WEAVER BOOKS

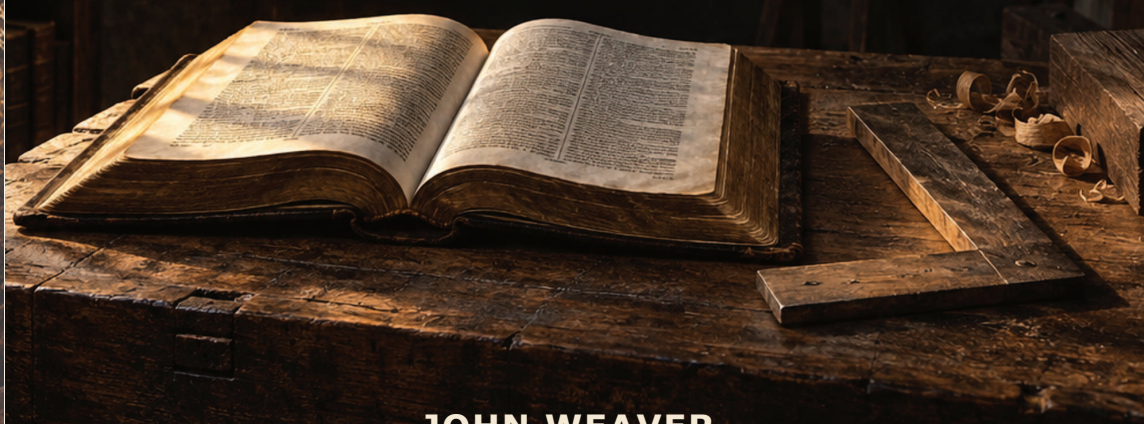
BIBLICAL STUDIES

# Romans: Law, Obedience, and Sanctification

## Volume 1

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

PSALM 119:105



**JOHN WEAVER**

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

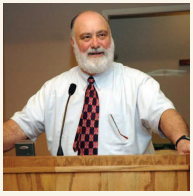
*Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

**1 PETER 1:16, EXCERPT**

John Weaver considers law, obedience, and sanctification through Romans and related Scriptures. These messages examine the relationship between a profession of faith and the conduct of Christian life, calling readers to consider holiness in concrete terms. Volume 1 is one of two volumes; the complete chapter sequence is preserved across the set. This volume contains corrected chapters 1-21.

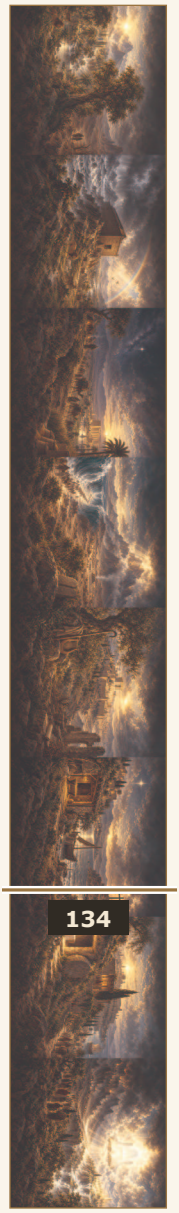
*“Prayer is not an attempt to change the mind of God or to change the will of God.”*

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 134**

WEAVER BOOKS

# Romans: Law, Obedience, and Sanctification

Volume 1

Corrected chapters 1-21

John Weaver

Weaver Bible College

LIBRARY BOOK 134

# Romans: Law, Obedience, and Sanctification

Volume 1

John Weaver

Weaver Books
Weaver Bible College

Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Corrected review edition - October 4, 2026. Repeated full sermons have been consolidated; chapter numbers, contents, indexes, and study-guide reading ranges follow this corrected edition. Original transcript variants remain preserved in the editorial archive. Final editorial and publisher approval is still required. This is Volume 1 of two, covering corrected chapters 1-21. Both volumes use one matching study guide.

# Contents

Chapter 1: Christ and the Adultrous Woman 11

Introduction and Controversy of the Passage . . . . . 11

Biblical Love Fulfills the Law . . . . . 12

The Scribes and Pharisees . . . . . 13

Identity and Character of the Accusers . . . . . 13

The Dilemma: A Trap for Jesus . . . . . 15

Jesus' Response and the Law of Jealousy . . . . . 18

The Accusers Depart and the Woman's Forgiveness . . . . . 22

Civil vs. Religious Forgiveness . . . . . 25

Church Discipline and the Living Dead . . . . . 27

Conclusion: Justice, Mercy, and Lawless Enforcers . . . . . 30

Chapter 2: Feared by Your Enemies 33

Introduction: The Nature of Fear . . . . . 34

Illustrations of Fear vs. Faith . . . . . 35

The Source of Blessings: God Causes . . . . . 39

God Works Mediately Through Obedience . . . . . 40

God Commands and Establishes . . . . . 43

Gospel Obedience and Perseverance . . . . . 46

The Promise: Enemies Will Fear You . . . . . 48

Biblical Examples of God's Protection . . . . . 49

Chapter 3: Why God Does Not Answer Most Prayers 51

Introduction: The Problem of Unanswered Prayer . . . . . 51

The Example of Josiah: Hearing God's Word . . . . . 51

Six Prerequisites for Effective Prayer . . . . . 54

The Principle of Lex Talionis in Prayer . . . . . 64

Scriptural Proof of the Principle . . . . . 65

Application: Obedience as the Key to Answered Prayer . . . . . 68

Chapter 4: Who's Paying Attention 71

Introduction: The Problem of Not Paying Attention . . . . . 71
The Blame-Shifting Condemnation of God . . . . . 73
The Proposition: When You See Oppression and Perversion of Justice . . . . 74
Biblical Condemnation of Oppressing the Poor and Perverting Justice . . . . . 75
The Prohibition: Marvel Not . . . . . 78
The Context: Keeping Our Words and Vows . . . . . 79
The Preeminent One: God is Higher and Regards . . . . . 83
Applications: Pay Attention to Your Own Business and Trust God's Sovereignty 85
Chapter 5: Committing the Sin of the Jews 91
Committing the Sins of the Jews . . . . . 91
Introduction and Scripture Reading . . . . . 91
The Jews Crucified Christ . . . . . 92
Why Did the Jews Crucify Christ? . . . . . 94
Jesus Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King . . . . . 96
The Exaltation of Christ as Lord and Messiah . . . . . 98
Believing Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God . . . . . 101
Rejecting God's Kingship in 1 Samuel 8 . . . . . 103
Implications of 'We Have No King but Caesar' . . . . . 104
The Consequences of Rejecting God's Kingship . . . . . 109
Consequences of Rejecting God's Kingship . . . . . 109
National and Personal Application . . . . . 110
Conclusion and Prayer . . . . . 113
Chapter 6: 1 Sanctification & Sexual Purity 115
Sanctification and Sexual Purity . . . . . 115
Introduction and Historical Context . . . . . 115
Background of Thessalonica and the Epistle . . . . . 117
The Problem of Sexual Impurity . . . . . 118
An Exhortation . . . . . 118
Exhortation by the Lord Jesus . . . . . 118
Practical Necessity: We Must Be Taught . . . . . 120

Personal Application: How to Walk and Please God . . . . . 129
Progressive Reality: Abound More and More . . . . . 132
Chapter 7: 3 Sanctification & Sexual Purity 135
Sanctification and Sexual Purity . . . . . 135
Introduction and Review . . . . . 135
The Will of God Revealed . . . . . 136
The Affirmation: This is the Will of God . . . . . 138
Other Specified Areas of God's Will . . . . . 140
The Necessity of Obeying Clear Commands . . . . . 141
Motivation: The Eternal Reward of Doing God's Will . . . . . 142
The Explanation: What is Sanctification? . . . . . 142
Sanctification Central to Salvation . . . . . 145
Applications and Conclusion . . . . . 149
Chapter 8: I Will Love the Lord 151
Introduction to Psalm 18 . . . . . 151
David's Determination: 'I Will Love the Lord' . . . . . 153
God's Prior Love as the Foundation . . . . . 153
Love as an Act of the Will . . . . . 155
The Three Elements of Biblical Love: Attitude, Affection, Action . . . . . 156
Attitude: Knowing God's Person and Providence . . . . . 156
Affection: Setting Our Hearts on Things Above . . . . . 160
Our Actions Demonstrate Love . . . . . 161
Action: Love Demonstrated by Obedience . . . . . 162
Applications: Examining Our Love and Obedience . . . . . 166
Chapter 9: Total Warfare 169
Introduction and Review of Psalm 18 . . . . . 169
David's Dominion . . . . . 170
Principle 1: A Time for Mercy and a Time for No Mercy . . . . . 171
A Time for Mercy and a Time to Show No Mercy . . . . . 171
God Is Not Always Merciful . . . . . 175

Principle 2: Total Warfare Is Sometimes Lawful and Right . . . . . 179
Total Warfare . . . . . 179
Psalm 137 and the Destruction of Babylon's Children . . . . . 182
Principle 3: Psalm 18 Applied to Christ's Return . . . . . 184
Christ's Return in Flaming Fire . . . . . 187
Applications: Gratitude and Warning . . . . . 188
Chapter 10: The Pleasure of the Lord 191
Introduction: The Question of Pleasing God . . . . . 191
God's Promise to Those Who Seek His Pleasure . . . . . 191
The Meaning of 'Taketh Pleasure' . . . . . 192
God Takes Pleasure Only in His People . . . . . 192
Chosen by Free Grace, Not Works . . . . . 193
Salvation Given Before the World Began . . . . . 195
Justified Freely, Without a Cause . . . . . 195
Why God Takes Pleasure: For His Name's Sake . . . . . 196
Believers Should Take Pleasure in God . . . . . 197
God Condescends to Take Pleasure in Us . . . . . 198
Victory Assured for His People . . . . . 199
What Pleases God: Fear and Hope . . . . . 200
Chapter 11: How to Love The Lord With All Your Heart 207
Introduction: The Great Commandment . . . . . 207
The Obligation to Love God . . . . . 208
Common Interpretations of Loving God . . . . . 209
Strength and Might in Loving God . . . . . 209
Love Is Not Sentimentality . . . . . 211
Love Connected to Commandments in Deuteronomy 6 . . . . . 211
Jesus Quotes the Shema in Mark 12 . . . . . 212
Old Testament Evidence: Love Is Obedience . . . . . 213
New Testament Evidence: Love Is Obedience . . . . . 214
Love Is Demonstrative and Evidenced . . . . . 216

Practical Applications of Loving God . . . . . 219
Conclusion: The Measuring Stick of Obedience . . . . . 223
Chapter 12: It Takes More Than a Profession of Faith 225
Introduction and Scripture Reading . . . . . 225
Salvation by Grace Alone, Not Works . . . . . 225
The Problem of Empty Profession . . . . . 227
False Profession in Jeremiah's Day . . . . . 228
Confession Must Come from the Heart . . . . . 228
The Holy Spirit Authenticates True Confession . . . . . 230
The Insult of Disobedience . . . . . 232
Swearing Falsely Profanes God's Name . . . . . 236
Jesus' Warning Against Empty Profession . . . . . 237
Conclusion: Obedience Evidences Genuine Faith . . . . . 238
Chapter 13: How to Enrage Hypocrites and Pharisees 241
How to Enrage Hypocrites and Pharisees Without Even Trying . . . . . 241
Introduction: The Natural Conflict Between Real and Pretend Christians . . 242
Biblical Descriptions of Hypocrites . . . . . 243
Jesus' Untactful Confrontation of Pharisees . . . . . 245
First Method: Violating and Opposing Their Traditions . . . . . 246
Confounding Their Thinking . . . . . 250
Second Method: Confounding and Confusing Their Thinking . . . . . 250
Third Method: Explaining, Expounding, and Applying God's Law . . . . . 253
Applications for Believers . . . . . 256
The Third Application . . . . . 257
Chapter 14: Abiding In Christ 259
Introduction and Personal Anecdotes . . . . . 259
The Vine and Branches Metaphor . . . . . 262
Fruit as Evidence of Salvation . . . . . 263
Abiding is Mandatory, Not Optional . . . . . 263
The Meaning of Abiding: Obedience to Christ's Word . . . . . 265

Christ as Living Word and Scripture as Written Word . . . . . 266
Obedience as the Pattern of Abiding . . . . . 267
The Government of Christ and the Mandate of Obedience . . . . . 268
Preservation, Perseverance, and Keeping Ourselves in God's Love . . . . . 269
The Test of Genuine Faith and the Spirit's Enabling . . . . . 272
Applications: Fight, Obey, and Do Not Live by Feelings . . . . . 274
Applications of Abiding in Christ . . . . . 275
Chapter 15: A Short and Pointed Prayer 277
Introduction: The Value of Brief, Sincere Prayer . . . . . 277
The Context of Psalm 119:121-128 . . . . . 279
The Clean Hands Doctrine (v. 121) . . . . . 280
Consciousness of Deficiency and Need for Surety (v. 122) . . . . . 283
Longing for Deliverance and Deeper Obedience (vv. 123-125) . . . . . 285
Our Impotency and Helplessness . . . . . 286
The Pointed Petition: 'It Is Time for the LORD to Work' (v. 126) . . . . . 286
Implications: Human Impotence and Divine Omnipotence . . . . . 286
When to Pray This Prayer and Our Response (vv. 127-128) . . . . . 289
Chapter 16: Holiness and Obedience 295
Introduction: The Command to Be Holy . . . . . 295
The Flesh Opposes Holiness . . . . . 296
Holiness Begins in the Mind . . . . . 298
Holiness Begins in the Mind . . . . . 299
Renewing the Mind Through Scripture . . . . . 301
Being Sober-Minded . . . . . 302
Holiness Ends in Obedience . . . . . 303
Not Fashioned to Former Lusts . . . . . 304
Applications: The Inseparability of Holiness and Obedience . . . . . 306
Chapter 17: Community In The Old South and Confederacy 309
Southern Community in the Old South . . . . . 309
Introduction: The Need for Community . . . . . 309

Biblical Foundation: Comfort and Edify One Another . . . . . 310
Defining Community: Commonality is Essential . . . . . 310
The Church as Community of Faith . . . . . 313
Rebuilding Society on God's Law . . . . . 313
The Role of Individuals and Families . . . . . 314
Self-Government vs. External Control . . . . . 314
Southern Hope . . . . . 314
Four Pillars of Southern Community . . . . . 315
Southern Hope: Biblical Hope . . . . . 315
Theological War: Christianity vs. Atheism . . . . . 316
Southern Hope and Honor . . . . . 318
Southern Honor: The Glue of Community . . . . . 319
Southern Heritage: Birthright and Identity . . . . . 323
Chapter 18: Pretend Christians 333
Introduction: The Prevalence of Pretend Christians . . . . . 333
The Parable of the Two Sons . . . . . 334
The Pharisees as Pretenders . . . . . 335
Modern Examples and Antinomianism . . . . . 336
Pretend Preachers and How to Identify Them . . . . . 337
The Nature of True Salvation: Continued Obedience . . . . . 338
The Wise and Foolish Builders . . . . . 342
Why Some Fall Away: The Flesh, the World, and Family Breakdown . . . . . 342
The Proof of Genuine Faith: Continuing in Christ . . . . . 348
Chapter 19: A Biblical Philosophy of History 351
Introduction and God's Command to Remember . . . . . 351
The Eternal Decree of God and History . . . . . 352
The Bible as a History Book and the Command to Teach . . . . . 353
Definition and Purpose of History . . . . . 354
Learning from God's Judgments in Nature and Providence . . . . . 355
The Danger of Erasing History . . . . . 357

Profiting from the Lives of Others . . . . . 358
History as Conflict Between God and Anti-God . . . . . 359
Applying Principles to Historical Figures . . . . . 360
The Relevance of Past Events and Timeless Principles . . . . . 363
The Gospel as All-Encompassing Good News . . . . . 368
Applications and Conclusion . . . . . 371
The Gospel and a Biblical Philosophy of History . . . . . 371
Chapter 20: Who Are You Condemning? 373
Introduction: The Principle of Positive and Negative . . . . . 373
Condemnation Is Not Only for the Unsaved . . . . . 374
How We Condemn Ourselves . . . . . 375
How We Condemn Others . . . . . 384
How We Condemn God . . . . . 387
Conclusion: The Inescapable Choice . . . . . 389
Chapter 21: Who Is Your God? 391
Introduction: The Question of Who Your God Is . . . . . 391
Intellectual vs. Practical Atheism . . . . . 392
Biblical Examples of Hypocritical Worship . . . . . 393
The Consideration: Knowing and Considering God's Revelation and Salvation 397
The Declaration: God is the Only Sovereign Lord . . . . . 401
The Implication: Therefore Keep His Commandments . . . . . 403
Imputed vs. Practical Righteousness . . . . . 406
Obedience as the Test of True Faith . . . . . 408
Topical Index . . . . . 415
Scripture Index . . . . . 423
Study Guide Link . . . . . 441

CHAPTER 1

# Christ and the Adultrous Woman

October 20, 2002

## Introduction and Controversy of the Passage

Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives, and early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him, and he sat down and taught them. And the scribes and the Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery, and when they had set her in the midst, they said unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery in the very act.

Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned, but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. And when they heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one beginning at the eldest, even unto the last. And Jesus was left

alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more.

Most of you have never heard this passage preached on before. In fact, many individuals have never even considered this passage or its implications. This passage is a hotbed of controversy because it is usually not only misunderstood, but even taken out of context. Some try to deny the authenticity of this passage, and some say that it should never have been in the Bible to begin with. I believe that is outright blasphemy and heresy and denies the infallibility and the inspiration of the Bible. Many individuals take this passage and use it to teach antinomianism. I hope you understand the term antinomianism.

## Biblical Love Fulfills the Law

The Greek word nomos is the word law. Antinomianism refers to someone who is against God's law. An antinomian, then, is someone who either does not believe that God's law is valid or at least lives as if God's law had no effect at all upon him. Usually, when people come to John chapter 8, they try to say that love supersedes the law. In other words, the law is the Old Testament; in the New Testament, we have love, and what matters is that we just love, love, love, love, and God's law does not matter at all. I can quote this, but hold John 8 and look in your Bibles to Romans chapter 13.

I am not wanting to get into an exposition of this truth this morning. I have done it in time past. But look in your Bibles to Romans chapter 13. I want you to look at verses 9 and 10. Watch carefully. He 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." Everybody understands this is the Ten Commandments. "And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

What is biblical love? Biblical love is not sentimentalism, emotionalism, a funny feeling, goosebumps, or overlooking sin. Biblical love is the fulfilling of the law of God. When people say that love has superseded God's law, they do not even know what they are talking about, because biblical love is the fulfilling of God's law. You understand that?

Here is an illustration. If I reach my hand over into Henry's pocket, steal a hundred-dollar bill from him, and say, "Henry, I love you, I love you, I love you," do I love him? Not biblically, because love is the fulfilling of the law. If I love him, I keep my hand out of his pocket. Whether I ever tell him I love him or not is immaterial. Whether I ever get teary-eyed or sentimental is immaterial. Whether I ever get emotional is immaterial. I love him because I am fulfilling God's law toward him. Love is the fulfilling of the law.

There are individuals who try to say that love has superseded the law of God. In order to understand this passage, it is almost imperative that you take it in its entire context.

## The Scribes and Pharisees

## Identity and Character of the Accusers

First, note who is causing the problem here. Look at John 8, verse 3: “And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery.” You must ask yourself, Who were the scribes, and who were the Pharisees?

The scribes were supposedly the students of Scripture, the scholars of the law. They gave their entire lives to studying the law in order that they might teach others. The Pharisees were the most religious, zealous sect of the land. They supposedly believed in absolute obedience. However, as you read Scripture, you find that their obedience was to their traditions more than to the Word of God. The Pharisees would have been considered the fundamentalists of the day.

The Sadducees were another group, but they were the liberals. They denied the existence of angels and the bodily resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees, of course, believed both. So now you have

two groups: the scribes, supposedly the scholars and students of the law, and the Pharisees, one of the main fundamentalist religious sects of our Lord's day, bringing this woman to our Lord.

Let me give you an overview of the first seven chapters before we come to John 8. In every one of these chapters, you will find the scribes and Pharisees mentioned. In John chapter 1 and verse 14, they were ignorant of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. They sent messengers to him, saying, "Who art thou?" They did not even know who he was. The Old Testament had prophesied about John, so the students of the law were ignorant concerning Christ's forerunner.

In verse 26 of chapter 1, they were ignorant of the divine presence in their midst. What did John say? "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not." He was referring to Christ. The scholars and students of Scripture, the leading religious leaders of their day, did not even know who Jesus Christ was. When you get to John chapter 2, you have our Lord's first miracle. What was His first miracle?

He turned water into wine. You heard the old story about the state trooper who pulled the black creature over because he had been weaving a little bit. The trooper asked, "What do you have in that bottle?" He said, "Water." "Water? Let me have that." He handed him the bottle. The trooper sniffed it and said, "That's not water, that's wine." He said, "Praise the Lord, He done done it again."

Well, sometimes it works like that, I guess. But when they lacked wine, wine in the Bible was a symbol of joy. Read the book of Psalms: He says He has given wine that maketh glad the heart of man. So when they did not have wine, it symbolized a joyless nation. The scribes and Pharisees were ignorant of the forerunner of Jesus Christ; they were ignorant of Jesus Christ. They were a joyless nation.

In John chapter 3, Nicodemus, a ruler of the Pharisees, came to Jesus dead in trespasses and sins. What did Jesus Christ say to him? "Verily, verily, I say to you, you must be born from above." That is, you must be born again. One of their rulers was absolutely and totally lost and dead in trespasses and sins.

In John 4, Israel was absolutely callous toward the Samaritans. You remember, the Samaritans were basically half-breeds. They then are married. Jesus sat on the well and asked the Samaritan woman for a drink of water. She said, “How is it thou, being a Judean, ask water of me, a woman of Samaria? For the Judeans have no dealings with the Samaritans.” In fact, they called the Samaritans dogs. Here they were, a joyless nation, totally callous and indifferent to their neighbors.

In chapter 5, Israel is portrayed as a nation of blind, impotent folk, halt and maimed. There was the man who had been at the pool for thirty-eight years. In chapter 6, Jesus Christ is the bread of life; but the nation is presented as hungry indeed, indifferent, and without desire for the true bread of life, Jesus Christ. In John chapter 7, the leaders reject Christ as the living water and send officers to arrest Him. When the officers return, they ask, “Why have you not brought Him?” The officers answer, “No man has ever spoken like this man.” Then they say, “What’s wrong with you?”

Do you believe on Him? Now, the point I am trying to make is that, when you get to John chapter 8, it is the same group in verse 3—the scribes and the Pharisees—that brings this woman to Jesus. The same group that caused all the heartache and problems, and was totally ignorant of the Word of God, is now bringing this woman to Jesus Christ.

Here is a principle that we must learn: even the enemies of truth can often quote Scripture and use it against us. These scribes and Pharisees had no love for the truth and no desire for it; they were enemies of the truth. Yet they were trying to take the truth of God and use it to entrap Jesus Christ. If you look down to verse 6, it explains the whole scenario: “This they said, tempting him that they might have to accuse him.”

## The Dilemma: A Trap for Jesus

When the scribes and Pharisees brought this adulterous woman to Jesus Christ, they did not bring her because they were shocked at her immorality, or because they were upset, grieved, and heartbroken over her sin. They were not grieved because the law of God had been dishonored, nor upset because it had been broken. They used this

sinful woman for one simple reason: to ensnare and entrap Jesus Christ. You are talking about using someone else's sin. That is exactly what these people were doing. Their object was not to help the woman but to exploit her for their own evil designs. They wanted to ruin Christ, entrap Him, make Him contradict Himself, and basically destroy His own testimony.

Since we know who brought this adulterous woman to Jesus Christ, let us look in verses 2 through 5, first of all, at the dilemma. "And early in the morning, he came again into the temple." Where is He? He is in the temple. "And all the people came unto him, and he sat down, and taught them." What is He doing in the temple? He is teaching and preaching. Here is a public exposition: "And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they said unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act."

"Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned, but what sayest thou?" The Bible says in verse 3, "And the scribes and the Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery." How many of you think she came voluntarily? No, they brought her—probably dragged her in. She did not come voluntarily.

Evidently—and this is another sermon in itself—the scribes and Pharisees had what you and I would describe as police powers. Do you remember, as you read through the Bible, the officers of the temple, and who those officers were? In John chapter 7 they sent officers to arrest Jesus Christ. So undoubtedly they had some control over what you and I would call the temple police, or temple officers. They went out, physically brought this woman to Jesus Christ, compelled her to come, and set her in the midst.

Here Jesus Christ is sitting in the temple teaching when religious leaders barge in, dragging a woman. They pull out a chair, put her in the midst of everyone, and say, "Master, here's a woman taken in adultery in the very act."

"Moses says she is to be stoned, but what do you say?" Talk about brash and arrogant. They were interrupting His message and teaching, demanding that He preside as a judge and give them an

answer. There is something inside me that recoils against people who are so brash and arrogant.

They say she was caught in adultery in the very act. You are thinking the same thing I am thinking, and you want to ask: Where was the man? Why did they just bring the woman? It takes two to commit adultery. Why did they just bring the woman? I do not know the answer.

There could be several answers. The man may have been one of their own, who knows? But I do know this: you get far more emotionalism involved when you start condemning a woman than a man. They were designing this entrapment, this scheme, to trap Jesus Christ.

They said Moses in the Law says she is to be stoned. Leviticus 20:10 says, “And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” The law did demand the death penalty for adultery.

Deuteronomy 22:22 says, “If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman and the woman. So shalt thou put away evil from among Israel.” God says both the man and the woman are to be put to death. Of course, they only brought the woman.

Here is the dilemma confronting Jesus Christ. He is in the temple, teaching in a public situation. They barge in, interrupt His message, put the woman in the midst, and say, “Now look, Moses’ law says she is to be stoned, but what do you say?” All these witnesses are waiting for His answer.

If our Lord had said, “Let her go,” He would have been accused, and rightly so, of violating the law of God, because the law of God demanded that she be put to death. Moreover, what would we do with the claim of Matthew 5:17, where Jesus Christ publicly said that He had come to fulfill the law? If Jesus Christ said, “Let her go,” they could charge Him with violating the law of God and His own words.

Suppose Jesus Christ said, “Stone her; put her to death.” What would then be the understanding of the people? Jesus Christ was known as the friend of publicans and sinners, and certainly He

would not be showing Himself their friend if He said to stone them. Moreover, John 18:31 reveals where they were really going with this: "Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." The Romans had taken away the death-penalty power from the nation. If Jesus Christ said, "Take her out and stone her," they would have reported Him to the Roman government. They thought they had Him trapped. If He said, "Let her go," He was no friend of the law; if He said, "Stone her," He was no friend of sinners and was in trouble with the Roman government.

Now look at the actions of our Lord. John chapter 8, verses 6 through 9, says: "This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." The Bible says twice, in verses 6 and 8, that Jesus Christ stooped down and wrote something on the floor of the temple.

## Jesus' Response and the Law of Jealousy

Most of us have often wondered, What did He write? Some have suggested that perhaps He began writing the names of people with whom they had committed adultery, or perhaps listing dates. I do not know. However, you have to remember two things, and I believe this is the answer. First of all, Jesus Christ is the High Priest.

Secondly, where did this take place? In the temple. What significance does that have? Let me show you. Hold John 8, but turn back in your Bibles to Numbers, chapter 5. We will begin reading with verse 11 and read through verse 31. It is a lengthy passage, but it is important that you understand the background before I give you this quote.

Numbers 5, beginning with verse 11: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, So here then is something that the Lord himself has

ordained. The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside and commit a trespass against him, and a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and there be no witness against her, neither she be taken with the matter." In other words, basically, she has gotten away with it. Nobody is talking, no one has seen it, and no one knows about it.

Watch verse 14: "And the spirit of jealousy come upon him." In other words, he becomes extremely suspicious, although he has no evidence. "And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled." That is, she is actually guilty. "Or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled." That is, she could be totally innocent. "Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance. And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord. And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take and put it in the water." Notice the dust of the floor of the tabernacle: he takes it and puts it in the water. "And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of the memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering."

**SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 5:11-31 (KJV)**

> "And the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse. And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thine husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse. But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thine husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband, then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing. And the priest shall say unto the woman, The Lord make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell. And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy

> bowels, to make thy belly swell, and thy thigh to rot. And the woman shall say, Amen, Amen. And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and shall blot them out with the bitter water."
>
> "And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse, and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her and become bitter. Then the priest shall take the jealousy offering out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the offering before the Lord, and offer it upon the altar. And the priest shall take a handful of the offering, even the memorial thereof, and burn it upon the altar, and afterwards shall cause the woman to drink the water. And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that if she be defiled, that is, if she is actually guilty, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot, and the woman shall be a curse among her people."

That is, she is going to have a living death for a while: everybody will know her sin, and then she will die in misery. Verse 28 says, "And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean, then shall she be free, and shall conceive seed." In other words, God will bless her, and she will have a child. "This is the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled; or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the Lord, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law. Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and the woman shall bear her iniquity." If she is guilty, the man is guiltless.

Remember that it was the scribes and Pharisees who brought this woman to our Lord. Our Lord is the high priest, and He was in the temple. The temple, of course, replaced the tabernacle.

Dean Burgon, a scholar of times past, puts Numbers chapter 5 together with John chapter 8: "The scribes and the Pharisees bring a woman to our Savior on a charge of adultery. The sin prevailed to such an extent among the Jews that the divine enactments concerning one so accused had long since fallen into practical oblivion."

Adultery was so prevalent in our Lord's time that no one was enforcing the law against it, almost as it is today. Even now, adultery and fornication are considered personal, private acts rather than sins condemned by God or by the state, although most states still have laws against them. Those laws are merely on the books. Burgon was saying that it was prevalent sin.

On the present occasion, our Lord is observed to revive His own ancient ordinance after a hitherto unheard-of fashion: the trial by bitter water, or water of conviction, from Numbers chapter five. This ordeal was intended both for the vindication of innocence and the conviction of guilt. According to traditional belief, however, the test proved inefficacious unless the husband himself was innocent of the crime whereof he accused his wife. Thus, it had either conviction or vindication of innocence, but was useless unless the accusing husband himself was innocent of the crime wherewith he charged his wife.

Let the provisions of the law contained in Numbers chapter five be considered. The accused woman, having been brought near and set before the Lord, was subjected to bitter water that caused the curse. The priest took holy water in an earthen vessel and put dust from the floor of the tabernacle into the water. Then, with the bitter water that caused the curse in his hand, he charged the woman by oath. Next, he wrote the curses in a book and blotted them out with the bitter water, causing the woman to drink the bitter water that caused the curse. If she were guilty, she fell under a terrible penalty, her body testifying visibly to her sin. If she was innocent, nothing followed. And now who sees not that the Holy One dealt with His hypocritical assailants as if they had been the accused parties?

Into the presence of the incarnate Jehovah verily they had been brought. Perhaps, when He stooped down and wrote on the ground, it was a bitter sentence against the adulterer and the adulteress which He wrote. We have but to assume some connection between the curse which He thus traced in the dust of the floor of the tabernacle and the words which He uttered with His lips. He may with truth be declared to have taken the dust and put it on the water, and caused him to drink of the bitter water which causeth the curse.

For when, by His Holy Spirit, our great high priest in His human flesh addressed these adulterers, what did He but present them with living water, that is, Himself, in an earthen vessel? Did He not further charge them with an oath of cursing, saying, “If you have not gone aside to uncleanness, be ye free from this bitter water”? That is, when He said, “Whoever is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.”

But if ye be defiled, on being presented with which alternative did they not, self-convicted, go out one by one? What else was this but their own acquittal of the sinful woman, for whose condemnation they had shown themselves so impatient? Surely it was the water of conviction, as it is six times called, which they had been compelled to drink. Whereupon, convicted by their own conscience, as John relates, they had pronounced the other's acquittal.

Finally, by Himself declining to condemn the accused woman, our Lord also did in effect blot out those curses which He had already written against her in the dust, when He made the floor of the sanctuary His book. What Dean Burgon is saying is basically what our Lord did in John chapter 8; it is what the priest did in Numbers chapter 5.

Now, let me ask you a question. Suppose Don steals $100 from Al. I go to Al and say, “Al, you know that Don stole this money from you.” “Yes, I know that.” “Well, you ought to swear out a warrant against him and have him arrested.” “No, I'm not going to do that.” “Well, if you don't, I will.” What is going to happen when I try to swear out a warrant because I believe that Don stole $100 from Al? They will tell me, “You can't swear out a warrant.” If I go and file a lawsuit, they will tell me, “You have no standing.” Why did I have no standing? It did not happen to me. I had not been hurt.

## The Accusers Depart and the Woman's Forgiveness

These Pharisees and scribes, in reality, had no standing even to bring suit against this woman. Who was the victim? First of all, her husband. Was he not the victim? He should have been the one who could have come to our Lord and said, “Look, here’s my wife. She was taken in adultery.” But he was not there. The scribes and Pharisees had inserted themselves in the place of the husband.

They had stolen his authority and his right. They came as the victim, which they were not, and demanded that our Lord judge this woman and condemn her.

This is in the Bible, but it is also in our law. Those who would like to understand more may look in Black's Law Dictionary under the term Clean Hands Doctrine. The clean hands doctrine is simply this: If I am going to accuse Henry of something and try to get him prosecuted for it, I had better be innocent of it myself. Clean hands means that I am not a guilty party; I have not participated in the sin.

Hold John 8 and turn to Deuteronomy 19, verse 15: "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth. At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." Verse 16 says, "If a false witness rise up against any man, to testify against him that which is wrong."

God says it takes more than one to condemn an individual. You must have two—at least two, and preferably more—and they must have clean hands. Deuteronomy 17:7 explains why: "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you."

Suppose Henry does something that deserves death, and yet I have done the same thing that he has done. But I prosecute him, have him prosecuted, and serve as a witness against him. When I put my hand on his head and testify—or pick up the first rock and hit him in the head to kill him, with everybody else following me—what have I in essence done? I have condemned my own self, because I am guilty of the very thing that he is guilty of. I may have actually helped execute him, or I may have been responsible for his execution, but in reality, I have actually condemned myself.

Now go back to John 8. This is exactly what our Lord is talking about. In John chapter 8, after He stooped down and wrote on the ground, note what He says in verse 7. Verse 6 says, "And this they said, tempting him that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not." He acted as though He ignored them, stooped

down, and began writing on the ground. When they continued asking Him, they were pressuring Him now. They thought they had Him.

"He said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." First of all, that does not mean an individual has to be perfectly sinless before he can testify against or condemn a guilty individual. If "He that is without sin" meant having no sin in general, how many criminals would ever be prosecuted? None, because everybody has sin. Here is what He actually says: "He that is without the sin among you." What sin was He talking about? The sin of adultery. They had charged this woman with adultery, which merits the death penalty.

All He was demanding was what the law demands: that they come with clean hands and have not engaged in this sin themselves. If they condemned this woman, then in reality, they were condemning themselves.

These men had been plotting against Christ and gathering information on Him. They had their own CIA, a special police, and FBI dossiers on Christ. If you are doing that to other people, it does not take much to convince you that someone might be doing the same to you. I do not know what He wrote. Maybe He wrote those curses, listed other names, or recorded some dates. I do not know.

But all of a sudden they realized that they were guilty of the very things of which they were accusing this woman, and that He knew about it. When they condemned her, He would turn around and press charges against them. Being convicted by their own conscience, they went out one by one, beginning with the eldest, even unto the last. They all left.

Look, if you would, in verse 9: "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. And when Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers?" "Hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." And Jesus said unto her, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more."

People have tried to say that in John chapter 8 our Lord destroyed or did away with the death penalty for adultery. That is not true. Our Lord did not do away with the death penalty for adultery; He fulfilled the law. Our Lord demanded what the law demanded: honest witnesses with clean hands.

When the witnesses left, there was no one to prosecute the woman. What does a judge do when there are no witnesses against the man? He dismisses the case. That is exactly what our Lord did. The witnesses had disappeared, so there was no civil case against her. “Woman, where are those thine accusers? Who’s going to stand up and accuse you? Hath no man condemned thee?” “No man, Lord.”

There was evidence of a changed heart in this woman. Undoubtedly, she was guilty and had been taken in the very act. Yet she answered, “No man, Lord.” The word Lord in the Greek is Kyrios. It means sovereign, owner, master, or boss. When an individual calls Jesus Christ Lord, he is saying, in essence, “I am throwing down my weapons of rebellion.”

She was repenting and turning from her sins, bowing to Him: “You are my boss. You are my owner. You are my master. I will now live the way You tell me to live. I will act the way You tell me to act, do what You tell me to do, and say what You tell me to say. You are my Lord, my boss, and my owner.” She said, “No man, Lord.” Then our Lord gave her a religious forgiveness: “Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more.”

There is a difference between civil forgiveness and religious forgiveness. Was the woman out of the woods? Not yet. Although the Pharisees had left her, we are not told what her husband did. He was the one who could have brought charges against her, but he did not, or at least we are not told that he did at that particular time. Civil and religious forgiveness are not identical, although they are intertwined.

## Civil vs. Religious Forgiveness

Suppose Ed steals from me and is caught in the act before he has time to dispose of the goods. He owes me twofold. If he disposes of

them, he owes me four or fivefold, depending upon my position. If Ed wants civil forgiveness, what must he do? He must make restitution. There is no civil forgiveness without restitution.

If he wants religious forgiveness, he still must make restitution. Suppose I steal a hundred-dollar bill from Ed and say, “Lord, You forgive me, please. I am just confessing. Lord, forgive me.” Then I stick the money in my pocket and go my way. Is that forgiveness? Is that confession? No. If I really want forgiveness, I must give Ed his money back. I must make restitution.

