the evilness and wickedness of being ungrateful and unthankful. Scripture may surprise us: ungratefulness and unthankfulness are what we would call root sins.

What is a root sin? Pride is a root sin as well. A root sin is something deep down in your being which, when it blossoms and produces, produces many other sins. Pride always produces other sins, and so do ungratefulness and unthankfulness. They produce idolatry and immorality.

Romans 1:21 says, “Because that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

“For this cause God gave them up in vile affections, for even their women did change the natural use of that which is against nature, and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lusts one toward another, men with men, working

that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves the recompense of their error, which was meet."

Now here is my question: How did this start? Go back to verse 21. When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, and neither were they thankful. Their unwillingness to glorify God and their unthankfulness for everything God had done for them led to their idolatry and their immorality.

When you look at Psalm 78, God had graciously and marvelously provided for His people. He fulfilled their needs in every way and delivered them from Egypt. In Exodus 19:4, God said, "You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bear you on eagles' wings and brought you unto Myself." He destroyed the Egyptians, bore Israel on eagles' wings, and brought them unto Himself.

God's Provision and Israel's Discontent

When you read Psalm 78, you may think that all these people had was bread and water, and that you would get tired of that yourself. But they did not simply have bread and water. Deuteronomy 8, beginning at verse 2, says, "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know. Why? That he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

"Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years." So God preserved them physically. He preserved their clothes, and their feet did not swell from all the walking.

Nehemiah 9:21 says, "Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing, their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swell not." The Bible said they lacked nothing.

Psalm 78:23–25 says, "Though he had commanded the clouds from above and opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven,

man did eat angels' food, he sent the meat to the full." The manna was called the corn of heaven and angels' food. It was the most nutritious, delicious, and satisfying provision, and God rained it down upon them. However, they were not content with what God had provided. What they wanted was a richer and more plentiful diet than what God had given.

Deuteronomy 32:9 says, "For the Lord's portion is His people." "Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, in the waste howling wilderness. He led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth about her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings. So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him."

"He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields. He made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats with the fat of kidneys of wheat, that thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. But what happened? But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness. Then he forsook God, which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation."

God provided for them everything that they needed. Instead of being grateful, appreciative, and thankful for the Lord's bountiful provision, they murmured and complained about it, questioning God's ability and asking whether God could do more for them than He was already doing. Now look in Psalm 78, beginning at verse 17.

"And they sinned yet more against Him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lusts. Yea, they spake against God. They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? He smote the rock, and the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide flesh for the people?"

Now, remember that these people came out of Egypt with their flocks and herds. Moreover, God was supernaturally providing for them. They had meat. But please listen to me: it is not merely that

they wanted meat; they wanted specialized meat. Suppose Joshua invited me to his house for a meal and put a New York strip steak in front of me. If I looked at that steak and said, "I don't eat anything but ribeyes. I don't want this junk," he would probably say to me what my father used to say: "Son, you've got two choices. Eat it or do without." Probably that is what Joshua would tell me: "You can either eat that steak or you can do without. It doesn't bother me one bit."

These people had already had a taste of some special meat. If you go back in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 16, beginning with verse 12, their specialized meat happened to be one that I particularly like, though I eat it very seldom: quail. Notice Exodus 16, verse 12: God said, "I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, speaking to them, saying, At eve you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God. And it came to pass that at the even, the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay round about the host." So God sent quails.

When you go back to Psalm 78, it does not say quails, but it does say feathered fowls, or fowls of wing. It could have been any bird, I suppose. Since they had already gotten the taste of quail, it could have been that. Verse 27 says, "...he rained flesh upon them as dust, and feathered fowls as the sand of the sea, and let it fall in the midst of their camp round about their habitations." So it was feathered fowls, some type of bird—probably, probably quail. I do not know. At least we know it was some type of bird.

So, what he has done now is give them their desires. Let me point something out that you and I need to understand: ungratefulness and unthankfulness lead to fleshly lusts and desires. You are not content with what you have or satisfied with the provision God has given you. You always want more. If you never appreciate what you are given, what you receive, you will always want more and always demand more.

The Insatiable Nature of Lust

There is nothing more disgusting than an unthankful, ungrateful, unappreciative ingrate. We tend to think that the welfare society

began with LBJ. That is not true. The welfare society has always existed, and here it is in Psalm 78, because these people could not be satisfied with everything God had given them. They wanted more, and in such a way they provoked God, tempted God, questioned God, criticized God, and condemned God: "Can God do this?"

"What if he can do it? Why does he not do it? If he does not do it, it means he does not love us as he ought to. If he does not love us as he ought to, he cannot be God." Do you realize that is where we are today? That is the welfare society. Look at all of the welfare, quote-unquote, that people receive across this country. They are never satisfied. They always want more and more and more. The more you give, the more unappreciative they are, and the more they demand that you give them. They call upon their god to give it to them, which happens to be the government. Yet the government cannot give to some unless it takes from others. So you have this welfare society right here.

Notice that they are saying, "We have got to have this specialized meat. We have got to have it. We are never satisfied until we get what we want." Ungratefulness, unthankfulness, and unappreciativeness always lead to lusts. Look at the adultery and fornication in our country. Why? Men do not appreciate their wives, and wives do not appreciate their husbands. They are not thankful. I am simply pointing out that these are root sins.

Now let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to Proverbs 30, and look at verses 15 and 16. Someone says, "But you do not understand; my wife is not young." She may not be young, but at least you have a wife. You may not even have a wife. "My wife is no longer attractive." She is still your wife. The truth is, you had better be thankful, because you could not have a wife.

An ungrateful, unappreciative, unthankful heart always leads to lust. Look in Proverbs chapter 30, verses 15 and 16: "The horse leech hath two daughters." What is a horse leech? It is simply a bloodsucker, a leech. A leech sucks blood like a tick. In fact, I am sure you have heard the definition of politics: "Polly" means many; "ticks," bloodsuckers. So politicians are a lot of bloodsuckers.

That is basically true. But note: “The horse leech hath two daughters.” Who are the two daughters? Some say greed and avarice; some say lust and desire. It does not matter. The truth is right here: “The horse leech hath two daughters, crying, Give, give.” There are three things that are never satisfied; four things say not, It is enough. What does not say it is enough? The grave always wants more. The barren woman always wants more children. The earth that is not filled with water represents drought. And fire says it is not enough; it burns up everything and wants to burn up something else.

I suppose we could add one more truth to this passage: someone with an ungrateful, unthankful, and unappreciative heart always wants more. It is never enough for such a person. Understand this: unbelief and ungratefulness always lead to ungodliness. Ungodliness is the ultimate speaking against God. You are no longer speaking against Him merely with your mouth, but with your life and actions. You are deliberately dishonoring and disobeying Him. An ungodly man always dishonors and disobeys God and His law. It all stems from a failure to glorify God and to be thankful.