Here is a man, to put it in modern colloquialism so we will understand it, who has robbed a bank. In this day and time, nobody has to make restitution, hardly. He goes to prison for seven years at the expense of the taxpayers. After seven years, he walks out, and what do people say? “He has paid his debt to society.” But what they are saying is that he is now civilly forgiven. He still may be a thief, but he is civilly forgiven.

When you come to religious forgiveness, although these two are intertwined, it is possible that a man may be religiously forgiven and not civilly forgiven. You say, “What in the world are you talking about?” There is a religious condemnation, and there is a civil condemnation.

You remember a number of years ago, there was a big uproar over this woman in Texas who had murdered, I think, not only her husband but several other people. Then she had gotten converted, and they were saying that she should now be forgiven and pardoned because she was now a Christian and should not have to face the death penalty. You remember that?

Let me ask you a question: Can God truly save a murderer? What is the answer? Yes. Does that mean, therefore, that God's law is not to be executed against the murderer? No. You may be religiously forgiven, but you still must face the penalty for your sin. If I pull out a pistol and shoot Henry in front of everybody, the Lord would forgive me for that. But that does not mean that I do not face the death penalty. When they execute me, I may indeed be converted by the grace of God, but I am still to be executed because I am a murderer.

The Bible says, “Whosoever taketh a life, he shall give his own life, forfeit his own life for it. Life for life.” Thus, one may have religious forgiveness without civil forgiveness. One may have legal or civil condemnation without religious condemnation, or vice versa. Today, in our land, a woman can have an abortion without civil condemnation, but there is religious condemnation for it.

Here is this woman: she acknowledges Christ as Lord, and evidently there is indeed a real change in her life. Our Lord says, “Neither do I condemn thee.” And look what He says: “Go and sin no more.” Our Lord knew that she was guilty. She needed religious forgiveness. She also needed civil forgiveness, but there were no witnesses, and therefore there was no trial. He had no choice but to dismiss the trial.

Let me ask you a question. I want you to think about this. What do we do today as Christians for this sin that is so prevalent in our society? It indeed not only destroys families and personal lives, but it will, in essence, destroy society as well. Now the question is, what remedy do we have left?

## Church Discipline and the Living Dead

You and I both know that the church does not have the power to execute the death penalty. The family does not have that power either. Only the state now has the power to execute the death penalty. What do you do when you have a reprobate state, or a reprobate civil government, that will not honor God's law and will not recognize God's law? I get so extremely frustrated when I hear of all these cases of child rape and child abuse.

I got news for you folks. I know how to stop that stuff. I can assure you that the ones who are executed will never commit those vile acts again. But you see, the reason we have such an outbreak is that they know they are not going to face the death penalty. They will go to some asylum or some prison for a year or two and then be turned right out to do it again.

**SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 (KJV)**

What can we do? Let me show you one answer. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 5, and let us look at the first

thirteen verses. Here is what the church can do, but what most churches will not do. The reason they will not do it is manifold, but it is certainly biblical. This is what we call church discipline.

"It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed.

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

"But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

Here was a man in the Corinthian church who was living with his father's wife. Undoubtedly, this was his stepmother. Paul says that such wickedness was so great that even the heathen

were not even doing it. Leviticus 18 and verse 8 specifically condemns this as incest. It is not simply adultery; it is incest, and it is covered here under the broad term fornication. Please remember, fornication is a broad term.

It covers many sexual sins and other sins as well. Here is a man living with his stepmother. His father was still alive? It was his father's wife? What does the Apostle Paul say? “Put that wicked one out from among you.” You exercise church discipline.

In the early church, they had to face this same dilemma. Do you know what term was used to describe Christians who had been guilty of adultery, but had repented and were allowed back into the church? They were called the living dead. Why were they called the living dead?

Murder is also a capital crime. Suppose I killed Joe, but no one knew about it, no one ever found out, and I was never prosecuted or brought to trial. Does that mean I am going to escape the death penalty? No. God is the judge, the death penalty is still there, and I would be a walking dead man. In other words, God would execute that judgment in His own time.

So the adulterers who had repented and were allowed back into the church were known as the living dead because they realized that, although the church did not have the power to execute the death penalty and the Roman government certainly would not execute it, God would.

This is exactly what he says: “You deliver such an one to Satan, you put him out of the church, that the body may be destroyed.” And in chapter 5 and verse 13: “...but them that are without God judgeth.” You execute church discipline, put him on the outside, and say, God, until he repents, he cannot come in; and even when he repents, it is up to You to execute the judgment You demand.

Church discipline is not only biblical; specific reasons are given for it in the Bible. The purity of the church is one. The benefit of those who have not sinned is another, and the benefit of the one who has sinned is another. The early church restored those who had repented, but recognized that they were indeed the living dead.

Note two things today. First, our Lord harmonized justice and mercy. Those two concepts are difficult for us because some take the attitude, “Justice, justice, justice,” while others take the attitude, “Forgive, forgive, forgive.” The man who wants justice many times has no mercy, and the one who wants mercy many times will never demand justice. These two were balanced in our Lord. There is a time for justice and a time for mercy. We must learn when and how to exercise those attributes.

## Conclusion: Justice, Mercy, and Lawless Enforcers

Here is a second thought, and this thought hit me like a ton of bricks last night: Do you realize the lawless cannot enforce the law? These scribes and Pharisees were lawless. Although they were the ones who had the law, they were lawless! Look at the mess our judicial system is in in this country. Do you know why? Because most of our judges are absolutely lawless. They follow neither the Word of God nor the Constitution. The reason most people are upset in this country is that there is no such thing as justice left any longer.

I read this week in an article a friend sent me that one IRS agent had failed to file and pay his taxes for five years until he was finally caught. He said the reason he did not pay his taxes was to support his wife’s spending habit. He said he had been a fool, threw himself on the mercy of the court, and the judge graciously gave him nine months’ probation. If that had been you or me, do you think we would have gotten nine months’ probation?

If you have never read George Orwell’s The Animal Farm, I encourage you to do so. The animals made up all these rules. Napoleon the pig and Snowball established their first rule: all animals are equal. But when they drove the farmer out of the house, Napoleon and Snowball took over the house, while the rest of the animals had to stay in the barn. When some animals became discontented because Napoleon and Snowball had the house, they went back to read the rules. The rules had been changed: all animals were equal, but some were more equal than others.

Lawless men cannot enforce God's law. They will either be too merciful and not give justice, or too demanding and not give mercy. Only a godly man who knows the law of God can give forth true

justice under God, and even that would sometimes be without error, because man is not omniscient. Only God is omniscient, and only God can give forth what we would call true justice.

But in John 8 Jesus Christ did not destroy the law of God or do away with the death penalty for adultery. He simply said, “There’s no case because there’s no witnesses.” The only thing He could give the woman was a religious forgiveness, which she received and evidently was changed by the grace of God. I pray that those who are in prison, who are there lawfully, rightly, and justly—though there are very few like that today, especially since prisons are unbiblical anyhow—would receive a religious forgiveness; that is, that they would indeed find Jesus Christ.

But just because someone finds Jesus Christ does not mean that, if guilty of murder, he goes free from the death penalty. We must distinguish between civil and religious forgiveness. It is absolutely amazing that justice and mercy are so absent from our judicial systems, and people are frustrated because they do not understand that the lawless cannot enforce the law.

Father, thank You for Your grace, mercy, and truth. Teach us and build us up in the most holy faith. Enable us to live for Thee, righteous and godly. May we obey the totality of Thy Word and, in this wicked, ungodly, licentious, and immoral age, live holy, righteous, moral lives in obedience to Thy law. In Thy name we ask it. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

# Feared by Your Enemies

June 27, 2004

**SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 28:1-14 (KJV)**

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments, which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

Blessed shalt thou be in thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face. They shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto, and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. The Lord shall

> establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of thee. And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, and in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, and in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee.

"The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand. And thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail. And thou shalt be above only, thou shalt not be beneath, if thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day to observe and to do them. And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them."

## Introduction: The Nature of Fear

Fear destroys and paralyzes. Each of us has not only heard, but has used the expression "frozen with fear." It indicates that someone is so frightened that he cannot move, function, and sometimes cannot even think. Moreover, the Scripture tells us in 1 John 4:18 that "fear hath torment." In other words, fear is a very painful and distressing emotion. Men many times suffer from the fear of poverty, losses, bereavement, sickness, death, and future woes. Fear distresses men.

It fills us with anguish and makes us restless and uneasy. Fear keeps us in servitude. In fact, the Bible teaches in Hebrews chapter 2 that through fear of death, through fear of hell, and through fear of the devil, men are kept in servitude. The Bible says that fear hath torment, or fear hath punishment, and sometimes the fear itself is indeed a punishment because it torments and distresses us so.

"The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." It is the first part of that verse that I want to emphasize: "The fear of man bringeth a snare." We are cautioned not to dread the power of man. It does not matter whether it is the power of a prince or the power of a multitude. Both are formidable enough

in and of themselves, but the slavish fear of either, the Bible says, brings a snare.

That is, it exposes us to many insults and to many temptations. Abraham, because of the fear of man, denied his wife. He said, “She's my sister.” Peter, through the fear of man, denied his Master. He said, “I know him not.” And there have been many, many Christians who, through fear of man, have denied their God and their faith.

Fear holds people in bondage. It keeps us docile. When you are living in a spirit of fear, it is always, “What if this and what if that?” Many are so fearful that they will never, ever attempt to change a system of government that enslaves and tyrannizes them. Have you ever wondered why the world, not only these foreign countries, but even in our own country from time to time, why people do not rise up and say, “We'll not put up with this any longer”? May I tell you why? Because of fear. Fear holds us in subjection. Fear holds us in bondage. Fear is absent wherever there is faith. Faith and fear are opposites; they cannot coexist together. They do not go well together.

Now, look in your Bibles to another passage, but hold it just for a moment. Numbers chapter 13. Just go ahead and turn there, but hold it, because I want to set you up and ask you a question. Look in your Bibles, the book of Numbers chapter 13, and get ready. You see, the truth of the matter is this: men are subjugated and enslaved through fear.

## Illustrations of Fear vs. Faith

Now that you found Numbers chapter 13, let me ask you a question. How many of you would be willing to attack a six-foot-four, 250-pound man, well trained in the martial arts, one who has been fighting ever since his youth? Why would you not willingly jump him? You say, “Well, Brother Weaver, I can answer that. I mean, I am not going to willingly jump him because I am afraid of him. I know probably what he could do, and I am not really sure of all that he might do. Therefore, since I do not want to be hurt, hospitalized, or killed, I am just going to stay away from him.” Then you say, “Well, now, Brother Weaver, common sense would tell you that you

ought not to jump on someone like that." Generally speaking, I would agree. But let me ask you a question.

What if your life or your freedom depended upon whether or not you would fight that individual? What if not only your life, but the life of your family and the freedom of your family depended upon whether or not you fought that individual? Would you fight? You might say, "Now, let me try to get this clear. You're talking about someone who's been trained in fighting from his youth. I don't think I'd fight." Are you beginning to see what I'm talking about?

Fear keeps us in subjection. It keeps us in bondage. Look at Numbers chapter 13. Here is the report of the ten evil spies: "But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."

Joshua and Caleb brought back a good report, but the other ten spies brought back an evil report. They said, "We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land, which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land through which we have gone to search it is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof. And all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants."

"And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." God had told the children of Israel to go up and fight. Instead, they sent spies to check out the land. Two spies brought back a good report, but ten brought back an evil report.

Why were they afraid? Number one, it was a lack of faith. But it was also fear that kept them from attacking and fighting. Fear kept them from having a due regard to their life and their liberty. God had given them the land, but they would not obey God. They feared man, and therefore they destroyed themselves.

In 1 Samuel 17, David was about to fight Goliath. David said, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" He turned from him toward another and spoke after the same manner, and the people answered him again as before. When the words David spoke were heard, they rehearsed them before Saul, and he sent for him. David

said to Saul, “Let no man's heart fail because of him. Thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.”

Remember, Goliath was a giant and a warrior. He was a martial artist trained from his youth up to fight. David said, “Don't let any man's heart fail for fear. I'll go up and fight the man.” Saul answered, “Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.”

David replied, “Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear and took a lamb out of the flock. And I went after him and smote him and delivered it out of his mouth. And when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and smote him and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.” David said, “Moreover, the Lord delivered me out of the paw of the lion, out of the paw of the bear. He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said, “Go, and the Lord be with thee.”

Now, let me ask you a question. David, a young boy, inexperienced, faced a well-trained giant who was trained in the martial arts, and yet David faced him unafraid. Why? Certainly David trusted in the living God, and that faith made fear impossible. I told you earlier that faith and fear cannot coexist together. When David saw the giant, he said, “God's already delivered me from a lion. He's already delivered me from a bear. And the God that sovereignly delivered me in those areas will deliver me in this area as well.”

Something should be exceedingly obvious: the Israelites in Numbers chapter 13 had equally the same promises that David had in 1 Samuel chapter 17. But the Israelites were afraid, and David was unafraid. Why? Because David appropriated the promises. David believed when the Israelites did not believe.

This disparity existed between David and the Israelites. In fact, you can see this disparity that existed between Joshua and Caleb and the Israelites as well. The Israelites were fearful. David was not. The Israelites were fearful. Joshua and Caleb were not. Joshua and Caleb said, “Only rebel not ye against the Lord. Now look. Neither fear ye

the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Fear them not."

I hope you see the disparity between these two groups. David, like Joshua and Caleb, saw the grace and the power of God when the Israelites did not. What did the Israelites do? The Israelites saw the giants and they were fearful. They were afraid. They said, "We were as grasshoppers in their sight." When they said this, that was the estimation of the Israelites concerning themselves. That was not their enemy's estimation. That was simply what they thought. They were exceedingly fearful.

The Israelites saw the greatness and the power of the giants, and saw their own weakness, lack of strength, and lack of faith, and said, "We're not going to fight." David, Joshua, and Caleb were just the opposite. They saw their own strength through the greatness and the power of God, were unafraid, and were willing to fight. In fact, Joshua and Caleb said, "What are you talking about? They're bread for us."

You talk about a great people; all that means is they've got a great possession. That's more for us. They're bread for us. So while one group was fearful and ready to relinquish their lives and their freedom, the others were willing to fight. They said, "We don't care how big they are, or how strong they are, or what the multitude of them happens to be. We will fight because we know the power of God."

When it comes to the subject of fear, had you rather fear your enemies? Or had you rather your enemies fear you?

To be absolutely honest with you, personally, I'd rather have my enemies tormented, dysfunctional, and unable to move and act than to have those characteristics in my life. I'd much rather my enemies fear me than I fear mine enemies. But you ask, "Do we have a choice in the matter?" The answer is yes. I'm going to show you that in just a moment.

I confess to you, and I want to acknowledge once again publicly, the absolute sovereignty of God. I realize it is up to God who gives His blessing of fearlessness. But God does not give His blessings willy-nilly. There is always an underlying foundation in the

bestowment of any of His blessings. I want you to look at some specific promises. Look in your Bibles, first of all, to the book of Exodus, chapter 15. I want you to look at verses 13 through 16. Then we're going back to Deuteronomy 28.

God promised His people that their enemies would fear them. Exodus 15:13-16 says, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed. Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. The people shall hear, that is the people of the land, the heathen, the people shall hear and be afraid. Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed. The mighty men of Moab, trembling, shall take hold upon them. All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them by the greatness of thine arm. They shall be still as a stone till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over which thou hast purchased."

What did God do when He led His people out of Egypt into the land? He put fear upon all the inhabitants. They would not lift a finger against God's people, and their strength literally melted away. In Exodus 23:27-30, God promised, "And I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come. And I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, the Hittite from before thee. And I will not drive them out before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out before thee, until thou be increased and inherit the land." Note what He said: "I will send my fear before thee." God said, "I'm going to make them afraid of you before you ever get there."

Now go back to Deuteronomy 28. All through the Bible, we are told over and over to fear not. Why should we fear when the sovereign God of heaven and earth is our Heavenly Father? There are three things to see very quickly in Deuteronomy 28. The first is found in verse 7.

## The Source of Blessings: God Causes

"The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face. They shall come out against thee one way

and flee before thee seven ways." My first point is found in verse 7: "the Lord shall cause." Verse 7 gives us the source of the blessings. The originating cause is God Himself. I don't care which blessing you talk about in Deuteronomy 28, or which blessing you talk about anywhere in the Bible, the source, the originating cause of all blessings, is God himself. Romans 11 verse 36 tells us: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory and honour for ever. Amen."

Listen to what that verse says: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." "For of him," that is originally; "through him," that is providentially; and "to him," that is ultimately, are all things. God is absolutely sovereign. That ought to make you remember Ephesians 1 and verse 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus." All blessings are in Him. He is the source of all blessings.

To understand verses 7 through 10, you must go back to verse 1. The blessing of verse 7 must be understood in light of the stipulation God laid down in verse 1. In fact, everything harkens back to verse 1: "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments, which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth."

Notice: "it shall come to pass, if thou hearken diligently"—if you listen carefully to God, that you might observe and do all his commandments. The blessings promised in Deuteronomy 28 are conditional blessings, or conditional promises. They are conditioned upon obedience, upon the fact that we honor and worship the one true and the living God only.

## God Works Mediately Through Obedience

Now, let me explain something to you. Let me make a statement, and then I'll explain the statement. God may work immediately or mediately. Now, when I make that statement, please understand that has absolutely no reference to time. The terms "immediately" and "mediately" are theological terms. When we say that God works immediately, what we mean by that is simply this, that God, when

He works immediately, He does not use means. He doesn't work in means or by means or through means.

Let me give you an example. If you'll hold Deuteronomy 28, but look in your Bibles to Psalm 33 and verse 9. Psalm 33 and verse 9. Here's one very easily understood. Psalm 33 and verse 9. Here is an immediate act of God. Psalm 33. Look, if you would please, at verse 9, talking about the creation of the universe. Here it is, Psalm 33, verse 9, "For he spake, and it was done."

"He commanded, and it stood fast." Now, let me ask you a question. Did God use means when he created the world? No. He just spoke and it came into existence. He commanded, it stood fast. That means that God worked immediately. He did not use means whatsoever. Now when we say that God also works mediately, by that phrase we mean that he normally and he usually works by means and through means. Most of the time, God works mediately, not all in all cases we've just seen, but usually God works mediately.

For instance, let's suppose I have a need of a thousand bucks. OK. And I start praying to the Lord, "Supply my need." Do you think God is going to immediately drop five or six ounces of gold out of heaven for me?

Now, he could do that, could he not? Sure, he could. But that's not normally how he does it. What he would do is either bless me in my work or give me additional work or move on someone to give me a gift. You see, but either way, he's using means. That is what the word "mediately" means, that God is pleased to use means.

Now, when you apply that to Deuteronomy 28, when he says, "The Lord thy God shall cause," what he's telling us is this, that our obedience is his instrumentality. In other words, God causes these blessings to come upon us as we obey Him and honor Him and worship Him. One of the blessings that God gives us is deliverance from our enemies, but not just only deliverance. As we shall see later, one of those blessings is that our enemies will fear us. Now, look back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 11. Let me just show you some other passages very quickly. Deuteronomy 11, beginning there with verse 25. Deuteronomy 11, verse 25. Look what God says.

“There shall no man be able to stand before you. For the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that you shall tread upon, as he said unto you. Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse, a blessing if you obey the commandment of the Lord your God, which I command thee, and a curse, of course, if we disobey.”

Notice what He says: “There shall no man be able to stand before you.” Why? “For the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that you shall tread upon.” God said, “I will put your fear upon your enemies.” It is not only that they fear God; they fear the people as well. God said, “I will put it upon you.”

Look at how God did this in Joshua chapter 2. The spies had been sent to spy out Jericho. Rahab the harlot took them in and hid them. Remember, there were only two of them. What would the normal reaction have been if two enemies entered your city to kill you and your family and destroy your town? You might say, “We’ll kill the two of them anyhow. They may get us, but we’re going to get these two.” Yet nobody touched those spies, and Rahab would not allow them to be touched. Why? She said, “I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.”

She continued: “For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did unto the two kings of the Amorites that were on the other side of Jordan, Sihon and Og, who you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts did melt. Neither did there remain any more courage in any man because of you. For the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.” What did God do? He made the people afraid of Israel. He made them fearful; their hearts fainted, and they had no courage left.

Let me give you another illustration from 2 Chronicles 14: the prayer of Asa and the answer to that prayer. "And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian, with a host of a thousand thousand and three hundred chariots," that is, a million men and three hundred chariots, "and came unto Mareshah." Here was a small group facing an army of a million men and three hundred

chariots. "Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah."

"And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, saying, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power. Help us, O Lord our God. We go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee. So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. And Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar, and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves, for they were destroyed before the Lord and before his hosts, and they carried away much spoil. And they smote all the cities round about Gerar. Why? For the fear of the Lord came upon them, and they spoiled all the cities. For there was exceeding much spoil in them."

Little Judah, with a few thousand men, destroyed an army of a million men because the fear of God was placed upon them. That is why Deuteronomy 28 says, "The Lord thy God shall cause thine enemies to be smitten before thy face."

"They shall come out against thee one way and flee before thee seven ways." Notice the second point in Deuteronomy 28, verse 8: "The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses and in all that thou settest thine hand unto, and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." In verse 7, "the Lord shall cause." In verse 8, "the Lord shall command."

## God Commands and Establishes

When God speaks, it is done. His voice of command is also the voice of accomplishment. In Isaiah 55 and verse 11, He said, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." God's word is never, ever going to return void. His word will always accomplish whatever He sends it to do.

Psalm 148 shows that His voice of command is also His voice of accomplishment. In this psalm, all the elements are commanded to praise God—that is, creation—and here is why: "Praise ye the Lord.

Praise ye the Lord from the heavens. Praise Him from the heights. Praise ye Him, all His angels. Praise Him, all ye hosts. Praise ye Him, sun, moon, and praise ye Him, all the stars of light. Praise Him, you heaven of heavens, and you waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord. Why? For He commanded and they were created."

When God commands, nothing and no one can resist Him, thwart Him, hinder Him, or stop Him. His word of command is His word of accomplishment.

Deuteronomy 28, verse 7: "the Lord shall cause." Verse 8: "the Lord shall command." Now go back to verses 1 and 2: "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments, which I command thee this day. And the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God."

Now, in verse 2, there is a very interesting word: “overtake.” The Hebrew word is nasag, and it literally means to overtake, to catch up with, and to overcome. “All these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God.” Let me try to paint a picture to illustrate the meaning of this word. Try to imagine yourself as one who is obedient to God. You are honoring Him, worshiping Him, doing everything by His grace to please Him, and endeavoring to bring your life into conformity with His Word. God has blessed you and enabled you to do that.

But then God pours out blessings upon you, and you say, “Lord, I’ve got so many blessings now, I just can’t handle any more of them.” You start running down the road, trying to outrun and get away from the blessings of God. God says, “All these blessings shall come on thee, and what? Overtake thee.” If you obey Him, His blessings will run you down, knock you down, fall all over you, and you cannot stop them. Do you see what I am saying?

His voice of command is His voice of accomplishment. Whatever God commands, He brings to pass.

Joshua 8:10 records, “And Joshua rose up early in the morning and numbered the people and went up, and the elders of Israel before the people of Ai.” That is probably not the verse I wanted, but it demonstrates how God has given the victory. You know the story there: Joshua accomplished everything that God had told him he would accomplish. He defeated Ai, and he defeated all these others as well.

Joshua 21:45 sums up all the campaigns that Joshua fought: “There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel. All came to pass.” Whatever God commands, He accomplishes. Everything came to pass.

Now, go back to Deuteronomy 28. Now watch this. Let me tie it together for you. He said in v. 7, "the Lord shall cause." In v. 8, "the Lord shall command." Now in verse 9, "The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God and walk in his ways." So you have "the Lord shall cause," "the Lord shall command," and now "the Lord shall establish." And by the way, the word "establish" here literally means to establish, to confirm, to make sure, and to cause to stand. In light of the cause, which is God himself, in light of the command, which is God's command, we may be certain of God's establishment. God said, "I will establish you" or "I shall establish you an holy people."

That is one set apart, sanctified for his use. Now, let me ask a question. I'm sure that you will remember this verse, but here's my question. Why were we chosen unto salvation in Christ Jesus? Ephesians 1 verse 4, "And he hath chosen you in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Now what did Deuteronomy 28 verse 9 say? "He shall establish thee an holy people unto himself." Why did God choose us in Christ? That he might establish us an holy people.

Now, let me explain something. What we really have in Deuteronomy 28 is an illustration of what you and I would call gospel obedience. It is true that we are to obey. It is also equally true that we must obey. But it is not our obedience that saves us. It is Christ that saves us. Hold Deuteronomy 28 and turn in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews chapter 5. And let me point something out.

## Gospel Obedience and Perseverance

Here is a passage that refers to eternal salvation. And I want you to see what it refers to specifically. Notice the book of Hebrews, chapter 5, and look, if you would please, at verse 9. Hebrews 5, verse 9, talking about Jesus Christ and being made perfect. Now watch. "And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that what? That what? Obey Him." "He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." Is obedience necessary? Yes. Is it essential? Yes, absolutely. Obedience is the evidence that we have been saved by Christ. It is not our obedience that saves us. It is our obedience an evidence that we have been saved. Look in your Bibles, turn back to the book of Philippians chapter 2. Let me show you what I'm talking about. We're talking about gospel obedience. Philippians chapter 2. Notice, if you would please, verses 12 and 13. Philippians 2. Verse 12. You got it? Here we go. Philippians 2, verse 12.

Paul writes these Philippian Christians and says, "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." Is he telling them to earn their salvation, to merit their salvation? Of course not. He says, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Why? "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." What is he saying? God worked it in; you work it out. God put it in you. Now you apply it and bring it out. Our obedience evidences the fact that we have been saved by him. The truth of gospel obedience is much like the truth of preservation and perseverance.

Preservation and perseverance are basically the two sides of one coin. If I were to ask you, does God preserve his own? What is the answer? Yes. Our Lord said, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. He's in the Father's hand." He said, "no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." Philippians 1 and verse 6 says, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Jude 1:1 says that we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

Now that we know that we are preserved, does God's preservation negate our perseverance? The answer is no. In fact, it is God's preservation that ensures our perseverance. When we come to Hebrews 3 and verse 14, we are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast. "He that endureth to the end the same shall be saved." Does our perseverance save us? No. It is Christ who saves us.

We are unable to persevere only because God preserves us. God's preservation comes to light in our perseverance. God sovereignly and graciously enables us to persevere, and that perseverance is a demonstration, evidence, and manifestation of the fact that we are preserved in Him. Because He preserves us, we are enabled to persevere; therefore, our perseverance is merely by His grace as well. God uses means. Likewise, in gospel obedience, we are obedient to Him only because He has saved us.

Go back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 28. I want you to see the emphasis in these short fourteen verses upon obedience. Look at verses 1 and 2: “And it shall come to pass, that thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth.” You are to hearken diligently. Why? That you might observe to do.

Verse 2 says, “And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.” Once again, we have to listen. Verse 9 says, “The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways.” Verse 13 says, “And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath, if thou shalt hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them.”

Verse 14 states it negatively: “And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods and serve them.” The emphasis in Deuteronomy 28 is placed upon obedience.

Our obedience is His instrumentality. It is God who is the cause; it is God who commands. Once He causes and commands, He establishes us. It is His grace, then, that enables us to obey, that He might establish us. In other words, God works mediately in our lives, usually speaking. He enables us to obey Him, and as we obey Him, He places these blessings upon us.

## The Promise: Enemies Will Fear You

I'm going to show it to you from Scripture. If you and I wish to live peaceful lives, we must live godly lives. “The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face. They shall come against thee one way and flee before thee seven ways.” “The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee.” “The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways.” “And all the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of thee.” You don't like fighting? Cousin, I can tell you how to keep from fighting: obey me. I'll fix it where your enemies will be so afraid of you.

They will not want to jump you. They will not wish to start anything. You obey Me, and your enemies will fear you. Can you imagine that? Even conceive of that fact—that our enemies would be so fearful, frightened, frozen, and dysfunctional that they would not even want to mess with us?

“All the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord.” You are the people of the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God of heaven and earth. They know your mind, and they will be afraid of you. Why? Because they will know what our Father can do to them. I have often told people, “If you mess with my children, I could hurt you. But if you mess with my grandchildren, I can chew you up and spit you out so quick it would make your head swim.” If I believe that way concerning my own, how do you think God responds to His? You remember what He said to His people? “He that toucheth thee, toucheth the apple of mine eye.” It says you had better not hurt Mine. You had better not hurt Mine.

## Biblical Examples of God's Protection

I told you, if you want to live a peaceful life, then you must live a godly life. In 2 Chronicles 17:10, “And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kings of the land that were round about Judah, so that they made no war with Jehoshaphat.” What kept Jehoshaphat out of war? What kept Judah out of war? The fear of God. Jehoshaphat was a godly king. God said, “If you obey Me, I will work it out. Your enemies will fear you.”

Again, in 2 Chronicles 20:29–30: “And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest round about.” The fear of God was on all those kingdoms of those countries. These passages tie it all together: if you obey God and live a godly life, He can give you peace and rest. Consider also Proverbs 16:7.

Here is one that everyone should memorize: Proverbs 16:7. “When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Had you rather fear your enemies, or have your enemies fear you? God said that if you want to be feared by your enemies, you must live a godly life.

Now, one last passage. Turn in your Bible to Exodus 34. I want to show you how absolutely sovereign and how absolutely powerful God is.

Let me set it up for you before we read. Do you remember when the children of Israel came into the land they were to inherit? God put a sword in their hand and said, “Go kill everyone.” He killed a lot of people. Those they did not kill, they enslaved.

When they got into the land, God demanded that three times a year every male appear before Him in Jerusalem for those seven annual feasts. The women did not necessarily have to come; many of them did, but the men had to be there.

Now let me ask you a question. If you and I went over to the state of Alabama, got into Coffee County, killed a bunch of people, enslaved the rest, and took their property, and then all of us came back to Georgia for a convention, what would stop those people we

had enslaved from rising up, killing our wives and children, and taking their land back? You see the problem? The children of Israel had gone in and, concerning all those people they had not killed, they had enslaved them.

All the men were to go up to Jerusalem three times a year. What was to stop those pagans from rising up in rebellion, killing their wives and children, and claiming the land back for themselves? God says, "Thrice, that is three times in the year, shall all your men children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel."

"For I will cast out the nations before thee and enlarge thy borders. Neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year." God said, "You obey me. Not only will there not be any insurrections or rebellions; those people will not even desire to have their land back. I am the sovereign God. You obey me, and your enemies will fear you." What a powerful, holy, sovereign God we serve.

If we want to be feared by our enemies, we must live godly, obedient lives. God knows how to preserve and protect His own. The world may be in turmoil, trouble, and persecution, but God still protects His own.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us and make us holy and godly, and may we bring our lives into conformity to Your word. May we not fear our enemies, but may our enemies fear us, because we serve the sovereign God of heaven and earth, the holy, righteous God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of miracles and might. We give You praise this day, worship You, and confess that You are the one true, living God. Besides You, there is none other. Thank You for Your so great salvation, Your word, and Your Spirit. Give us grace that we may serve You acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Your name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

# Why God Does Not Answer Most Prayers

October 17, 2004

## Introduction: The Problem of Unanswered Prayer

On Wednesday night, I dealt with the sin that every Christian commits, especially on Sunday. Last night, I dealt with the fact of committing the sins of the Jews, how that we are doing the same thing that those Jews did back in the early days when, of course, they rejected the kingship of Jesus Christ. Tonight, I hope that you will see that all three of these messages tie together.

## The Example of Josiah: Hearing God's Word

Second Kings, chapter 22, beginning with verse one: “Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, that the king sent

Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the Lord, saying, Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people: And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord: and let them give it to the doers of the work which is in the house of the Lord, to repair the breaches of the house, unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house."

**SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Kings 22:7-20 (KJV)**

> Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully. And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord. And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.
>
> So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her. And she said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the

> inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.

"Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again." The subject is why God does not answer most prayers. I suppose that if I could answer the question of why God does not answer prayer in every specific instance, I could become an extremely wealthy man. Many people would pay good money not only to get their prayers answered, but to find out why their prayers were not answered. If you could find out why your prayers are not answered, you might be able to adjust a few things and have the prayers answered. Most people, when a prayer is not answered, have no earthly idea why.

You have to understand that praying, of course, is a duty as well as a privilege. The Word of God tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 17 to pray without ceasing. In Luke 18 and verse 1, our Lord says men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Since prayer is a command, it is a duty. But since prayer is to our Heavenly Father, and involves a relationship with Him, it is also a privilege. It is an opportunity to commune with our Heavenly Father through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer is not an attempt to change the mind of God or to change the will of God. Prayer is nothing more than an instrument to accomplish and bring to pass the will of God. You have to remember that God has not only ordained the end; He has also ordained the

means to reach that end. As Christians, we must pray regardless of whether or not our prayers are ever answered. How can I say that? Because God commanded us to pray. Whether our prayers are answered, in one sense of the word, is really irrelevant. God has given us a command, and we should do that.

## Six Prerequisites for Effective Prayer

Your prayer life is not to be judged by how many prayers you have answered, but by how well and how faithfully you pray. Before showing from Scripture why most prayers are not answered, let me give you several basic prerequisites for prayer. There are many other things, but I am going to give you at least six, probably—something absolutely elementary and fundamental.

First of all, there must be a proper association. If you are going to pray and pray effectually, there must be a proper association. In Luke 11 and verse 2, our Lord said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven." By proper association, I mean that we are the children of God by faith through Jesus Christ.

It is true that God blesses the just and the unjust alike. The Bible teaches that. But there is also a covenantal bond between God, our Heavenly Father, and His children. That bond does not exist between God and the unregenerate. There will always be a more tender and gracious response toward your own children than toward the children of strangers. If your own children were hungry, and a stranger's children were hungry, and you had just enough to feed your own children, which would you feed? Certainly, you would feed your own. That is what you and I would call human. Although God is not human—God is God—there is still that special bond that exists.

Look in your Bibles to Luke, chapter 11, beginning with verse 11. Our Lord says, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" Then He says, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

What is God saying? If a son asks the Father for a piece of bread, is He going to give him a stone? No. If he asks for an egg, will He give him a scorpion? No. He is going to give him what he needs. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children,” the answer is obvious. God, who is far above us, infinitely holy, and not evil at one whit, certainly knows how to give good gifts to His children. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 16, the Word of God says, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.” Notice that He says, “even our Father.” Our Lord taught us to pray, “Our Father.”

So there must be that proper association if we are going to pray acceptably unto God. Secondly, there must be a proper approach. Our Lord said it like this in John 14 verse 6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." In Ephesians 2 and verse 18, he says, "For through him"—that is, through Jesus Christ—"we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The only way that we can approach the Father is through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

Think about the Old Testament, how that tabernacle in the temple was divided into the holy place, the most holy place, and the general area where the offering was made, where the people could congregate and see the animals slain there because they were bringing those animals for sacrifice. What if one of those individuals decided, "Since I brought my animal for sacrifice, I am going to rush past these priests and go into the holy of holies and see for myself what is in there"? What would happen to someone who rushed headlong into the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament? He would have been killed.

Hebrews, chapter 10, gives us an understanding concerning that: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Here is something they did not have in the Old Testament and could not have, because the blood of rams and bulls and goats could make no one perfect. "By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." We may now come into the holiest of all, that is, to our Heavenly Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not come based upon our good deeds, our merits, our works, the goodness of life, the saints, or blood. If you come on any other terms or in any other way than through Jesus Christ, your prayer is unacceptable unto God. Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. The Bible said in 1 Timothy 2 and verse 5: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

So there must be a proper association and a proper approach. You must come to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. But thirdly, there must be a proper attitude. One cannot expect to receive anything from God or have any prayer answered if he comes with an unbelieving attitude. The first qualification given to us in Hebrews 11 and verse 6 is this: "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."

It is impossible unless you come with a proper attitude, and that attitude is one of faith. James 1, beginning with verse 5, gives a wonderful illustration: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." How many of us lack wisdom? All of us. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.

For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Now look what he says in verse 7: “For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.” Unless you come in faith, believing, he says, “Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.” In Matthew 21:22, our Lord said, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” In Mark 11:24, He said, “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

You not only have to have a proper association and a proper approach; there must be a proper attitude. But then, fourthly, there must be a proper asking. What is a proper asking? You remember when our Lord said in John 14:13-14, “If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.” When you get to John 16:26, He said, “At that day ye shall ask in my name.”

Do not think that our prayers are going to be answered just because we pray loudly, vigorously, and frequently. You can lie on your face before God all day and all night and still not receive anything of the Lord. There has to be a proper asking. You know what our Lord said in Matthew 6:7: “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” Our Lord said it is not the much speaking or the vigor of your prayer. There has to be a proper asking. There has to be a proper merit, and that merit is found only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Asking in the name of Christ refers to an absolute and total dependence upon the person, work, and merits of Jesus Christ.

Let me give an illustration. Suppose I walked into one of the local banks here in town. I picked up one of those drafts they have lying around, filled it out for a million bucks, handed it to the teller, and said, “I’d like you to cash this, please.” She says, “Wow, a million bucks.” “Yes, I’d like to have that in cash, please.”

A woman asked, “Do you have that much money in this bank?” I said, “No, ma’am, I don’t.” She asked how much money I had in the bank, and I answered, “Well, truthfully, ma’am, I don’t even have an account here.” She said, “Would you expect me to cash this check for you? And you don’t even have an account here?” I said, “Ma’am, I just said I’d like to have it. No, I don’t have an account and no, I don’t have any money. That’s why I’d like to have the cash.” She said, “Sir, you’re wasting my time. Please get out of here.”

I had asked in my name when I had absolutely nothing in that bank. But suppose I went there carrying a check signed by Michael Hawkins for one million dollars. The woman might look at me and say, “Oh, I know him. He’s got plenty. How do you want this, sir?” The point is that I am no longer asking in my name or in my merit. I am asking in the name of another. When I come and ask in the name of Jesus Christ, I am not depending on anything I have done, said, or have, nor on anything I might do. I am totally, absolutely depending upon the person and merits of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone.

James gives us a further explanation of proper asking: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” Then 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.” Our Lord says the first thing we need to learn to do is ask. There has to be a proper asking. But notice what else he says: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” It is not only that we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, depending totally upon His person, His merits, and His works; we cannot ask selfishly, lustfully, and wickedly.

Let me give you an illustration. There are very few times that I've been found speechless in my life, but here was one of them. I was talking to a fellow one day who was a professing Christian. He said, "Brother Weaver, I've been praying and asking the Lord for something, and seemingly he just doesn't answer my prayer."

He said, "I can't understand that, because I used to smoke. I asked the Lord to take away the cigarettes, and he did. I haven't smoked in years. I used to drink, and I asked him to take away the taste for alcohol. He did. I haven't had anything to drink for years. But it's just this one thing. It seems like I can't get the Lord to answer my prayer."

I said, "Well, what is it?" I thought maybe I could give him a scripture. He said, "I'm trying to get this woman to marry me." I jokingly said, "Well, maybe she doesn't love you." "Oh, no," he said. "She says she loves me. It's just that her husband won't give her a divorce."

When I regained my composure, I said, "Sir, let me tell you why God's not answering that prayer: because it's completely, totally contrary to His Word. It's a violation of His law, and it's based upon your lust and your wickedness." It's amazing how ignorant some people can be over such a simple subject. There has to be not only a proper association, but also a proper approach, a proper attitude, and a proper asking.

And we cannot ask wickedly, selfishly, and lustfully. Fifthly, there must be a proper apprehension. By proper apprehension, I mean that we must apprehend, understand, and comprehend what the will of God is. First John 5:14-15 says, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he

heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." God says that when we pray and ask according to His will, we know that He hears us. When we know that He has heard us, we know that we shall have the petitions which we have desired of Him.

Here is absolute assurance and confidence in prayer. When we pray according to the will of God, there is no doubt as to whether or not God has heard our prayers and will answer our prayers. But you say, "How do I know what God's will is?" The answer is very simple: His will is revealed in His Word. When we pray scripturally, according to the Word of God, we know that He has heard us, and we know that we are going to have those petitions that we have asked.

You may say, "But sometimes I may not know His Word on a particular subject. I may not know His will in a particular area. How can I pray then?" Remember what our Lord taught us to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." If we do not know exactly what the will of God is, we can lawfully and biblically pray, "Lord, your will be done in this matter. Your name be honored and glorified. I may not know, but thou dost know."

Romans 8:26-27 gives us another application. In that passage, we have someone who can pray with us, through us, in us, and for us when we do not exactly know what to pray.

In Romans 8:26–27, Scripture says: "Likewise the Spirit"—that is the Holy Spirit—"also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

There have been times in my life when I have been so broken and burdened that I did not know which end was up. All I could do was fall on my face and groan, cry, and weep before the Lord. The Holy Spirit knows our infirmities. When we do not know how we should pray as we ought, He is the one who makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. We cannot explain them or voice

them. God, who searches the hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us according to the will of God.

There must be a proper apprehension. We must know what God's will is. If we do not know what God's will is, we can honestly say, "Father, I want your will done. I want your name honored and I want your name glorified."

There must also be a proper affection. Colossians 3:1–2 says, "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, not on things on the earth." If we truly and genuinely love the Lord, and want Him honored and glorified, we will value His will, His Word, and His way above everything else. Our Lord taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." In other words, "Lord, we want your name to be sanctified. We want your name to be reverenced. We want your name to be glorified. We want that first and foremost in our lives." There must be a proper affection toward our Lord.

If we do not have a proper association, approach, attitude, asking, apprehension, and affection, our prayers will be affected one way or the other. My basic assumption is that every one of you knows what I have just told you, or at least should know. If you know all of this, why are your prayers not answered? Why are most prayers not answered?

Let us go back in our Bibles to 2 Kings, chapter 22. Josiah was a young man who had grown up in the ways of the Lord. He began to reign when he was eight years of age, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. Look at verse 2. You talk about a testimony; here it is: "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left."

Josiah was evidently a good king and a godly man as far as what he knew and understood. Based upon what he knew, God said he followed David, a man after God's own heart, and did not turn from the left hand nor to the right hand. However, as we read 2 Kings,

chapter 22, we find that a problem existed during Josiah's reign: the law of God had been lost.

I have an entire message on this one point, the lost law. God's law was lost in the house of God. That is where it is usually lost today, by the way. Our Lord said that He was wounded in the house of His friends. The average church today has no knowledge concerning the law of God. As far as most are concerned, it has been abrogated, nullified, and done away with, and henceforth has no value for anybody or anything. The same law that was lost in the temple is lost today as well.

They were going to restore and repair the temple. As they moved the debris, a copy of the law was found. Look at verse 8: “And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.”

Shaphan the scribe came to the king and reported what had been done with the money found in the house and delivered to those overseeing the work. Then Shaphan said, “Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book,” and read it before the king. When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he rent his clothes. He commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, “Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.”

Josiah was broken, rightly afraid, and humbled himself. He recognized that they were in trouble and said, “You go find out from God what we must do.” Notice where he sent them: “Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me.”

But then an interesting thing happens. Verse 14 says, “So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.” Why did

the priest and his entourage go to this woman? There could be several answers. Someone might say that the king's commandment required haste, and he was earnest in wanting an answer. Since she was already in Jerusalem, they went to her. She was also well known, because even her husband was a member of the royal court.

That sounds pretty good on the surface. But did you know that Jeremiah the prophet and Zephaniah the prophet also prophesied during the reign of Josiah? Why did they not contact Jeremiah? Why did they not contact Zephaniah? Jeremiah lived in Anathoth, which is really not that far from Jerusalem, but it could be that he was in some far-flung part of the kingdom. I understand that; that is a possibility. But you have also got to remember that Jeremiah was not known for his tact.

He preached very boldly, very openly. Someone could say, "Well, Zephaniah, although he preached during that time, may not have quite yet begun his ministry at this particular time because Josiah reigned thirty-one years. He could have been a little bit later." Let me ask you to turn very quickly to 2 Chronicles 35, just to show you before you dismiss the fact that Jeremiah might not have known Josiah. Oh, no. Not only did Josiah know Jeremiah, Jeremiah knew Josiah as well. In 2 Chronicles 35:25, there is a lamentation that Jeremiah gave for King Josiah: "And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations." So Jeremiah knew Josiah. Josiah knew Jeremiah.

My question is, why did they go to Huldah? I believe the answer is very singular and very revealing. This demonstrates the depth to which the kingdom had sunk and the depth of the apostasy that had permeated the kingdom. Certainly, Jeremiah was a prophet at this time. Certainly, Zephaniah was a prophet at this time. But look back at verse 13. Look what the king said: "Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me." Verse 14 says, "So Hilkiah the priest, and all of these men went unto Huldah the prophetess." Josiah did not send them to Huldah. Josiah said, "I want you to go and enquire of the Lord for me."

Now, let us try to put this together. We had Hilkiah the high priest, Shaphan the scribe, and Josiah the king. Turn, first of all, to

Malachi 2:7. Let me try to tie this little thought together. Remember, Hilkiah was the high priest. In Malachi 2:7, the Word of God says concerning the priest: “For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge,

“And they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” The priest should keep knowledge. He should know the law; he is the messenger of God. Shaphan was the scribe. Shaphan knew nothing about God’s law. Compare that with Ezra 7:6, where the Bible says that Ezra was a ready scribe in the law of Moses. Here, Hilkiah, the high priest, knew nothing about God’s law. Shaphan, the scribe, who was supposed to translate and copy, knew nothing about God’s law.

Now you have Josiah, the king. When you go back to Deuteronomy 17, the king was to have his own copy of God’s law, read therein, and meditate every day. Isn’t it interesting? The secret of the Lord was neither with Hilkiah the high priest, nor with Shaphan the scribe, nor with the king, nor with any other servants or ministers in the temple, and they went to Huldah. Huldah is mentioned here, the only instance in the Bible.

We know nothing of her circumstances. Tradition says that she prophesied amongst the women of the court, being a court lady herself. Why did they go to Huldah? Not only does it reveal the apostasy of the kingdom and the ignorance of those who were in authority, it also teaches us a simple truth: God never leaves himself without witness, because God is never going to leave sinners without excuse.

When those who should rule, those who should know, and those who should exercise dominion refuse to do so, the power will always shift to someone who does and who will. If the father will not be the head of his home, that authority and power does not disappear. If a father refuses to be the head of his home, next thing you know, mama will be the head of the home. If mama refuses to be the head of the home, the children will be the head; they will run the parents.

All that is needed to have a matriarchal society is for the men to refuse to fulfill the role God has ordained for them. The Word of God tells you very obviously, openly, and distinctly that when women rule, it is a judgment of God. All they have to do is refuse

responsibility. I'm not preaching on Huldah tonight, but I'm trying to preach on why God does not answer most prayers.

In 2 Kings 22, beginning with verse 18, the word comes back to the king from Huldah:

"But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord."

## The Principle of Lex Talionis in Prayer

Look again at the latter part of verse 18: "As touching the words which thou hast heard." Now watch: "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof"—skip down now to the last phrase—"I also have heard thee, saith the Lord."

Here is what God said: "Josiah, you heard me. Now I've heard you." Why was Josiah's prayer answered? Because he heard God. He listened to God's Word. He humbled himself. He knelt. He was broken. God said, "Josiah, because you heard me, I want to hear you."

You also have to turn things around, turn things upside down, or consider the opposite. If God heard Josiah because Josiah heard God, that also means this: When we do not hear God, God does not hear us.

The principle is called the lex talionis, that is, the law of retribution. It is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, a foot for foot, hand for hand, stripe for stripe, burning for burning. God always makes the punishment fit the crime. What God is saying is this: When you hear me, I hear you. When you refuse to hear me, I refuse to hear you.

## Scriptural Proof of the Principle

Look in your Bibles at 1 Samuel, chapter 2, verse 30: "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." What did God say? Those that honor Me, I will honor. Those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed—that is, they shall be despised themselves.

Now look at Hosea, chapter 4, verse 6. This is a passage most of us quote, but unhappily, we do not usually quote all of the verse. God told Josiah, "You heard me and I heard you." The opposite is also true: when we do not hear God, God does not hear us. Hosea wrote, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." That is usually where we stop. We bemoan the fact that we are ignorant people; that is, we do not know God, His Word, or His principles.

But look at the rest of the verse: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Why are they ignorant? Here is why: "Because thou hast rejected knowledge." They refuse to hear God. "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."

Now, wait a minute. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Why? Because they rejected knowledge. They would not listen to God. They did not want Him, His Word, His truth, or His principles. God said, "Since you've rejected My Word, I will also reject you, that you will be no priest to Me. Seeing you have forgotten My law, I will also forget thy children."

Now let me show you how this is the lex talionis: it is punishment fitting the crime. What is God's law? It is an expression of His will. When God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill," that is God's will for us. Even in 1 Thessalonians, Paul said, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." That is the will of God.

What are our children? They are expressions of our will. We wanted them. Now God says, You forget the expression of My will,

My law; I forget the expression of your will, your children. You want to know why our children are in such trouble in this country today? Because God's people have basically forgotten God's law. They have forgotten His Word and turned their backs upon Him. In justice, He turns His back upon the children.

The law is an expression of His will. This Word is an expression of His will. David said in Psalm 66 and verse 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." What is iniquity? Iniquity is sin; it is rebellion and wickedness. Look in your Bibles, if you would, to 1 John 3 and verse 4. I can quote it, but I want you to see it.

Look in 1 John 3 and verse 4. Since you know that iniquity is sin, and David said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," the Word of God says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." You cannot sin without transgressing God's law. What did David say? "If I regard, if I countenance, if I hold, if I love, if I embrace iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Why? Because we are not hearing God or listening to Him; we are living lives in direct contradiction to His will and His word. How do you expect God to hear you and bless you when your life is totally contrary to God?

Those who were here on Wednesday night will remember 1 Samuel, chapter 15, verse 22. After Saul had sinned against God, Samuel said to him, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." In that verse, obedience and hearkening are synonymous. No one ever really hears the Word of God until he heeds it, until he obeys it. Our Lord said, "To hearken is better than sacrifice," or, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The fat of rams was a chief part of the sacrifice always given to God. So what is our Lord saying?

If you do not hear Me, I do not hear you. You can say, "Brother Weaver, I think this is just much ado about nothing. I think I can embrace sin and keep rebellion and wickedness in my life, and the Lord will just hear me when I cry." I want you to explain this verse if you think it does not matter how you live or whether your life affects your prayer. Look in Proverbs 28, verse 9: "He that turneth away his

ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." You know what the word abomination is?

It means it is a stench in God's nostrils. God cannot stand it. God said, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." You do not hear God; God is not going to hear you. God says your prayer will be an abomination to me.

In the book of Zechariah, chapter 7, begin reading with verse 7. Pay close attention to what God says: "Should ye not hear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?" Should you not hear the words when everything was going well? Should you not have heard the words of the Lord?

Verse 8 says: "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." They did not want to hear God. "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." God said, "You would not listen to me. Why should I listen to you? You do not hear my words. Why should I hear your words?"

Has it ever bothered you that Christians can attend church year after year, hear so much preaching, and yet know so little? Why in the world do professing Christian people stay babes in their Christian life? Why? Well, look in Mark 4, verse 24, and our Lord said unto them, “Take heed what ye hear.” Now let me just stop. In Luke 8, in the same passage, the same parable of the sower, our Lord says, “Take heed how ye hear.” So you’re not only to

take heed what you hear, you're to take heed how you hear. But look what He says, verse 24, Mark 4:

"And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath."

Now, let me go back to verse 24. He said, "Take heed what ye hear." Now look at this phrase: "With what measure ye mete, with what measure ye measure, it shall be measured to you."

Now let me just stop there before I go to the rest of the verse. When our Lord said, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you," here's what He's saying. You're not going to read your Bible or study your Bible ten minutes and get two hours' worth of knowledge. No, you're going to get ten minutes' worth of knowledge. You're not going to read your Bible a month and get ten years' worth of knowledge. No, you're going to get a month's worth of knowledge. Whatever measure that you measure in seeking the truth of God, to that same degree, it's going to be measured back to you. But here's the kicker. Watch it. He said, "And with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given."

## Application: Obedience as the Key to Answered Prayer

You know why most Christians reach a plateau and never go further? Because they do not obey what they have already heard. Why should God give you more truth if you will not obey the truth He has already given you? "To you that hear shall more be given." To you that obey, to you that apply, shall more be given. If you will not obey or apply the Word of God, why should God give you any more? It is the same principle: God says, "You do not hear My words; I will not hear your words." You want to know why most people's prayers are not answered? They do not listen to God, hear His Word, or apply His law and principles to their lives.

Most people pray only when their backs are against the wall. Most do not know what it means to pray without ceasing. Much of our

prayer is reduced to, “Thank you, Lord, for our food. Amen.” Often it is so short and sweet that it is over before we know it. We do not study, seek to apply the Word of God, or hear God's Word. God says, “If you are not going to listen to Me, why should I listen to you?” Failure to apply and obey the Word of God leads to defeated, deformed, and devastated lives.

Look in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 1. The same principle applies to unbelievers: God says, “You will not listen to Me; I will not listen to you.” It is not extravagant; it is absolutely just. Beginning with verse 22, God says, “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.” Turn. Repent. God says, “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.” You would not listen to Him or hear His words. Look what God says: “I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.”

"They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." If we don't hear God, God will not hear us. It is absolutely imperative that we hear, heed, obey, and apply the Word of God. God said, "Josiah, you heard my words. Your heart was tender. You humbled yourself. You sought me. Therefore," said God, "I heard your prayer." If we want God to hear us, we must hear Him. The only way we are going to hear Him is in this book, bringing our lives into greater conformity to the Word of God and being transformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart," if I hold that which is contrary to God, as David said, "the Lord will not hear me." If we want our prayers answered, we better live holy, godly, obedient lives, turn from every known sin, every bad attitude, every bad disposition, and

every wicked, ungodly way, and say, "Lord, may I be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and may my life be brought in greater conformity and obedience to the totality of your word."

Father, in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I pray that you would impress upon our hearts the absolute need for obedience, for application of thy word, for hearing thee, and for obeying that which thou hast given us. Enable us, Father, to bring our lives in conformity to thee and to thy word. Give us grace that we may serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

# Who's Paying Attention

April 3, 2005

**SCRIPTURE READING - Ecclesiastes 5:1-8 (KJV)**

## Introduction: The Problem of Not Paying Attention

Today we're dealing with Ecclesiastes chapter 5, verses 1 through 8. Ecclesiastes chapter 5, beginning there with verse 1.

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools. For they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth. Let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God. For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth. Therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business, and a fool's voice is known by a multitude of words. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it. For he hath no pleasure in fools. Pay that which thou hast vowed. Better it is that thou shouldst not vow, than thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel that it was an error. Wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the works of thy hands?

> For in the multitude of dreams, in many words there are also diverse vanities, but fear thou God."
>
> "If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter. For he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they."
>
> How many times have we said to our children, to our spouses, and to our friends, "You're not paying attention"? Occasionally Alice will say, "You're not paying attention," or something like that. If I'm studying, if I've got something on my mind, she can come into the room and sit there talking to me, and all of a sudden she'll say, "You haven't heard a word that I've said, have you?" I'll look and say, "Pardon? What was that?" The truth is, we always say to each other, "You're not paying attention."
>
> And you don't know how many times, as pastor, I wanted to single individuals out and say, "You're not paying attention." Because the truth of the matter is, you usually can look at people and tell whether or not they're listening and whether or not they're paying attention.

Even on some occasions, we demand that others pay attention to us. If they do not give us the attention that we think we deserve, then our “feelings are hurt.” Although we demand that others pay attention to us, we do not necessarily think that we need to reciprocate and pay attention to what they have to say as well.

The problem is that many times we carry this “not paying attention” concept into the spiritual realm and often blame God for things that happen to us. We reason that if He really cared, He would have been paying more attention and would not have allowed those things to happen in our lives. When we do that, and begin to question His love, concern, and goodness, we begin to ask the question, “Why, Lord? Why is this happening to me? Why am I going through this? Why must I suffer?”

There is indeed a difference between asking the Lord “why” in order to bring our lives more into conformity with His Word, to understand His purpose and will for our lives, and to become more holy and godly, and questioning God in a blame-shifting manner.

There is a difference between asking, “Why, Lord?” so that we may be obedient, and asking in a blame-shifting condemnation and complaint.

## The Blame-Shifting Condemnation of God

We can do this very subtly. Hold Ecclesiastes 5, but look in your Bibles at the book of John, chapter 11. Everyone knows the story of our Lord and His friendship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Lazarus was sick, and our Lord knew that he was sick. Yet He stayed away purposefully and deliberately until Lazarus had died, that He might raise him from the dead, as the Scripture tells us.

Notice what Martha said in John 11:21. I want you to see this kind of blame-shifting condemnation placed upon our Lord by Martha: “Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Now look at that: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” It was a subtle way of blaming Christ for the death of Lazarus.

In other words, what she was saying basically was this: "Lord, you were our friend. You are our friend. You have an obligation to us. And Lord, you failed that obligation. Had you been here, like a good friend should have, then my brother would not have died." Isn't it absolutely amazing that we hardly ever blame anything on sin, Satan, disobedience, rebellion, or the lack of our own personal responsibility? We normally bring and blame everything upon God. It's God's fault, because He should have been paying more attention. And then we begin to reason, "Well, after all, God is the one that allowed sin into the world. And therefore everything is his fault."

Now that is certainly how unbelievers think, and unhappily that is even how some professing Christians think. You see, we want God to pay attention to our plans, our needs, our wants, and our desires, and yet the truth of the matter is we willingly ignore His word, His plan, His will, and His desires. In other words, we want God to give us the attention that we think we deserve, but we're not willing to give Him the attention that He deserves. Can you say spoiled, selfish, rebellious?

While most people blame God for everything, you might as well go ahead and blame Him for everything under the sun. I have heard people argue, I have heard people ask, "Well, why does God allow Christians to suffer? Why does God allow babies to die? Why does God allow old folks to suffer? Why do wars occur? Why do tragedies strike? Why does death happen? Why do catastrophes happen?" I mean, if you're going to blame God, go ahead and blame Him for everything.

Now, you understand I'm speaking facetiously. But here's what we're thinking. We're really thinking the problem is God's just not really paying attention. If we only had a God who would cooperate with us and do what we wanted done, things would work out, wouldn't they? We think that our wisdom, our compassion, our concern, and our knowledge is what needs to be applied. If God would just listen to us and do things the way we want them done, things would simply work out differently. The problem that we think that we have with God is He's just not paying attention.

Ecclesiastes chapter 5 lays out some very important truths that we need to consider, especially in light of today's events. The primary truth to be considered is verse 8.

## The Proposition: When You See Oppression and Perversion of Justice

"If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter. For he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they."

First, note the proposition. It is very simple: "If thou seest the oppression of the poor and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province." In our day and time, we do not need to read that "if thou seest the oppression of the poor." We need to read it, "when thou seest the oppression of the poor," and when you see the perverting of justice and judgment.

All you have to do is open your eyes. It is literally everywhere. We have a banking and usury system designed to steal from everyone, including the poor. We have a judicial system that believes it is

answerable to no one, including God Himself. We have a bureaucratic, despotic, and tyrannical government that has exceeded its constitutional authority thousands of times and constantly tramples innocent citizens under its feet. It is not "if" you see it; it is "when" you see it, because it is literally everywhere.

We know individuals who have been trampled upon by bureaucracy and tyranny, and we know poor people who have been trampled upon. The Bible enunciates two principles very clearly. When God speaks of the oppression of the poor and the perverting of justice and judgment, He gives us principles that are not to be violated.

## Biblical Condemnation of Oppressing the Poor and Perverting Justice

God forbids the oppression of the poor. In Deuteronomy 15, beginning with verse 7, He says: "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates of the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, now watch, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother. But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth." He further warns, "beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release is at hand, and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him naught, and he cryeth unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee."

Notice what God says. If there is a poor man in the land, he is your brother. We are not talking about strangers or people we do not know. We are talking about our brothers. If he has a need, we take care of it. God says, "thou shalt not harden thy heart toward him."

In the context, under the Old Testament, every seven years debts were to be forgiven. Suppose Tom is a poor brother and I am a rich brother—not that I am, but suppose it for argument's sake. Tom comes to me in the sixth year, the tenth month, with just two more months until the year of release. He says, "Now, Pastor, my wife's hungry. My kid's hungry. I don't have any money to pay my rent. And I need to borrow a thousand dollars."

I look at him and say, "I guess you do. I'd like to borrow a couple thousand like that myself, because in two months I won't have to pay it back." Then I tell him, "Now, boy, you're not getting a penny from me." God says, "You shall not harden your heart toward your poor brother. You give him what he needs." God says, "No, you can't do that." In other words, He forbids the oppression of the poor.

Look in Psalm 41, beginning with verse 1. Psalm 41 says, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor."

The Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble. If you are merciful and deliver someone else in the time of trouble, God says, “I’ll be merciful and deliver you in the time of trouble.” “The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive and he shall be blessed upon the earth and thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing. Thou wilt make all of his bed in his sickness.” Isn’t that amazing? God says, if you are merciful to the poor, I’ll be merciful to you. I’ll preserve you. I’ll bless you.

Look in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 31. The Bible forbids, over and over, the oppression of the poor: “He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his maker, but he that honoreth him hath mercy upon the poor.” When you oppress the poor, you are reproaching the poor’s Maker; that is, you are reproaching God. But if you have mercy upon the poor, then you are honoring God. Look also at Proverbs 17 and verse 5: “Whoso mocketh the poor reproaches his maker, and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.”

You cannot take a proud, arrogant, haughty attitude toward the poor. Proverbs 19:17 says, “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which is given will he pay him again.” The Bible says that he who has pity upon the poor lends unto the Lord, and that which he gives, the Lord will pay him back again. In other words, you are not going to out-give God.

Proverbs 21:13 says, “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.” God says, “You do not hear the cry of the poor. When you cry, I do not hear you.” Proverbs 22:16 says, “He that oppresses the poor to increase

his riches and he that giveth to the rich shall surely come to want." God is forbidding the oppression of the poor.

Proverbs 30:14 says, "There is a generation whose teeth are his swords and their jaw teeth knives to devour the poor from off the earth and the needy from among men." I could multiply these scriptures, but I have given you enough to know that over and over, God condemns the oppression of the poor. He condemns the ridiculing of the poor. He condemns the hardening of your heart toward the poor. God condemns the reproaching of the poor.

God also condemns the perversion of justice and judgment. Deuteronomy 1:16-17 says, "And I charge your judges at that time saying, hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him, you shall not respect persons in judgment, but you shall hear the small as the great, you shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's, and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it to me, and I will hear it." Moses is instructing those judges under God, but he says, "For the judgment is God's."

What is the supreme responsibility of a person who is a judge? To judge for God. How can you judge for God unless you judge according to God's law? How can you judge for God unless you judge righteously? This is why God instituted the judges.

Look in Proverbs 17, verse 15. Look what God condemns: "He that justified the wicked and he that condemned the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord." Remember, an abomination is a stench in the nostrils. God says the judge that will justify the wicked and the judge that will condemn the just is a stench in the nostrils of God. God condemns the perverting of justice.

Look in Proverbs 24 and verse 14. Proverbs 24, verse 14. That is not really the verse I wanted, but it does apply: "So shall the knowledge and wisdom be in my soul when thou hast found it, then there shall be reward and my expectation shall not be cut off." There was a verse there that dealt with judgment. That is exactly the verse I put down, but I do not see it right now. Turn over to Proverbs 31 and look at verse 9. This one is sufficient. Look what God says: "Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and the

needy." "Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and the needy."

I do not have to tell you that the oppression of the poor and the perverting of justice and judgment is wicked, wrong, ungodly, and rebellious. Yet you look around today in our society and you will find politicians, officers, and judges who thumb their nose at God and say, "I do not care what you say."

All you have to do is think of the Terri Schiavo case. And by the way, if you have not figured it out, it was legalized murder. Anytime you withhold food and water like that, the woman was not on life support. She was not in a vegetative state. But you look around today and here are judges constantly and consistently thumbing their noses at God. Their rebellion is in plain sight.

We see it every day. And if you do not see it, you are not listening, and you are not looking. How in the world can men be so perverted, so lustful, so selfish, so rebellious? How can they so willfully and so easily take advantage of the poor and the needy?

Now, what does God say? Here is the proposition: When you go into a province, if you see the oppression of the poor, the perversion of justice and judgment—and you are going to see it—that is the proposition.

Secondly, look at the prohibition. This is what throws you. Ecclesiastes chapter 5, verse 8 says, "If thou seest the oppression of the poor and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter." Here is the prohibition: "Marvel not."

## The Prohibition: Marvel Not

The Hebrew word for "marvel" is tamah, which means to be astounded, stunned, amazed, or dumbfounded. When you see it, do not stand there dumbfounded or amazed. In light of the wicked oppression of the poor and the violent perversion of judgment and justice, God is saying that we should not stand there stunned, amazed, and marveling.

The question in everybody's mind has got to be, How in the world can we help but be shocked at such blatant rebellion? By the way, I

hope you understand that this is why the majority of the people in this country are not shocked at blatant rebellion: they do not even know what truth is, and they do not know what God requires. Once you know what God requires, you can see the blatant rebellion. Yet God is saying, Do not be dumbfounded or astounded. It is almost as if you had better expect to see it.

Anyone who believes in the doctrine of total depravity will quickly and readily understand how men could be so wicked, vile, and rebellious. As bad as it is—and it is bad—if God removed His restraining hand, it would be a million times worse. The only reason it is not worse is because of God's restraining hand.

Now, look at the context with me. I want to begin to put this together for you and show you the argument Solomon is making. If you look closely at Ecclesiastes chapter 5, you will see that the primary emphasis in this first part of the chapter is upon words—our words, and especially words that relate to our vows. So look at verse 1.

## The Context: Keeping Our Words and Vows

He says, “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God. And be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools. For they consider not that they do evil.” That is good counsel for all of us: to be more ready to hear than to speak. In good South Georgia lingo, watch your mouth.

“Be not rash with thy mouth. Let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God. For God is in heaven and thou upon earth, therefore, let thy words be few.” What is God admonishing us to do? We are to think carefully before we speak, especially in reference to vows. Do you not remember that our Lord said in the New Testament that we will give an account for every idle word?

Recognize that you are the creature and He is the Creator. You are the servant and He is the Master. He is the King and you are the subject.

“Pay that which thou hast vowed.” God said, if you make a vow to Me, you pay. A vow does not necessarily involve money; it may or may not. You could vow to give the Lord a certain amount, and if you

do that, you keep your vow. You could vow that you are going to do something else, or not do something else. If you make that vow to God, you keep it. “Defer not to pay it.”

“Better it is that thou shouldest not vow than thou shouldest vow and not pay.” No one is making you vow, and no one is making you give your word to God. But when you give your word to God, you had better pay it. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

“Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel that it was an error. Wherefore should God be angry at thy voice and destroy the work of thy hands?” Do not make vows or say things that you do not intend to keep and do. God says that if you start lying and backpedaling, then He will judge you.

In verse 8, he says, “If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in the province, marvel not at the matter.” Note what is happening. God emphasizes in the first part of this chapter that we are to keep our word. We are to be men and women of integrity. Whatever we say, that is what we are going to do.

Turn back to Psalm 15. This psalm shows once again how God demands that our word be our bond, whatever we say we do. God is giving us a description of the godly man, the man who will abide with Him. “Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?” That is the question. Here is the answer:

“He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart, he that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor, and whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord, here it is, he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent, for he that doeth these things shall never be moved.”

Note in verse 4, “he that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not.” What is he saying? Here is the man who will keep his word, even if he suffers for keeping it. If I make a deal with Henry and then find out I could have gotten a better price, I still have to keep my word toward him.

Do you remember how God made the Israelites keep the covenant they had made with the Gibeonites in Joshua chapter 9? They were to destroy all those people in the land, yet the Gibeonites put on rotten clothes and took moldy bread and wine bottles and came to the Israelites. The Israelites said, "Who are you?"

They said, "Oh, we be from a far country. We're way off. And we heard about your God, and we want to enter into a covenant with you. We want to be one with you."

"Well, how do we know that you're not from here in the land?"

"Well," they said, "look at our clothes. They were new when we came. Look at our bread. It was fresh out of the oven." Of course, they deceived the Israelites, and the Israelites made a covenant with them. No one checked with God. After they made the covenant, they found out that the Gibeonites were part of the Amorites that they were to destroy. And you know what God said? "You can't touch him."

They did make them drawers of water and hewers of wood, but they were not allowed to kill them. God said, "You've given your word. Now you keep your word."

Now, when you look in Ecclesiastes chapter 5, in the first seven verses, basically the whole thrust is that we are to keep our words and vows; we are to be men and women of our word. When you get to verse eight, he says, "If or when thou seest the oppression of the poor and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter." Wait a minute.

Do you see the disparity? God is demanding that we keep our attitudes, words, and actions. If He is so fastidious concerning our attitudes and actions, so fastidious in making sure that we keep our word and do that which is right and holy, how then can God allow the oppression of the poor and the violent perverting of judgment and justice, which is so prevalent, so open, and so blasphemous? How could God allow that to happen? He is so fastidious when it comes to us. He expects us to keep our tongues and our words under control.

When we look at the smallness of our sins compared with the greatness of the sins of the wicked, the question has to come: How

can God allow that? How can that go on? Psalm 73 shows that Asaph had the same problem we are experiencing today.

He says, “Truly, God is good to Israel, even as such as of a clean heart.” Thus he gives the conclusion in the first verse. But then he says, “But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped.” In other words, I nearly lost it. Why did he nearly lose it? “For I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

When I saw the prosperity of the wicked, look at the one-worlders, the Bilderbergers, the Rockefellers, and all those wicked men in the Illuminati. Just name it. Look at the multitudes of millions that they have. Then he says, “For there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm.” It looks like they are solidly in control. “They are not in trouble as other men. Neither are they plagued like other men.” Seemingly, they do not have the problems that we have. What is the result? “Therefore, pride compasseth them about as a chain. Violence covereth them as a garment.”

He says in verse seven, “Their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than the heart could wish.” Here is a description of them: “They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression. They speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens and their tongue walketh through the earth.” They are not afraid to curse man nor God. “Therefore, as people return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out of them. And they say, here’s the wicked. How does God know?”

“And is there knowledge in the most high?” Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world. They increase in riches. Note the disparity that he is recognizing. He says in verse thirteen, “Verily, I’ve cleansed my heart in vain. I’ve washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long I’ve been plagued and chastened every morning.” He looks around at the wicked: they are prospering and successful. It looks like they are getting away with it, while he suffers.

“All I do is suffer. All I do is do without. Lord, I don’t understand this.” That is why he said in verse sixteen, “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.” He is trying to do what is right, yet suffering and doing without, while he looks at this wicked, ungodly

reprobate. His eyes stand out in fatness; he has more than his heart can wish. He hates God, despises Him, reproaches the poor, and perverts judgment. It does not matter to him.

"Look at me. I love you, I want to honor you, I want to serve you, and I'm suffering in doing that." But in verse seventeen he says, "Until I went in the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end." When he found out what was going to happen to the wicked, he would much rather be poor and suffering: "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castest them down in destruction, how they are brought into desolations, as in a moment they are utterly consumed with terrors, as a dream when one awakeneth so, Lord, when thou awakenest thou shalt despise their image." God, you will destroy them.

Now, go back to Ecclesiastes chapter 5. Asaph was in the same position in Psalm 73 that we are in today. You have a proposition. We have a prohibition. God says, "Don't marvel." Don't stand dumbfounded when you see this. Look in verse 8, because here is the third thing: the preeminent one. "If thou seest the oppression of the poor and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter." Why should we not be dumbfounded, amazed, and astounded? Here is why: "For he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they." God says, "I am the sovereign. I am the preeminent one. I'm higher than they are, and I am paying attention. I regard everything that they're doing."

## The Preeminent One: God is Higher and Regards

Have you understood that nothing escapes the all-seeing eye of God? He is omniscient. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good." It is not just good that God sees; He sees the evil as well. Hebrews 4:13 says, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight. But all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." God sees clearly, accurately, and truly. He knows the motives and intents as well as the actions. Nothing escapes His notice. Nothing can be hidden from Him. Nothing is forgotten by Him. Daniel 2:22 says, "He knoweth what is in darkness." Ezekiel 11:5 says, "For I

know the things that come into your mind, every one of them." God even knows what we think and what we do not think.

Absolutely nothing can be hidden from God. No human eye may see, but his maker witnessed the crime and called Cain into account. Sarah may laugh derisively in her tent and say, "Verily, I laugh not," but God heard her and said, "Verily, you did laugh." Achan stole a wedge of gold and carefully hid it under his tent, but God saw it and brought it to light. David went to great pains to cover his sins, yet God uncovered them and brought him into account. That is why Numbers 32:23 says, "Be sure your sins will find you out." There is absolutely no one higher than God.

The highest of the high regardeth. In fact, hold Ecclesiastes, but turn over a few passages to Isaiah 43. Let me show you that God is God alone. Notice verse 11: "I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no Savior." Then look at Isaiah 44:8: "Fear you not, neither be afraid. Have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it, you are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no God. I know not any." There is no other God but the one true and living God. Ecclesiastes 5:8 says, "For he that is higher than the highest regardeth it."

One of my favorite stories is about Lester Roloff, bless his heart. He was a dear, dear brother. When the government was trying to make him take a license for his homes through Family and Children Services, he went down to see them and said, "No, I can't do that." The lady said, "Now, Brother Roloff, you know the Bible says that you're to submit to the higher authorities." He looked at her and said, "Ma'am, I have no trouble submitting to the higher authorities. It's you lower authorities that's giving me this."

That is a fact. There is one higher than the highest. No matter how high you are in authority in this life, in this earth, there is always someone higher than you. That someone is the sovereign of the universe. The Bible says he regardeth it. He is the sovereign; he is the absolute; he is the ultimate.

Now look at this word "regardeth" in verse 8: "for he that is higher than the highest regardeth." God not only sees what he considers; it is even more than that. The Hebrew word for "regardeth" is shamar,

which in many instances is translated as keep, guard, or protect. So the application is very simple: God himself is the divine picket. God himself is on sentry duty. God will see, observe, keep and gather the truth, and use it against the wicked when he judges them. Look in your Bibles to Psalm 50. Let me show you what God tells the wicked in Psalm 50:20-21. He corrects them. He tells them.

They may not believe it. They may not listen, but he tells them very plainly in Psalm 50:21: “These things hast thou done,” he says to the wicked, “and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.” In other words, you thought I was like you; you thought I was forgetful. “But I will reprove thee and set them,” that is, your sins, “in order, before thine eyes. Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”

Psalm 90:8 says it very plainly: “Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins, in light of Thy countenance.” Now let me tell you why God said, “Marvel not.” God said, “Marvel not,” because the wicked shall not escape. The wicked shall not go unpunished. You know what he said in Nahum 1:3? “The Lord is slow to anger and great in power. And will not at all acquit the wicked.” He is slow to anger, he is great in power, and he will not at all acquit the wicked.

In light of that, Deuteronomy 7:9-10 declares, “Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keepeth his commandments to a thousand generations. Watch, and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack to him that hateth him. He will repay him to his face.” God is not embarrassed to judge the wicked, I can assure you. I have quoted this in time past, but in light of what I have been teaching and preaching, I want you to see it.