Applications: Trust, Thankfulness, and Warning

Let me make some applications. First, do not misunderstand me. There is a huge difference between asking God questions for information, learning, direction, and wisdom, and questioning His integrity, morality, power, ability, love, grace, and wisdom. When we begin to ask, “Why have You done this? Why is this happening in my life?” it may not be a request for wisdom or direction. It may be a complaint: “Lord, why did You let this happen? If You were as smart as I am, You would never have allowed this to happen.” That is elevating yourself above God and dethroning Him. There is a vast difference between asking God questions and questioning God—a vast difference.

The Second Application

The second application is this: I would urge you to read through Scripture and note how many times we are exhorted, admonished, and commanded to be grateful and thankful. It may really surprise you.

If you understood one simple truth, it would change your life forever, I believe. What is that one truth? Here it is: God does not owe you anything. Anything you get from Him is grace and mercy. He does not owe you life, health, or finances. He does not owe you anything. You have sinned against Him. You are a sinner. You owe Him; He does not owe you.

If you understood the fact that God does not really owe you anything, then you might come up with the same attitude that Jacob came up with in Genesis 32 and verse 20, when he said to God, "I am not worthy of the least of Thy mercies, and of all the truth which I have shown in Thy service. I'm not worthy of the least of thy mercies." How many of you deserve to wake up this morning? How many of you deserve to have help? How many of you deserve to be breathing right now? The answer is none of us.

If we ever understood that God does not really owe us anything, He would tend to make us really thankful and grateful and appreciative for everything that He has done for us. Philippians 4:6 sums up everything that I have just told you today: "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

There are three things in this verse. First of all, be careful for nothing. Secondly, be prayerful about everything. And thirdly, be thankful for anything.

You say, "Should I be thankful that I stumbled and broke my toe?" Yes. It could have been your foot. It could have been your leg. It could have been your back. It could have been your neck. Yes, you can be thankful for anything. So be careful for nothing, prayerful about everything, and thankful for anything.

Now, I want you to go back to Psalm 78. Hold Psalm 78; we are coming back there one more time. Here is the last application, and I want you to see it. Listen to me.

Do not allow your ungratefulness, your unthankfulness, to lead to your own destruction. Remember, they craved feathered fowls—and they got them. Look at verse 27:

“He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea. He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round

about their habitation. So they did eat, and were filled. For He gave them their own desire."

"They were not estranged from their lusts, but while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel." Sometimes, when you get your desire, it ends in death. Do not speak against God. Do not question God. Do not criticize God. Do not condemn God. Do not be in unbelief. Do not be ungrateful and unthankful, for that always leads to lust, to idolatry, to immorality, and to wickedness.

Thank the Lord every morning, every night, and during the day. Thank Him. Do not speak against Him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, we confess and acknowledge that there have been times that we've spoken against Thee. We've questioned Your providence and what You have allowed to happen to us and our families. We've doubted Thee. We ask for repentance and faith. Help us to be thankful, grateful, and appreciative for everything that You've done for us, Lord. Without Thee, we are nothing, and without Thee, we cannot live one second. Help us to confess that we're not worthy of the least of Thy mercies, especially of Thy truth that You've showed unto us. Help us to praise Thy holy name. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 20

Are You Ready And Able To Rule?

June 27, 2023

Introduction to Zechariah 3 and Prophetic Telescoping

Zechariah chapter 3, beginning with verse 1:

“And he showed 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? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by. And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, If thou wilt walk in my

ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then shalt thou also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by."

The book of Zechariah is much like the book of Daniel in that it is a book of visions that must be interpreted and applied. Thankfully, when we compare Scripture with Scripture, the applications become easier. We can see not only how these visions applied to God's people in the Old Testament, but also how they apply to each of us in the New Testament era.

Prophetic telescoping works in several different ways. The easiest way to explain it is by considering the prophecies concerning David and Solomon, and Abraham and Isaac. When God speaks about David's son, in the immediate context He is speaking about Solomon; but in the long distance He is speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the greater Solomon. Likewise, when He speaks about Isaac and the promises given to Isaac, He is still speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the greater Isaac. That is why the New Testament begins in Matthew 1:1 with these words: "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

When you are looking through that telescope and see Solomon and Isaac, way back beyond them is the Lord Jesus Christ. The same is true when it comes to prophecy, because there are a lot of prophecies that relate to the immediate context and to the people mentioned in the Old Testament. But if you look down that prophetic telescope, you can see how it applies in New Testament times, and especially to the Lord Jesus Christ as well. The book of Zechariah has, indeed, immediate reference to God's people in the Old Testament; that is for sure. But it also has that telescopic reference to each of us in the New Testament. In fact, Zechariah 1:13 shows that these good and comfortable words spoken to these Old Testament saints are applicable to New Testament saints: "and the Lord answered the angel that talked with good words and comfortable words."

Chapter 1 basically deals with the overthrow of the enemies of God's people and teaches them concerning the ultimate restoration of His people. You find that in Zechariah 1:18-21. But when you

come to Zechariah 2, this is absolutely confirmed. In Zechariah 2:4, it says, "And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." Clearly, then, there is restoration spoken of here. The restoration of God's people is not incidental to the passage; it is explicitly confirmed in the prophecy.

The Depravity of Israel in Zechariah's Day

The problem that existed during the days of Zechariah is the same problem that exists today, and that problem is the depravity of man. Because Israel at this point had sinned exceedingly grievously against God, there was rebellion, wickedness, and moral defilement. Any and all of these were sufficient to forfeit all the blessings of God. It was not simply the people who were immoral and wicked; it was every stratum of society. The corruption extended throughout the whole society and left no class untouched. Ezekiel supplies additional light on this situation. In Ezekiel 22, beginning with verse 25, God says, "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion, ravening the prey."

Ezekiel declared concerning the people, the priests, the princes, and the prophets: “They have devoured souls, they have taken the treasure and precious things. They have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated my law and have profaned mine holy things. They have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither do they show difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.”

“And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.”

Notice that in verse 25 he spoke against the prophets, in verse 26 against the priests, in verse 27 against the princes, and in verse 29 against the people. It was not simply the people who were wicked and ungodly. The government was wicked and ungodly—that is, the princes. The religious establishment was wicked and ungodly—the prophets and the priests as well.

There were a few priests who remained faithful to God; however, most did not. In Ezekiel 44, all of the Levites had basically forsaken God, gone astray, and entered into idolatry. In verse 10 God says, "And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols, they shall even bear their iniquity." Thus, the whole Levitical priesthood had basically deserted God for idolatry, and God said they would bear their iniquity.

Yet verse 15 speaks of the few who remained righteous: "But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God." There were only a few priests who remained true to God.