## Applications: Pay Attention to Your Own Business and Trust God's Sovereignty

Now, let me make some applications. The first application is the one that you and I need to pay attention to. What in the world is God telling us in Ecclesiastes 5:1-8? Are you listening? I am going to

summarize it for you. He is telling us that we need to pay attention to our business and let him pay attention to his business. You say, “What are you saying, Brother Weaver?” It is his business to punish the wicked, and he will. “Vengeance is mine,” said the Lord, “I will repay.” What is God telling me? I have got my hands full just taking care of my own business.

That is not saying we should be unconcerned. I have my responsibilities. James 4:17 says, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” I must make sure that I do what is right. God is telling me that I do not need to pine, worry, or fear that somehow the wicked will escape or get by with their evil deeds. God said they will not. He will take care of that.

Deuteronomy 29:29 says, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God. But the things that he has revealed,” that is, his Word, “belong to us and our children forever.” God is telling me that I do not have to be concerned about the secret things; those belong to him. I need to be concerned about the things he has revealed, that I may be obedient. First, then, we need to pay attention to our business. Secondly, having said that, we cannot escape the reality that we still wonder how God allows such wicked, open, blatant rebellion. I am going to be absolutely honest with you.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: if I was God, I would have killed me and a whole lot more other people a long time ago. You see what I'm saying? But I'm thankful I'm not God. We wonder how God permits wickedness to continue.

Now I'm going to give you two biblical answers. If you're not satisfied with these two answers, you need to search the Scriptures for yourself to come up with additional answers. Or you may take it up with God Himself. These are the only two quick answers I can give you. Before the first, turn in your Bible to Psalm 76, verse 10. We see there the wicked, blatant, open rebellion, and why God basically puts up with it, even temporarily. But here is the first answer as to why God allows this wickedness to continue.

Somehow, some way, the wickedness that happens will redound to God's honor and glory. It's just that simple. Psalm 76:10 says, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of

wrath shalt thou restrain." You know how much wickedness there is going to be in this world? Just enough that will ultimately redound to God's honor and God's glory. That which will not redound to His honor, He will restrain; it will not happen.

Stop and think about this. God can use a crooked stick to draw a straight line. God can use envy and hatred and jealousy to send a Joseph into Egypt to save His people. God can use immorality and harlotry to hide His spies and save His people. God can use the wicked, if He so chooses, to chastise His own people, as He did in Isaiah 10.

The only wickedness that is going to happen in this world is that which will ultimately redound to God's honor and God's glory. If there was no wickedness, we would know nothing of God's patience, nothing of God's mercy, nothing of God's longsuffering, and nothing of God's justice. So this is the first answer: why does God put up with it? Why does God allow it? I can't give you all the explanation, but somehow, some way, somewhere, it will ultimately redound to His honor and His glory, and what will not, He will not allow to transpire.

In Genesis chapter 20, when Abimelech the king took Sarah, intending to take her as his wife or concubine, God came to him in a dream by night and said, "If you touch her, you're a dead man. I'll kill you, because she's another man's wife." Abimelech answered, "Lord, I have not come near her. In the innocency of my heart, have I done this? Said he not to me, she is my sister. Said she not, he is my brother."

And the Lord said, "Yea, I know it. Therefore, I restrained thee from touching her." I do not know what God did. Maybe He gave him a case of the 24-hour virus. I do not know what He did, but Abimelech did not come near Sarah. It would not have brought honor on the Lord for Sarah to be defiled, since she was going to be part of the lineage of Christ. God restrained it. God can restrain whatever He chooses, and He will restrain what will not bring Him honor.

Some may say, "But Brother Weaver, you don't understand. Some of this wickedness that God allows means Christians have to suffer."

Yes, it does. But look at what God said concerning Saul of Tarsus. In Acts chapter 9, after Ananias protested because he wanted nothing to do with Saul, God said to him in verse 15, "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

Suffering is part and parcel of our privilege. Philippians 1:29 says, "It is given to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." The fact that God's people have to suffer does not mean that even their suffering will not redound to God's honor and glory. It shall.

Here is the second reason God allows them to continue temporarily. Romans 9:21-22 says, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath?"

“What if God willing to show His wrath and to make His power known endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?” God says, let me tell you something. Those vessels fitted for destruction will be the recipients of my wrath and my power. I will endure their blasphemy and sacrilege temporarily so I can show the greatness of my wrath and my power. Why does God let them go? Because they are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.

Proud, haughty, arrogant rulers, judges, and monarchs of this world will soon discover the same truth that Nebuchadnezzar discovered in Daniel 4:37. He confessed, “Now, I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth and His ways judgment. And those that walk in pride, He's able to abase.” What did Nebuchadnezzar have to confess? He knows how to cut men down to size. All of these wicked judges, rulers, and politicians will be cut down to size.

Another important truth that you and I must remember is that God is on the throne of this universe, working everything out after the counsel of His own will. If everything is going wrong, then it is going wrong just right, because God is working it out. He is in

control. He is the judge. That does not mean that we must not fulfill our responsibilities.

We have a duty to cry out against sin and wickedness and to do everything our Lord commands us. We cannot shirk any of our responsibilities. We must occupy till He comes. We must lift up our voices and cry aloud like a trumpet. We must do everything that God tells us to do. At the same time, we must realize that He is in control.

Our problem really is this: We cannot be content to do our duty. We want to run the world as well. Arthur W. Pink said one reason we do not like the Pope is because we want to be the Pope ourselves. Let me show you what I mean.

During the Reformation, when things were not going well, Philip Melanchthon, the successor to Martin Luther, was pacing back and forth, wringing his hands in Luther's presence. Melanchthon said, "O Luther, O Luther, O Luther, what shall we do? It appears that all is lost." Luther looked up from his desk and said, "Let Philip Melanchthon cease to rule the world and all shall be well."

We must learn to do our duty and be content to let God work everything out.

Father, speak to our heart. Help us, Lord. Teach us thy word, teach us thy truth, and give us grace that we may serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

# Committing the Sin of the Jews

September 20, 2007

## Committing the Sins of the Jews

**SCRIPTURE READING - John 18:36-37; 19:14-15, 19-22 (KJV)**

## Introduction and Scripture Reading

I brought the message last night, “The Sin That Every Christian Commits, and Especially on Sunday.” Tonight, I want to bring a message which I've entitled “Committing the Sins of the Jews.” And then, Lord willing, tomorrow night, I'm going to be bringing a message on why God does not answer most prayers. I hope that you will be able to be here.

John chapter 18, verse 36: “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now is my kingdom not from hence.”

> "Pilate therefore said of him, Art thou then a king? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of truth heareth my voice."
>
> John 19, verse 14: "And it was the preparation of the Passover at about the sixth hour, and he said to the Jews, Behold your king. And they cried out, Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."
>
> Now skip down to verse 19: "Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross, and the writing was Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. This title then read many of the Jews, for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city. It was written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not the King of the Jews, but that he said, I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written."
>
> It has been said that imitation is the highest form of flattery. Well, that may be true in certain aspects, but it's certainly not true when it comes to sin, rebellion, and wickedness.

## The Jews Crucified Christ

I want to demonstrate something from Scripture that you probably never really thought about: how today we are duplicating exactly the sins of the Jews. In fact, we are duplicating the sin committed when they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah. I know it is not politically correct to refer to the scriptural fact that the Jews crucified Christ, but it is a scriptural fact. Many Christians try to water down the subject by saying that we all crucified Him because He died for the sins of His people, and, if we are believers, our sins were placed upon Him. I understand that thought, and I certainly understand why one could say that.

But the Scriptures are very specific. Over and over they tell us that it was the Jews who crucified Christ. In John chapter 18, our Lord said that if His kingdom were of this world, then His disciples would

fight so that He might not be delivered unto the Jews. It was the Jews who hated Him, sought His life, delivered Him up unto Pilate, and demanded that He be crucified.

Listen to John chapter 5, verse 16 and then verse 18: “And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus and sought to slay him because he had done these things on the Sabbath day.” Verse 18 says: “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but also said that God was his father, making himself equal with God.” Over and over, the Bible tells how the Jews persecuted Christ.

Look back at John 19, verse 11. Pilate had asked our Lord, “Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?” Our Lord answered: “Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above. Therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” Of course, it was the Jews who delivered Jesus Christ up unto Pilate.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter specifically charged the Jews with the crucifixion of Christ. In Acts chapter 2, verse 23, Peter is preaching. The Bible says, “Him,” that is Christ—in fact, we can go back and look at verse 22.

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, specifically charged the Jews with crucifying Christ: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

Again, preaching to the leaders and all the people of Israel, Peter said, “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.” Peter was preaching to the Jews and saying, “You crucified Christ.” In Acts 10:39, the Word of God says, “And we are witnesses of all these things which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem,” and then, speaking of Jesus, “whom they

slew and hanged on a tree." Once again, the Bible specifically says that it was the Jews who crucified Christ.

Stephen, giving his testimony before he was stoned to death, said, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." He continued, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." Thus Stephen also said it was the Jews who betrayed and murdered Christ.

I realize it is not politically correct in this day and time to say that the Jews crucified Christ, but it is scripturally correct because the Bible repeats that truth over and over. You may believe the politically correct version, or you may believe the scriptural version. As for me and my house, I want to believe the Word of God.

The question that must be asked is not who crucified Christ. The Bible is exceedingly plain upon that subject. The question is, Why did the Jews crucify Christ? Why was He crucified?

## Why Did the Jews Crucify Christ?

We understand and know that every detail of the life and the death of Jesus Christ was foreordained by God. In Acts chapter 2, verse 22, the Word of God says: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." Then it says of Christ, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." God determined beforehand everything that was to happen to Jesus Christ down to the letter.

In Acts chapter 4, beginning with verse 26, there is a confession of that fact: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ." The passage continues: "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

There was not one thing done to Jesus Christ that was not already foreordained before the foundation of the world. His scourging, His crucifixion, His mocking, everything down to the nth degree, had been predestinated and foreordained by God. God left nothing to chance, nothing to fate, nothing to fortune. Everything was predetermined by God. Nothing could happen outside of God's will because God was in absolute, total, sovereign control. Please remember, nothing happens by accident when it comes to God. You cannot slip up on God's blind side because He does not have one. God is the omniscient sovereign of heaven and earth.

Here is what the Scripture teaches: Although everything about the death of Jesus Christ was foreordained from before the foundation of the world—and He is referred to as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—those who crucified Christ did not do so in obedience to God, but in rebellion against God.

In fact, the Bible says the kings of the earth did not even understand what they were doing. But they were in rebellion. They were not doing anything in obedience to Jesus Christ. They hated Jesus Christ. They were refusing Him as the Messiah. Our Lord said in John 15, verse 25, "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."

What does that mean? They hated Him freely. You remember that passage in Romans 3, where the Bible says, "being justified freely by his grace." That means there was nothing in the sinner that merited, earned, or drew forth the grace of God. It was free. When the Bible says, "They hated me without a cause," it is the same Greek word—they hated Me freely. There was nothing in Jesus Christ that earned, merited, or drew forth their hatred. They hated Him simply because they hated Him.

Therefore, they were in rebellion to God, and they were responsible for His death. Why did they crucify Him? Because they hated Him, refused Him, and rejected Him. But why did they do that? When you look in Daniel 9, verses 25 and 26, you find the word "Messiah." We have all heard and said that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. The Hebrew word for Messiah is "Mashiach." That word is translated only twice in our Bibles as "Messiah." However, it is

translated thirty-seven times as “anointed.” The word Messiah literally means “the Anointed One.” Hence, it refers to Jesus as the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Prince, the King of Israel.

## Jesus Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King

Now, stop and think for a moment, because this truth will govern the message. We talk about Jesus Christ. Sometimes we read in Scripture, “Jesus the Christ.” Oftentimes we say “Jesus Christ” without thinking, as though it were like saying “John Weaver.” I have a first name and a last name, but when we say “Jesus Christ,” we do not stop to think about what we are saying. Jesus is from the Greek word “Iēsous,” which literally means “Savior.” The Hebrew word is “Yeshua,” from which we also get “Joshua.” “Yeshua,” translated in our Bibles as “Jesus” and occasionally as “Joshua,” means “Savior.” Thus, “Jesus” is our Lord’s human name, and the name means “Savior.” “Christ” comes from the Greek word “Christos,” the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “Messiah,” and literally means “the Anointed One.”

“Anointed.” Thus, when you say “Jesus Christ,” you are saying, “Jesus the Savior, the Anointed One”—that is, the Messiah, the One sent by God the Father. He is the God-Man, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. When you say “Jesus Christ,” you are confessing and acknowledging that Jesus is not only the Savior; He is the Messiah whom God the Father sent. Jesus Christ is literally the Messiah, the Anointed One of God.

As you read through the Bible, especially the Old Testament, you find that prophets, priests, and kings were anointed. Prophets were not necessarily anointed in exactly the same way as priests and kings, but they too were anointed. For instance, look back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy, chapter 18. Let us begin reading at verse 18.

Moses spoke of the fact that God would raise up a Prophet like unto himself, and that Prophet is none other than Jesus Christ. In Deuteronomy 18:18-19, God says: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee," 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."

This is how those prophets were anointed: God placed His words in their mouths. In 2 Chronicles 36:15-16, God had mercy upon His people and sent them His messengers and prophets. Yet they would not listen to His messengers and despised His words. "His" is singular. They were not merely despising the words of the messengers; they were despising God's Word, who had sent the messengers. God had placed His Word in their mouths.

Let us think about Jesus Christ. The topic of this message is "Committing the Sins of the Jews." I am laying the foundation to show that we today are doing exactly the same things the Jews did in their rejection of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the God-Man: one person with two natures. He is God, and He is man. The Bible makes this exceedingly clear: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." John 1:1-3. Verse 14 says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." First Timothy 3:16 declares, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." This means that Jesus Christ is one person with two natures: perfect God and perfect man.

The absolute importance of this is clear. If you deny either one of those natures—if you deny that He is divine or that He is human—you destroy salvation. Jesus Christ has to be both God and man in order for salvation to be. He has to be God in order to expiate—that is, to wash away, pay for, and take care of our sins. And He has to be man to be our substitute, because it was in our nature that we sinned against God.

If you say, “Well, Jesus Christ is not God,” then you have destroyed salvation. If you say, “Well, He may be God, but He was not a real man; He was just a mirage,” then you have destroyed salvation. He has to be God and man in order for us to have salvation. But Jesus Christ is not only one person with two natures.

Jesus Christ is one person with three offices: prophet, priest, and king.

What did the prophet do? The prophet declares the Word of God. We just read that in Deuteronomy 18: God said, "I'm going to raise up a prophet like unto Moses. I'm going to put my words in his mouth." Jesus Christ is our prophet to declare unto us the Word of God. Jesus Christ is our priest, not only to make atonement for us, but also to make intercession for us. Jesus Christ is also our king to rule over us.

Just as Jesus Christ is one person with two natures, and denying either nature destroys salvation, He is also prophet, priest, and king. He holds all three offices. If you deny either one of those offices, you have likewise destroyed salvation. Salvation hinges upon, is based upon, and is founded upon Christ as the God-Man and Christ as prophet, priest, and king.

There are some today who try to say, "You can pick whichever offices of Christ that you want to believe in and bow to." What they are saying is this: "You can receive Christ as your prophet to declare unto you the Word of God. And you can receive Christ as your priest to make atonement for your sins and to make intercession for you. But you do not have to bow to Him as king. You do not have to bow to Him as Lord."

No, you cannot do that. Christ is one person in three offices. Just as you cannot divide the two natures of Christ without destroying salvation, you cannot divide the offices of Christ without destroying salvation. There is no such thing as one-half being saved or one-third being saved. Jesus Christ is either prophet, priest, and king, or He is nothing. He is what God ordained Him to be. You cannot just pick and choose. He is prophet, priest, and king. If you receive Him as your prophet and as your priest, you must also receive Him as king. The only Savior that exists, the only one who exists, is Jesus Christ, and He is prophet, priest, and king. He holds all three offices.

## The Exaltation of Christ as Lord and Messiah

Acts 2:36 says, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both

Lord and Christ." Peter is preaching, and he says that God hath made that same Jesus, whom they crucified, both Lord and Christ. I hear preachers sometimes ask people, "Well, won't you make Christ the Lord of your life?" And I always want to scream, "You can't do that!" God has already beaten you to it. He made Him Lord and Christ. He already is Lord. But He is not only Lord; He is Christ. He is the Anointed One. He is Messiah.

Now, I want you to look at the word "assuredly." "Therefore let the house of Israel know assuredly..." Wow! Let me tell you about the word "assuredly." It is the Greek word "asphalōs," and it is not only translated as "assuredly" in our Bibles, it is also translated as "safely." I'm going to show you two passages. And when you see the word "safely," it doesn't mean "without harm." It means "securely." For instance, look in your Bibles to the book of Mark—hold Acts—look in your Bibles to the book of Mark, chapter 14.

And notice, if you would please, verse 44. Judas has betrayed Christ. Mark 14, verse 44. And look what the Bible says concerning Judas. Mark 14, verse 44: "And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely."

Now, once again, the word "safely" does not mean "without harm." It means "securely." I'm going to show you that in just a moment. It means "don't let him escape. Don't let him get away."

Now, if you look at it in your Bibles, Acts chapter 16, you'll see exactly how that same word is translated "safely" again. You remember that Paul and Silas have been beaten. They've been thrown into the dungeon. You remember how Paul had delivered this demon-possessed girl. And so in Acts 16 and verse 23, look what the Bible says: "And when they had laid many stripes upon them," that is, Paul and Silas, "they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely." Now, the word "safely" there doesn't mean "without harm." I mean, they'd already beaten the living daylights out of them. They'd laid many stripes upon them. They threw them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them securely.

"Don't you let them escape. Don't you let them get out of here."

Now, listen to what Peter said: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly." That is, let all the house of Israel know securely. This is a fact that is beyond escape. You cannot get away from it. "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." That is, Jesus Christ fills every office that God the Father ordained for Him. He is prophet, priest, and king.

Now, let me give you two quotes based upon what I've just told you. Here are two commentators to show you I'm not just making this up. This is not an original interpretation, but here's Albert Barnes and he says this: "The word 'Lord' properly denotes proprietor, master, or sovereign. Here it means clearly that God had exalted him to be king as so long expected, and that he had given him dominion in the heavens, or as we should say, ruler of all things. The extent of this dominion may be seen in John 17, Ephesians 1, etc."

In the exercise of this office, He now rules in heaven and on earth, and will yet come to judge the world. This truth was particularly fitted to excite their fear. They had murdered their sovereign, now shown to be raised from the dead and entrusted with infinite power. They had reason, therefore, to fear that He would come forth in vengeance and punish them for their crimes. Sinners opposing the Savior are at war with their living and mighty sovereign and Lord. He has all power, and it is not safe to contend with the Judge of the living and the dead.

Albert Barnes, commenting on Acts 2:36, said that Jesus Christ now has all power and fills every office that God the Father ordained for Him. John Gill said, “God the Father had not only constituted and appointed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah, the Lord of lords and King of kings, and had invested him with that office, power, and authority, but he had made him manifest to be so by the Holy Spirit whom he had received and now poured forth the same. And not another, even him whom they have rejected with so much contempt, whom they had treated in such a scornful and brutish manner, has stood upon and buffeted and scourged, and at last crucified. Yet now had he all power in heaven and earth given unto him, he was exalted above every name, that in his name every knee should bow.”

When Peter said, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly,” he meant that they should know securely that God had made Jesus Christ the sovereign Lord, the Messiah, the Anointed One. Therefore, He is prophet, priest, and king.

In Acts 5:31, Christ is called a Prince: “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” The word “Prince” is the Greek word “archēgos,” meaning prince, captain, or author—one who takes the lead in anything and thus affords an example, such as a predecessor. In Acts 3:15, Jesus Christ is called the Prince of life.

When “Prince,” or “archēgos,” is used of Jesus Christ, it means that Christ is in the actual exercise of His office. He not only holds that office; He is fulfilling and exercising it. It denotes that Jesus Christ has power and dominion. That is why, in Matthew 28:18, He said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

Ask yourself this question: Why is it that the apostles, over and over, preached on the resurrection and the exaltation of Jesus Christ? Why did they repeatedly point out that Christ was the Messiah, that Jesus had been raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God? Is there a reason? The answer is yes. Is there an important reason? The answer is still yes.

## Believing Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God

Look in your Bibles to John, chapter 20, verses 30 and 31. In order to commit the sins of the Jews, and in order to see how we are doing it, you have to understand who Jesus Christ is. You have to understand His position. He is prophet, priest, and king. He is the Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

John writes: “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.” That is the book of John. “But these are written,” that is, this is why he put all of these facts in the Gospel of John, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Go back and look at verse 31. Here is what he is saying: “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

John's argument is very simple. If Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One who was foreordained and predestinated in the Old Testament, then, as the Messiah, He fills the three offices of prophet, priest, and king. If Jesus Christ is the Messiah and fills the office of prophet, priest, and king, it also means that He is the Son of God. John says, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God." If Jesus Christ is Messiah, He is the Son of God. That means He is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods. John says, "I want you to believe that Jesus is Messiah. If you ever believe that Jesus is Messiah, you must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

You cannot deny or divide the person of Jesus Christ without destroying salvation. Neither can you deny or divide any one of these offices—prophet, priest, and king—without destroying and denying salvation. Romans 1:4 shows what openly declared Jesus Christ to be the Son of God: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Why did the disciples always emphasize the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the exaltation of Christ? It was the resurrection from the dead that pointed out, singled out, manifested, and declared that Jesus the Messiah was indeed the Son of God. The emphasis in the New Testament is not only that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, but that He is prophet, priest, and king. Consequently, He is the Son of God.

If He is the Son of God, He has all power and all authority. We do not have a Savior who is not king, nor do we have a priest who is not king. Remember Melchizedek, translated "King of Salem," "King of Peace," and "King of Righteousness." Melchizedek was a priest who was also king, a type of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not just a prophet; He is the prophet-king. He is not just the priest; He is a priest-king. Since Jesus Christ is the Son of God, He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

One must bow to Him in order to be saved. Let me put it to you like this: The only Savior that exists is the Savior who is prophet,

priest, and king. I've had people say to me in times past, "Well, I believe in God, but I don't believe that Jesus Christ is God." And I tell them, "Then, therefore, you don't believe in God, for the only God that exists is the God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ." And if you read John chapter 5, He'll say, "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father." So the only Savior that exists is the one who is the Messiah, who is prophet, priest, and king, and that Messiah is the Son of God. Now, now that I've established one simple truth—Jesus Christ is the Messiah, He's the Son of God—

## Rejecting God's Kingship in 1 Samuel 8

Now, how do we commit the sins of the Jews? Look in your Bibles, 1 Samuel, chapter 8. I'm going to come back to John 18 and 19. I have not forgotten that. That is the text, and I'm going to explain it just momentarily. I hope you know the story in 1 Samuel chapter 8.

In this passage, the children of Israel refuse God as their king, and they want a man to be their king. But I want you to note what the Scripture says. I want you to know what God says concerning this. Look in 1 Samuel 8, verse 4: "Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways."

"Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." We want a king. We want to be just like the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites. We want a king. Verse 6: "But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord." Now look at what the Lord said: "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee." Watch this: "For they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." Now, listen carefully.

When there is a rejection of the kingship of God, there is rejection of His person. What did He say? “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” Rejection of God’s kingship is therefore a rejection of God’s person. To show that this interpretation is correct, He charges them with idolatry. In verse 8 He says, “According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even unto this

day," that is, when they are rejecting His kingship and Himself, "wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee."

God said that when they rejected His kingship, they were rejecting His person and going into idolatry. In 1 Samuel 12:12, Samuel points out that God was indeed their king before they rejected Him: "And when ye saw Nahash the king of the children of Ammon come against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king." Why do you want a man when you have God as your king? In verse 20 of the same chapter, he calls it wickedness. That is sin, iniquity, and revolt: "You're rejecting God. You have God as your king and you want a man? You're rejecting God's kingship. You're rejecting God's person for a man."

Now consider John 19. The Jews had delivered Jesus Christ to be crucified, and they made an astounding statement. After Pilate said, "Behold your king," they cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

## Implications of 'We Have No King but Caesar'

The word "have" is the little Greek verb "echō," and it is in the present tense. They were saying, "We are not having. We're not wanting, we're not desiring any other king but Caesar." The verb "echō" is also translated in our Bible as "need." They were saying, "We are not needing any king but Caesar. Caesar will suffice us. We don't want the kingship of Christ. We're not having this man to reign over us." Remember, when you reject the kingship, you reject the person.

That's what 1 Samuel 8 said. Now let us think about the implications of their statement: "We have no king but Caesar." I want to give you four of them. First, it was a declaration of the denial of theological salvation—that which is of God. It was an outright denial of God's salvation. In Jonah 2:9, the Bible says undeniably that "salvation is of the Lord." God had promised salvation in Genesis 3:15, the protevangelium, the first promise of the Messiah, and that promise continued throughout the Bible.

God entered into the covenant with Abraham. He promised salvation and deliverance. Yet here, in one fell swoop and in one simple sentence, they denied God's salvation. They were saying, “We don't need God. We don't need God's salvation. We have Caesar.” What happened to all the salvation promised down through the Scriptures? In that statement they rejected not only the kingship of Christ, but the salvation of Christ. He who does not need Jesus Christ as King does not want Jesus Christ to be God. The only salvation that exists is the salvation where Jesus Christ is King.

John Calvin wrote concerning this verse, “We have no king but Caesar.” “This is a display of shocking madness, that the priests, who ought to have been well acquainted with the law, reject Christ, in whom the salvation of the people was wholly contained, on whom all the promises depended, and on whom the whole of their religion was founded, and indeed, by rejecting Christ, they deprived themselves of the grace of God and every blessing.”

When they said, “We have no king but Caesar,” they were saying, “Christ, God, as far as your salvation goes, I don't need it. I don't want it. Don't bother me.” There was a denial of the kingship of Christ, a denial of His person, and consequently, a denial of His work.

But here is the second implication. When those Jews said in John 19:15, “We are not having, we're not wanting, we're not desiring, we're not needing anything but Caesar,” they declared that they now had only a desire and satisfaction for a political salvation. “Caesar will do for us. Caesar will save us.”

We'll look to the emperor for bread and circuses. In Acts 4 and verse 12, Peter was preaching before the Sanhedrin and issued a declaration of war against Caesar. What did he say? "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

How could that be a declaration of war against Caesar? Because what Peter said in Acts 4 and verse 12 directly contradicted the words of Caesar Augustus. In 17 B.C., when a strange star shone in the heavens, Caesar Augustus had proclaimed throughout the entire Roman Empire: "Salvation is to be found in none other save

Augustus, and there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved."

Peter took that prominent saying from Caesar Augustus and applied it to Jesus Christ: "Oh, no, no, no. Caesar Augustus is not King of kings and Lord of lords. He is not prophet, priest, and king. Jesus Christ is."

Peter was going head to head with the Roman Empire. He was denying their authority. He was denying their godhood. Would to God that we had preachers today who were as bold as Peter!

On January the 1st, 42 B.C., the Roman Senate recognized Julius Caesar as a divinity, as a god. They proclaimed him "Divus Iulius," that is, Julius the Divine, Julius the God. Octavian, who took the name of Augustus and was his successor, went further and took the title "Divi Filius," that is, the Son of God. Augustus was claiming to be the Son of God. He was claiming to be God. He had proclaimed throughout his empire, "There's none other name under heaven given among men whereby you must be saved other than the name of Caesar Augustus."

Caesar Augustus referred to himself as Lord, God, and Savior. He referred to himself as the just and holy one. He also called himself King of kings and Lord of lords. Augustus Caesar was claiming divinity for himself. In the Roman Empire, there was a pagan cult, a pagan religion, the worship of a false god; that false god was Rome itself, with the Caesar on the throne being the head god. The priesthood in that Roman religion were those senators and those consuls who ruled Rome supposedly wisely. They were regarded as the loyal leaders and looked upon as semi-saviors because they were continually looking out after the best interest of the Roman people.

Does that sound familiar? “We’re just looking out for your good. We’re trying to protect your health. We’re looking out for your welfare.” This was exactly the attitude of the senators and consuls: “We’re doing what’s best for you. We’re only thinking of you.” Of course, taxes in the Roman Empire kept getting higher because the consuls, senators, governors, and provincial leaders wanted to live lavishly, claiming semi-deity themselves. Poverty and corruption increased in the Roman Empire. In fact, the pagan cult of Rome

increased to such a degree that many emperors proclaimed not only that they were God, but that they possessed superhuman power.

What got started under Julius Caesar really snowballed under Augustus Caesar. In fact, it was Augustus who revived the old pagan religion and rebuilt the old temples. Eventually, the future Caesars after Augustus would be worshipped as—here is the title—"dominus et deus," that is, Lord and God. Domitian, who ruled from 86 to 96 A.D., actually demanded that the Roman people worship him as a god. The violent persecution of Christians under his reign resulted from the fact that those Christians would not recognize him as God.

It is said that Emperor Tiberius did not want to be worshipped as God. In a speech before the Roman Senate, he said, "I am a mortal and divine honors belong only to Augustus, the real savior of mankind." Augustus, as I pointed out, referred to himself as the Son of God. In fact, he had that inscription on his coinage: "Augustus Divi Filius," the Son of God.

Here is what I want you to see: in the first century, there was a war between Christ and Caesar. Here was the issue: Who is Lord? Who is King? Who is God of gods and King of kings and Lord of lords? Who is it that fills the office of prophet, priest, and king?

Christians were not persecuted and slain in the Roman Empire just because they were Christians. In the Roman Empire, you could believe whatever you wanted to believe. If you wanted to believe in Zeus, have at it. If you wanted to worship Aphrodite, go for it. If you wanted to worship Apollos, they could care less. If you wanted to worship Jesus Christ, wonderful! They could care less. You only had to raise your hand once a year, swear by the genius of Caesar, and say, "Caesar is Lord." That is, Caesar gives me the right to believe in whomever I want to believe.

The early Christians would not do that, and they were put to death not just because they were Christians, but because they were counted as traitors and treasonous to the Roman Empire and the Roman pagan religion.

You say, "But pastor, I understand what you're saying, huh? But we live in 2007 and we're not living in the Roman Empire." I understand that. But I do hope you realize that we still have the

same state religion of political correctness, the same attitude of infallibility of government, and the same demands for total, unlimited submission to government. The same confiscation of personal wealth for the benefit of government still exists, and it is still the same old pagan religion. Let me demonstrate it: look at Katrina; look at Andrew.

To whom did the people of America cry for help? Did they cry to the One True and Living God who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, or did they cry to the federal government? What about the tornadoes out in Kansas, our droughts, and our floods? To whom do we cry? Not to the One True and Living God. Nationally speaking, we have committed exactly the same sin today that the Jews did when they crucified Christ, because we have traded Christ for Caesar. We traded God for a man, and God's law for man's law.

We would rather have our sins than repent. We would rather lose our souls as a nation than take personal responsibility for our actions. When those Jews cried, "We have no king but Caesar," they were not only denying God's salvation; they were saying, "We'll be satisfied with a political salvation."

Here is a third implication: a king rules by his law. When they said, "We have no king but Caesar," they were trading God's law for man's law. Who is your king? You may answer, "Jesus Christ is my king." I pray that is true, but whose law do you obey? A king rules by his law, and our king is, in reality, the one whose law we obey. Who is paramount in your life, Christ or Caesar? If there is a showdown and you have to choose between Christ and Caesar, who would you choose? If you cannot obey both and must obey only one, which one would you obey?

Peter and the other disciples answered that for us very clearly in Acts 5:29: "We ought to obey God rather than men." Our Lord said in John 14:21, "He that loveth me keepeth my commandments." Verse 24 says, "He that hath not my commandments, or keepeth not my commandments, loveth me not." First John 5:3 says, "And this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." First John 2:4 says, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

## The Consequences of Rejecting God's Kingship

The war still exists between Christ and Caesar. Each one is claiming lordship, divinity, kingship, the right to rule, and the power to bring salvation. The question is, which one do we obey?

We must always remember that there are consequences to our actions. Here are these Jews standing before Pilate. Pilate says, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ, who is called the Messiah?” And they cry out, “Crucify him, crucify him, away with him.” They were rejecting God's salvation. They were choosing the salvation of Caesar, wanting that and being content with it, which meant that they would now be under Caesar's law, abiding by his law and rules. But they had also forgotten that there are consequences for rejecting the kingship of God and the kingship of Christ. When wicked men refuse Christ and His law, they rush headlong into the arms of tyrants.

They simply bring misery upon themselves and their posterity. We are either going to be ruled by God or by man, and we are going to find this out: the severity of God is milder than the tender mercies of tyrants.

In 1 Samuel chapter 8, they rejected God as king. A king rules by his law. When they rejected God as king, they were not only rejecting His person; they were rejecting His law. Once they had a human king, they would be ruled by a human law. This is what God says in 1 Samuel chapter 8 and verse 7: “And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.”

## Consequences of Rejecting God's Kingship

“Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.” In other words, show them the consequences

of their actions and of their choice. “And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.”

God said, “And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be 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 oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. 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 menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.”

God said, “You didn’t want to serve Me? Fine. You’ll serve him. You didn’t like My law? Fine. You can have his law. You didn’t like My mercies? Fine. You can have his severity.” Then He says in verse 18: “And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day.”

There is a price, dear friend, for rejecting the kingship of Jesus Christ. Those Jews cried out, “We are having no king but Caesar. We’re not wanting any king but Caesar. We’re rejecting Christ. We’re rejecting Him as Messiah. We’re rejecting Him as prophet, priest, and king. We’ll not have this man reign over us. Caesar will take care of us. We’ll be satisfied with Caesar.” Caesar showed them how merciful he could be in 70 A.D., when he tore down and destroyed Jerusalem and literally murdered millions of them. The Word of God says even the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. How much more the cruelty.

## National and Personal Application

Our Lord says it accurately in Proverbs 8:36: “He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.” Those who trust in Caesar keep crying out, “Give us better

government. Give us better government." Do you realize that all Caesar can do is create more bureaucracies and more little tyrants? He cannot save us because he is not God. Only Jesus Christ can save us, for Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords.

On August 2, 1776, when the parchment copy of the Declaration of Independence was being signed—yes, two signed it on July 4, but most signed later, on August 2—Samuel Adams said, "We have this day restored the Sovereign to whom all men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun. Let His kingdom come." Our founding fathers said, "We have this day restored the rightful Sovereign." Not King George, but King Jesus. Who is your sovereign? Who is your savior?

Committing the sins of the Jews can be done nationally and individually. Nationally, what we have done as a professing Christendom is trade Christ for man and God's law for man's law. But do you realize we do that personally as well?

What the Jews wanted when our Lord came was not a meek and lowly Savior who would make atonement for their sins and save them. They wanted a deliverer who would come riding in on a white charger and deliver them from the Roman Empire. Even our Lord's disciples in Acts chapter 1, verse 6, asked, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They expected Christ to come on that white charger and restore the kingdom to Israel.

Where the Jews messed up, they wanted a political deliverer but did not want a personal deliverer. Where we mess up today, in 2007, we are willing to receive Christ as a personal deliverer, but not as a political deliverer—not as King of kings and Lord of lords. By receiving Him as a personal deliverer, I mean that nobody wants to go to hell. Everybody is willing to be a Christian in the sense that we want to be saved from the penalty of our sins so that we can enjoy the pleasure of our sins. We want to be delivered from that penalty so that we will not be judged and destroyed, but at the same time, we do not want Jesus Christ to reign over us.

What we're saying is this: "I'll bow to Your priesthood and Your prophethood, but Lord, don't be a king in my life. Don't tell me how to live, how to act, how to walk and talk, how to dress, or how to treat

my parents, friends, husband, and mother. Don't tell me." Oh, yes, dear friend. If He is your prophet, if He is your priest, He is also your king, which means He has the sovereign right to reign over you and tell you everything. He's King of kings and Lord of lords.

Zacharias was the father of John the Baptist. Note the prophecy, the words, and the admiration that Zacharias gave concerning the first coming of Christ and the birth of Christ: "And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."

Zacharias' prophecy was not talking about the second coming of Christ, but the first coming of Christ. Christ now is quite able to deliver us from our enemies. He is now quite able to give us complete and total and absolute deliverance politically, nationally, any way whatsoever. But what is required is a bowing to His kingship. Salvation does not come just any old way. It only comes God's way. The other verse does not come any old way. It only comes God's way, and on God's terms. What did those wicked people say about Christ in Luke 19 and verse 14? They said, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

You know what Christians are saying in this day and time? Personally, individually, by their actions, "We'll not have this man to reign over us." But I've got news for you, folks. Whether you admit it, whether you acknowledge it, whether you confess it, whether you believe it, He is still King of kings and Lord of lords. And He has all power and all authority.

## Conclusion and Prayer

And you will bow sooner or later. Because every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Do not commit the sins of the Jews. You bow to Christ in your personal life, your family life, your church life, your business life, and your political life. You bow in every area. For Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the God-Man, the Son of God, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, prophet, priest, and king.

Father, we do ask You to teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, and help us to see, Lord, the absolute importance of the kingship of Jesus Christ, how it affects all of our life every day. And Lord, may we not say with those wicked people, "We'll not have this man to reign over us."

May we not say, "We're only needing and wanting and having Caesar." May we say, "We're only needing and wanting and having Jesus Christ, who is the true King, the true Lord, and the true Savior." In His name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

# 1 Sanctification & Sexual Purity

October 22, 2007

## Sanctification and Sexual Purity

## Introduction and Historical Context

We begin in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, reading the first eight verses.

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He

therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit."

The Thessalonian church was begun under what we would call rather adverse circumstances. Hold 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, but turn back in your Bibles to Acts chapter 17, and let us see the circumstances under which the church was begun. Notice verse 1.

"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people."

The Thessalonian church was born out of great adversity. Concerning the Bereans, verse 11 says: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

So the Bereans then did not have the fighting and the squabbling that the Thessalonians did. Paul refers once again to this adversity in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 14 and 15: "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men." So once again, the Apostle Paul refers to the adversity that was begun there in the Thessalonian church.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, beginning with verse 1, he continues: "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, our brother,

and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: that no man should be moved by these afflictions." Notice especially that no man should be moved by these afflictions. "For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain."

In the introductory statement from our text in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, I am pointing out the fact that the Thessalonian church was begun with great adversity. In Acts chapter 17, 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, and 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul refers to this adversity.

## Background of Thessalonica and the Epistle

Thessalonica was a city of Macedonia. The city was founded in 315 B.C. by Cassander, who named it after his wife, who was the sister to Alexander the Great. Like Corinth, Thessalonica was a seaport city. Paul labored in Thessalonica probably around a month, beginning the Thessalonian church.

Like most churches, there were problems in it. Paul wanted to visit the Thessalonian church, but was unable to. In fact, in 1 Thessalonians 2:18, after he had begun the church, he wrote, "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us." Paul was hindered from visiting the Thessalonian church a second time, and so he wrote them this epistle to deal with some of its problems.

First Thessalonians was probably written around A.D. 48 to 50, and it is considered to be the very first epistle that the Apostle Paul wrote. First Thessalonians, then, was probably the first epistle written by the Apostle Paul. Since Thessalonica was a seaport town, one of the problems that had to be dealt with in Thessalonica was the problem of sexual purity—or, I should say, the problem of sexual impurity.

Unhappily, sexual impurity today is not confined to seaport towns like Corinth and Thessalonica. The problem is absolutely nationwide. It is not only nationwide; it is worldwide. The promiscuous sexual revolution that enveloped the globe is literally upon us in full force. Restraint, self-discipline, respect, abstinence, and faithfulness seem to be forgotten values. They are absolutely now things of the past.

## The Problem of Sexual Impurity

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, the passage under consideration, Paul calls us to sexual purity, holiness, and honor by the authority of Christ and by the will of God. This passage gives us some absolutely powerful motives. It will take three or four weeks to deal with this passage.

## An Exhortation

## Exhortation by the Lord Jesus

The exhortation concerns remaining pure and faithful and holy. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:1, “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.” The very first point, then, is an exhortation. Paul says, “Furthermore then, brethren, we beseech you and exhort you.”

The first word, “furthermore,” calls us to look back at what Paul has previously stated. Look in chapter 3 at verses 12 and 13. This is the connection with the word “furthermore” in chapter 4. Paul says, “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.”

In light of the exhortation the Apostle Paul is about to give in chapter 4, he wants Christians to remember that we are to abound in love one toward another and toward all men. Note verse 13: “to the end”—in other words, for this purpose—of being established unblameably in holiness before God. Part and parcel of our holiness

is sexual purity. Part and parcel of our sanctification is sexual purity. As the Apostle Paul says in verse 4, every one of us should know how to possess our vessels in sanctification and honor.

Now consider the two words "beseech" and "exhort." Paul says, "Furthermore then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you." The word "beseech" is erotao in the Greek, and it literally means to ask, to beseech, to entreat, or to pray. The word "exhort" is parakaleo, which means to call near, to invite to, to implore, or to exhort.

We get our English word "Paraclete" from that Greek word. It is a name for the Holy Spirit and is used in English in our Bibles. The Holy Spirit is referred to as the Divine Paraclete.

In other words, he is the one who is called alongside to help. It is from the word parakaleo, which means, "I call alongside." So when the Apostle Paul says, "I beseech you," he literally says, "I'm entreating you, I'm praying you." When he uses the word "exhort," he is saying, "I'm calling you alongside, I'm inviting you, I'm imploring you. You need to listen to what I'm about to say."

Now note a very important point concerning this beseeching and exhorting. In verse 1 he says, "Furthermore then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you," and note the words, "by the Lord Jesus." The beseeching and exhorting that the Apostle Paul is doing is not simply from man, nor by man, nor literally from Paul as an apostle.

In the Bible, there is such a thing as apostolic authority. The Apostle Paul refers to this in 2 Corinthians 13: "The authority that God has given me, He's given me for your edification, not for your destruction." Paul could have used and exercised what is known as apostolic authority, but he does not even do that. He says, "Furthermore then we beseech you brethren and exhort you by the Lord Jesus Christ."

Our beseeching and exhortation, then, is by the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "by" in the Greek can be translated either "by" or "in." Thus, he is saying, "We are exhorting you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." First, Paul is exhorting us by the authority of Jesus Christ. Christ said in Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and earth is given unto me." Paul is exhorting us in the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and, secondly, in His name.

Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 through 8, tells us how Christ Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross. But verse 9 says, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.”

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." So when the Apostle Paul says, "I beseech you and exhort you," he says, "I'm not only beseeching and exhorting you by the authority of Jesus Christ, but in the name which is above every name, the name of Jesus Christ." Therefore, what Paul is exhorting us to in chapter 4, verse 1, is not merely something that Christ desires of us; it is also something that Christ demands of us. Since Christ is Lord, He has every right to do so. Paul is beseeching us and exhorting us in the authority and in the name of Jesus Christ.

This exhortation continues all the way through verse 8, which I will cover in the coming weeks. From verse 1, however, there are three practical implications, or three practical truths, that we must learn. He says, "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus." Here is the first: "that as ye have received of us." Here is the second: "how ye ought to walk and to please God." Here is the third: "So ye would abound more and more."

## Practical Necessity: We Must Be Taught

First of all, there is a practical necessity in verse 1. What is that practical necessity? We must be taught how to walk and to please God. He says, "...as ye have received of us." There is the practical necessity: we must be taught how to walk and to please God.

Secondly, there is the personal application: "How ye ought to walk and to please God." Thirdly, there is the progressive reality: "so ye would abound more and more." Paul gives us a practical necessity, a personal application, and a progressive reality. Let us take these three points one at a time, beginning with the practical necessity.

He says, “Furthermore then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us.” The word “received” in the Greek is paralambano, and it literally means to learn, to receive, or to take to one’s self. Paul is saying that it is an absolute necessity that you and I be taught the truths, the ways, the word, and the will of God. Why?

Because by nature we are not only ignorant of such truth, but diametrically opposed to it. God said, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” There is a world of difference between the way He thinks and the way He works and our way of thinking and working.

Paul writes in Ephesians 4:17-18, “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” What is man by nature? Man by nature is alienated from God. He is ignorant of God, and he is blind.

Paul says the same thing in Colossians 1:21, but a little differently: “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.” We were at one time enemies in our minds and also had wicked works.

Now, the amazing thing is this, folks, and this is what most Christians have never understood: even after we are converted, we still must be taught the will of God, the word of God, and the truth of God. A baby has life, but once that baby is born and you know it is living, kicking, screaming, eating, and drinking, you do not walk away and leave the child. The child has to be taught.

He has to be nourished. Look at what he says in Ephesians 4:20. After telling you not to walk as the unconverted walk, he says, “But ye have not so learned Christ.” Underline the word learned: “Ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the

deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Note verse 20: "but ye have not so learned Christ." Note verse 21: "if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him." The truth is, we must be taught.

Look in your Bibles to John 6:44–45. Conversion itself is a teaching experience. In John 6:44, Christ says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." No man has the ability to come to Christ unless Christ draws him. What is that drawing? How do we know we have been drawn? Look at verse 45: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." We have to hear the Father. We have to be taught in order to come to Christ.

Once we come to Christ in faith, we continue to learn Christ. You remember 2 Peter 3:18, where Peter writes, "...but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The little word "and" in the Greek is kai. It is translated in our King James Bibles not only as "and," but sometimes as "even." Thus, 2 Peter 3:18 could be read, "but grow in grace, even in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." You are not growing in grace unless you are growing in knowledge.

We have to be taught. Now, let me clear up a misunderstanding. Turn to 1 John 2. This passage is usually taken out of context, perverted, and misinterpreted to many individuals' own detriment and destruction. Look at 1 John 2:20, where John writes this statement.

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." Now look at verse 27: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

How many in this room will confess that you know all things? How many will acknowledge that you know everything about even

one subject? Well, does not the Bible say you know all things? Yes, it does—but you had better take it into context. How many can say that everything you know, you have never had anybody teach you, and that you do not need a teacher? I have heard Christians say, “I do not need to be taught.” What they do is take verse 20 and verse 27 out of context.

Without giving a detailed exposition of 1 John 2, it should be clear that there is a restriction upon these verses. If you do not restrict them, they will contradict other plain passages of Scripture. You cannot have Scripture contradict Scripture. First, there is a restriction as to the nature of the things themselves. In the context of 1 John 2, we are talking about spiritual truths, especially spiritual truths in relationship to Jesus Christ.

Look again at verse 20: “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” You say, “Well now, wait a minute, you did not take time to read the context.” I know that, but I am going to show you something. We are talking about spiritual truths, primarily about Jesus Christ. You say, “But Brother Weaver, I do not even know all things about Jesus Christ.”

Listen, you will never know all things even about Jesus Christ. Why? First Timothy 3:16: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” What did he say? “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”

Can you explain the incarnation? No. Do you know everything there is to know about the incarnation? No. How, then, can John write in verse 20, "but ye know all things"? Look at the context, in verse 21: "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." We know all things in the sense that we know the truth; the truth of God covers everything that you and I need to know.

In verse 22, he says, "Who is a liar? but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." We know that whoever denieth the deity of Christ is a liar. In verse

23: "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." We know that it is impossible to know the Father without the Son. What did Jesus Christ say in John 14, verse 6? "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

In verse 24, he says, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." We know that if Christ abides in us, we shall continue in Him and in the Father. Then, in verse 25: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." In Christ we have eternal life.

What do we know? We know all things about Christ as far as His salvation is concerned. We may not know them perfectly, but whatever is necessary for salvation is in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Secondly, there is a restriction as to the scope of all things. We do not literally know all things. We do not even know all things about one subject, much less all things about every subject. But we do know that all things are given unto us, and all things that we need are at our disposal.

Look back in your Bibles to 2 Peter 1, verses 3 and 4. He says, “According as his divine power hath given unto us,” what are the next two words? “All things.” “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” What is he saying? He says in verse 3 and verse 4 that God has given us literally all things.

Now, when you look back to 1 John 2, and especially verse 27, when it comes to the teaching as to who Christ is, we do not need any man to teach us. Why? Listen carefully, and we will show it to you from the Bible. Only God can teach us who Christ is savingly. Only God can reveal God. Only God knows God.

In Matthew 11 and verse 27, look at what Jesus Christ Himself said: “All things,” by the way, there is that phrase again, “All things.” “All things are delivered unto me of my Father. And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”

How can I know who the Son is? The answer is, only if the Father reveals Him. How can I know who the Father is? The answer is, only if the Son reveals Him.

I could stand here and tell you about Jesus Christ all day long. But if God does not open your eyes, if God does not show you who He is and what He is, you will never see it. Look at Matthew 16, beginning with verse 13. Jesus Christ is at Caesarea Philippi: “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?” Now watch: “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

I do not want to misquote it. Jesus did not say, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for thou art smarter than any other man. Thou didst figure this out when no one else couldest.” He said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” How did Peter know who Jesus Christ was? God revealed it.

I am incapable of teaching who Christ is in that sense. I can tell you all about Christ, but I cannot show you who He is. Only God can do that. When you come to 1 John 2:27 and read the phrase, “and ye need not that any man teach you,” does that mean pastors do not need to teach about the person and work of Christ, His office and work, or His redemption? No. It means that only God can enlighten our minds, illuminate us, and show us who Christ really is and what His work consisted of.

It is likewise the Holy Spirit who enlightens us concerning every truth. The Holy Spirit is that anointing who lives in us, the one who turns the light on and enables us to understand any of the Word of God.

You cannot interpret 1 John 2:27 to mean that you have no need of any teachers at all. Why? Because that interpretation is contradictory to other plain Scriptures. It is true that only God can open our minds and give us true light and knowledge concerning Christ and spiritual realities. But consider what the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4. Jesus Christ himself makes this point very real to us. Beginning with verse 8: “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

“(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)” So Christ is the risen, resurrected, glorified Lord.

Verse 11 says, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

“that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Christ gave pastor-teachers to build up, edify, strengthen, teach, and mature the people of God. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers are the gifts of Jesus Christ to his church.

The apostolic office has ceased, and, basically speaking, the office of prophet has ceased. Even the office of evangelist has basically ceased. You may ask, “Now wait a minute, Brother Weaver, how can you say that?” Paul told Timothy, the pastor, to do the work of an evangelist. If you study the Bible, you will find that an evangelist in the New Testament was someone who went out and began churches in un-evangelized territories. There are no un-evangelized territories left today.

Just about everywhere has heard the gospel. That doesn't mean that they believed it or received it. But that's why Paul wrote Timothy to do the work of the pastor-teacher. What is the one office

that God has given that is still remaining? It is the office of pastor-teacher. Why did He give that office? For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

If you interpret 1 John 2 and verse 27 literally, without any restrictions, and believe that verse when it says, "and ye need not that any man teach you," taking it out of its context, I've got a question to ask you. Why did Jesus Christ Himself teach? Why is He called the Great Teacher? Read Matthew 11, verse 1, Mark 4, verse 1, Mark 6, 2, and Mark 6, 34. The Bible says that Jesus Christ taught. May I remind you of the Great Commission? Matthew 28, verse 19. What did it say? "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations."

Somebody needs to teach. You cannot take 1 John 2 and verse 27 and say, "Hey, I don't need anybody to teach me." In fact, look in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 3. In this passage, you have the qualifications for a pastor-teacher. I'm not going to read all of them or cover all of them, but let's read down through several verses. 1 Timothy 3, verse 1: "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach. Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity."

If I took the time today, I would show you that every qualification that Paul gives for a pastor in 1 Timothy chapter 3, every qualification is required of every other Christian except one.

Does God not require you to be hospitable? Yes. Does He not require you to be blameless? Yes. Does God not require you to not be a striker? God does not want you to be a striker. Does He not require you to be vigilant and sober and of good behaviour? The only qualification that God does not demand of every Christian is the qualification, verse 2, “apt to teach.” The pastor must be apt to teach.

That is how we know whether or not God has truly called a man to preach. If he can teach, if he can actually communicate the truth of God, he has been called to preach. For those whom God calls, He

qualifies. Timothy was commanded to teach: “These things command and teach.” First Timothy 6:2 says, “And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.”

Second Timothy 2:2 gives an admonition of the pastor: “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” The pastor is responsible to teach other men who are able to teach others also.

Very clearly, you cannot say that First John 2:27 means that we do not need a teacher, that we do not need any man to teach us. It is true that man cannot communicate the spiritual truth of God. Only God can open the eyes. Only God can enlighten the minds. But God does use teachers. In Hebrews 5:12, He tells us that some of us, when we should be on meat, are back on milk, and have need that someone teach us again all over the first principles of God.

What does it take to present a child of God perfect before God the Father? I am not talking about the person and work of Christ. We know that Christ is our all in all, but that is not the context of the question. We are in Christ, and His work is perfect. Now that we are saved and in Christ, what will bring us to perfection so that we may be presented to God the Father? Look at Colossians 1:28: “Whom we preach, warning every man,” that is, euthetically confronting every man, “and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”

What does it take to present us perfect in Christ Jesus? It takes preaching, confrontation, and teaching. You cannot be matured without those three things. God has not only ordained the end; He has also ordained the means to that end. Therefore, God has given pastor-teachers to the church for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying, the building up of the body of Christ, which will bring them to maturity.

When you miss the preaching of the Word of God and the teaching of the Word of God, to use an expression that you will

understand, you are cutting your own throat. You are depriving yourself of the food, nourishment, and teaching that you need to be mature and perfect in Jesus Christ. God gives us pastor-teachers, and He does so for a reason.

This is not to discourage you from studying at home. You ought to study at home. But here is a fact: you will learn from pastor-teachers what you would never learn on your own at home. I am not saying, "Do not study." When God calls a man and gives him the gift to teach, He also gives him the corollary gift that must go with it: the gift to study. You cannot teach if you do not know, and you cannot teach if you do not study.

The truth is this: you are going to learn things from pastor-teachers that you would never learn on your own. That brings me back to this first point: here is the practical necessity—we must be taught. Teaching is absolutely fundamental, essential, and necessary. It is true that God must take that truth and make it real to us, but we must hear the truth; we must be taught.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:1, Paul says, "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us"—in other words, we are the ones who taught you; you received what we gave you. Here is the practical necessity: you must be taught.

## Personal Application: How to Walk and Please God

Secondly, in verse 1, here is the personal application: "that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God." This phrase emphasizes personal responsibility. The pastor may teach, instruct, and even make applications. But the truth of the matter is that if you do not personally obey the Word of God, the Word of God has done you absolutely no good.

I have done a lot of counseling in my years in the ministry. There have been times I have wanted to grab the man or woman, hold them up against the wall, and say, "What's wrong with you, dummy? Listen to me." It does no good to tell you what God says if you do not actually obey. If you do not do what God says, all the counseling is worthless. Are you listening?

There is no pastor who can live for you. No one can talk for you, act for you, or walk for you. You have to be the one who personally applies the Word of God. I can show a husband how to get along with his wife, but I cannot make him get along with her. I can show a woman how to relate to her husband, but I cannot make her have that hard attitude. I can show children what God demands of them, but I cannot make them obedient or submissive. Each of us is personally responsible to God. Look in your Bibles at Romans 14.

Romans 14:10 says, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

You will give an account as to whether or not you personally applied the Word of God. Turn over in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." You are going to give an account to Christ as to how you lived, how you talked, how you walked, and what you said. Whether it be good or bad, you will give an account. Why? Because if you are a Christian, you belong to Him. He is the Lord. You are absolutely responsible.

Do you remember what He said in Mark 4:24? "Take heed what ye hear." In Luke 8:18, He said it like this: "Take heed therefore how ye hear." So you will give an account not only as to what you hear, but how you hear it.

Jesus Christ gives us an absolute, foolproof test as to whether we can discern whether we are making personal application of the Word of God. In Luke 6:46, He said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Then He gave the illustration of the wise man who built his house upon the rock and the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. The wise man was the man who heard His word and did it. The foolish man was the man who heard the word and did it not. How do you know whether or not you are getting anything out of the Word of

God and out of the preaching and teaching? The answer is, look at your life. Are you making a personal application?

I want you to understand this: it is the message that counts, and not the man. I do not care if I am preaching, or Brother Melvin, Chester, Tony, Tom, Doc, Don, or Russ. It is not the man, but the message, that is important.

Look in 1 Corinthians 3. Paul said, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

Watch what the division wants: “For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”

Some people were saying, “We are followers of Paul. We like Paul, but we do not care about Apollos.” Another group in 1 Corinthians 1 said, “We are of Cephas”; that is, they followed Peter. Here is another group that tried to be a little more spiritual. Look at verse 12 of 1 Corinthians 1.

"Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." Some say, "I like Peter, but I'm not listening to Paul." Others say, "I like Apollos; I'm not listening to Peter or Paul." Some try to be more spiritual and say, "We're just followers of Christ." Paul said, "Let me tell you something." It is not the man or the personality; it is the Word of God. Every preacher is nothing more than an instrument. You need to hear the Word of God, hear the message, and learn how to walk and please God.

In order to walk and please God, the very first thing you must do is listen. You have to learn the truth before you can apply the truth. One of the lost arts in our day is the art of listening. Watch yourself: you do not even listen to each other. Husbands do not listen to

wives, wives do not listen to husbands, and we do not listen to our children. We do not really listen. You are never going to learn until you learn how to hear.

There is so much in the Bible about hearing the Word of God. Even in this congregation, while I have been preaching, some of you have been thinking about lunch, tomorrow, your work, what you have to do at home, the messy house, the dirty dishes, or something else. Why? Because we do not have the discipline to listen. How can we apply the truth if we do not know the truth? If you do not listen, there is no way you can learn.

I challenge you to read Matthew chapter 13, especially the parable of the sower, where our Lord speaks about hearing the Word of God. After we hear and receive it, we must analyze, perceive, understand, comprehend, and apply it. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:1, "and ye have received from us how ye ought to walk and to please God." You must personally learn how to walk and please God. No one can walk for you, and no one can live for you.

## Progressive Reality: Abound More and More

There is a progressive reality: "so ye would abound more and more." In our Christian life, first of all, there is no neutrality.

Secondly, there is to be no regression, no going back. We are to know how to walk so that we will abound more and more. Life is not just one simple hurdle, one simple milestone, or one simple obedience. Our life is to be a lifestyle of abounding obedience, literally from faith to faith, from glory to glory, and from grace to grace. Paul says that he wants us to abound more and more.

Look back, if you would please, in 1 Thessalonians 3:12: “...and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another.” We are not going to turn back to Philippians 1:9, but he says basically the same thing: our love is to grow and abound more and more. If our love is to grow more and more, and we are to abound, what is our love? Romans 13:10 says, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” So what is he saying? We are to abound more and more in obedience to God in every area of our life.

I am eager to get down to verses 4, 6, 7, and 8. But what Paul is saying in verse 1 is so vitally important. If you do not hear verse 1, it will do me no good to preach verses 4, 6, 7, and 8. You must realize that you must be taught; there is a practical necessity that you make a personal application of that truth to your life. Then there must be a progressive reality for you to continue in obedience. All the truth in the world will not help you.

Paul begins with a simple exhortation, but the exhortation is in the name, and in the person, power, and authority of Jesus Christ. You had better give ear, for God has given Him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus Christ every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Let us pray. Father, we ask today that You would help us, build us up in the most holy faith, and teach us, Lord, how desperately we do need to be taught, but how desperately, Lord, we need to make personal application and to make sure that there is a progressive reality in our lives in Thy truth, that

There be no neutrality and no regression. Father, we ask that You would bless us today in our time of fellowship, and we ask, Father, that Your name would be honored and glorified through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen and amen. Remember the offerings and the books. We will have a little fellowship lunch afterward, so stay and eat and fellowship together.

CHAPTER 7

# 3 Sanctification & Sexual Purity

October 22, 2007

## Sanctification and Sexual Purity

## Introduction and Review

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8:

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He

therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit."

In verse one, Paul gives an exhortation with three points attached to it. First, there is a practical necessity: "ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God." Second, there is a personal application: you ought to walk and please God. Third, there is a progressive reality: "so ye would abound more and more." Thus he exhorts them to receive the teaching, apply the teaching, and continue to grow in the teaching.

Verse two gives an explanation: "For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus." What they received from the apostles concerning how they ought to walk and please God was essentially teaching from the law of God. The law of God is not merely the Ten Commandments, but the entirety of Scripture. A king rules by his law, and all of God's Word is law because it issues forth from Him. Specifically, Paul was applying the law of God to different situations.

Now we come to the third point, an exposition. In verse three, Paul begins to expound the truth he has exhorted these Thessalonians to live by.

## The Will of God Revealed

Let us look at the exposition in verse 3: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication." The exposition continues into verse 4, but verse 3 is loaded with truth. The Apostle Paul begins to expound the truth of his teaching, the point of his instruction, and the purpose of his message.

The way to walk pleasing to the Lord is to obey His commandments. In walking pleasing to the Lord and obeying His commandments, we are actually doing the will of God. He says in verse 3, "For this is the will of God."

In many areas, when we discuss the will of God, it is something upon which we meditate, something we study, and something we ponder. Many people say, "I would really like to know the will of God," but sometimes it is very difficult to know the will of God. In some rare instances, that may be true, but this is not one of those

instances, because here we are not left questioning or wondering. He tells us in plain, readable, and understandable words exactly what the will of God is: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.” Then He goes on to say that you should abstain from fornication. The will of God, in the area of sexual purity, is that we be pure.

When we discuss the will of God, there are two things that we need to consider. First, there is the revealed will of God, which we know as the Bible, the Word of God. Secondly, there is the secretive will of God. The secretive will of God refers to God's eternal purpose, which He purposed in Jesus Christ before the world ever began. The only way that we can ever know the secretive will of God is when that will comes to pass in time and in history. Until then, we will not know it, and until then, we need not know it.

Deuteronomy 29:29 shows exactly what we are talking about. In this passage, God declares, "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God." That is, His eternal counsels, His secretive will. Now, what is the distinction? "But those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

What are we to be concerned about—the secretive will or the revealed will? Very clearly, the revealed will. That is what God has given us to do. He will work out His secretive will. We have no idea concerning it, and we will not understand or know what it is until it comes to pass. But He has given us His revealed will, and He has said that is what we are to live by.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:3, He says, "For this is the will of God," so we are talking about the revealed will of God, the plain, evident Word of God: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." The word for sanctification is hagiasmos. That is the Greek word. It literally means consecration, purification, or sanctification. You could read it this way: This is the will of God, even your consecration or your purification, as well as your sanctification. I want you to think for a moment.

## The Affirmation: This is the Will of God

Here is a unique opportunity: an opportunity to please God, to walk according to His commandments, and actually to do His will. As I said earlier, the will of God may not be plain in some areas, but in this area it is unmistakably clear and plain. In one sense, it is absolutely exciting to think that we have the actual opportunity to please God. Have you ever stopped to think about that? We have an opportunity to please, satisfy, and honor the very heart of God. He says, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Many times the will of God may be very general, and we may have to meditate and ponder on it, but here it is very specific. God has told us exactly what His will is.

Paul is affirming the will of God in our lives in regard to sexual purity. His first point under the exposition is an affirmation. In verse three he says, “For this is the will of God.”

In Romans 12:1–2, Paul says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God.” The mercies that the Apostle Paul is talking about he has already discussed in the previous chapters: our calling, our election, our justification, our redemption, and all of those things. He says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.”

He continues, “holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Tie the word “holy” and “acceptable” in verse 1 to the will of God in verse 2. He says that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, and the way to prove it is by yielding your bodies, he says, a living sacrifice unto holiness, that which is acceptable unto God, that which is our reasonable service.

This passage shows that the will of God is proved as believers yield their bodies to Him. The body is to be presented as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, rather than conformed to this world. Paul’s emphasis is that transformed minds and yielded bodies belong together in obedience to the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

I want to compare these verses. In 2 Corinthians 8:5, the Apostle Paul is talking about the Christians in Macedonia: “And this they did, not as we had hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.” Isn’t that interesting? The reason these Macedonian Christians gave so generously for the poor brethren is this: they first gave themselves to the Lord and then to us. The point is that we are never going to live rightly for ourselves or for others until we first give ourselves to the Lord and live for Him.

Why did Christ redeem us? Galatians 1:4 says, “Who gave himself for our sins, why? That he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” Christ actually gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from this present evil world. Therefore, we are not to live for ourselves, nor according to this present evil world, but for our Lord.

Presenting our bodies a living sacrifice and living holy and godly lives is not something to be done in a mechanical, functionary way. We cannot say, “This is just my function. This is a role I’ve got to play, and I might as well play it through,” and act just like a mere machine. No, there should be some real heart in our sanctification and in our holiness.

Ephesians 6:6 says, “Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” When we present our bodies, live holy and godly lives, and abstain from fornication, we are doing the will of God from the heart. It is because of our love to God, our regard and honor for Him, and our desire to please and obey Him. This is what Scripture teaches in Ephesians 6 and, as we will see, in 1 Peter chapter 4.

Consider the comparison in 1 Peter 4:1-2: “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.” Again, verse 1 says, “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.”

Do you think that when Jesus Christ came, He said, “Well, I've got a role to act out. I've got a little duty to perform. I might as well go

ahead and get it over with"? Do you think He was mechanical in that area? Do you honestly believe that Christ did not rejoice to please the Father, do the will of God, and honor Him?

That is what the Scripture says: He will magnify my law and make it honorable in all things. Christ said, "I want to do always those things which please the Father." It was not merely a perfunctory role that He was playing. He actually did the will of God from the heart. He was zealously affected by the will of God. That is exactly what God is telling us: we must learn to cry out for holiness and walk in such a way as to please God.

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification." There can be no doubt that this is the will of God for each of our lives.

Let me show you another specified area of the will of God. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Paul says, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." The phrase "the will of God" occurs a number of times in the New Testament, but only several passages unmistakably and undeniably spell it out. One is our text in 1 Thessalonians 4; another is 1 Thessalonians 5:18. In everything give thanks, "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

## Other Specified Areas of God's Will

My wife and I have been trying to secure a mobile home for my mother-in-law to live in. She is going to sell her house. We found one she liked immensely and were going to buy it. We even got copies of the title so we could make the necessary arrangements. Would you believe that, within twenty-four hours, the people had sold it out from under us? They sold it to someone else after we had already told them we would take it.

Alice was a little upset, and I said, "Well, don't be upset, because the Lord will give us a better one at a cheaper price." Two days later, we found another one that she liked even better—six thousand dollars cheaper. So, in everything, give thanks. There is no reason to complain about things. God says, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." It is unmistakable, clear, and plain.

Look in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 15: “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” So what is the will of God for our lives? That we live doing that which is right and holy, in obedience to Him.

Look in 1 Peter 3 and verse 17: “For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.” The will of God is that, if we have to suffer, we suffer for doing what is right. We do not suffer for doing what is wrong.

Here are some very clear specifics: this is the will of God in your sanctification; this is the will of God, that we give thanks in everything; this is the will of God, that we do that which is right; and this is the will of God, that if we suffer, we suffer for doing good and not for doing evil.

## The Necessity of Obeying Clear Commands

In Colossians 4:12, Paul says, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers,” that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Paul says that Epaphras was praying for these Colossian Christians that they may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. How can you and I stand perfect and complete in all the will of God if we do not obey Him in these specific areas? It is impossible.

If you and I will not obey God in these specific areas, for instance, “this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication,” or, “this is the will of God that ye give thanks in everything in Christ Jesus,” what makes you think that we will ever obey God in those areas about which we are dubious and doubtful and have a little difficulty discerning the will of God? If we are not going to obey God in that which is clear and plain, most likely we are certainly not going to obey God in those areas that cause us difficulty in ascertaining the will of God.

You do not have to guess about sanctification. You do not have to guess about sexual purity. You do not have to guess about giving thanks. You do not have to guess about doing good. You do not have to guess about suffering for righteousness’ sake. God spells it out. God makes it exceedingly clear. God makes it exceedingly plain. The

only question is, are you going to affirm the will of God in your life? Are you going to actually obey God? Are you going to present your body a living sacrifice, doing that which is holy and acceptable unto God?

## Motivation: The Eternal Reward of Doing God's Will

Let me give you one powerful motivation. What will motivate you to do so and to obey God from the heart? Here is one thing that ought to really motivate you. In 1 John 2:15, he says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” Here is a very powerful verse: “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

You remember what Paul wrote about Demas? He said, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present evil world." So he says, "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 describes 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 here it is: "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

The world and all its lusts are only temporary, but he who does the will of God abides forever. Doing the will of God is eternal; serving the lust of the flesh is only temporary. So you have an affirmation by the Apostle Paul: this is the will of God.

## The Explanation: What is Sanctification?

Now go back to verse three in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, because I want to spend the rest of my time today on the second point in verse three, which is an explanation. He gives you an affirmation, "This is the will of God," and then explains that affirmation: "even your sanctification." Sanctification, then, is the will of God for each of His children.

I want to explain what sanctification is. The word sanctification is hagiasmos, from the root word hagios, which basically means holy, worthy of veneration. Let me show you how this word is used in our

Bibles. Turn first to Luke chapter 1 and verse 49. Remember that the word means, first of all, to be holy and worthy of veneration. In Luke 1:49, the Word of God says this in reference to God: "For he that is mighty hath done to me great things," says Mary, "and holy is his name."

Hagios is his name. What does that mean? It means that God is holy and that God is worthy of veneration and honor and worship and praise. So the very first way that the word is used is in reference to God.

Secondly, the word holy means to be set apart for God, to be exclusively his own. Luke 2:23 says, “As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.” Now, what in the world does that verse mean? “Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.” You remember the Old Testament: before the Levites were chosen, the firstborn was always set apart for God, both among men and in animals. When it says, “Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy,” what did they do to that firstborn male ram, that firstborn male ox, or that firstborn male sheep? They set him aside for God. This was God's exclusive property.

Now, the word holy does not simply mean holy and worthy of veneration. It does mean that. But it also means, secondly, to be set apart for God, to be His own exclusively. In John 17, the high-priestly prayer of Jesus Christ, Christ says, “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Verse 16 says, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

Let me ask you a question. Why is it that God's people are not of the world? We have been set apart exclusively for Christ. Just as, in the Old Testament, national Israel was God's exclusive people, so in the New Testament the Christians, the new Israel of God, are God's exclusive people. We have been set apart for God. So the word holy means not only holy and worthy of veneration; it also means to be set apart exclusively for the Lord.

Thirdly, the word holy means to be prepared for God. Ephesians 1:4 says, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the

foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him." Holy and without blame before Him.

We have been prepared for Him. Ephesians 5:25–27 says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." We are not only set apart for God; we are to be prepared for God in the sense that we are actually to be holy and live for Him.

Fourthly, in the moral sense, the word holy means to be pure. It means to be upright. It means to be holy and sinless. First Peter 1:15–16 says, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." As God is pure, as God is sinless, and as God is upright, He likewise calls us to be pure, holy, and upright.

Put all these definitions together and understand that it is the will of God for each of us, number one, to be holy; number two, to be set apart exclusively for God's use; number three, to be prepared for God and for His use; and number four, to be upright, holy, and, as much as possible, sinless. This is sanctification.

Do not confuse justification, sanctification, or glorification. Justification is the initial change. That is when God saves us. Sanctification is additional change. That is when we grow in grace. Glorification is our ultimate change. That is when we will be perfect in eternity. Between justification and glorification is sanctification.

To understand sanctification, we must distinguish between two types of sanctification. First, there is what we know as positional sanctification, which we have in Jesus Christ, and that positional sanctification is absolutely perfect. First Corinthians 1:30 says, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." This is what the Bible says concerning us in Christ: Jesus Christ is basically our sanctification. When we are in Christ, we are positionally perfect.

Nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken from it. In His high priestly prayer, our Lord requests of the Father in John

17:23: “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” Remember that our Lord always has His prayers answered. Therefore, we are perfect in one; we are perfect in Jesus Christ. This is the positional sanctification that we have in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 2:10 says, “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Then: “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Now Christ, the Sanctifier, is perfect. Then those who are sanctified are perfect as well, for we are in Christ.

This is known as a positional sanctification. We are in Christ. Most of the teaching in the Bible on sanctification does not, or is not, in reference to our positional sanctification, although the Bible does teach that. Most of the references are what you and I would call a practical or a progressive sanctification.

Progressive, or practical, sanctification is whereby the whole man is renewed after the image of God, and we are enabled, by the grace of God and by His power, more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. What is progressive sanctification? What is practical sanctification? It is when we are enabled by the grace and power of God to die more and more unto sin and live more and more unto obedience unto Jesus Christ.

## Sanctification Central to Salvation

We ought to be more holy tomorrow than we are today. We ought to be more obedient next week than we were this week. That is practical, or progressive, sanctification. Paul prayed, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly”—W-H-O-L-L-Y, completely, totally. “And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul prayed that we would be sanctified in body, soul, and spirit—in other words, that we would be holy, totally and completely sanctified. This is a practical, progressive sanctification. “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

If God has called us to salvation, He has also called us to sanctification and holiness. Those whom God justifies, He sanctifies. There is no such thing as a perfect, inalienable standing in Christ Jesus that is divorced from heart purity and a personal walk in righteousness. Someone says, "I'm perfect in Christ Jesus. I have my positional sanctification. That means I can live any way I want to live." Oh, no. If you really are positionally perfect in Christ, you will have personal, progressive, practical obedience to Christ, walking in holiness and sanctification. This does not necessarily mean that you are going to be perfect in this life, but you will be walking in that direction.

The Bible knows nothing—and listen to me carefully—of a justified, unsanctified man. Whomever God saves, He delivers from sin and from the tyranny of sin. May I quote Matthew 1:21? "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." He shall—not hope so, not maybe so. He shall. Those whom He justifies, He sanctifies. Justification deals with the guilt of our sins, while sanctification deals with the pollution and corruption of our sins. Sanctification, then, is central to the saving purpose of God.

One passage to prove this is 1 Corinthians chapter 6. We have today what is known as the carnal Christian theory. What people mean by that is that somebody has made a decision for Christ, joined the church, and been baptized, while living like the devil. He is called carnal.

According to 1 Corinthians chapter 3, the Corinthians' fleshliness consisted in arguing over who was the best preacher. Some liked Paul, some Apollos, and some Cephas; others said, "Well, I'm really spiritual. I like Christ." Their fleshliness was arguing over who was the best preacher. But today, fleshliness or carnality is defined as drunkenness and whoremongering. We think that if a man has lived as an adulterer for forty years and has been a member in good standing with the church, he must be a Christian. No. Look what Paul says.

1 Corinthians 6:9: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind," that is, sodomites, "nor thieves, nor

covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Then verse 11: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

What is Paul saying? If you think some whoremonger, thief, effeminate person, or drunkard is a Christian, you are deceived. God might have some folks who used to be that, but He justified them, sanctified them, and cleaned them up. They are no longer those things.

Sanctification is central to the saving purpose of God. In Ephesians chapter 1, verses 3 and 4, he says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

The salvation of sinful men was no accident. It did not simply and spontaneously occur; there was no big bang theory when it came to salvation. Salvation was purposed by the triune God before the foundation of the world. That same God who chose us unto salvation chose us to be holy—that is, He chose us to be sanctified before Him.