Generally speaking, every stratum of society was totally, completely wicked, defiled, and corrupt. Corruption was on every hand, and every individual happened to be guilty as well. The corruption of the priesthood and the people in Zechariah chapter 3 is represented by Joshua. Remember, the priest represented the people. The people told Moses, "Let not God speak to us. You speak to us in the place of God." That is what the priest did in those days. The priest represented the people to God, and they prayed to God for the people. Joshua also represented the priesthood because he was the high priest. Thus Joshua stands, as the Bible tells us, in filthy garments. The filthy garments symbolize the sin, pollution, and depravity in which the people and the priesthood existed at that particular time.

When you read the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, these two prophets stirred up the people to rebuild, or to build, the second temple, which was completed in 516 BC. In other words, everybody had become remiss. Everyone had become totally concentrated upon

themselves instead of God, instead of God's Word, and instead of God's worship. Consequently, God used Haggai and Zechariah to stir them up.

The priesthood especially was facing a dilemma. This dilemma was occasioned by those individuals who happened to be awakened by the Holy Spirit. A sinner may be content in his sin, enjoying his sin, loving his sin, and wanting more and more sin. Then the Holy Spirit of God comes along, convicts him, and opens his eyes. Now he sees his sin in a totally different light. He sees that sin is meriting punishment; yes, he sees it meriting death. He sees how corrupt and polluted he really and truly is, and consequently goes into what you and I would call depression and despair.

And we have to ask why. The answer is very simple: someone who is awakened to their sins, the depth of their depravity, and the corruption of their morals and their person will usually ask themselves, “What am I doing here? How could God possibly use me? How could God possibly use anyone like me?” God is infinitely holy and righteous, and here I am. I am unholy and unrighteous. I have no right to stand before a holy God. I have no right to worship Him. I have no right to minister unto Him whatsoever.

Now I know the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 7, talking about man ministering, that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency and the power may be of God and not of man.” Well, that is true. God does use men. However, when I think of my sins and the sins of other men—men that I have known intimately, godly men—and yet I have to ask this question, “How in the world could God use me? How in the world could God use anyone?”

When you stop and think about this, there are no perfect men. There are no perfect preachers. There are no perfect pastors. How can we progress? How can we continue? How can we overcome? How can we be in a position where God could seriously use us? The answer to those questions is found in Zechariah chapter 3. What applies to Joshua the high priest in Zechariah chapter 3 applies to a greater degree to you and I in the New Testament. It occurs and applies to us today.

How can I say that? You have to understand that as we consider Joshua and the priesthood, you also have to remember that we are priests. In fact, the Bible tells you in 1 Peter 2 and verse 9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, listen to this, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." What did He say? You are a royal priesthood. Then, in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 6, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." And Revelation chapter 5 and verse 10 says, "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

Accused, but Acquitted

When you look at mankind by nature, at yourself by nature, and see that you are sinful, polluted, fleshly, and worldly, you would have to conclude that we are not fit to rule anything. We cannot even rule ourselves. How could God ever use us? How could we ever be an instrument in His hands? Once again, Zechariah answers this. There are three things to see about Joshua, the high priest.

Joshua the High Priest: Accused but Acquitted

First of all, he was accused, but acquitted. Zechariah 3:1 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." Three individuals are mentioned. First, there is Joshua the high priest. Second, there is the angel of the Lord, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearing of Christ in the flesh in the Old Testament.

It may be in a vision, but He is there. He is known as the messenger of the covenant as well, in Judges chapter 2 and verse 1 and Malachi chapter 3 and verse 1. Third, there is Satan, the accuser of the brethren. "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Yahweh or Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him."

Let me point out an important truth. All my life I have heard the saying, "Satan flees when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." It sounds good, but this verse seems to disprove it. Here is Joshua

the high priest, Satan standing at his right hand, and the Lord Jesus Christ there; Satan was standing to resist him. He was not fleeing in this instance.

Matthew Henry, speaking of the word Satan, says, "Etymologically, the enemy, as in the New Testament, your adversary the devil; etymologically, the accuser. It is a proper name of the evil one, and yet its original meaning, the enemy, was not lost."

Hence, here, as in Job, his malice is shown in accusation: "The accuser of our brethren who accused them before our God day and night." In Job, the accusations were false. Here, doubtless, they are true. He accused Job of what would have been plain apostasy. Joshua and Zerubbabel had shared or given way to the remissness of the people concerning the rebuilding of the temple and the full restoration of the worship of God. For this, Haggai had reproved the people through them. Satan had a real charge on which to implead them, since the whole series of visions also relates to the restoration from the captivity. The guilt for which Satan impleads him with Jerusalem, and Jerusalem in him, includes the whole guilt that had rested upon them, so that for a time God had seemed to have cast away His people. Satan stands at his right hand, the place of a prosecutor, to show that he had none to save him and that he himself was victorious.

The sad truth, both then and now, is that many of the accusations made against the saints of God by our enemy and by our enemies are not false, malicious, or slanderous. Many of them are true. Have you ever stopped to entertain this thought? There is no Christian, and there is no preacher or pastor, who cannot be assailed in some areas, because everyone has his own weakness. We know our weaknesses, our lusts, our desires, our private thoughts, and our private temptations.

These have been a source of sorrow and remorse to those who have genuinely repented and have a great desire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, we must pray frequently and fervently: "Lord, make me obedient. Lord, make me holy as Thou art holy. Renew my mind. Give me the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ." Every true Christian has sincerely regretted all the sins he has committed.

I have often said that I would not want to live my life over unless I could live it over with the knowledge I have now. I would be willing and able to correct many things, but that is not possible. The point is that many godly men have mourned not only that they have sinned, but that they still have a sinful nature in one sense of the word.

Our flesh is flesh, and our flesh will never be anything but flesh. There is no such thing in us as holy flesh. That is why I believe one of the reasons we read in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 50, where the Apostle Paul said, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." No, flesh and blood is not going to inherit the kingdom of God.

Therefore, this old fleshly body will have to fall off, and there will be a new glorified body. Sadly, the truth of the matter is this: we are most often rightly accused by the adversary. We must confess most of the time that we are guilty. We are sinners, we have sinned, and we will continue to be sinners until the day of our glorification.

In verse 1 he is accused. In verse 2 he is acquitted: "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?" So Satan is rebuked, and our Lord says, "This is a brand plucked out of the fire." The enemy was instantly rebuked by Jesus Christ, and Christ confessed that Joshua was one of his own, being a brand plucked out of the fire. Jude, verses 22 and 23, says, "And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Here the Lord rebukes Satan and says he is acquitted. Matthew Henry said, "Satan is here checked by one that has authority, that has conquered him, and many a time silenced him. The accuser of the brethren, of the minister and of the ministry, is cast out."

His indictments are quashed, and his suggestions against them, as well as his suggestions to them, are shown to be malicious, frivolous, and vexatious. “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.” The Lord—that is, the Lord our Redeemer—rebuke thee; that is, the Lord the Creator. The power of God is engaged for making the grace of Christ effectual.

The Lord restrain thy malicious rage, reject thy malicious charge, and revenge upon thee thy enmity to a servant of his.

Those that belong to Christ have him to appear vigorously for them when Satan appears most vehemently against them. He does not parley with him but stops his mouth immediately with this sharp rebuke: “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.” This is the best way of dealing with that furious enemy: “Get thee behind me, Satan.”

What we have here in reality is a picture of Romans 8:33–34: “Who shall lay any thing 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.” Joshua is accused, but then Joshua is acquitted. The reason for Joshua's acquittal, and the reason for our acquittal, is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He paid our sin debt. We were guilty as charged and rightly accused, but he intervened as our substitute, as our sacrifice. We were personally guilty and legally guilty and deserved death. But by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we were given life, while the opposite is true concerning Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was personally innocent but was made legally guilty when our sins were imputed to him.

Here is Joshua accused and acquitted. Now we, in Jesus Christ, stand in his absolute perfection. We stand in his obedience, in his righteousness, and in his holiness. God looks at us and pronounces us not guilty. We are acquitted only because we are in Jesus Christ.

Joshua the High Priest: Polluted but Purified

So Joshua was accused but acquitted. There is a second truth here: he was polluted but purified. “Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” We are not only acquitted, but also purified; not only justified, but also sanctified; not only forgiven, but also adorned.

We've been given that which is clean and white, the righteousness which is from Jesus Christ alone. So those to whom justification is

imputed, sanctification is also imparted. Our Lord does not forgive us and then leave us in the filthiness of our sin in our flesh. He gives us a change of garments. According to Romans chapter 6, we're raised in newness of life. That means all habits have to be put off. They've passed away. We put on new habits, new attitudes, and new ways of thinking. As we learn to think biblically and scripturally, it is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from all sin. That's why the Bible says in 1 John 1 in verse 7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Once we have been cleansed, it is our duty and responsibility to walk holily, to walk in sanctification, and to walk in purity. That is why in 2 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 1 the Bible says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." So it is our duty and responsibility, after God has acquitted and purified us, to keep ourselves clean.

Here's what John Trapp said: "I will change thy rags into robes, thy stained clouts into clean clothing. Thou shalt be arrayed with the righteousness of the saints, that twofold righteousness, imputed and imparted, that of justification and the other of sanctification. That is an undercoat, and this is an upper, that clean and pure, this white and bright, both must be had from Christ, who is made unto us of God, not only of wisdom, but of righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Surely as our apparel is not bred of us, neither grows out of our bodies, so neither does this change of raiment in the text. But the blessed Lamb of God clothes us with his own fleece, which is long enough and large enough to cover all of our defects and deformities and to set us forth to the admiration of the angels. As he taken upon himself our sins, so he put upon us his righteousness. This is a blessed exchange indeed, a sure pledge of our peace with him and with God by him."

Ruined but Reigning

That is exactly what He does for us in sanctification. Joshua has been accused and acquitted. He has been polluted but purified. Now we come to the fifth truth: he was ruined but reigning.

"And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by." The clothing of Joshua was the putting on of the priestly garments of the high priest, along with the fair mitre.

Joshua the High Priest: Ruined but Reigning

You must remember that this is also known as the covenant of peace. In Numbers 25, Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, turned God's wrath away from the children of Israel by being zealous for the Lord God of hosts and accomplishing what Moses and the others had failed to accomplish. God said, "I will give unto him my covenant of peace." While Joshua was being clothed with the high priest's garment, he was completed by placing this mitre upon his head. It was a holy crown with a plate of gold inscribed, "Holiness to the Lord."

Exodus 28 describes these garments: "And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office." Then verse 36 says: "And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things..." This is the mitre they put upon Joshua the high priest.

Joshua has been accused but acquitted—justified. He was polluted but purified—sanctified. He is ruined now, but he is reigning—glorified.

Like Joshua in Zechariah chapter 3, we now as God's people have been justified, sanctified, and glorified in Jesus Christ. Someone may object, "Well, we are not yet glorified. We are still waiting for the redemption of our body. We are still waiting for that glorified body." While that is absolutely true in one sense of the word, in another sense of the word, our glorification is so absolute and so certain that it is spoken of as completed. So if you look in Romans 8, in verse 30,

look at what is said: "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Now here is the interesting thing about verse 30. When you look at the word predestinate, the word called, the word justified, and the word glorified, you find that all of these words happen to be aorist active indicatives in the Greek. Past tense, true, already done, already accomplished. God predestinated us. God called us. God justified us. And God glorified us. Yes, our glorification is complete in the sense that it is a done deal.

Go back to the book of Zechariah, chapter three, and look at verse seven. Why are we talking about Joshua? Why are we talking about the fact that he was accused but acquitted, polluted but purified, ruined but now reigning? Look in verse 6 first. He said, “And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua,” or at least commanded or charged Joshua. Then look at verse 7: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts.” This is the charge, the protestation: “If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.”

The Condition for Ruling: Obedience and Submission

There were conditions to Joshua being a faithful high priest. There were conditions for Joshua being a righteous ruler. He said, “If thou wilt walk in my ways, if thou wilt keep my charge, then…” In other words, if you want to rule, if you want to reign, you must be submissive. You must be obedient. Obedience is required. Obedience to God’s law, to God’s way, and to God’s charge is absolutely necessary. Why? Because we are to rule and reign under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and in submission to him, because he is the branch. Our rule is to emulate his rule. We are only ready to rule and reign when we are obedient and submissive.

To Christ. In 2 Samuel 23:1–3, we read: “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."

Anyone who is going to rule must rule justly, and you can only rule justly if you rule biblically and in the fear of God. That means you must be submissive. Now watch this in verse 7: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH."

Christ the Branch and the Building of the Temple

Who is God's servant, the Branch? Of course, it is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jeremiah 23:5 says: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Jeremiah 33:15 says: "In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land." So yes, you could say, well, that's Solomon.

Yes, but there is a greater than Solomon, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Zechariah 6:12 says, "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord."

What in the world is the Branch going to do? He is going to rule righteously, that is for sure, but he is also going to build the temple of the Lord. We are not talking about a resurrection of Solomon's temple, or the second temple, or Herod's temple. We are talking about the real, genuine temple. The Branch is the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is building the temple of God.

Ephesians 2:19-22 says, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the

household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

So the Branch, the Lord Jesus Christ, is building the temple of God. Jesus Christ has accomplished that which the Old Testament prophesied. The prophecy of Amos, in Amos chapter 9, is another passage concerning this work, and Acts chapter 15 also speaks to it.

Amos 9:11 gives this prophecy: "In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old."

What did God just say? "In that day," that final day, that day of the righteous Branch, "I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old."

The Council of Jerusalem is taking place in Acts 15. In Acts 10, Peter and some of the men went to Cornelius, a Roman soldier, and preached; all these people were converted. In Acts 11 they questioned Peter, and then rejoiced, saying, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” Now they are having this council because some of the Judaizers are saying, “It’s alright to believe in Jesus, but in order to be saved you just need to be circumcised and keep all the law,” and so forth.