Now I want you to look very carefully at verse 4. Here are three very important things to see. First of all, God's election is central as to the basis upon which he saves men. The Bible says, "according as he hath chosen us." Our union with Christ is central as to the means by which He will save those men. He says in verse 4, "according as he hath chosen us in him." And then notice, thirdly, holiness is central in that. Watch verse 4: "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy." God did not choose us and redeem us and save us in Christ that we might be wicked and rebellious and ungodly. He chose us and redeemed us that we might be holy.

May I remind you, and I hope you know this verse by heart, Romans 8 and verse 29? We went over that passage in great detail a number of months ago, but you remember the Bible said, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Sounds like holiness to me. In 1 Peter chapter 1,

beginning with verse 1, he says, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." Now, he says in verse 2, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit." The agent in sanctification is the Holy Spirit. Here he shows you the same truth again, through sanctification of the Spirit.

Romans 8:9 says, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Isn't that plain? If a person does not have the Spirit of Christ in them, he is not a Christian. But what is the Spirit doing in that Christian according to 1 Peter 1 and verse 2? He is sanctifying that Christian, because sanctification is by the Spirit. So wherever the Spirit of God is, there is going to be sanctification. You cannot have the Spirit of God and not be sanctified.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14, Paul writes, “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord. Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In verse 13, Paul talks about our election in eternity past; in verse 14, he talks about our glorification in eternity future. Between election and glorification are calling and sanctification. It sounds to me that if you get to glorification, you have to pass through calling and sanctification. He said that God chose you from the beginning to salvation through, or in, sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. So those whom God justifies, He sanctifies.

The world and modern-day Christendom are consumed with being happy. Everybody wants to be happy. Every time you read or hear something, it is super syrupy and sentimental: “I’m happy, are you happy? Just so we’re happy.” Listen, God is not so much concerned with our happiness as He is with our holiness. It is true that a holy person will be a happy person, but you can be happy and not be holy.

Ephesians 5:25–27 says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Why did Christ give Himself for the church? “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Christ did not give Himself to edify, activate, or motivate the church. He gave Himself that He might sanctify it and make it holy. Holiness is God’s number-one priority. That is why Christ gave Himself for us: that He might make us holy.

Look in your Bibles to Titus, chapter 2, verse 10: “Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” Adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us.” Now watch, the grace of God that brings salvation teaches us something.

What does it teach us? It teaches us “that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us,” and here is why: “that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Isn’t that amazing? Why did He give Himself for us? That He might purify unto Himself a peculiar people. And the grace that brings salvation, according to verse 12, teaches us to live holy, godly, soberly, and righteously in this present world. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.”

## Applications and Conclusion

How central, how significant is sanctification in salvation? Hebrews 12:14 answers: “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” This answers the question. Jesus Christ came to redeem a people, purify them, and make them holy. He did not come to redeem them and leave them in their sins and rebellion. Let me make a couple of applications, and I think the first one should be extremely obvious. Sanctification, or holiness—it is all

the same—is not a side issue. It is a vital, central, important life-and-death issue, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Sanctification is the will of God for our lives.

If we have been chosen by the Father and redeemed by the Son, according to Scripture, we will also be sanctified by the Spirit. Does that mean we will be absolutely perfect? No. Does it mean we will never sin? No. Does it mean we will not make mistakes? No. But it does mean that we will be progressively and practically pursuing a life of holiness. It is true that David sinned. But David was a man after God's own heart. His sin was the exception.

It was not the rule. Do I make mistakes? Yes. Do I sin? Yes. Do I want to sin? No. Do I enjoy sinning? No. I want to be holy. But I am human, a sinner, and imperfect; as long as I am in this flesh, I will sin. Yet the tenor and general theme of my life is pursuing holiness and obedience to God, honoring Him, and bringing my life into conformity to His Word.

Sanctification will be present in our lives if the Spirit of God is in us. Let me tell you once again what sanctification is: Sanctification is the work of God's free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. Paul said, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

Next week, he is going to deal with a negation. I am going to show you an aspect of sanctification: that we should be sexually pure in every area of our lives. This is the will of God, that we live a holy, sanctified life. Father, we ask that You would help us, build us up in the most holy faith, teach us Thy Word, and make us pure and holy. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 8

# I Will Love the Lord

December 23, 2007

## Introduction to Psalm 18

As we look at Psalm 18, we are going to read only the first three verses. The message I start today, hopefully, I will finish next Lord's Day. I may stay in Psalm 18 for some time, and I may not, but this is a tremendous psalm. Listen very closely, because the message is not only simple, but absolutely fundamental, and I hope it will be self-explanatory as well.

The title of the message is found in verse one: "I will love the Lord." Psalm 18:1–3 says: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower. I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised, so shall I be saved from mine enemies."

Psalm 18 is also recorded in 2 Samuel, chapter 22. There are a few variations between Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22, but nothing that affects the principles or interpretation of the psalm. Note the heading given in your Bibles to Psalm 18: "To the chief musician, a

psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all of his enemies, and from the hand of Saul, and he said," followed by verse one: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength."

Most scholars agree that David wrote this psalm in his old age, reflecting upon how many times God delivered him from his great enemies, especially King Saul, one of his greatest enemies.

John Gill, commenting on verse 1, says: "Not that this psalm was composed and sung the selfsame day that David was delivered from Saul and set upon the throne, for it seems to have been written in his old age at the close of his days, for immediately after it, in the second book of Samuel, it follows, 'Now these be the last words of David' in 2 Samuel 23, verse 1, but the sense is that whereas David had many enemies, and particularly Saul, who was his greatest enemy, the Lord delivered him from them all, and especially from him, that is from Saul, from him first, and"

When David reflected upon all the rest in his last days, he sat down and wrote this psalm and then sung it in public, having delivered it into the hands of the chief musicians for that purpose. Psalm 18, then, is a celebration by David of praise and worship to God for having been delivered all of his life from all of his enemies.

There are a multitude of many and varied truths found in this psalm. But I do not suppose that any of these truths are greater than the very first one revealed in verse 1. David reveals a very wonderful and, at the same time, very practical truth that we need to hear, understand, and apply. David says in verse 1, "I will love thee, O Lord."

The question must be asked: Do you love the Lord? If your answer is yes, then other questions must also be asked. How do you know that you love the Lord? Is there any real way of knowing whether or not your love is genuine and sincere, or is merely a figment of your imagination? What is it to love the Lord? Let me answer some of these questions for you from the Word of God.

## David's Determination: 'I Will Love the Lord'

David's determination is the first point. David said, "I will love the Lord." David is expressing a truth that needs to be applied in each of our lives: his determination of the Lord. He said, "I will love thee, O Lord." Notice what David does not say. He does not say, "I want to love the Lord," nor did he say, "I hope to love the Lord." David said very emphatically, "I will love thee, O Lord." He is expressing a dedicated determination.

Underline this in your minds: David is here writing and speaking already as a regenerated, converted believer. Why? Because no man can love God first. The Bible tells us that man by nature is at enmity with God. Romans 8:7–8 says, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Notice what he said: "because the carnal mind is enmity against God."

## God's Prior Love as the Foundation

The Greek word for enmity is echthra, and it speaks not only of enmity, but hatred, yea, strong hatred. So literally, what he says is that the carnal mind strongly hates God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The Bible teaches us that fallen man by nature is alienated from God. In fact, the Bible says in Ephesians 4, verse 18, "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from God through the ignorance that is in them." Man by nature not only hates God; he is alienated from God and ignorant of God. Colossians 1:21 confirms this truth: "And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now be reconciled." Before we were converted, before we were saved, we were verily the enemies of God. It is therefore absolutely impossible for anyone to love God first. If it were possible for anyone to love God first, that would mean we could bring God into obligation to us.

In other words, if we could first do something for God, then God would be obliged to do something for us. Romans 11:35 says, "Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" Who hath first given to God? If you can give something to God first, then you can bring Him into obligation to you. God said, if you can give to me first, I will recompense you again. It is impossible

to do anything first for God. If God had not given us our being, life, health, and strength, we would not even be here. How can you do anything for God first? Had God not given you life, you would not even exist. The Scripture teaches that it is utterly impossible to bring God into obligation to ourselves.

The Bible says in 1 John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." Herein is love, not that we loved God. No, we did not love Him first; He loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins. And 1 John 4:19 is extremely specific: "For we love him, because he first loved us." We love Him. Why? Because He first loved us. It is absolutely impossible to love God first.

Let me show you how utterly impossible it is to love God first. Jeremiah 31:3 says, “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” What kind of love does God have? An everlasting love. God is an eternal being. God said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” That means God’s love has no beginning. It also means, thankfully, that it has no end.

There’s a little couplet that goes like this: God loved me in eternity past. God will love me in eternity future. How long will this continue? Forever. Praise His holy name. The Bible says He loved us with an everlasting love. This is the love with which He has loved us, and it reaches back before anything in this world began and continues forever.

Now look at 2 Timothy chapter 1, verses 8 and 9. Paul writes to Timothy: “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; 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.”

Now look what God has done. He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus. What is that next phrase? “Before the world began.” When did God love us first?

Before the world began. When did He give us grace first? Before the world began. It is a simple, undeniable, undebatable, unarguable truth that God loved us first. Now listen to me: the only reason we love God is because He first loved us, and the only reason we have any love and affection for Him now is because of what He does in our hearts.

Look back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 5 and verse 5. The Bible says, “And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Note this: the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us. Then I want to ask you some questions: where did this love come from, and how did it come to be in our hearts? It came by the Holy Ghost, who is given unto us.

Who was it that first loved us? The answer is God the Father. Who first gave Himself for us in eternity past as a mediator and as a sacrifice? Remember, the Scripture says He was a Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. The answer is God the Son. Who, therefore, now sheds the love of God abroad in our heart? The answer is God the Holy Spirit. So it is God who loved us first and last and all in the middle. Therefore, everything that we have of love is of God.

Our love to God, listen carefully, can only be a response to His love. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, so our love to God only reflects His love to us. As we look at Psalm 18, keep this truth firmly in your mind: God loved us first. When David says, “I will love thee, O Lord,” he is speaking as a regenerated and converted individual.

## Love as an Act of the Will

As we talk about love, we must remember, first and foremost, that love is an act of the will. David said, “I will love thee, O Lord.” Does God command husbands to love their wives? Yes, Ephesians 5:25. Does God command us to love our neighbors as ourselves? Yes, Leviticus 19:18 and James 2:8. Does God command us to love Him? Yes, Deuteronomy 6:5, Deuteronomy 11:1, and a host of other passages.

The reason is simple. Feelings, sentiments, abstract concepts, and ethereal desires cannot be commanded. Only an act of the will can be commanded. I love my wife because I choose to love my wife. I love my neighbor because I choose to love my neighbor. I love my God because I choose to love Him, because He has worked in my heart by His grace. Love is an act of the will. It is a choice. It is a determination. David said, "I will love thee, O Lord."

I want to give you what I will call an irreducible minimum concerning the elements of biblical love, and demonstrate these biblical elements under David's response. He begins with this determination: "I will love thee, O Lord." David is responding to the love of God, expressing not only a determination, but a choice.

## The Three Elements of Biblical Love: Attitude, Affection, Action

An act of his renewed and regenerated will. Biblical love involves a minimum of three things: attitude, affection, and action. There may be other elements in biblical love, but these three are the irreducible minimum. You cannot have biblical love without attitude, affection, and action. I will take these one at a time. The very first is attitude. Why do I list attitude first? The answer is very simple: everything that we are and everything that we do is determined by our attitude.

## Attitude: Knowing God's Person and Providence

If you look in your concordance and try to find the word attitude in the Bible, you will not find it. The word attitude does not appear in the Bible, but the concept and principle of attitude are throughout the Bible. For instance, Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Second Corinthians 10:5 says, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

When you talk about how you think, you are talking about attitude. If I were to give you all of the verses in the Bible that talk about the mind, I could literally be here all day. So you must ask yourself: Why are there so many verses in the Bible concerning the

mind? Why is the mind so important? The answer is very simple: Whoever controls the mind controls the body. Whatever controls the mind controls the body.

Do you know why our enemies always wish to brainwash us? So they can control us. You know why there is so much subliminal advertising? So you can be controlled. Once you are brainwashed, that means you can be controlled. Why should we have a biblical attitude? Why should we have biblical mindsets? The answer is that we can be controlled by God, by the principles of His Word. Everybody is brainwashed; it just depends on who does the brainwashing.

If you learn to think biblically, if you have a biblical attitude, you will not be controlled by the world, the flesh, and the devil, or by the media, which really could be under the devil, I guess, or by the humanist, which could really be under the devil, too. Attitude is first and foremost. David said, "I will love thee, O Lord." What is he saying? He is saying, "Lord, I am going to keep my attitude right toward Thee." If we are to love God, we must, first of all, have a right attitude toward His person.

When I say we must have a right attitude toward His person, that simply means this: we must know Him. We must know Him. Do you realize it is impossible to love someone that you do not know? I could sit here and describe to you a dear friend of mine or a relative. I can tell you all of his good points, all the qualities, and all of his characteristics. After I got through describing my friend or my relative, I could look at you and say, "Now I command you to love him." How can you love him? You do not know him.

It does not matter that I just told you. In my words, I do not have the power to reveal him unto you. So the point I am trying to make is this: if you are to love God, you must know Him. Look in your Bibles to 1 John 5 and verse 20: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." What is the true God and eternal life? It is to know God through His Son Jesus Christ. He said, "and we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him."

By the way, look back in your Bibles to John 17 and verse 3, the Gospel of John, and look at what our Lord says in His high priestly prayer. He tells us exactly what eternal life is. I hope you understand that I have preached on this in time past. Eternal life is not just simply living forever. It is not. If you define eternal life as living forever, if you believe in a real, literal hell, then the unsaved have eternal life because they are going to live forever in punishment. So eternal life is not just living forever. Look at it, John 17, verse 3. Our Lord tells you what eternal life is. In fact, let us read verse 2. Our Lord is praying. He said, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Now look as He defines it: "And this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

What is eternal life? It is knowing God through Jesus Christ. Eternal life is knowledge, and you do not get eternal life when you die. You have eternal life now, if you have Christ, if you know God. What in the world will eternity be? It will be forever learning about the great and glorious God who saved us and redeemed us.

The Bible says eternal life is to know God. It does no good simply to profess to know God or to profess to love God. Why? Because our conduct and actions will betray us if all we do is profess that we know Him and love Him. Titus 1:16 says, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

They profess that they know Him. They can talk a good talk, but in works they deny Him. So, if you are going to know God, you must know God. You must know His attributes. His attributes are simply manifestations of His person.

If you are a real child of God, if you love God, you may not be able to stand and hold a theological debate about the incommunicable and communicable attributes with some theologian. You may not be able to do that, but if you know God, you will know that He is the only omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal, immutable, infinite, and only wise God. You will know that He is the Sovereign, Supreme, and only Potentate, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and God

of Gods. You will know that He is holy, just, right, and merciful, and you will know that everything God does is right. For God is God.

You may not be able to have a debate, but you will know that God is God. You will know that He is the Creator, Savior, and Redeemer, and that no one can approach Him except through Jesus Christ. You will know God in that sense.

If we are going to love Him, we must know His person. Secondly, we must know His providence. We must not only have a right attitude toward His person; we must have a right attitude toward His providence. God's person is manifested in His providence.

There are many times that you and I rejoice in God's providence. I truly want to rejoice every day. I am like the old man when someone asked him if he was having a good day. He said, "Anytime I wake up and read the obituaries and not discover my name, I'm having a good day."

We need to be thankful for that. There are many times that we can thank God. For instance, in John 3 and verse 17, the Bible says, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." We can rejoice in that. How about Galatians 4, verses 4 and 5? The Bible said, "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."

It is one thing to rejoice when God blesses us, protects us, provides for us, and heals us. But here is the question: Can we still rejoice in His person and in His providence when He chooses to take our loved one from us, or when He afflicts us with sickness or financial loss? It is one thing to say Romans 8:28 when God has blessed us: "For all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It is one thing to say that when God blesses you, but when you lose your wife, or your husband, or your child, or your job, or your finances, is God still God? Does God still love you? Yes. Do you remember? None of us have ever gone through what old Job went through.

He not only lost everything he had and was afflicted; he lost ten children in one day. Job 1:21 records his words: “Naked came I out of

my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He did not know only God's person but also His providence. He was still willing to bless and praise God even though he had lost everything. When we know God and His providence, we know that God is too loving to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake. Have we ever comprehended the reality that everything God does for us, He does for our good and for His glory?

Can we honestly say that we love Him for who He is? His gifts are wonderful, and His blessing and providential care are unsurpassed. Yet we should learn to love Him for who He is, not simply for His blessings and gifts. We need to learn to love the Giver and not the gifts. Our attitude should be one of absolute love, admiration, and affection for our Lord's person and His providence.

## Affection: Setting Our Hearts on Things Above

The first element in biblical love is attitude. Our attitude has to be biblical. If I am to love my wife as God commands me, or my children, I must have a biblical attitude. If you ladies are to love your husbands as God commands you, you must have a biblical attitude. Your thoughts must conform to the Word of God. If we are going to love God as we should, our thoughts must conform to the Word of God. So the first element is attitude. The second element is affection.

You cannot have the right attitude without affection; attitude and affection go together. If I have the right attitude toward my wife, does it not automatically follow that I have affection for her? Of course. If parents have the right biblical attitude toward their children, does it not necessarily follow that they also have affection for them? Yes. If I have a biblical attitude toward God, does it not also follow that I have affection toward Him and His Word? The answer is yes.

Turn to Colossians chapter three, and look at what the Bible says, beginning with verse one: "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, not on things on the earth."

If ye then be risen with Christ—that is, if you are regenerated and converted—seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above. If you have a biblical attitude, you are going to have biblical affection.

The word affection in Colossians 3:2 is the Greek word phroneo, which means literally to direct one's mind toward a thing, to seek after, to strive for, to savor, and to be wise. So, actually, he is saying that you savor those things which are above. You savor where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. You have an affection for those things.

John Gill said concerning the word affection: "The word phroneo signifies to mind them and to think upon them, to favor them and approve them, to be affectionately desirous of them and concerned for them."

"For where the treasure is, the heart should be. And as the saints' best things are above, their minds and affection should be there likewise. Their contemplation should be on those things, and their conversation should be in heaven. Nor should they regard anything but what is there, or come from this, for they belong not to this world, but to another and better country. Their citizenship is in heaven, and there in a short time they must have their everlasting residence, and therefore should seek after and highly prize and value heavenly things, and set their affections upon them."

Attitude and affections are closely connected. Unless our attitude is right, we will never have affection. But when our attitude and affections are right, our affections will be set upon God.

## Our Actions Demonstrate Love

We will love Him as we should. If we do not have a right attitude, we will not have the right affections, and therefore we will not love Him as we should. You know what David said in Psalm 73 and verse 25? David said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee." Lord, You are all I want in heaven, and You are all I want down here. Do you remember what David said in Psalm 42? We sing about this regularly: "As the hart panteth after

the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." He is manifesting an affection for God and for the things of God.

## Action: Love Demonstrated by Obedience

Now, the question has to be asked: Is there any way that you and I can know and determine whether or not we have a biblical attitude and a biblical affection? The answer is yes. You do not have to guess or speculate as to whether you really love the Lord or have a biblical attitude and affection. There is a way that we can know for certain. What is it? The third point: our actions. You do not need a college degree to figure this out. It is very simple.

Turn in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 3, and look at verse 16. Let me prove one simple point: love is always demonstrable. Love is always manifested. Look at the Bible in 1 John 3 and verse 16: "Hereby perceive we the love of God." The word perceive means to comprehend, to lay hold on, and to understand. How do we understand the love of God? Because He laid down His life for us. Consequently, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. How do we conceive, understand, perceive, and comprehend the love of God? Because God actually did something. His action was commensurate with His affection and with His attitude. Your actions always demonstrate whether or not you really, genuinely love.

This is so true; we know this. Suppose I repeatedly tell Alice, “I love you. I love you. I love you. You’re the love of my life. You’re all that I desire. You’re all that I ever want.” I tell her that repeatedly, and yet I am constantly running around with other women. Now, my question is, should she believe that I really love her?

The answer is, of course not, because my actions demonstrate that I do not have a biblical attitude or biblical affection for her. My actions are demonstrating my lack of love for her. The same is true in reference to the Lord. Our actions demonstrate whether or not we love Him.

This principle is so important and yet so simple. Romans 13:10 is a very simple verse and a very simple truth: “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Therefore,

love is the fulfilling of the law. After showing you this principle, I want to take you through the Word of God and demonstrate it.

May I remind you of something? Love is not feeling. Love is not sentimentality. Love is not some abstract concept floating around somewhere in the universe. Love is obedience. Love is the fulfilling of the law. How do I know that I love God? How do I know that I have a biblical attitude and biblical affection? The answer is that there will be biblical actions.

I want to show you this first in the Old Testament and then, secondly, in the New Testament. Look at Exodus chapter 20, beginning there with verse 6. God says, "And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

Do you see this connection? "Shewing mercy unto thousands of them that" do what? "That love me." How does He know who loves Him? Because they keep His commandments.

Numbers 15, beginning with verse 37, says: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue." Why? "And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: that ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am the Lord your God."

God says, Put this fringe on your garments and a ribbon of blue. Why? I want you to remember all My commandments, to do them.

Deuteronomy 11:1 says: "Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway." What is the evidence? Keeping His charge, statutes, judgments, and commandments always.

Verse 13 says: "And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and

with all your soul." Listening to His commandments and obeying them is equated with loving the Lord your God. Yes, it is.

Verse 22 says: "For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him." What is loving the Lord?

It's obeying him. Walking in his ways, keeping his commandments. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 30 and verse 16. Deuteronomy 30 and verse 16. Notice what he says. Deuteronomy 30, verse 16: "In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God." He's commanding us now to love him. "To love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it."

Now, I don't see how you could read any passage in the Old Testament without understanding this principle. Look in verse 20 of Deuteronomy 30: "That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

Now notice what he says. If you love me, you're going to cleave to me. You're going to obey me. Our actions demonstrate whether or not we love the Lord.

Now, I could multiply these passages in the Old Testament. Well, let me show you the same exact principle is true in the New Testament. So turn, please, to the book of John, chapter 14. John 14, and let's begin reading there with verse 15. We have the same God who does not change. His word does not change. John 14, notice verse 15. John 14, verse 15. Our Lord says, "If ye love me, say so." Is that what that verse says? What's it say? "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Wow. Well, look at John 14 in verse 21. Our Lord says it like this: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

Now, what did he say? "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Why? Because love is the fulfilling of the law. Love is always demonstrable. Love is always manifested.

Look in verse 24. John 14, verse 24: "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." In other words, he that does not love me, does not obey me, does not keep my commandments. That's something. Now I want you to turn in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 5. 1 John chapter 5. I told you the principle is really simple. It is so fundamental, and yet so many people overlook this simple truth. 1 John 5.

Notice verses 2 and 3. 1 John 5, verse 2: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments."

How do I know that I love the children of God? When I love God and keep his commandments. How do I know I love Dr. Bristow, Dr. Holmes, Dr. Hobby, or whoever? Is it because I go up to each one of them, cry on their shoulders, and tell them how much I love them? No. Love is not feelings. Love is not sentimentality. I know I love him when I fulfill God's law toward him. I respect his wife and his children. I do not steal from him. I do not hate him. I do everything I can to help him and bless him. That's love.

That's what he said: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Here is the definition of love again: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." What is the love of God? Obeying him. Keeping his commandments. How do I know whether or not I have a biblical attitude and biblical affection? Do I obey God, or do I disobey God?

First John 2, beginning at verse 3, says, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." How do I know that I really, genuinely, savingly know God? Because he is enabling me to bring my life into conformity to his word. Man cannot do that by himself. It takes the grace and the power of God.

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, "Oh, I'm a Christian," and yet he is an adulterer, a fornicator, and a thief. What does God say? He is a liar. He does not love me; he does not know me. Because if he knew me, if he loved me, he would keep my commandments.

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." What is pleasing to God? Obedience. Look in your Bibles to 2 John and verse 6. "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it." From the beginning, love has always been obedience to God. "If you love me, keep my commandments." Can there be any doubt to the reality and the truthfulness that love is actually demonstrated by obeying the word of the Lord? In plain, simple language, love is obedience.

You will never have biblical actions toward your husband or toward your wife or toward your children until you have a biblical affection, and you will never have a biblical affection until you have a biblical attitude. It is attitude, affection, and actions. David said in Psalm 18, verse one, "I will love thee, O Lord." What was he saying? Lord, I have determined. I will keep my attitude, my affections, and my actions biblical and scriptural. I will obey thee. And that, my friend, is biblical love.

## Applications: Examining Our Love and Obedience

The first application is this. Do you love the Lord? Have you determined in your heart to love the Lord? If you answer yes, my next question is, have you, and are you continuing to, bring your life into conformity to his word? Someone is going to say, "But Brother Weaver, I am not perfect." No one is perfect. But here is the test. When we see and understand the truth of God, are we continually becoming obedient to that truth that we see and understand? Love is obedience.

It is the sovereign God of heaven and earth who defines what love is. It is not in the power or prerogative of man to redefine love. Love is what God says it is, not what man determines. God has spoken, and we must bow to him. So if I say, "I love the Lord," what does that mean? It means I have a biblical attitude and biblical affection, and I

am constantly endeavoring, by his grace and power, to bring my life into obedience to his word as he shows me his truth.

There are different stages in the Christian life: babes, young men, and fathers. But I do not care which stage you are in; obedience is the key. You must bring your life into conformity with the truth God shows you.

Here is my second application, and it goes right along with everything I have taught: It is useless and worthless to declare your love for God or Christ and then turn around and live as you please. "Well, I love Christ, but I am pleased to commit adultery." No. "Well, I love Christ, but I am pleased to lie and steal and cheat." No. What did our Lord say in Luke 6:46? "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If you call me Lord—sovereign, boss, owner, and master—then you obey me. If you are saved by my grace, I am your Lord, your boss, and your master. You obey me. Remember Titus 1:16: "They profess that they know him; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

Love is always demonstrable. Whether between husband and wife, parent and child, or a Christian and the Lord Jesus Christ, love manifests itself in attitude and affection, and actions demonstrate whether that attitude and affection are right. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Rebellion against God's law demonstrates that a person does not love God. As our Lord said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." And David said, "I will love thee, O Lord." I will have the right attitude, the right affections, and the right actions toward you.

Father, we ask today in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us, teach us, and build us up in the most holy faith. Give us grace, Lord, that we may bring our lives in conformity to Your Word and understand that real, genuine love involves attitude, affection, and action, both on the physical level and on the spiritual level. Help us, Lord, to honor Thee and to love Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

# Total Warfare

February 24, 2008

**SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 18:37-50 (KJV)**

## Introduction and Review of Psalm 18

I have pursued mine enemies and overtaken them. Neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them that were not able to rise. They are fallen under my feet. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle and hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me.

They cried, but there was none to save them, even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind. I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people, and thou hast made me the head of the heathen. A people whom I have not known shall serve me.

As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me. The strangers shall submit themselves unto me. The strangers shall fade

> away, and be afraid out of their close places. The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me. He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me. Thou hast delivered me from the violent man. Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.
>
> Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

Although I read all of those verses today, we are not going to cover those verses today. In fact, we will not even cover one of those verses today, because I am going to lay down some principles before we look at those verses in detail. Let me tell you where we are and how we got here in Psalm 18. We have been looking at this psalm, taking it verse by verse and point by point. In verses 1 and 2, we saw David's determination when he said, "I will love the Lord."

## David's Dominion

Biblical love consists of an attitude, affection, and action. We saw, secondly, David's distress in verses 3 through 6. God had him backed up against the wall, and he cried to the Lord; the Lord heard him and delivered him. Then we saw David's deliverer in verses 7 through 19, and the pictures David gave of how God responded instantly and immediately, coming down to deliver him.

In verses 20 through 28, we saw David's deportment, or how to act if we want to be delivered, because David behaved himself biblically and scripturally. In verses 29 through 33, we saw David's defense and how God empowered and enabled him to fight his battles. In verse 34, we looked at David's discipline when he said, "He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken in mine arms."

David learned the discipline of war, the art of war, from God himself. In verses 35 through 36, we saw David's designation, that is, his designation of praise, for he gives God all the honor and glory for

everything God has done for him and everything God has taught him. Now, in verse 37, we begin David's dominion.

This dominion that David is able to exercise is a picture of the dominion of Jesus Christ. As we read Psalm 18, verses 37 through 50, we saw that David defeated his enemies. With God's help, the defeat of our enemies is absolutely certain. These verses do not speak only of David's defeat of his enemies in times past; they also speak of a present and continuous deliverance. We are delivered from our enemies and able to defeat them by the grace of God.

When David was preserved in battle, it enabled him to continue to fight. The preservation of the saints of God bodes ill for their adversaries. It was true in David's case, and it is certainly true in our case as well.

## Principle 1: A Time for Mercy and a Time for No Mercy

Before an exposition of these verses, some principles must be laid down that most people have never grasped or understood from the Bible. Most Christians have no earthly idea of these principles. If you do not understand them, you will not understand what David means when he says, for instance, in verse 37, "I pursued mine enemies and overtaken them."

## A Time for Mercy and a Time to Show No Mercy

"Neither did I turn again till they were consumed." What did he do? He totally, completely destroyed his enemies. I can show you verse after verse. Unless you grasp the principles I am going to enunciate, you are going to think that boy, David, must have been a mean, wicked man. No, he was not.

The very first principle I want you to understand is this: Listen carefully. We must understand that there is a time for mercy and a time to show no mercy.

Now, let me begin by telling you what the unscriptural mentality is. It is the same unscriptural mentality that always offers an objection. It says, “But are we not always to be merciful?” And then it follows up with this question: “Is not God always merciful?” The

answer to both questions is a resounding no. We are not always to be merciful, and God is not always merciful.

Now, let me point out the fact that there are general principles taught in the Bible. One of those general principles concerns mercy. Yes, generally speaking, we are to be merciful individuals. What did our Lord say in Matthew 5:7? “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” Certainly, we should be characterized and known for mercy. James 2:13 says, “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” Once again, we are to be merciful people. If you would hold Psalm 18, look in Matthew 18. We who have received mercy should indeed show mercy most of the time. Look at Matthew 18, beginning at verse 23.

Here is a passage that is very easy to grasp. Matthew chapter 18, verse 23: “Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a certain king which would take account of his servants. And when he begun to reckon, one was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had in payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred pence. And he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou ow’st. And the fellow servant fell down at his feet and besought him, saying, Have patience with me and I will pay thee all. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison until he should pay the debt.

“So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry and came and told unto their Lord all that was done. Then his Lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desirest me. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on my fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.”

Notice the application: “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.”

The principle is very simple. If we have received mercy, we should be merciful. If we receive forgiveness, we should be forgiving. That is a general principle. We should be characterized by mercy.

Do you realize that one of the greatest crimes God cried out against in the Old Testament was the crime and sin of a lack of mercy? In Hosea chapter 4 and verse 1, the Bible says: “Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel. Now listen, for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.” God is entering into a controversy with Israel. Why? Here is why: “Because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.” God says, you want to get Me angry? You want to get Me upset? There is no truth, no mercy, and no knowledge of God in the land.

Everyone in this room knows the story of the Good Samaritan. You remember what our Lord said in Luke 10:37. He was making the application and said, "He that showed mercy on him, then said Jesus to the man, Go, and do thou likewise." In other words, mercy. We are to be characterized, generally speaking, as merciful individuals. Did you know that even the wicked kings of Israel were often known for their mercy?

For instance, turn in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 20. I want to show you this passage, because from it I want to begin the point that I am going to make. There had been a war between Ahab, the king of Israel, and Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria. You remember that Ahab was a wicked, ungodly reprobate. Ben-Hadad had begun the war; he started it. Ahab defeated him, and the king and several of his men fled for their lives.

In 1 Kings chapter 20, let us begin reading with verse 29. "And they pitched one over against the other seven days, and so it was that in the seventh day the battle was joined, and the children of Israel slew the Syrians a hundred thousand footmen in one day." So 100,000 Syrian soldiers were killed in one day. Watch verse 30: "But the rest fled to Aphek and to the city, and there a wall fell upon

20,000 and 7,000 of the men that were left. And Ben-Hadad fled and came into the city and into an inner chamber."

Now there had been 127,000 soldiers killed. Watch what his servants said to Ben-Hadad: "And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads and go out to the king of Israel. Peradventure, he will save thy life." They went begging for mercy because they had heard that the kings of Israel were merciful.

Did Ahab spare Ben-Hadad's life? Was Ahab merciful to Ben-Hadad? The answer is yes. He not only allowed Ben-Hadad to live; he even entered into a covenant with him, and they parted friends. Here was one wicked king attacking another wicked king, and one wicked king was merciful to the other, pardoned him, and parted from him as a friend. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that a blessing? Isn't that just peachy? No.

There is a very serious problem: God did not want Ahab to be merciful to Ben-Hadad. He wanted Ben-Hadad dead. Let us look at the story, beginning with verse 34: “And Ben-Hadad said unto him, that is, Ahab, the cities which my father took from thy father I will restore. And thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So I made a covenant with him and sent him away.” Ben-Hadad restored the city and named streets after Ahab. Isn’t that wonderful? Watch verse 35.

“But a certain man of the sons of the prophet said unto his neighbor, in the word of the Lord, smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite. Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the Lord, behold, as soon as art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him. Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him. So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face. As the king passed by, he cried to the king and said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle, and behold, a man turned aside and brought a man unto me and said, Keep this man, and if by any

means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver."

"And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be, thyself hast decided it. And he, the prophet, hastened and took the ashes away from his face. And the king of Israel discerned him, that he was one of the prophets. And he said unto him, Ahab, thus saith the Lord, because thou hast let go out of thine hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction. Therefore, thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people. And the king of Israel went to his house heavy in displeasure, and came to Samaria."

What did God say? God said, "You had mercy on someone I did not want you to have mercy on. You let him go. So your life for his life, your people for his people."

## God Is Not Always Merciful

There are times that God demands that we be unmerciful and without pity. Generally speaking, we are to be characterized by mercy, but there are times when we are to be unmerciful and without pity. Consider Deuteronomy 19:13, concerning someone guilty of premeditated murder: "Thine eyes shall not pity him."

"But thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee. Thine eye shall not pity him." If you read the context, God is saying that you take that man and deliver him to the avenger of blood, that he may be put to death. Do not have pity on him. I do not have any pity on someone who is guilty of premeditated murder. Murder? If someone says, "We'll give them life in prison," no, you do not give them life in prison; you put them to death.

In verse 18, speaking to the judges, God says, "And the judges shall make diligent inquisition." Then, in verse 19: "Then shall you do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother, so shalt thou put evil away from among you, that those which remain shall hear and fear and shall henceforth commit no more evil, such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand and foot for foot."

What is God saying? You are not to have pity or mercy upon individuals who deserve death. Moreover, there are times when God demands that we be unmerciful and without pity.

We are not to be merciful toward His enemies. Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 7, verses 1 and 2. This may surprise you, but there are times when we are not to be merciful and are to have absolutely no pity.

"When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land where thou goest to possess it, and has cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou. Note, and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them."

Isn't that amazing? God says, "You don't show mercy unto them." Look in Deuteronomy 23, verse 6. Here God is referring to the Ammonites and the Moabites: "Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days forever." You are not to seek their peace or prosperity all your days forever. Verse 3 names them.

If God forbids you to help, aid, support, or encourage someone, does that not mean you are to have no mercy upon them? Of course. He says, "Don't seek their peace. Don't seek their prosperity. Don't try to help them. No mercy." Someone may say, "But Brother Weaver, there may be times in the Bible when Christians are supposed to be unmerciful and without pity, but surely God is always merciful." No. No.

You have got to remember that God is absolutely sovereign. When we talk about God's sovereignty, it means that God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases, because He is God. God owes no one anything at any time. His mercy is His own, and His grace is His own.

Look in Romans chapter 9, beginning with verse 15. We could quote this from the book of Exodus, but here it is in Romans 9: "For he said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is

not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." God says, My mercy is mine. My compassion is mine. I will show my mercy on whomever I will be merciful to. I will show my compassion on whomever I will have compassion about.

So it does not matter what a man does, whether he wills or whether he runs. No, no, no. It has nothing to do with the creature; it has everything to do with God.

If you want that explained, look in verse 17. After saying, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," here is the illustration: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Are you watching? "Therefore have thee mercy on whom ye will have mercy, and whom ye will he hardeneth." Did God have mercy on Pharaoh? No, He did not. Did God harden his heart? Oh yes. Did God harden the heart of Og and Sihon? Oh yes.

Look back to Exodus 34 and verse 7. This shows that God does not have mercy all of the time. In fact, let us read verse 6, so that you can see we are talking about the one true and living God: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

Now look what he says in verse 7: "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Now watch: "And that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the children's children, unto the third and the fourth generation." If God will by no means clear the guilty, is it not the guilty who need mercy? Well, of course it is.

How does God deal with his enemies? Does he show them mercy? The answer is no. He does not show them mercy. He destroys his enemies. Let me give you a few quotes. You do not have to turn to these passages. Israel rebelled against God, went into idolatry, and became God's enemy. In Hosea 1:6, concerning Hosea's wife, God says, "As she conceived again, and bear a daughter; and God said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy

upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away." I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; I will utterly take them away.

In Jeremiah 13:14, God says, "And I will dash them one against the other, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but will destroy them." That is God speaking. God said, "I'll dash them together. I'll dash them to pieces. I will not pity, I will not have mercy, I will not spare, but I will destroy them."

In Jeremiah 21:7—Jeremiah 21:7—in fact, let us turn there. This is a very interesting verse. Zedekiah was a wicked king of Judah, and God was warning him through Jeremiah the prophet. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, where you fight against Nebuchadnezzar, whom I have given this land. So he says, I'm going to turn back the weapons of war in your hands, where you fight against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls."