Acts 15, beginning in verse 14, says: “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.” That refers back to Acts 10 and Acts 11, where Peter gave his account. Then it says: “And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”

That which was prophesied in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament. Here Joshua the high priest in Zechariah chapter 3

has real implications for you and me today. If we are kings and priests unto our God, and if Jesus Christ has raised up the tabernacle of David, why are we not ruling? Why are we not reigning? Why are we not even ready to rule?

Why We Are Not Ruling: Disobedience

Do you remember what the Lord said to Joshua in Zechariah 3 and verse 7? "If you will keep my charge, if you will keep my ways, then, then." In other words, nobody is going to rule and reign as long as they are disobedient and wicked and ungodly. Nobody is going to have the power of God upon them. No one is going to be the head apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look, first of all, in Zechariah chapter 8 and verse 16. Remember, God said we must keep all of his charge and all of his ways. He says, "These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates."

You have to have a righteous and just society in government. "Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord."

Now go back to Zechariah 7, beginning in verse 8: "And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts."

It is not amazing. God said the reason you are not ruling is because you are not obedient. The reason you are not reigning is that you are not obedient. God told these people exactly what to do, and

they refused to do it. He said, “This is the lex talionis. This is the law of retribution. This is where God makes the punishment fit the crime.” He cried through His prophets and told them what to do, but they refused to hear. Therefore, when they cried to Him, He would not hear them.

We will never rule, and we will never be ready to rule, until we learn to be submissive and obedient. God will never use us to rebuke others unless we are willing to be rebuked ourselves. He will never use us to lead others unless we are willing to be led by Him. He will not use us to bring others into submission unless we are willing to be submissive ourselves, nor lead us to bring others to obedience unless we are willing to be obedient ourselves.

So here is my first application: We ruin our lives, ourselves, our families, and the priesthood by our disobedience.

We expect God to hear us, yet we refuse to hear him. If I could convey to you just 10 percent of the phone calls I receive from people who are in trouble—Christian people, husbands and wives, families—it would blow your mind. I do not even tell Alice; I do not want her burdened down with it. We live in our own little world and do not understand that there are people around us who are falling apart: husbands, wives, families, and children. Everything is all right in our little group, but we do not see it.

I am simply pointing out the fact that if we want peace and prosperity, it is only going to come through obedience. Look back in Zechariah chapter 3, verse 10: “In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.” The phrase “under the vine and under the fig tree” is a symbol of God's blessing of peace, prosperity, happiness, and comfort. God's message is clear: you are not going to find peace, prosperity, happiness, and comfort until you learn to submit and obey. It is just that simple.

However, obedience in time and in history is inevitably going to bring back and bring around at least a certain amount of peace and prosperity. We do not understand the implications of this. God is never going to use us to rule until we are learning to be submissive and obedient. It is just that simple.

Application: Readiness for Societal Collapse

Now I want to make an application. Think about this. There is a motive in bringing this message. The truth is that we are facing a most certain societal and governmental collapse. Our society has already disintegrated. Our economics have disintegrated. Our government is a farce. There is no justice in the Justice Department. The laws are not laws; they are contrary to the Constitution and contrary to the Word of God.

We are not even ruled by rulers. We are ruled by a secret group that controls the rulers. I am simply saying that we are going downhill faster than you can imagine. So here is my question: What if society collapsed completely tomorrow? With about a million and a half illegal immigrants, factions—or who knows what—let us say it collapsed tomorrow. You would have no local government, no state government, and no federal government. You would have nothing because everything had collapsed.

Your money would be basically worthless, and you would be facing dog-eat-dog people. They are killing, raping, and looting, and it does not bother them. That is the way they were raised; that is how they live.

Do you remember the message I preached years ago, titled "Theology and Culture"? I used an illustration from the movie Black Hawk Down. I saw that movie years and years ago on television. We had not had television in years, so I do not know how long it had been. When the movie came on a second time, I decided to watch it again, and I was glad I did because there was a scene I had missed the first time.

One Black Hawk pilot was captured alive. He was beaten to a bloody pulp, tied up, and thrown in a corner, with blood coming down everywhere. The warlord of Mogadishu looked at the pilot and said, "You stupid Americans. You think you can come over here and cram your democracy down our throats and keep us from killing each other, when killing has been a way of life for us for a thousand years?" What about all these people who are coming in? Killing has been a way of life for them for thousands of years. These gang

members do not care anything about your life, my life, or anybody else's life.

I'm simply pointing out the fact: if this collapsed tomorrow, here is my question: Who can hold a community together? Who can start a society back the way it should be? The answer is only those who know the Word of God and how to apply it; those who are willing to do what is right; those who are willing to submit to obedience and to the truth of the Word of God and build upon it.

It is time that we become serious about submission and obedience to the Word of God—in our individual lives, our family lives, our church lives, our societal lives, and every area and sphere. God will never use us to rule and reign until we are willing to be ruled over and reigned over by Him. That is why He said, "Joshua, if you keep My charge, if you keep My way, then I'll give you places to walk in. I'll give you places to rule in. I'll give you places to take charge over."

But you must learn obedience and submission.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, I pray that You would encourage and strengthen us, and give us a holy determination to be submissive to Thee and to Thy Word, and to guide our lives according to Thy precepts and principles. Stir Thy people; move us, O Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 21

Peace With God

July 27, 2025

Introduction: The World and the Unsaved Lack True Peace

Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Let me make two very emphatic statements. First, the world does not know or have true peace. Second, the unsaved do not have, neither do they know, true peace.

You may think that these are harsh and hard statements, and yet they are biblical statements and they are true. Our Lord said in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” He said He is going to give His peace, but not as the world gives peace.

John Gill made this comment on the verse: “The peace that Christ gives is true, solid, and substantial. The peace the world, the men, and things of it give is a false one. While they cry peace, peace,

sudden destruction is at hand. The peace of the world is at best an external one. But the peace that Christ is the giver of is internal.

The Nature of Christ's Peace vs. Worldly Peace

“The peace the world affords is very transient, unstable, and short-lived. But the peace of Christ is lasting and durable. The peace of the world will not support under the troubles of it. But the peace which Christ gives cheerfully carries His people through all the difficulties and exercises of this life, and as they differ in kind, so likewise in the manner of giving, and in the persons to whom they are given. The world gives peace in words only. Christ gives peace in deed. The world gives feignedly. Christ gives heartily. The world gives for its own advantage. Christ gives for His people's sake. The world gives its peace to men of it, to the ungodly, none to the godly whom it hates. Christ gives His not to the wicked, for there is no peace to them, but to the saints who are the excellent in all of the earth. And so there is a vast difference between the peace of the world and the peace of Christ.”

The Word of God says concerning the wicked in Isaiah chapter 57, verses 20 and 21: "But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." So neither the world nor the wicked have what you and I would call real, genuine peace.

When the Bible speaks of peace, in any chapter or verse where we read of peace or the peace of God, the word for peace is eirene. It literally means a state of tranquility, peace, harmony, and accord. Look at verse 1. He says, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." We understand, based on this partial statement, that peace with God comes through justification by faith. But then he said, "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Justification by faith comes through the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore peace comes from the Lord Jesus Christ as well.

Peace with God Comes Through Justification by Faith in Christ

What he is telling us very clearly is that peace with God is made only through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His work. It is His salvation. It is

His reconciliation and His propitiation that brings us into a state of peace with God. Therefore, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We must take careful note of this truth: true peace comes through justification by faith, and justification by faith comes through the Lord Jesus Christ. So you can ask, what is justification?

I want to give you a definition. I preached on this many years ago; in fact, I preached a whole series based upon this one definition. Here it is: "Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardoneth all of their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight, not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ by God imputed unto them and received by faith alone."

Justification, then, is an act of God's free grace unto sinners whereby He pardons us, accounts us, and accepts us righteous in His sight. But notice: "not for anything wrought in them, or anything done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Jesus Christ by faith imputed unto them," and received by faith alone. The peace of God comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Distinction Between Peace with God, Peace of God, and Peace in God

Peace with God comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ, because there is a difference between peace with God and the peace of God. They are not the same. You have to have peace with God before you can have the peace of God. Then you are going to end up with peace in God.

Philippians 4 and verse 7 says, “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The peace of God. In Colossians chapter 3 and verse 15, he said, “And let the peace of God rule your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” Then, in 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 23, the Apostle Paul said, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

It is the peace of God, then, that is to rule us. It is the peace of God that is to sustain us in times of trouble and turmoil. It is also the peace of God that leads us into sanctification and holiness.

I was astounded when I started looking at the peace of God in Scripture. It is astounding to me how many times peace is mentioned in reference to God. In Romans chapter 14 and verse 17, he says, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” It is not anything external. It is not in ceremonies or rituals. No, it is in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Thus, the child of God should be able to have peace even in the most turbulent and troublesome times. Not only do we have peace, but we also have joy, because we understand that our Heavenly Father is in absolute, total, and full control. We understand, of course, Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.”

The peace of God, peace with God, and the peace that God gives have a very prominent place throughout Scripture. Most of you will remember that when the angels announced the birth of our Lord in Luke chapter 2 and verse 14, they said, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Peace was therefore proclaimed at the birth of Jesus Christ. In Acts chapter 10 and verse 36, the apostle said, “The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: He is Lord of all.”

We are talking about peace with God, and shortly we will include in it the peace of God and peace in God. Notice in Romans chapter 15 that three titles are given to God. In verse 5 we read, “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.” First of all, He is known as the God of patience.

Then, in verse 13, we read, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.” He is known as the God of hope. Finally, in verse 33, Scripture says, “Now the God of peace be with you all.

Amen." Notice the progression given here in the name of God. I believe it is set in what you and I would call gospel order.

We must know God, first of all, as the God of patience before we can ever know Him as the God of hope. We must understand that God could have justly and righteously smitten us down many, many times. But God was very patient, and He forbear with us and brought us to the place where He not only regenerated us, but gave us repentance and faith and converted us.

Once we have been converted and see how awfully we have sinned against Him, and how God could have righteously and justly smote us down but did not, we understand that He is the God of patience. Since He has saved us, we can see that He is the God of hope, because the only God that exists is the one true living God, and the only hope we have is in Him. Once we know Him as the God of patience, then we may know Him as the God of hope.

Once we know Him as the God of patience and the God of hope, then we may know Him as the God of peace. I believe this is in gospel order in Romans chapter 15. The interesting thing is that it is also the God of peace who gives us victory over our enemy, Satan. Romans 16:20 says, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." Thus, the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

I have stated previously that we must have peace with God before we can have the peace of God. What I want you to see is the implication in Romans 5:1 when Paul speaks of peace with God. He says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This verse not only implies, but teaches very clearly, that there was a time in our lives when we did not have peace with God. The implication is that we were His enemies.

We were fighting and waging war against Him. We were ungodly, rebellious, defiant, and recalcitrant. I will go further and say that we even hated Him; in fact, we despised Him. Our hatred and despising were manifested in the fact that we transgressed His law, trespassed against His authority, and basically sought to overthrow Him. We

wanted to dethrone God and enthrone ourselves. Our hatred, then, was manifested in despising His sovereign authority. We thought and acted as if He did not have the right to tell us what to do, what not to do, how to live, and how not to live.

The Pre-Conversion State: Without Strength, Ungodly, Sinners, Enemies

Paul develops this thought in Romans chapter 5: before we had peace with God, we were basically at war with Him. Notice verse 1 once more: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now go to verse 6. He says, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” He is telling us what we were before we had peace with God. The very first thing he says in verse 6 is that we were without strength.

The Greek word is asthenes, and it means that which is weak, that which is infirm, that which is feeble, that which is impotent. Here I want you to see fallen man's depravity as well as fallen man's insanity. So the Bible tells us that fallen man is without strength. He's absolutely helpless. He cannot extricate himself from his slavery to sin. He cannot lift himself up by the bootstraps, so to speak. He cannot cease sinning. He cannot please God. He is nothing more than a slave to his sins and to his lusts. He is without strength. He cannot escape from the misery of his situation. So he's weak, infirm, feeble, and impotent. And listen to this. Here's his insanity.

And yet he makes war against the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God of the universe. How could anyone hope to fight against God and succeed? Fallen man is so depraved, ignorant, and blind that he believes he may successfully fight against God and ultimately win. No, God says we were without strength. We could not do one thing. Notice what else he said in verse 6: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Asebes is the word used here to describe the ungodly. It means those who are impious, destitute of reverential awe toward God. It also means those who condemn God.

Why do sinners condemn God? Why do they say that God is unjust, unkind, or unloving? The answer is that they want to justify

themselves. If you are right, God is wrong; if God is right, you are wrong. The only way you can justify yourself is by condemning God and saying that He is unkind, unjust, unrighteous, and wrong, while you are right. That is what our Lord said to the Pharisees in Luke chapter 16, verse 15: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your heart: for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." The very best man can ever produce is still an abomination in the sight of God. This tells us what we were before we were converted by the grace of God.

We were without strength and ungodly. That is not all. Verse 8 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He did not merely die for the impotent, the weak, and the ungodly; He also died for sinners. The word for sinners is hamartolos, meaning those devoted to sin, bound to sin, slaves to sin, eminently sinful and wicked. It means that you are in the power of sin and under its grip, as well as under sin's penalty. The word also basically means to miss the mark.

It is like an archer shooting an arrow at a target, but the arrow falls short. The sinner is not trying to please God; he is trying to please himself. He is not wanting peace with God; he is wanting to make his own peace. He falls short because he is devoted to sin, totally and completely enslaved by it.