"And I will assemble them into the midst of this city. And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger and in fury and in great wrath. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast, they shall die of a great pestilence. And afterwards, saith the Lord, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life. And he, that is Nebuchadnezzar, shall smite them with the edge of the sword. He shall not spare them, neither have pity nor have mercy."

Someone says, "Oh, but Brother Weaver, that's Nebuchadnezzar not having pity or mercy." May I ask who turned them over into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar? It was God. God did it so that they would not have mercy or pity shown to them.

Is God always merciful? The answer is no. In Zechariah 1:12, we read: "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the

cities of Judah against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years," the seventy years Judah was in captivity. God had no mercy upon that city. Anyone who takes the Scripture seriously, anyone who believes the Word of God, cannot say that God is always merciful. He is not always merciful. He is not merciful to those he dooms and destroys. If you say that doom and destruction are mercy, I don't want that kind of mercy, I can assure you. No, God destroys his enemies.

Now listen carefully. Scripture does not demand that Christians be merciful to everyone. I cannot be merciful toward those who obstinately disobey the law of God. I can't. God forbids it.

## Principle 2: Total Warfare Is Sometimes Lawful and Right

Let me give you a classic illustration. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10, the Apostle Paul said, "even when we were with you, we commanded you, that if any will not work, neither should he eat." If I look around and see a lazy, indolent sluggard who refuses to work in my vicinity, I must not say, "Oh, that poor man, he must be hungry. Let me buy him something." No, God says don't do that. If he will not work, don't let him eat. He'll either go hungry and get impetus enough to get up and go to work, or he'll starve and die out.

## Total Warfare

If he is not going to work, neither should he. All I am trying to show you is this: there is a time for mercy, and there is a time to have no mercy. Christians are not always to be merciful to everyone without exception, nor is God always merciful to everyone.

Here is the second principle, and it will be hard to swallow, but it is in the Bible: there are times when total warfare—that is, the complete annihilation of one's enemies—is lawful and right.

Let me begin by once again giving you the general principle of Scripture. You must understand that there are always exceptions to general principles. I could give you illustration after illustration. For instance, "Beat thy child with a rod. If thou beatest him with a rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt deliver his soul from hell." Does that

mean that every child who has ever been whipped is going to heaven? Of course not. That is a general principle.

But with the blessing of God upon that discipline, that child is most likely to be converted. That does not mean that every child who has ever been whipped, or ever whipped consistently, is going to end up in heaven. It does not mean that at all.

I give you another general principle: “He that giveth a wife giveth a good thing, and obtaineth mercy of the Lord.” I know some men who got a wife and did not get a good thing, and some women who got a husband and did not get a good thing. You see, those are general principles; there are exceptions to them. A general principle of Scripture is this: in warfare we do not harm women and children.

I could even broaden it. In warfare, we do not fight against civilians. That is a general principle. Here is another general principle, found in the book of Deuteronomy: You do not make war against creation. You make war against God's enemies. You make war against sinners. You do not fight against God's creation, and you do not simply try to destroy the world. Remember 1 Samuel chapter 15. God had sent King Saul to fight against the Amalekites.

When Saul got there, the Kenites were mingled in and were in the way. God had not told Saul to fight against the Kenites. So, in verse 6, Saul righteously, rightly, and correctly told the Kenites, “Look, I've got no battle with you, but I do with the Amalekites. Now you need to get out of the way so you won't get hurt.” They got out of the way. That is right. Here is the general principle: Generally speaking, you do not make war against civilians, women, and children.

However, there are exceptions to that. There are exceptions in the fact that God at times told His people to destroy men, women, children, and even the animals. Let me emphasize this: This total warfare is to be regulated, controlled, and directed by God Himself. God told Saul to do this. It is not left to man's judgment or authority; God Himself directs it.

Look at Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 2. Note what God says, talking about all those enemies: “And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, neither shalt thou

show mercy unto them." God said to totally, utterly, and completely destroy them. What is He talking about? He is talking about literally wiping out a group of people—men, women, and children.

To demonstrate that, go back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 2, beginning with verse 30. Deuteronomy 2, verse 30: "But Sihon, king of Heshbon, would not let us pass by him. Why? For the Lord thy God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate."

**SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 2:30-34; Deuteronomy 3:3-6; 1 Samuel 15:1 (KJV)**

Remember, he'll have mercy on whom he'll have mercy and whom he will he hardens.

"For the Lord thy God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate that he might deliver him into thine hand as appeared this day. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee. Begin to possess it that thou mayest inherit his land. Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz. And the Lord our God delivered him before us, and we smote him and his sons and all his people.

"And we took all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed the men and the women and the little ones of every city. We left none to remain. Only the cattle we took for a prey in ourselves. And the spoil of the cities which we took."

Now, they killed everything. Man, woman, child. May I ask you who delivered them into their hands? It was God. And God had said he wanted them totally annihilated.

"So the Lord our God delivered into our hands also Og the king of Bashan and all his people. And we smote him until none was left to him remaining. And we took all the cities at that time. There was not a city which we took not from them. Threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars, besides unwalled towns and a great many, and we utterly destroyed them as we did unto Sihon, king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city."

> Who was it that delivered them into their hands? It was God Himself. Is there a time when total warfare is mandated by God? The answer is yes.
>
> “Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel.”

"Now, therefore, hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord." Samuel the prophet said, Saul, God has got a command for you. God has sent me to tell you something. Now, you listen to God's words. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Is that total warfare?

That is the annihilation of one. Who was it that sent Saul to do it? God did. How did Saul get in trouble for disobeying God, for allowing Agag and the best of the sheep and the best of the oxen to live? God took the kingdom away from him, and God sent King Saul to death because of this.

Generally speaking, in a time of war, you can say civilians are not to be harmed, women and children are not to be harmed. But there comes a time when a people are so wicked, vile, and ungodly that God says, Destroy them all—man, woman, child, ox, suckling, ass, anything and everything.

## Psalm 137 and the Destruction of Babylon's Children

This is a hard truth to receive because we are not used to thinking like this. Psalm 137 contains a prayer: "Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof." The word rase means to destroy, to burn, to annihilate, to mutilate. They were saying, Destroy it, destroy it, even to the foundation thereof, to whack Jerusalem off the face of the map. Then look what God says concerning these Babylonians, these Chaldeans: "O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed. Are you looking?"

"Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the

stones." Verse 8 says, "O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."

I am not going to mince words or purposely be vile, but what that means is that they take the babies by the heels and beat their brains out against the rocks. That is basically what it means. And God says, “Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.”

John Gill, commenting on Psalm 137:8–9, wrote, “That takes the infants from their mother’s breast, or out of their arms, and dashes out their brains against a rock, as the word signifies; which, though it may seem a piece of cruelty, was but a just retaliation.” The Babylonians had done the same to Israel’s children, and it had been foretold elsewhere that it should be done to theirs, Isaiah 13:16. “Nor is this desired from a spirit of revenge, but for the glory of divine justice, and that such a generation of cruel creatures might be rooted out of the earth.”

Alice and I have friends who live up north. They are godly people, and she taught in public schools for the longest time. She had to quit because of the vileness and wickedness. She told us, “You would not believe the language, temperament, and immorality of first graders.” After teaching, she said, “I understand now why God would have the children wiped out as well, because the children begin at an early age, repeating the sins of the parents.”

Spurgeon commented on Psalm 137:8–9: “The avenger would be fulfilling an honorable calling in overthrowing a power so brutal, so inhuman. Assyrian and Chaldean armies had been boastfully brutal in their conquest. It was meet that their conduct should be measured back into their own bosoms. No awards of punishment can be more unanswerably just than those which closely follow the Lex Talionis, that is, the law of retribution, even to the letter.”

“Babylon must fall as she caused Jerusalem to fall, and her sack and slaughter must be such as she appointed for other cities. The patriot poet, sitting sorrowfully in his exile, finds a solace in the prospect of the overthrow of the emperor’s city, which holds him in

bondage, and he accounts Cyrus right happy to be ordained to such a righteous work. The whole earth would bless the conquest for ridding the nation of a tyrant. Future generations would call him blessed for enabling men to breathe again and for once more making liberty possible upon the earth."

"We may rest assured that every unrighteous power is doomed to destruction, and that from the throne of God justice will be measured out to all those whose law is force, whose rule is selfishness, and whose policy is oppression. Happy is the man who shall help in the overthrow of the spiritual Babylon, which, despite its riches and power, is to be destroyed. Happier still shall he be, who shall see it sink like a millstone into the flood, never to rise again." What that spiritual Babylon is, none need inquire. There is but one city upon the earth which can answer to that name.

That was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He says, Happy shall be the man who engages in the overthrow of such wickedness and such tyranny. It is amazing to me that God says that the man or the men whom God ordains to overthrow tyranny and despotism, when they destroy such a wicked empire, shall be counted happy, counted blessed, extolled, and celebrated because they are delivering people and the world from a grievous, wicked tormentor.

## Principle 3: Psalm 18 Applied to Christ's Return

Now, whether we like it or not, the Scripture does teach, number one, that there is a time to be merciful and a time not to be merciful. The Scripture teaches that there is a time for total warfare, where the annihilation of one's enemies is completely lawful and right. Here is the third principle that I want to enunciate today: We must remember that this passage, Psalm 18, is directly applied to Jesus Christ.

Thus, when He returns, He will show no mercy to His enemies, and He will wage total warfare against His enemies. This passage applies directly to Jesus Christ.

Now, if you look in Psalm 18 and verse 2. And then turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 2. Psalm 18 verse 2. Hebrews chapter 2. In Psalm 18 verse 2, we read this. "The Lord is my rock and my

fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust, my buckler and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." When you get to the book of Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 13, the Bible says this, "and again, I will put my trust in Him," quoting from Psalm 18 verse 2, and then Christ says, "Behold, I am the children which God has given me." In the context, this is talking about Jesus Christ. So Psalm 18 verse 2 is referring to Christ in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 13. Now turn back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 15 and then go back, if you would, to Psalm 18. Psalm 18. And if you look at verse 49. Psalm 18 verse 49. Psalm 18 verse 49, "therefore will I give thanks unto thee O Lord among the heathen and sing praise unto thy name."

Then if you look at Romans 15 and verse 9, "that the Gentiles might glorify God for this mercy as it is written for this cause, I will confess to thee among the Gentiles and sing unto thy name." And once again, it has reference to Jesus Christ. In fact, let me just say this. If you look at Psalm 18, for instance, and verse 40, look at Psalm 18, verse 40.

"Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I may destroy them that hate me." Look in verse 43. "Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people. Thou hast made me the head of the heathen. A people whom I have not known shall serve me." These verses speak of the dominion of Jesus Christ over and over throughout the New Testament. Wow. So when the scripture is telling us there's a time to have mercy and a time to show no mercy, and there is a time to wage total war against your enemies. That is not only true of David, it's only true in time and history of God's people. Generally, this passage is applied to Jesus Christ.

John Calvin's commentary on Psalm 18, especially these latter verses, explains that David insists, by showing from the effect or issue, that all his victories were to be traced to the favor of God. From this it follows that his cause was good and just. God, no doubt, sometimes grants successes even to the ungodly and wicked, but at length He shows by the issue that He was all the while opposed to them and their enemy. It is His servants alone who experience such tokens of His favor as He showed toward David, and by these He intends to testify that they are approved and accepted by Him.

Calvin acknowledges that David speaks too much after the manner of a soldier in declaring that he will not cease from the work of slaughter until he has destroyed all his enemies, or rather that he has forgotten the gentleness and meekness which ought to shine in all true believers, in which they should resemble their Heavenly Father. But David attempted nothing without the command of God, and his affections were governed and regulated by the Holy Spirit. We may therefore be assured that these were not the words of a man who was cruel and took pleasure in shedding blood, but of one who faithfully executed the judgment that God had committed to him. Indeed, David was so distinguished for gentleness of disposition that he abhorred the shedding of a single drop of blood, except insofar as duty and the necessity of his office required.

We must therefore take into consideration David's vocation and his pure zeal, which was free from all perturbation of the flesh. Moreover, it should be particularly attended to that the psalmist calls enemies those whose indomitable and infatuated obstinacy merited and called forth such vengeance from God. Now, listen carefully: as he that is David represented the person of Christ, he inflicted the punishment of death only on those who were so inflexible that they could not be reduced to order by the exercises of mild and humane authority.

This of itself shows that there was nothing which he was more delighted than to pardon those who repented and reformed themselves. He thus resembles Christ, who gently allures men to repentance, but breaks in pieces with his iron rod those who obstinately resist him to the last.

The sum of these verses is that David, as he fought under the authority of God, being chosen king by him and engaging in no undertaking without his warrant, was assisted by him, rendered invincible against the assaults of all his enemies, and enabled even to discomfit vast and very powerful armies. Further, let us remember that under this type there is shadowed forth the invincible character and condition of the kingdom of Christ, who, trusting to be sustained by the power of God, overthrows and destroys his enemies, uniformly comes off victorious in every encounter, and continues king in spite of all the resistance which the world makes to his

authority and power. Everything that Psalm 18 speaks of is speaking of Christ.

Calvin says, “Although therefore Christ can only obtain a tranquil kingdom by fighting, let us not on that account be troubled. But let it be enough to satisfy us that the hand of God is always ready to be stretched forth for its preservation.” Christ can only obtain a tranquil kingdom by fighting.

## Christ's Return in Flaming Fire

When Christ returns, He will show no mercy, and He will wage total war against His enemies. Turn to 2 Thessalonians, chapter 1, and Revelation, chapter 19. Begin with 2 Thessalonians 1, verse 7: “And to you who are troubled rest with us.” If you are anxious about what is happening, and it looks as though the wicked have the upper hand and will not be punished, you who are troubled can rest with us. Here is something that you can rest in.

**SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 19:1-6, 11-16 (KJV)**

> When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and be admired in all them that believe, because our testimony among you was believed in that day. Notice, when our Lord comes back, He's going to come back in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ.
>
> He came the first time as a lamb, the second time as a lion. After these things, I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, hallelujah. Salvation and glory and honor and power to the Lord our God for true and righteous are His judgments. For He has judged the great whore who did corrupt the earth with her fornication and avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again, they said, hallelujah, and her smoke rose up forever and ever.

> And I saw heaven open. And behold, a white horse and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire and on his head were many crowns. And he had a name written that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, with that he should smite the nations, and that he should rule them with a rod of iron. And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh the name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.
>
> Need I remind you that when our Lord comes back it will be without mercy and in total war against his enemies? The dominion that David was able to acquire by the grace and the mercy of God that we're seeing in Psalm 18 is a picture of that full and final dominion that God will exercise through his son, Jesus Christ.

## Applications: Gratitude and Warning

Since God is not obligated to be merciful and is not merciful to everyone, those of us who have received mercy should be eternally thankful, grateful, and give Him honor, praise, and thanksgiving. What a special blessing it is to be recipients of God's gracious favor. Think of the multitudes in this world who do not even know who Jesus Christ is, who have never seen or heard the Word of God. Think of the multitudes in America who are totally and absolutely ignorant of Jesus Christ. Many of them are in churches, and yet God has had mercy upon you and me. It ought to make us eternally grateful and thankful.

The second application is this: since we know that when our Lord returns, He will return in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, we know that He will wage total war against His enemies and destroy them. That should give us an impetus to warn our family, friends, and

neighbors, as John the Baptist did when he said, "flee from the wrath to come."

Lastly, Scripture tells us in 2 Corinthians 6 and verse 2, "Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation." Christ now speaks in tones of grace and mercy, but when He returns, He will speak in anger and wrath. Which would you rather hear Christ say: "Well done, my good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord," or "depart from me, ye wicked, I never knew you"? We must seek Him, as Scripture says, while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his evil thoughts, and let him turn to the Lord. What does Scripture say? He will have mercy. But if you refuse to turn, there is no mercy, only wrath. There is a time to be merciful and a time to show no mercy. It is true with God, and it is true with us. Let us pray.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that you would help us and enable us to grasp and understand these simple principles and truth, and help us to see, as we look at these verses next week, the great dominion that we'll have through Jesus Christ our Lord, typified in David's fighting and warfare.

Lord, we pray for those who've lost loved ones this past week, and for those who are in serious condition, and it looks as if they may die. Lord, we pray for them and ask for Your grace and strength for the families, friends, and neighbors. Help us, Lord, to be faithful to Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask, Amen.

CHAPTER 10

# The Pleasure of the Lord

January 24, 2010

## Introduction: The Question of Pleasing God

Psalm 149, verse 4, says, “For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people. He will beautify the meek with salvation.” Have you ever really stopped to think and ask yourself, What is it that pleases the Lord?

Each one of us is very much concerned with our own pleasure. In fact, we usually do that which pleases us before we will do anything that would please anyone else. Most of the time, however, we are willing to please ourselves even to the extent that we will neglect the Lord and that which pleases Him. We are often more concerned with finding our own pleasure than with honoring the Lord.

## God's Promise to Those Who Seek His Pleasure

Here is what God tells His people in Isaiah 58, verses 13 and 14: “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then

shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord. And I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

So God sovereignly promises special blessings for those who seek His pleasure above their own pleasure. The truth of the matter is this: We are actually guilty of idolatry when we put our pleasure above that which pleases the Lord, because we are putting ourselves ahead of Him. Have you ever meditated upon the questions, What is it that pleases the Lord? What is it that delights Him and gives Him pleasure? We are told specifically in verse 4, "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people, he will beautify the meek with salvation."

## The Meaning of 'Taketh Pleasure'

The word "taketh pleasure" is actually one word in the Hebrew. It conveys the idea of complacency, satisfaction, and delight. It is the opposite of being pained and offended. The Bible is telling us that God has a complacent satisfaction; He is satisfied with us exactly as we are in one sense of the word—that is, as we are in Christ. He delights in our welfare and in doing good for us. We are able to give Him pleasure in that sense. Since we are able to give Him pleasure, and since He does take pleasure in us, we should make sure that we do exactly that and not cause Him grief.

## God Takes Pleasure Only in His People

There are several truths to draw from this one simple verse. "For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people." First, it should be emphasized that He takes pleasure only in His people. Not everyone belongs to Him in this peculiar and particular manner. Psalm 100:3 says, "Know ye that the Lord, He is God. It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." But that verse does not refer to every individual.

John Gill, the great Baptist commentator, says in commenting on verse 4: "This text does not refer to all mankind, though they are all his people by creation and are under the care of his providence, yet they are not all acceptable unto him. Some are abhorred by him for their sins and transgressions, but thankfully the ones mentioned in verse 4 are a special and peculiar people whom he has foreknown

and chosen, taken in the covenant of his grace, and provided it in blessings for them, whom he has given to Christ, he has redeemed, and who are called by the Spirit and the grace of God, whereby they appear to be his people."

It is these that the Lord loves with a love of complacency and delight. He takes pleasure in their persons as considered in Christ, in whom they are accepted with Him, clothed with His righteousness, made comely through His comeliness, washed in His precious blood, and adorned with the graces of His Spirit. Yea, He takes pleasure in their services done in faith and from love, and to His glory, in their sacrifices of prayer and praise, as though offered up through Christ, in their company and communion with them, and in their prosperity and happiness here and hereafter.

God takes pleasure in His people. He takes pleasure in the fact that He has chosen us, predestinated us, regenerated and converted us, and called us in Christ. He takes pleasure in the fact that we are able to please Him in obedience and faith. If we are His, then we are His special and peculiar people.

That is why throughout the Bible it says that we are the apple of His eye and His special treasure. In Malachi 3:17, God said, "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his son that serveth him." Notice what God said: "They shall be mine in the day that I make up my jewels." When God says, "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people," there is indeed a people that are exclusively His.

## Chosen by Free Grace, Not Works

Secondly, those who are His people are only so because of His free favor and grace. The word "pleasure" is actually "rotsa" in the Hebrew, which means to make acceptable, to accept favorably, or to make pleasing. Thus, the psalmist is saying that it was entirely of God's good pleasure that He chose a people to Himself. We did not deserve it, earn it, merit it, or work for it. We became His only by His grace and mercy.

In Deuteronomy 7, notice what God told Israel: "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people. For you were the fewest of all people." The Lord did not set his love upon them because they were special, great, glorious, or multitudinous. No. Why, then, did the Lord set His love upon them? Verse 8 says, "because the Lord loved you." Isn't that interesting? Look at it in verse 7. The Lord did not set His love upon them for any of the reasons mentioned in verse 7.

But why did He? "But because the Lord loved you." In other words, the Lord loved them simply because the Lord chose to love them. Period. He set His love upon them. That is why God brought them out from Egypt. That is why He brought them out from the servitude of Pharaoh. That is why He brought them into the land. That is why He gave them the promises through Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac. Why? Simply because the Lord loved them.

Now look at Ephesians chapter 1. Notice the same truth in the New Testament. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise and the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

The Bible tells us in verse 3 that God is to be blessed and praised because He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. But notice verse 4: "according as he hath chosen us in him," that is, in Christ. When? "before the foundation of the world." He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and this passage identifies that choice with the good pleasure of His will, to the praise and glory of His grace.

And why did he choose us? “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” Do you know why God chose anyone? Because God was pleased to do it. Do you realize that if God was not pleased to choose some to salvation, none would be saved? Because all justly deserves

judgment and damnation. But here's the grace of God giving us and calling us grace and giving us grace in Christ before the world began.

## Salvation Given Before the World Began

Now, if you would turn in your Bibles very quickly to 2 Timothy, let me show it to you, beginning there with verse 8 of chapter 1. Notice chapter 1 and verse 8. The Apostle Paul writes, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor me his prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God." Now watch verse 9: "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." When did God choose us? Before the foundation of the world. When did God give us grace? Before the foundation of the world. And everything that God did for us, He did because of and through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Now, I want you to turn to two passages. I want you to turn to John chapter 15, and at the same time, Romans chapter 3. Hold Romans chapter 3 if you get there first, and then go back in your Bibles to John chapter 15. Let me show you what I'm talking about.

## Justified Freely, Without a Cause

Each of these passages that I've just read has stated undeniably and clearly that God chose us not according to our works. God did not look down through the ages and say, "Oh, I see Ed down there. Ed's going to believe in me; therefore I'll choose him." Because Ed, just like everyone else, is absolutely, totally depraved. And what does Romans 3 say? "There's none that seeketh after God. There's none that doeth good. There's none that understandeth. They're all going out of the way." In fact, if God looked down and saw that Ed would believe on Him and therefore He chose him, that is not an election. That is a ratification. No. God chose us in Christ before we ever had a being. He called us in Christ before we ever created the world.

He gave us grace before the stars, the sun, and the moon were ever formed. Let me show you how free this is. Look in John 15:25. This verse refers to Christ; in fact, Christ is speaking: "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in

their law, They hated me without a cause." Consider what Christ said concerning His enemies: "They hated me without a cause."

What does that mean? It means that there was absolutely nothing in Jesus Christ that merited, earned, or drew forth their hatred. Jesus Christ was and is the sinless Son of God. When He says, "They hated me without a cause," the Greek word means, "They hated me freely." Their hatred came of their own selves. There was nothing in Christ that drew it out. They simply hated Christ. Christ did not earn or merit their hatred; they hated Him freely.

Now look at Romans 3:24, where the same exact Greek word is translated "freely": "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." What does "freely" mean? It means without a cause: being justified without a cause. There was nothing in us that earned, merited, or drew forth the grace of God. God justified us absolutely freely. He did so of His own good pleasure, through Jesus Christ, and based upon His own grace and mercy.

## Why God Takes Pleasure: For His Name's Sake

Think about this: the Bible says, "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people." Why does the Lord take pleasure in His people? There is nothing in us by nature that is holy, good, or right. There are no works we can do to please Him, for He said that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

We're all as an unclean thing in His sight. Why in the world does the Lord take pleasure in us if there's nothing good in us and there was nothing in us to draw forth His grace and His mercy? How in the world can God take pleasure in us? Once again, I want to give you an Old Testament scripture and a New Testament scripture to show you why God takes pleasure in His people. David says in Psalm 25:11, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." What does David say? "For thy name's sake, O Lord." In other words, for your great and glorious name, for your honor, for your glory, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.

The same truth is taught throughout the Scriptures. In 1 John 2:12, John writes, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins

are forgiven you for his name's sake." Wow. Your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. Do you realize that everything that God does, He does for His name's sake? He does it for His own honor and glory. He takes pleasure in us because He is pleased to take pleasure in us, and it will ultimately be a means of redounding to His honor and His glory.

In fact, the book of Ephesians chapter 1 tells us that God is going to show forth His praise in us throughout the ages. God takes pleasure in us for His name's sake. But God takes pleasure in us for His name's sake; not everyone is God's people. Not all are included in this special group that he is talking about in Psalm 149 and verse 4. Those that are called are called only because of His grace and mercy.

There's a third truth in Psalm 149:4: "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people." Since the Lord takes pleasure in His people, His people should take pleasure in Him. This is not merely a truth about the Lord's pleasure in us; it also calls forth our pleasure in Him.

## Believers Should Take Pleasure in God

Stop and think, first of all, of creation. The Lord has been gracious to me and has allowed me to travel all over this country. I love the mountains. I love the desert. I love the swamps. I love it all. It is absolutely phenomenal. It doesn't matter where you are; you can always see God's glory in creation. But there's not only His creation; there's His providence.

Look how God has protected us, supplied our needs, and given us health and life. You do not only need to think of His creation and providence. Think of the redemption we have in Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins. Once you think about that, think about God's person: His greatness, glory, and majesty.

Meditate upon His omniscience, His all-knowing; His omnipotence, His being all-powerful; and His omnipresence, His being everywhere at one time in the totality of His person. Think of everything about God, and you can find something in which to take pleasure. The Bible says in Psalm 111:2, “The works of the Lord are

great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." What works? Creation, providence, and redemption. The works of the Lord are great, and those who take pleasure in them will seek them out. Have you sought out those works? Have you considered, more than once, everything He has done for you in each of these areas?

Do you bow before Him? Do you worship Him in His majesty? Walk outside some night and look up into the clear sky at the multitude of stars, remembering that He calleth them all by name. He knows the name of every star. How can you look and not be awed at what God has created? How can you not rejoice in it? How can you not take pleasure in it?

Spurgeon said, "For the Lord takes pleasure in his people, and therefore they should take pleasure in him. If our joy be pleasing to him, let us make it full. What condescension is this on Jehovah's part to notice, to love, and to delight in his chosen? Surely there is nothing in our persons or our actions which could cause pleasure to the ever-blessed one were it not that he condescends to men of low estate. The thought of the Lord's taking pleasure in us is a mine of joy never to be exhausted."

"He will beautify the meek with salvation." They are humble and feel their need of salvation. He is gracious and bestows it upon them. They lament their deformity, and He puts a beauty upon them of the choicest sort. He saves them by sanctifying them, and thus they wear the beauty of holiness and the beauty of joy which springs out of a full salvation. He makes His people meek and makes the meek beautiful. Herein is the grand argument for worshiping the Lord with the utmost exaltation. He who takes such pleasure in us must be approached with every token of exceeding joy.

## God Condescends to Take Pleasure in Us

Consider Psalm 113. Beginning with verse 1: "Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore." "From the rising of the sun until the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised." That is all day long. Even David said he would meditate upon Him in the night watches, so even during the night.

"The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens, who is likened to the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high." We are talking about His greatness and His majesty, but look at verse 6: "...who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord."

But notice verse 6: "...who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth." Can it even enter your mind that God condescends to take pleasure in His people? Stop and think about that. God is self-sufficient. God is the self-existent One. God needs no one. God needs nothing. God is absolutely perfect. And yet He condescends to take pleasure in His people. He condescends to behold the things in heaven and earth, to lift up the poor, the needy, and the beggar.

The Lord taketh pleasure in His people. Look back at Psalm 149, verse 4: "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people, he will beautify the meek with salvation." Since the Lord taketh pleasure in His people, He will not forsake us or abandon us to our enemies.

## Victory Assured for His People

The Bible says in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." There are times when it looks as if our enemies are riding high, and, judging by the circumstances, we are being trampled upon and defeated. You never look at the circumstances; you look at the Lord. Psalm 149:4 says, "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation."

"Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord."

God has not appointed us to defeat; He has appointed us to victory. When the Bible says, "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people," mark it down: He will ultimately be pleased to give us total victory—in time, in history, and in eternity. You might lose a battle, but losing a battle does not mean that you have lost the war.

## What Pleases God: Fear and Hope

What in the world is there in us that could please the Lord? Have you been faithful all of your life? No. Have you prayed as you should? No. Have you studied as you should? No. Have you obeyed as you should? No. Have you sacrificed as you should? No. Have you worshipped as you should? No. When we look within ourselves, we find nothing that can please Him. In and of ourselves, we are helpless and powerless.

But there may be something in us that is there supernaturally—something that He puts there, something that He places. Psalm 147:10 tells us first what it is not: "He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man." It is not our physical appearance or physical abilities that particularly please the Lord. He is not impressed with our agility, power, or strength. We should all be as physically fit as we can so that we can serve Him and live for Him, and we should use our bodies to serve Him.

You remember what the Apostle Paul said in Romans 1:9: "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit, and the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayer." It is true that the Apostle Paul served God with his spirit. But was it just his spirit that was going all over the Roman Empire preaching? No, it was his body. He served Him with his spirit, but the spirit was in the body. It was the body that was taking the spirit and taking Paul out preaching.

All I am trying to say is this: our physical endurance does not necessarily please the Lord in the sense of, "Look at me, I am mighty, big, and strong." But we do need our bodies to serve Him. So if it is not our physical appearances, what is it? Look in Psalm 147:11: "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and those that hope in his mercy." There are two things that God takes pleasure in: those

that fear Him and those that hope in His mercy. It is our faith, our hope, and our obedience that please Him.

Albert Barnes said it like this: “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him and those who truly worship Him, however humble, poor and unknown to people they may be, however unostentatious, retired, unnoticed may be their worship. Not in the pride, pomp, and circumstance of war is his pleasure, not in the march of armies, not in the valor of the battlefield, not in the scene where there are garments of the warrior rolled in blood, but in the closet where the devout child of God prays, in the family, when the group bend before him in solemn devotion, in the assembly, quiet, serious, calm, when his friends are gathered together for prayer and praise, in the heart that truly loves, reverences, and adores him. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him and those that hope in his mercy.”

The Scripture tells us that even the cry of the penitent is really pleasing to His ear. For in Luke 15:10, our Lord said this: “Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” Note, there is joy where? In the presence of the angels of God. So it is the Lord who is rejoicing. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. From the beginning, or the instant, of faith to the death of the mature believer in Christ, it is our faith, it is our obedience, it is our hope that pleases Him.

He takes pleasure in His people. Why? Because in His people He has given us faith, hope, and His mercy. Spurgeon said it like this: “While the bodily powers give no content to God, spiritual qualities are His delight. He cares most for those emotions which center in Himself. The fear which He approves is fear of Him, and hope which He accepts is hope in His mercy. It's a striking thought that God should not only be at peace with some men, but even find a solace and a joy in their company.”

Not only to be at peace with us, but to find a kind of solace and joy in our company. Oh, the matchless condescension of the Lord, that His greatness should take pleasure in the insignificant creatures of His hand. Who are these favored men in whom Jehovah takes pleasure? Some are the least in His family, who have never risen beyond hoping and fearing.

Others are more fully developed, but still exhibit a blended character composed of fear and hope. They fear God with a holy awe and filial reverence, and they hope for forgiveness and blessedness because of divine mercy. As a father takes pleasure in his own children, so the Lord solaces Himself in His beloved ones, whose marks of the new birth are fear and hope. They fear, for they are sinners. They hope, for God is merciful. They fear Him, for He is great. They hope in Him, for He is good. Their fear sobers their hope; their hope brightens their fear. God takes pleasure in them both, in their trembling and in their rejoicing.

Have you ever trembled before God when you thought of His greatness and majesty? I think of that passage in Isaiah 6: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. And the seraphim flew with six wings; with twain they covered their face, with twain they covered their feet, and with twain they did fly. And they ceased not, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." And then Isaiah said, "Woe is me! I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Woe is me! For mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts." He trembled. You remember it was John the Apostle who saw the Lord on the Isle of Patmos, and he fell, or as one dead, at His feet. Have you ever trembled before God? Have you ever rejoiced before God? Have you ever been really, genuinely thankful?

Sometimes we get in such a habit of saying, "Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord," that we can say it without being genuinely thankful or having heartfelt gratitude. The Lord takes pleasure in us when we fear Him, when we tremble before Him at His greatness, majesty, and power. He takes pleasure in us when we hope in Him for forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration, and when we are thankful.

Thomas Manton, the Puritan, rightly states on this verse: "A sincere Christian is known by both of these, that is, fear and hope. A fear of God, or a constant obedience to His commands, and an affiance, trust, and dependence upon His mercies. Oh, how sweetly are both these coupled! A uniform, sincere obedience to Him, and an unshaken, constant reliance on His mercy and goodness. The whole

perfection of the Christian life is comprised in these two, believing God and fearing Him, trusting in His mercy and fearing His name.

"The one makes us careful in avoiding sin, the other diligent to follow after righteousness. The one is a bridle from sin and temptation, the other is a spur to our duties. Fear is our curb, and hope is our motive and encouragement. The one respects our duty, and the other our comfort. The one allayeth the other. God is so to be feared as so also to be trusted, and so to be trusted as also to be feared.

"And as we must not suffer our fear to degenerate into legal bondage, but hope in His mercy, so our trust must not degenerate into carnal sloth and wantonness, but some hope in His word so as to fear His name. Well then, such both believe in God and fear to offend Him are the only men who are acceptable to God and His people. God will take pleasure in them, and they will take pleasure in one another."

Both of these demonstrate and evidence the real, true child of God. If you and I really and truly want to honor our Sovereign Lord, if we want to please Him, we must know what pleases Him. That is fear and hope, or trust and obedience, or recognition of Him and submission to Him.

If I were to tell you that I am coming to your house to visit, and you said, "Since you are coming to my house to visit, I would love for you to have a meal with me," and I said, "Fine, I will be delighted to have a meal with you," then you asked me, "What would please you for dinner?" I would tell you what I can eat and what I do not like. If I got to your house and what you had prepared for me were those things that I did not like and could not eat, the first thought would be, "This person really does not care for me or love me, or was so inconsiderate not even to listen to my answer when they asked what I preferred."

The point is this: If we are told in Scripture what pleases God, why in the world would we try to give Him something different? If we really and genuinely want to please Him and honor Him, why not give Him exactly what He asks? Fear and trust. Obedience. Submission.

Those who place their own pleasure above God's pleasure are idolaters, plain and simple. If we genuinely want to worship Him, we are going to put His pleasure above our pleasure.

Once you know what I have taught, there are no excuses. James 4, verse 17, says, "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." In other words, God says, "I have just told you what pleases Me." Since God has told you what pleases Him, if you are not going to do that, then very obviously you are not concerned with pleasing God. If you do not give Him that which pleases Him, to you it is sin. There can be no excuses, because we know, based upon the Word of God, that which pleases Him. If we do not please Him, then we are guilty of displeasing Him. If we please God, as I said when I started this message, God has promised a special blessing to those who obey Him and please Him.

He said, "If you will turn away your foot from doing your pleasure and do that which I delight in, then I will cause you to ride high. I will give you these blessings." Would you like to see our enemies overthrown? By our enemies, I mean the enemies of Christ and of the Word of God, those causing God's people and the world all the problems we are in now. Would you not like to see them overthrown?

The Bible says in Proverbs 16:7, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." If we want victory in time and history, we must learn to please the Lord and do that which gives Him honor and glory. I am thankful that our Lord said in Luke 12:32, "Fear not, little flock, it's the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." If we please Him, part of His pleasure is giving us the kingdom. Therefore, we need to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

God has said that He takes pleasure in His people. It is not our physical appearance, physical abilities, greatness, or multitudinous capacity to accomplish anything or to have a great number of us. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him and those that hope in His mercy.

We must always be conscious that while our faith and obedience please our Father, it was His grace and mercy that gave them to us to

begin with. Any ability we have to please God came from God, for we had no ability in and of ourselves. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure."

What a wonderful God we have. He demands something of us, gives us the grace and ability to do it, and then rewards us for doing it. How can you beat something like that? If I told you, "Henry, I want you to buy a new Cadillac," and you said, "Pastor, I'm broke," I could say, "Not any longer. Here's $50,000. Go buy that new Cadillac."

What have I just done? I told him what I wanted him to do, gave him the money to do it, and then he did exactly what I told him to do. I said, “Now here’s another $100,000 for gas and expenses.” Can you beat a deal like that? No. That is exactly what God does for us. He tells us what He wants us to do, gives us grace and the ability to do it, and, when we do it, rewards us for doing it. It was all in Him to begin with.

The second application is this: What a humbling yet wonderful thought it is that we were made for His pleasure. Have you ever stopped to think that God did not need us? I get upset when I hear people, ignorant of God, His attributes, and Scripture, say, “The reason God created us was that He was lonely.” That is such hogwash. It says that God is not perfect and that He is mutable. If He was lonely and we helped Him, then He changed; He was no longer immutable or self-sufficient.

God did not need us. We cannot add to His perfections in any way, and yet He was pleased to create us, choose us, predestinate us, regenerate and convert us, and give us repentance and faith. We were made for Him, yet He did not need us. Scripture says in Revelation 4:11, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they were and are created.” The only reason God created us, saved us, and takes pleasure in us is that He was pleased to do so.

What an astounding thought that a sinful creature can give the sovereign, majestic, holy, righteous God of heaven and earth pleasure: He taketh pleasure in His people, and He will beautify the meek with salvation. The Lord is pleased with the faith, hope, and

obedience that He places within us. If God is pleased with them, we need to be pleasurable to Him by giving Him more obedience, fear, hope, and worship.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. Lord, it boggles our minds that we can please Thee, and yet Thou sayest that Thou takest pleasure in Thy people. Help us, Lord, to be pleasurable to Thee. Help us to be pleasing unto Thee.