He tells us that we are not only without strength and ungodly, but that we are sinners—those who are enslaved and devoted to sin. Our Lord said, I think it is John 8:34, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” In other words, “servant” is the Greek word doulos, which means a slave of sin.

Notice something else in verse 10. We are not only without strength, ungodly, and sinners; we are actually the enemies of God—or that is what we were. Let that sink into your mind for a moment. Have you ever contemplated the fact that every unsaved person is an enemy of God? That is astounding. It ought to explain a lot of things going on in this world. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

The Greek word is echthros. It refers to individuals who are hateful, hostile, who oppose God, and who are armed in rebellion and waging war against Him. They seek to overthrow His sovereign authority, His commands, His government, and His people. We were actual enemies of God, enemies in our minds as well as in our bodies.

Everything stems from the mind. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:18, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Every unsaved man is an enemy of God, and specifically an enemy of Jesus Christ. Paul also said in Colossians 1:21, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." The wicked works came from the wicked mind, but he said we were enemies in our mind.

Adam and Christ: Two Federal Heads

Before we had peace with God, we were without strength, ungodly, sinners, and enemies of God. The Apostle Paul proves all of this with one simple truth given in verse 12: "Wherefore, as by one man"—that would be Adam—"sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The last phrase, "for that all have sinned," is an aorist passive, which means all of us sinned one time, once and for all. When did all men sin once and for all? In the fall. We fell when Adam fell.

Death is a result of sin, and death passed upon Adam's posterity because he was our legal head and our representative. What he did, we did. When he fell, we fell. We lost everything in Adam, and death is the penalty for our sins.

You have to remember that there is original sin. That is what he is talking about here. There are also actual sins. We originally sinned in Adam; consequently, we were born into sin, and therefore we actually sin. Let me make this clear: You do not become a sinner because you sin. You sin because you are a sinner. The very proof of original sin is the fact that everyone actually sins.

In Romans chapter 5, you have many comparisons and contrasts between the first Adam and the last Adam. In verse 14, he says:

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.” How in the world could Adam be a figure of Jesus Christ? Adam sinned, and Adam fell, yet the Bible says he was a figure, a type, of Jesus Christ. He was a figure and a type of Jesus Christ.

First of all, I will answer this: He was a federal head and a representative of a people. We were all in Adam. You say, “I don't think it is right because of what one man does and the rest of us are held accountable.” Then throw out all the government in the world, because whatever our representatives do, we do. Whatever they get us into, we are gotten into by them, and we are ended up to our eyeballs.

If you do not like Adam being our head and falling, then you will not like Jesus Christ being our head and saving us. Look in your Bibles at 1 Corinthians chapter 15, beginning with verse 45: “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” Adam, the man, is called the first Adam.

Jesus Christ is called the last Adam. You say, "But I know many people who've been named Adam since Jesus Christ." I know a number of them myself. So how can Jesus Christ be called the last Adam? Because these are the only two men who have ever sustained a federal headship and a federal representation of a people. Martin Luther, the reformer, said, "There are only two men in the world, Adam and Christ, and everyone else hangs from their belt." In other words, you are either in Adam or in Christ. Jesus Christ is called the last Adam because there is never going to be anyone else who will sustain a federal headship and representation of a people.

Let me boil it down to this: Unless you are saved by Jesus Christ, you are never going to be saved, because He is the last Adam. There is not going to be anyone else. First Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 45, says: "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they

also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Notice that the first man is of the earth, earthy, and the second man is the Lord from heaven. How can Jesus Christ here be called the second man, when obviously millions of people lived from the first Adam to the Lord Jesus Christ? He is called the second man only because He is the second one to sustain that federal headship in relationship chronologically in time. Thus He is called the last Adam and, in this instance, the second man as well.

Now go back to Romans chapter 5. You see that there are comparisons and contrasts between the first Adam and the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. But consider the horrible state in which we found ourselves because of Adam's sin. Someone said, "Well, if I had been in the garden, I would not have eaten that forbidden fruit." Yes, you would have.

You would have done exactly what he did. So, yes, he was our representative. Romans 5:6 says, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” This little phrase “due time” indicates and intimates that it was the perfect and most fitting time for Jesus Christ to come and accomplish salvation and redemption. In due time, although we were without strength, although we were ungodly, although we were sinners, although we were the enemies of God, in due time, in the appropriate time, Jesus Christ came and brought salvation.

Another similar passage is found in Galatians 4:4–5: “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.” The word “fulness” refers to the Greek word pleroma, and it refers to that which is full, complete, and fulfilled. In other words, Jesus Christ came at the appropriate time in history, fulfilling God’s timing and decree. Jesus Christ was not one minute too early, and he was not one minute too late. He came exactly on time, in due time, in the fulness of time.

Romans 5:6 says again, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Then verse 8 says, “But God

commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Not when we deserved it, not when we had gotten ourselves right, and not when we had cleaned ourselves up, but when we were sinners, Christ died for us. First Corinthians 5:7 says that "even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." Jesus Christ was not only our substitute; Jesus Christ was our sacrifice.

Romans 5:8–9 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The phrase "being now justified by his blood" gives us a very practical definition of justification. The word justified, you could say something simple like this:

It means "just as if I'd never sinned." In fact, the Greek word is dikaioo, meaning to make righteous, to declare or announce righteous. What did Jesus Christ do? He died in our stead, as our sacrifice, but He did something prior to His death: He fulfilled the law of God perfectly. He obeyed the Father in every specific iota. He said in John 8:29, "For I do always those things that please the Father." Jesus Christ then worked out an absolute perfect righteousness as well.

Christ's Work: Propitiation, Reconciliation, and Intercession

Jesus Christ propitiated the Father. The Bible tells us three times that He is our propitiation. The word propitiation is from the Greek word hilasmos and literally means to appease, to placate, to satisfy. Here is God's righteous anger and wrath hanging over our heads like a Damocles sword. God is ready to strike us because we are weak, ungodly, impotent, sinners, and His enemies. He is ready to cut us off. The Lord Jesus Christ comes and dies as our sacrifice and substitute. The Father accepts all the work of Jesus Christ, raises Him from the dead, and imputes the righteousness of Christ to the believing sinner, while imputing the sins of the believing sinner to Jesus Christ.

When God declares us righteous, He sees us in Jesus Christ. He sees the perfect obedience of Christ and the perfect sacrifice of Christ. He sees us in the place of Christ because the righteousness of

Christ has been imputed to us, and He pronounces us right, just, and righteous in light of that broken law. Because of the person and work of Jesus Christ, He satisfied the wrath, anger, holiness, and justice of God. Then He expiates, or washes away, our sins.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." We were reconciled. What do you do between two people who hate each other, fussing, fighting, and feuding all the time? You try to make them reconcile. Once they reconcile, there is peace and harmony. There is no more fussing, fighting, and feuding. Our Lord then reconciled us to the Father.

You remember when Adam sinned, what did he do? He ran and hid. We have been running from God ever since Adam ran from God. If I were to ask you why Jesus Christ came and died, I know you could say, "To save sinners." I understand that, but specifically, 1 Peter 3:18 says that Jesus Christ died, the just for the unjust. Why? To bring us back to God, to reconcile us, to make us friends. In the first Adam, we ran from God; in the second Adam, we run to Him.

In other words, He reconciles us. The word katallasso literally means to reconcile those who are at variance. It is to be returned to favor and to be received into favor. So God is reconciled to us through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, He receives us back into His favor. Moreover, this word in the Greek happens to be a second aorist passive indicative, which means it happened once, once and for all. We were passive; we had nothing to do with it. It is an indicative, which means it is an absolute truth. It was done for us through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, look at verse 10 again: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Isn't that an interesting thought? We are not only saved by the death of Jesus Christ; we are also saved by the life of Jesus Christ. How can that be? Hebrews 7:24-25 says, "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Has it ever dawned upon you that Jesus Christ is praying for you? When you sin—yes, you sin, and so

do I—not necessarily purposefully, deliberately, and premeditatedly, but you sin because you are a sinner.

But when you sin, the Lord Jesus Christ is still praying and interceding: "Father, forgive them, they're mine; my blood covered that. Father, help him to be holy, help him to be godly, help him to do that which is right. Lord, speak to him, direct him." The Lord is interceding for us. He ever liveth to make intercession for the saints. We are saved not only by His death, but also by His life.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." You can look at the word atonement and read it as at-one-ment. It just so happens that atonement is the same word as reconciliation in verse 10. Thus we have received the reconciliation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The reconciliation comes through the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only do we have peace now; we also have joy because we have been reconciled to our Heavenly Father. "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. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

We have that joy as well. Now see how the Apostle Paul concludes here in Romans chapter 5. In verse 18 he says, "Therefore as by the offence of one"—that would be the first Adam—"judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so"—here is the comparison—"by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." All who were in Adam became condemned; all who are in Jesus Christ are justified.

Verse 19 says, "For as by one man's disobedience"—that is, Adam's—"many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Those who are in Adam, and those who are in Christ. Moreover, "The law entered, that the offence might abound"—that is, that it might appear more exceedingly

wicked—"but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." In other words, grace outran and outraced sin: "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now go back to Romans 5:1: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Faith is the instrumental cause. Jesus Christ is the meritorious cause. God the Father is the original cause, and the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause. Here, then, are the person and work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in our reconciliation and atonement.

Applications: Submission, Humility, and Obedience

Here is the first application: It is impossible to have peace with God if you have not thrown down your weapons of warfare and rebellion against Him. Peace comes through reconciliation, submission, and obedience. If you are still fussing, fighting, feuding, and condemning God, you have never been reconciled. Once you are reconciled, you have peace with God. There is no more fighting against Him, waging war against Him, trying to dethrone Him, overthrowing Him, or fighting against His government.

You submit to Him and surrender to Him. Peace comes through submission, reconciliation, and obedience. There are so many people today who constantly fight against God in their minds and conduct. No. When God reconciles you through the Lord Jesus Christ, you throw down your weapons of warfare and are willing to bow to Him.

The truth that I have just enunciated should humble your soul greatly, because here is a declaration of what you were before God saved you. You were without strength. You were impotent. You were weak. You could do absolutely nothing to save yourself. You were ungodly, a sinner devoted to your sins, lusts, desires, and whatever you wanted. Moreover, you were an enemy of God. You fought against Him. You hated Him. You despised Him. When man meets his enemy, the natural thing for him to do is to kill him. God could have justly and righteously killed each one of us. But He was the God of patience to us and the God of hope to us. When He patiently endured our sins and then brought us to Himself in Jesus Christ, we saw the hope that we have, and He became the God of peace.

Think about this. In Romans chapter 5, verse 6, we read, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Not when we were godly, obedient, or wanted to be saved. Verse 8 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He died for us and reconciled us in verse 10 when we were enemies.

God could have righteously and justly cut us off years before we were ever converted. The amazing thing is that God is sovereign and omniscient. He looked down through eternity and knew everything we were going to think and do, every act we were ever going to commit, every sin, every act of rebellion, and all of our enmity against... He knew all of that and set His love upon us regardless, and sent His Son to die for us.

That should humble us. We need to repeat what Jacob said in the book of Genesis: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." We need to say, "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."

You have to know God as the God that you have made peace with, the peace of God. You have to know the peace of God so that you may know peace in God. Once you know peace with God and the peace of God, then you have peace in God. In 2 Corinthians 13, verse 11, we read, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” Live in peace. You cannot live in peace unless you have had peace with God and the peace of God. It is peace with God and the peace of God that enables us to live in peace.

We are not fussing and fighting with each other. We are not condemning and harassing each other. We are living in peace. Galatians 6 and verse 16 says, “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”

According to Galatians 6 and verse 16, who is the Israel of God? The answer is those who walk according to this rule. The word “rule” in the Greek is the word kanon. We would call it canon—not C-A-N-N-O-N, that is the kind that shoots, but C-A-N-O-N. We

speak of the canon of Scripture, the Old Testament canon, or the New Testament canon. The word canon means a measuring stick, a measuring rod, or a standard.

"As many as walk according to this rule"—that is, the Word of God—"peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." The Israel of God are those who walk according to the Word of God, those who walk according to His rule. Notice that peace is connected with obedience. That is what He said: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." If you want peace, you must walk in obedience. You must walk according to the rule, the standard, the Word of God.

Psalm 119:165 says, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." Great peace. You can have peace when the world is falling apart, when your family is fighting and feuding, and when everything is going crazy around you, because you love the Lord and His Word. You are going to live by His Word, be obedient, and not be upset.

You understand that people are sinners and are going to sin, but that does not mean that you have to. Keep your heart and do what is right. Once you have peace with God, you need to understand the peace of God. Once you have the peace of God, you need to live in peace with God and with His saints. Living in peace comes from having the peace of God and peace with God. Without peace with God, there can be no peace of God or peace in God. We need to pray that God will give us His peace in our lives, the peace that comes through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next time you are reading through the New Testament, particularly, notice how often Paul said, "and may the peace of God be with you," or "the God of all peace." The Word of God makes a great deal about peace, and we need to learn the peace of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We ask, Lord, that You would be pleased to speak to our hearts and help us. Help those on the prayer list. We remember Joshua and Felicia and their family. We pray for Michael, Dan Lee, and Jessica today, and also for Don and Anita Thomason. We pray for each of these on the prayer list and ask that

You would undertake for each one of them. We give Thee praise in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Source Notes

Chapter 1: Application & Practicality of Biblical Law
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Chapter 5: What Does It Mean To Pray In Jesus' Name
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