May we be more holy, conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and glorify Thee in everything we say and do. In Thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

# How to Love The Lord With All Your Heart

August 12, 2012

## Introduction: The Great Commandment

I am going to bring a message today which is very dear to my heart, especially this morning and the one tonight as well. To me, this is very fundamental, very elementary, and yet at the same time something that most of us have never really grasped. Notice Matthew 22. We are going to read verses 35 through 40.

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him and saying, Master, what is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is likened to it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Our Lord is very clear in this commandment. He tells us that we are to love the Lord with all of our heart, all of our mind, and all of

our soul. Since this commandment is exceedingly clear, there is no excuse for not doing so.

In Mark chapter 12 and verse 30, our Lord repeats this, but note how he states it. The Word of God simply says: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment."

Then, in Luke chapter 10 and verse 27, once again you will see that he repeats this commandment. The Word of God says, "...and he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself."

Now turn in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 6. We are going to be looking at verse 4 and verse 5, and I would ask you to mark this passage because we are going to come back to it just shortly.

Notice Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verse 4. You have there what is known as the Shema Israel: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." The Shema Yisrael usually goes, "Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad." But notice what follows: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

It does not really matter whether you look in the Old Testament or the New Testament; the command is the same. We have been commanded to love the Lord with all of our hearts, minds, and souls. Several questions should automatically come to mind. First of all, how do we love the Lord with all of our heart, all of our mind, and all of our soul?

Another question is this: Is there a standard of measurement? How can I know whether or not I genuinely am loving the Lord with all my heart, all my mind, and all my soul? How can I know whether or not you are doing that? Is there some standard of measurement? Is there some way that we can know?

## The Obligation to Love God

The honest truth is this: We are obligated to love the Lord with all of our heart, mind, soul, and body simply because He commands it. He

is the Creator. He is the Redeemer. He is the Lord. He is the Savior. We are obligated to obey. Even the unconverted, who do not have the ability to love Him with all of their heart and soul, are still responsible to do so. Simply because man in his sin has lost his ability does not mean that God has lost His right to command. God is still sovereign, and God is still in control.

What does it mean, basically, to love the Lord with all of our heart, mind, and soul? In Mark 12 and verse 30, and in Luke 10 and verse 27, the word "strength" was added as well. In Deuteronomy 6 and verse 5, the word "might," M-I-G-H-T, was added.

## Common Interpretations of Loving God

Some scholars interpret these words in a general sense. One author says, "Thou shalt love him with all the faculties or all thy powers. Thou shalt love him supremely more than all other beings and things and with all ardor possible. To love him with all the heart is to fix the affections supremely upon him, more strongly than on anything else, and to be willing to give up all that we hold dear at his command." That is very general.

Other authors and scholars break the statement down, saying that the heart refers to the affections, the soul to our life, and the mind to our intellect. Thus, when we set our affections upon Him, we love Him more than life; when we think upon His thoughts, we love Him with our mind; and when we bring our lives into conformity to His Word, we love Him with our soul. Adam Clarke wrote about two pages on what it means to love the Lord with all of your heart and with all of your soul. When you finish reading it, you stop and ask, "Has anybody ever loved the Lord like that?"

## Strength and Might in Loving God

What he said seems absolutely impossible in this life, though not impossible in the next life. Before we go further, let us deal with the words "strength" and "might," for we are commanded to love the Lord with all our strength as well as all our might. I believe David gives the answer concerning strength in Psalm 103:1: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless the Lord, O my soul." He continues, "Forget not all of his benefits." Notice what he

said: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me." In other words, strength comes from giving Him all the honor, praise, and glory with everything within us. We do not hold back when we recognize that everything we are and everything we have is of Him and from Him; we are to love Him in that regard.

What about the word “might”? Sometimes “might” and “strength” are used interchangeably, but not always. The word “might” in Scripture has another implication as well. In 1 Chronicles chapter 29, David shows us another understanding of the word “might,” by which Deuteronomy 6:5 teaches us to love the Lord with all our might.

“Furthermore, David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great: for the palace is not for man, but for the LORD God. Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, and the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistering stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal.”

David was prepared with all his might. In this context, to love the Lord with all our might means with all our money. Some people say, “I really love the Lord,” but they will never tithe, give, or make offerings. If the word “might” in Deuteronomy 6:5 is interpreted by 1 Chronicles 29:2, then some who say they love the Lord really do not love Him, because loving Him with all our might would include loving Him with all our money.

We understand that we are required to love the Lord with all our hearts, minds, souls, strength, and might. But what is it to love the Lord? Is love merely a warm, tingling feeling, goosebumps rising on

the back of my neck as I think of the Lord, or the hair on the back of my neck standing up?

**SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 6:1-9 (KJV)**

## Love Is Not Sentimentality

Or is it the fact that I get some kind of a crawling sensation on my skin and I get all teary eyed and sentimental. Is that loving the Lord? And the answer I'm going to show you is absolutely not. Is loving the Lord some type of asceticism? No. I want you to go back to Deuteronomy chapter six. I told you we'd be coming back there. I want you to look at the context in which he tells us that we're to love the Lord with all of our might. And I'm going to show you from the Bible.

## Love Connected to Commandments in Deuteronomy 6

We'll be looking at a number of passages. How this is explained, notice beginning there with Deuteronomy chapter 6 and let's read the first nine verses. The scripture says, "Now these are the commandments, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God commanded to teach you that you might do them in the land whither you go to possess it: that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou and thy son and thy sons' sons, all the days of thy life, and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear, therefore, Israel, and observe to do it, that it might be well with thee, and that thou mightest increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

"And thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And

thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates."

When God tells you that you are to love the Lord with all your heart and all your soul and all your might, in the context it is right in the middle of verses concerning the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments. Verse 2 speaks of keeping His statutes and keeping His commandments. Then verse 6 says, “And these words which I command thee shall be in thy heart,” and that you shall talk about them as you lie down and as you are awake, putting them as the front of your eyes and posting them on the doors of your house.

In other words, the point is this: Loving the Lord somehow, according to Deuteronomy chapter 6, is connected with His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes. It is very plain in the context. Now go to Mark chapter 12 and look at verse 29, because the interesting thing is that our Lord, in Mark chapter 12 and verse 29, quotes from Deuteronomy chapter 6.

## Jesus Quotes the Shema in Mark 12

“And Jesus answering him, The first of all commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, which is the first commandment.” Notice that in verse 29 He begins by quoting the Shema Israel, which we read in Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 4. Why in the world is our Lord quoting Deuteronomy 6:4 here in Mark 12:29? Here is the answer: First of all, our Lord is not only supporting the law as it has been given, but He is also telling us how we are to love Him.

There is indeed a covenantal relationship that exists between God and His people, and the covenant that binds us to Him is in His Word, and it is His Word. Thus the reference then to the Shema Israel in Deuteronomy 6 and verse 4 is teaching us basically that we have one Lord, one faith, one Word, and one baptism. In other words, we are united with Him.

Now, what I want to do is this. I want to ask you some questions, and then I'm going to show you the answer. Have you ever wondered why David said, "Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation day and

night"? Have you ever wondered why Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and they were the rejoicing of my heart"? Have you ever wondered why Job said, "I esteem thy words more than my necessary meat"? Why did these people place the Word of God in such a place of preeminence in their lives?

## Old Testament Evidence: Love Is Obedience

I want you to see what it is to love the Lord. I'm going to show it to you from the Old Testament, and I'm going to show it to you from the New Testament. Let us look in Deuteronomy chapter 30 and verse 16 to begin with. Look what the Word of God says: "In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God." Are you watching? "To walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply, and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it." Now look at it: "In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God." What is loving the Lord thy God? It is walking in His ways; it is keeping His commandments and His statutes and His judgments.

Skip down to verse 20. Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 20, "That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey His voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him, for he is thy life, and the length of thy days, that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." Now, he said in verse 20, "that thou mayest love the Lord thy God." What is loving the Lord thy God? It's obeying His voice. It's cleaving unto Him. It's recognizing that He is indeed our life. Turn right over, if you would, please, to the book of Joshua, chapter 22, and look at verse 5. Joshua 22 in verse 5. Again, Joshua says this very plainly. Joshua 22, look at verse 5. He says, "But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul."

Now, I want you to note that "Take diligent heed to do the commandment of the law which Moses the servant charged you to

love the Lord." Wow. I hope you're beginning to see that there is a connection somehow between obeying the Lord and loving Him.

Now, if you look in Joshua 23 and verse 11, he says it basically the same thing. "Take good heed, therefore, unto yourselves that you love the Lord your God." But you'd have to look at it in the context and go back to verse 8. He says, "but cleave unto the Lord your God as you have done this day." So there is a cleaving unto the Lord that is associated with loving him as well.

Now, the New Testament is just as plain. Let me make a statement. I'm going to prove it to you from the Bible. Love is obedience. Love is not sentimentality. It is not emotionalism. It is not traditionalism. It is not anything else. Love is simple obedience. If you would look in your Bibles to the book of Romans chapter 13 and verse 10. Romans chapter 13 and verse 10. And look, if you would, exactly what is defined for us. Romans 13 and verse 10.

## New Testament Evidence: Love Is Obedience

And the Scripture says this: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." Now, what is love? Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Keep in mind that love is the fulfilling of the law. Our Lord says in John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” In verse 21 He says, “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” In verse 23, “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words. And my Father will love him, and we'll come unto him and make our abode with him.” He said, “If a man love me, he'll keep my words.” The opposite is also true of those who do not love Him. Verse 24 says, “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.”

I don't know how really and truly anything could be any plainer. Our Lord simply says, If you love Me, keep My commandments. If you don't love Me, you're not going to keep them. It's just that simple.

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

know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep His commandments.

So here's my question: How do I know that I love Brother Tim? How do I know that I love your pastor? How do I know that I love Jacob? How do I know that I love any of God's children? The answer is, by this we know we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

That simply means this: I treat Brother Tim and his wife the way God commands me to. I treat his property the way God commands me to. I don't steal from him. I don't covet what he has. I treat him the way that God commands me.

This is very simple. We have tried to mix love with sentimentalism and emotionalism. For instance, if I went to Keith, fell on his shoulders, began weeping and crying, and said, “Brother Keith, I love you,” everybody might say, “Look how Brother Weaver loves Brother Keith.” But what they do not see is that, while I am telling him I love him, I have my hand in his pocket stealing a $100 bill from him. Emily says it is not there; she already has it. But you see what I am saying? I can tell him I love him. I can become emotional, weep, and cry all over him. But according to the Bible, do I love him if I am stealing from him? No.

“Hereby we know we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.” If you really, truly, genuinely want to know what love is, here it is, plain and simple: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” What is the love of God? It is the keeping of His commandments.

“Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” How do I know that I really, genuinely know the Lord Jesus? How do I know that I am really, genuinely converted? The answer is very simple: by His grace and by His power, He is enabling me to be obedient to His Word. “Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”

But watch verse 4: “He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” I wonder where that leaves an awful lot of church members—people who say

they love the Lord, and yet are immoral, wicked, ungodly, liars, thieves, covetous, adulterers, and fornicators. What did he say? “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.” In other words, when God saves us, He enables us to be obedient.

This does not mean that we are absolutely perfect. No, it does not mean that at all. But it does mean that our lives, generally speaking, are lives of obedience. The Bible says in 2 John 1:6, “And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.” This is love: that we walk after His commandments.

## Love Is Demonstrative and Evidenced

Biblical love is always demonstrative. It is always manifested. It is always evidenced. In 1 John 3:16, we read, “Hereby perceive we the love of God.” The word “perceive” means to understand, to comprehend, to see, and to lay hold upon. So he says, “Hereby perceive,” or understand or comprehend, we the love of God.

Now, do not let me misread this. “Hereby perceive we the love of God because He told us He loved us.” Is that what the Scripture says? No. If God told us He loved us, certainly that would be true, because God does not lie. But look what the Scripture says: “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” In other words, real, genuine love is always demonstrative. How do we know that God loved us? Not merely because He told us, but because He demonstrated it, manifested it, and evidenced it. He laid down His life for us. Then He says that we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Verse 17 continues: “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.” If someone has this world’s goods, sees his brother in need, and shuts up his compassion from him, how does the love of God dwell in him?

So that simply means this. Brother Ernie comes up to me and says, “Brother Weaver, I’ve been out of a job for two months. I’m hungry. My wife is hungry. My children are hungry. Is there anything you can do for us?” I have a pantry full of food, and I say, “Yes, my brother, there’s something I can do for you. I’m going to pray that the Lord will supply your need. Let’s bow in prayer.” What?

What good is praying for him and with him when I have the wherewithal to feed his family? “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” If I genuinely love him, I will be willing to share with him whatever I have. Real, genuine love is always demonstrable; it is evidenced and manifested.

How do we love the Lord with all of our heart, mind, soul, and being? Since love is obedience, since obedience is demanded to God’s law-word, and since love is always active and demonstrable, it should not be too difficult to figure out how to love the Lord. Obviously, loving the Lord is not what most people think it is. Most people have been filled with so much religious bunk. I get questions all the time from people: “Oh, Brother Weaver, did you see Preacher So-and-so on TV?” No. “Did you hear him on the radio?” No. Unless I know somebody, I am not listening to him. I could not see him on TV anyhow; we do not even have TV. I am simply not listening to a bunch of people who spout their ideas and never teach the Word of God.

What we have done today is associate love with feelings and emotions. Ask yourself: If I come to church and say that I am loving the Lord, can I cuddle up to the Lord? Can I get all warm and fuzzy with Him, teary-eyed and sentimental? Can I get an emotional high, jump and shout, have an experience, and say, “Boy, I love the Lord”? You can say that, and you might get some of it, but that does not mean that you love the Lord, because that is not biblical love. Look in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 6. In light of what I have just said, I want to ask you a question. You say, “Brother Weaver, what I want to do is just get so close to the Lord I can touch Him.” I understand that phraseology, but look what the Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 6, beginning with verse 15. In fact, let us read verse 14, just to show that we are talking about Jesus Christ.

"That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in His times He shall show who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see, to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." There goes your cuddling and your warm fuzzies, because no man can approach unto Him physically like that. You may weep and cry and wail and scream that you love Him, but that does not necessarily mean that you do. In the Bible, love is obedience.

Now let us take it a step further. Hebrews 6:10 says, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which you have showed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister." Think about that. What can you give the Lord that He actually needs? Nothing. Everything you are, He made. Everything you have, He gave you. Everything that is in the world, He created.

It is like the scientists who became arrogant, thinking they could create life and do everything. They told about one scientist who had a conversation with God and said, "God, we're now as big as you. We can create life too." God said, "Is that right?" He said, "Yes." God replied, "Let me show you. Let me take this handful of dirt." God said, "No, you go get your own dirt."

Everything we are and everything we have is His. So how can we minister to God? By ministering to the saints and to each other. Matthew 25:40 says, "And the king shall answer and say to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as you've done it to the least of these my brethren, you've done it unto me." The only way we can minister to God is by ministering to one another. Since love is the fulfilling of the law, and we are to love God with all our hearts, minds, soul, strength, and might, loving God means keeping God's law toward others and toward each other.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. How can I minister to God? How can I love God with all of my heart? Is there a standard of measurement? Is there some way I can know whether or not I love God? Is there some way that I can know that Brother Mack loves

God? How can I measure that? What would be the standard that I could measure by?

## Practical Applications of Loving God

Consider the commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” When I love my wife the way God commanded me to love her, and when I understand that the Lord forbids adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness, I can also read in Scripture where my Heavenly Father says in Proverbs 5:18, “Let thy fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.” What does that mean? It means that if I am going to love God, I have to love my wife the way God commands me to love my wife. When I find my joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in the wife God has given me, and love her the way Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, then I am loving God, because that is exactly what He commands. When I love her with a biblical love, I am demonstrating that I love the Lord. My love is demonstrated by my biblical love to my wife.

On the other hand, when my wife submits to me, loves me, and helps me in the way that God has ordained, she is expressing her love to Christ. In Ephesians chapter 5, the wives were to be in submission to their husbands. Why? As the church is in submission unto Christ, so the wife is to be in subjection to her husband in everything. Her life is to picture the submission of the church to Jesus Christ. Therefore, when my wife loves me, submits to me, and helps me in the way that God has ordained, she is expressing her love for the Lord Jesus Christ, because love is the fulfilling of the law.

This thing is really so simple, and yet, at the same time, we have lost fact of the idea that love is obedience, and it is obedience to God. If we love Him, we will keep His commandments. If we love Him, we will obey Him.

The fifth commandment, Exodus 20, verse 12, says that we are to honor our father and our mother. When we honor our parents in the way God has commanded—if we submit to them, obey them, honor them, and esteem them very highly in the Lord—we are expressing our love to the Lord, because He is the one who has said, “Honor thy father and thy mother.”

Honoring your father and mother means more than saying, “Yes, ma’am,” and “No, ma’am,” and “Yes, sir,” and “No, sir.” If you were to read Matthew 15 and Mark chapter 7, you would find that honoring your father and mother means taking care of them in their old age, when they cannot take care of themselves. In 1 Timothy, you would find that this is indeed honoring the Lord.

He said, “Let the children and the nephews requite their parents.” The word “requite” means to pay back. Your parents took care of you when you could not take care of yourselves. They fed you, clothed you, nursed you, educated you, and did everything for you. Now, when your parents become elderly and cannot take care of themselves, God says it is time for you to requite them. Take care of them. Support them. Sustain them. That is biblical.

Married young men and women need to understand this: obedience, in one sense of the word, may cease when you have your own home, but honor never ceases. I made this a principle in my life. When I went back to see my father, I remembered that when I was in his house, I was still his son and he was still my father. Whatever he asked me to do, I would do. I may have been forty and had four children, or fifty and had grandchildren, but that was immaterial. When he asked me to do something, I was in his house, and I did it. God requires us to honor our parents. When I honor my parents as God commands me to, I am expressing my love to the Lord. I am loving Him with all of my heart and with all of my soul, because love is the fulfilling of the law.

In Deuteronomy 26, this chapter deals with tithing. Notice verse 17, after they had tithed: “Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice.” After all Israel had tithed unto the Lord, He says, “Thou hast avouched this day that the Lord this day is your God.” Do you know what the word “avouched” means? It literally means to say in one’s heart. Then he goes on to say that you are to keep His commandments and judgments and hearken to His voice.

In other words, when I tithe and give offerings unto Him, what am I doing? I am saying, “Lord, I am Yours and You are mine, and I am recognizing Your sovereignty. I am recognizing the fact that You

own everything. I am recognizing the fact, Lord, that everything I have, You gave to me. And Lord, I am giving this back to You, and as I am doing that, I am avouching this day that You are my God."

Now watch verse 18. After that happens, "...and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he promised thee." God says, when you avouch Me and do what I command, I am avouching you as Mine. You are My peculiar people.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. How do I love God with all my heart? When I refuse to steal, defraud, cheat, swindle, and lie, it is evidence that I love the Lord. When I give lovingly, generously, and cheerfully to the Lord and to His work, it is evidence that I love the Lord. Exodus 20:15 says, "Thou shalt not steal." Do you know what the positive side of "thou shalt not steal" is? You will find it in Ephesians 4:28: "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands a thing which is good that he may have to give to him that needeth." The opposite of "thou shalt not steal" is laboring with your hands, working that which is good, that you may have to give to him that needeth. In other words, you are not a covetous individual; you are a generous, loving, cheerful individual.

That's why 2 Corinthians 9 and verse 7 says, "Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." In other words, when I refuse to do those things that God forbids me to do, and I do what He commands me to do, I'm saying, "Lord, I love Thee. I'm loving You with all of my heart, with all of my mind, with all of my strength, with all of my being." When I minister to You the way God commands me to, I'm loving the Lord.

How do we know we love the Lord? We know we love the Lord when we love His children. First John 3:14 says, "We know that we pass from death to life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

Just because I love the brethren does not mean that I like all of them. There are some people who are brethren who can irritate you to death, and they have idiosyncrasies that you don't like. That doesn't matter. You are still required to love them if they're brethren.

How do I know that I've passed from death into life? Because I love the brethren.

I remember one dear friend who was a preacher. He's now dead, but his voice was so high-pitched that I could not stand to talk to him. His voice hurt my ears, and probably about thirty minutes would be all I could take. But I would spend those thirty minutes with him, find some reason to have a break, and then come back and spend thirty more minutes with him. He couldn't change his voice. It wasn't his problem.

That's the way God created him. He may have hurt my ears, but he was still my brother, and I was still required to love him and fellowship with him. First John 4:7–8 says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. And everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.” Verse 20 says, “If a man say, I love God and hateth his brother, he's a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.”

As Christians, we must love our husbands, wives, neighbors, and brethren, as Christ commanded us. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Love is obedience. If we do not keep His commandments and do as He commands, then we do not love Him. When I hate sin, wickedness, disobedience, and rebellion, and refuse to participate in such things, I love the Lord. Why? Because He has commanded me in Psalm 97:10, “Ye that love the Lord hate evil.” He has also said in Amos 5:15, “Hate the evil and love the good.”

Do you realize you cannot possibly love God without at the same time hating everything that is contrary to God? It is impossible. You remember Jehoshaphat got in trouble for loving the Lord’s enemies. David said, “Do not I hate them that hate thee, O Lord? I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies.” Then, after he said that, he said, “Search me, O God, and try my heart and see if there be any wicked way in me.” Evidently, it is not wicked to hate those who hate God.

The point I am trying to make is this: if we love Him, we are going to honor Him and obey Him. If there is no obedience, there is no love and there is no honor.

Now, I want you to follow me. I am fixing to tie everything together for you. Turn back to Exodus chapter 20 and look at verse 6. All I am showing you is what love is from the Bible and how to love the Lord with all your heart. He says, "...and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments." Who are those that love Him? Those that keep His commandments. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 5 and verse 10.

You will see exactly the same truth: "...and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep my commandments." Who is it that loves Him? Those that keep His commandments. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 19 and verse 9: "If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them which I command thee this day, to love the Lord thy God, and to walk ever in his ways, then shalt thou add three cities more for thee beside these three." But note what He said: "If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the Lord thy God." What is loving the Lord thy God? It is keeping His commandments. Then turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 34. Here is good King Josiah. Note concerning the covenant made between the king and the people and the Lord. Notice 2 Chronicles 34 and verse 31.

The Bible says, "And the king stood in his place." That was King Josiah. "And made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and with all his soul to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book." What was he doing? He was saying, "I'm going to love the Lord with all my heart, with all my soul." How was he going to do it? By keeping all the commandments and all the statutes. Loving the Lord with all of our hearts and souls is evidenced by obedience.

## Conclusion: The Measuring Stick of Obedience

That means there is a measuring stick. How can I know whether Brother Mack loves the Lord with all of his heart? It is very simple: I examine his life in light of the Word of God. If he is obedient to

God's Word, yes, he is loving the Lord. If he is disobedient, he is not loving the Lord. Talk is worthless. Emotions are fickle. Sentimentality is useless. The only thing that genuinely evidences our love for the Lord is our obedience.

He said in John 14 and verse 21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Galatians 6 and verse 16 says, "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them and mercy upon the Israel of God." The word "rule" is the word "canon."

Canon is our English word—not C-A-N-N-O-N, the kind that shoots. We speak of the canon of Scripture, the Old Testament canon, and the New Testament canon. Paul said, "As many as walk according to this measuring stick, to this standard, peace be upon them and mercy upon the Israel of God." Is there a way to measure whether we love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind? Yes. Are our lives in conformity to the Word of God, to the extent that we know the truth of God which He has revealed?

It is true that none of us are perfect, and none of us know everything. But the Word of God says plainly, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The question is not, Do I know everything? No. The question is, Am I obedient to that which I do know? Is my life being measured by obedience to the totality of the Word of God? As many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them and mercy upon the Israel of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. Help us to understand what it truly means to love You with all our heart, souls, mind, and being. Help us understand how simple it is, and yet how desperately we need to bring our lives into conformity to Your Word. Enable us to be obedient—more obedient, more godly, and more holy. Enable us to worship and honor Thee. When we look back upon a day and have obeyed Thee in every area we can, may we truthfully say, "Father, I have loved Thee this day through the Lord Jesus Christ in Thy Word." Make us more obedient. In Thy name we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 12

# It Takes More Than a Profession of Faith

November 4, 2012

## Introduction and Scripture Reading

Isaiah 48 begins: “Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, that are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; the Lord of hosts is His name.”

## Salvation by Grace Alone, Not Works

The subtitle is “Talk is Cheap,” which you will find the Scripture states very clearly. I am sure that every one of you has heard the age-old expression, “Everyone that's talking about heaven ain't going there.” That certainly is true, because it takes more than talk. It even takes more than a profession of faith.

When I tell you the title of this message is “It Takes More Than a Profession of Faith,” I want you to understand from the outset that I am not teaching, nor am I talking about or referring to salvation by works. No man is saved by his works. In fact, Scripture is exceedingly clear, and everyone in this room can quote the verses from 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.” Of course, it is only, totally, completely by God's grace. It is not of works, lest any man should boast.

Salvation is not only by Christ; it is in Christ alone. He is our substitute, our sacrifice, and our salvation. Apart from Jesus Christ, no one would be saved, and nothing can be added to His perfect work. It is not Christ plus our works. No, it is Christ and Christ alone. The Bible teaches in Hebrews 9:28, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Notice: He was offered once. He totally and completely perfected salvation. Our Lord made it exceedingly clear that salvation is impossible with men.

We cannot save ourselves, and we cannot help save ourselves. Mark chapter 10 shows very specifically how clear our Lord made it that salvation is totally, absolutely impossible with man. Our Lord had just sent away the rich young ruler, who was sorrowful because he had great riches and did not want to give them up. We read in verse 24: “And the disciples were astonished at his words.” What words? Verse 23 explains: “And Jesus looked round about and said unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God?”

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Then verse 26 says, “And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?”

The question is, “Who then can be saved?” The subject deals with salvation. Our Lord answers in verse 27: “And Jesus looking upon them, saith, With men it is impossible!” Salvation is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible. The Bible teaches very clearly that with man, salvation is impossible. That is why it is

impossible to be saved without Christ, because Christ alone is salvation.

Horatius Bonar said: “Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die, another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity.” That is true. We stake our whole eternity on the life and death of Jesus Christ.

## The Problem of Empty Profession

The subtitle of this message, “Talk is Cheap,” exposes not only the problem with professors in the Old Testament, but also the same problem in the New Testament and the exact same problem that we have today. A profession of faith that is not evidenced or backed up by a life of obedience is worthless.

In Isaiah 48:1–2, our Lord says: “Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city and stay themselves upon the God of Israel. The Lord of hosts is his name.” Here we see a people called by the name of Israel, implying that they were God’s covenant people. They swore by the name of the Lord, made mention of His name freely and openly, and seemingly were unashamed. They professed that they were God’s people and purportedly stayed themselves upon Him. Yet God states that their profession was not in truth nor in righteousness. They were a people in name only, with a worthless, useless lip profession.

How many are like that today? How many profess Jesus Christ and yet live absolutely opposite to His word and His will? Isaiah 29:13 applies very clearly today: “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of man.” They honor Him with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him; their fear toward Him is taught by the precept of man. I am afraid that many today are in the same exact boat as these Old Testament professors. Many have been raised in church, taught in church, and

educated in church, yet they have never been regenerated or converted by the power of God.

They may be able to quote Scripture, sing hymns, and even converse in theological language, yet they know absolutely nothing of the power of God in their lives. All they have is what they have been taught by the precept of man. They are absolutely, totally ignorant of the truths of covenantal faithfulness.

## False Profession in Jeremiah's Day

I want to show you the extent of the false profession. God is talking about an entire people that professed to be His people, and yet they were totally unregenerate. In Jeremiah 5:1-2, He tells Jeremiah, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely."

What did God tell Jeremiah? Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem. Find me just one man, just one man that executes judgment and seeks the truth. He said, I will pardon the entire city. Just find me one man. God says, yes, you are going to find some that will say, "Surely the Lord liveth," but they swear absolutely falsely. Their hearts are far from the Lord. Over and over in Scripture, Israel was judged and chastened by the Lord for its overt acts of treason, rebellion, and all of its provocations against Him. Yet, in all of this, it continued still in rebellion and still in its outward profession of being the people of God.

## Confession Must Come from the Heart

I am giving you this to show that this is exactly where we are today. Romans 10:9-10 is a passage that has been greatly misused, taken out of context, and not understood at all. The Scripture says: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

I want you to understand: the verbal confession of the mouth is useless without the converting faith in the heart. It is with the heart that man believes unto righteousness. With the mouth, confession is made, but it is with the heart. So if there is nothing in the heart, the profession of the mouth is absolutely useless.

It is true that we must confess Christ publicly and privately. However, real confession is the result of salvation, not salvation itself. We confess because we have been saved. It is not our confession that saves us; Jesus Christ saves us.

Now let us see this in context. Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." That is true, but we must define and understand what calling upon the name of the Lord means. I do not think it is mouthing some simple prayer that somebody tells you to pray. Calling upon the name of the Lord is like Peter when he was going under: he cried out, "Help, Lord!" Peter understood that if the Lord did not save him, he was a goner. I think that is what truly calling on the Lord is.

But who will call upon the Lord savingly? Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Then verse 14 asks, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" What must transpire before you can call? You must believe. Is it calling that saves you, or is it believing in Jesus Christ that saves you? Is calling an evidence that you have believed in Christ?

The passage continues: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" In order to call, you must believe. "And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" In order to believe, you must hear Jesus Christ. "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Then: "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

The calling is the result of believing, and believing is the result of hearing Christ. Christ normally speaks to His sheep during the preaching of His Word. A preacher cannot really preach His Word accurately and truthfully unless he has been sent by God. The real

voice that you need to listen for is not the preacher's voice, but the voice of Jesus Christ speaking through him as the Word of God is really and truly preached. Our Lord said in John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me."

It is the voice of Christ. How can you call unless you believe? How can you believe unless you hear Christ? It is Christ calling that saves us. He speaks to our hearts. We believe, call upon Him, and confess Him. But confession is not that which saves us; it is Christ. Calling is not that which saves us; it is Christ. We can only believe in Him savingly as He speaks to our heart.

## The Holy Spirit Authenticates True Confession

Real, genuine, regenerated, and converted Christians confess Christ, but they confess Him because they have been saved by Him. It is not our confession that saves us. It is Christ who has made our confession real and genuine that saves us. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:3, "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

No man speaking by the Spirit of God is going to curse Jesus Christ. If you hear anyone cursing Jesus Christ, you can mark it down: he does not have the Spirit of God. But look at the latter part of this verse: "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man"—there's the negative—"no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed"—here's the positive—"and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

Only the power of God, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and conversion, allows us to savingly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Look again at the latter part of verse 3: “and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

I can go out on the street, find multitudes of men and women who have the ability to speak, and ask them, “Can you mouth these words? Can you say, ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’?” If they can speak, they can mouth those words. Mouthing those words does not save. Man may imitate, but only the Holy Spirit of God can authenticate. That is why no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to savingly acknowledge and confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Remember, “can” is a term of ability: no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost.

Many have been deluded in joining a church and openly professing that Christ is their Savior, yet their lives have never been changed. They have no understanding of the Word of God, much less obedience to the commands of Christ or the principles of His Word. They never read or study the Word of God. Their lives are empty, hollow, and meaningless. They rest in and trust in their confession for salvation more than they trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. Mouthing words and repeating empty phrases does not save.

You may even use Scripture in your profession of faith. But Scripture in itself does not save. In 2 Corinthians 3:6, the Apostle Paul says, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Do you realize that even Scripture, without the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, is worthless? It is a dead letter without the power of God upon it. As important as Scripture is, it requires the ministry of the Holy Spirit to make it effectual in our lives.

I am talking about people who are in church, who have made a profession of faith, and yet whose lives are totally and completely unchanged. We are also told in Scripture that when the Lord saves individuals, He adds them to the church. Acts 2:47 says that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. I have always been suspicious of those who claim to be saved and yet never darken the doorway of a Bible-believing or Bible-preaching church. If the old adage is true, "Birds of a feather flock together," then those who are genuinely Christian will desire to be with others who are genuinely Christian. When God saves us, He puts us together.

On the other hand, there are those who are members of churches and frequently and habitually attend, who claim to be Christians, and all they have to show for it is a profession of faith—an empty one at that. They live as they please, even when their lives are completely contrary to the Word of God. They have no regard for God, His

commands, or His truth. When they hear truth, they reject it. They refuse it. That cannot be so.

## The Insult of Disobedience

Consider the absolute insult this is to God. Jeremiah 32:30–33 says, "For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the Lord. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury, from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face, because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face. Though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive my instruction."

Is it not, and would it not be, an insult to you if, while you were talking with me and speaking to me, I simply turned my back to you and walked off? What would the implication be? It would be very clear: I have no regard for your thoughts. I have no regard for your wishes. I have no regard for your desires. I have no regard for your fellowship, for your company. In fact, I have no regard for you. You are not worth listening to, nor do I have any pleasure in your presence; therefore, I am leaving. Would you regard that as an insult? Of course you would.

How much more of a blasphemous insult is it for individuals to turn their back on the holy, righteous, sovereign God of heaven and earth? And what did God say? God said, "I taught you, I sent my word and you refused to hear it."

**SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 35:1-19 (KJV)**

> You would not pay any attention to my word, to my preachers; you wouldn't pay any attention to me. It is indeed an insult, a blasphemous insult. I want to show you something. I want to read a rather lengthy passage, and you're going to see why I'm going to read this passage. In fact, I'm going to use this passage in a future message in several weeks because there's another

truth here as well. Let's read the first 19 verses of the book of Jeremiah, chapter 35. Now I want you to see the difference between the children of Jonadab and the professing children of the Lord.

Jeremiah 35:1: "The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites; and I brought them into the house of the Lord, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door: and I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: but we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us."

**SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 35:11-19 (KJV)**

"But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord."

> "The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them."
>
> "And ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers; but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered."
>
> "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."
>
> Now, I want you to listen very carefully to the whole principle that is given to us here. Before I give you the principle, let me ask you some questions. How would you like to live without a garden, without a home, without property, and without a vineyard? Would you like to dwell in a tent continually?

If you think living in a tent is kind of cool, wait until December, January, and February, and make sure that you stay in that tent for about thirty days during the rain and the cold. Then let us see how cool it really is.

Here is the contrast. In Jeremiah chapter 35, the contrast is between Jonadab, who is nothing but a man, and the one true and

living God. Here are Jonadab's words versus God's words, Jonadab's instructions versus God's instruction. When you stop and think, Jonadab was a man. He had no real authority and no real power, with the exception that he was a husband and a father. Everything that he said and commanded his children to do was, in one sense of the word, not only illogical but very inconvenient. Yet everything he asked his children to do, they did. They obeyed.

When Jeremiah set those pots of wine in front of them and said, "Drink, have at it," they said, "No. Our father Jonadab commanded us never to drink any, and we are not going to do it. He commanded us not to have gardens, houses, or property, but to live in tents and be nomads. That is exactly what we are going to do." Jonadab was a human being, a man with no authority beyond that which he had as a husband and father.

Yet here is a holy, sovereign God of heaven and earth, issuing commands and giving instructions for their good and benefit, with all authority and power—and no one listens to Him. They turn their back to Him and not their face. They insult and blaspheme God. God said, "You claim to be my people, but you will not listen or obey. It does no good to swear by the name of the Lord."

If all we have is an empty profession, it does no good to say that we are the people of God if all we have is a lip profession and our hearts and our lives are far from Him. In Isaiah 48:1–2, God says, "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; the Lord of hosts is his name." Note that they swear by the name of the Lord. Calvin says, "Now, as swearing is a kind of worship of God, he here puts one department for the whole class by a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole." Their profession invoked God's name, but it was not in truth or righteousness. They called themselves the people of God and rested upon the God of Israel, yet their hearts and lives were far from Him.

As idolaters offer an insult to God when they swear by their idols, in like manner do sincere worshipers of God render honor to God by

employing His name in oaths, for they acknowledge that they have but one God in whose name they glory. But here he attacks hypocrites with open mouth, loudly boasting the name of God and frequently mentioning His name, and yet in their hearts were greatly opposed to Him. On this account, he says, “not in truth nor in righteousness.” He employs the word “righteousness” to denote integrity and sincerity of heart, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. Or rather, righteousness and truth are synonymous terms, as if he had said it was a mere pretense and hypocrisy to profess that they were the very people of God, because their treachery openly proclaimed their falsehood. Notice that he used the word “treachery.” And it is treason. But it is more than treason.

## Swearing Falsely Profanes God's Name

In Deuteronomy 6:13, the Bible says, “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.” Calvin pointed out that swearing is a type of worship, and it is. Swearing by His name indicates that He is the one true and the living God. Deuteronomy 10:20 says, “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.” These people swore by His name, but not in truth and not in righteousness. Swearing falsely is connected with profaning the name of the Lord.

Leviticus 19:12 says, “And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.” Note: “Thou shalt not swear by my name falsely.” What were these people doing when they were professing to be God’s people and living in total, absolute rebellion to Him and His law? They were profaning the name of the Lord. They were swearing by His name falsely, and they were profaning the name of the Lord.

He said, “You shall not do that.” Look in Leviticus 21:6: “They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy.” But note: they shall be holy and not profane the name of their God. In Leviticus 22:32, He

said, “Neither shall ye profane my holy name. But I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the Lord which hallow you.”

Swearing falsely is a type of profanation of the name of God. Those who profess Christ but do not possess Christ are swearing falsely by His name, and in so doing they are profaning the name of Christ. Those who profess Him but do not possess Him are swearing falsely by His name. It takes more than a profession of Christ to save; it takes a possession of Christ.

## Jesus' Warning Against Empty Profession

Our Lord Himself makes it clear that talk is cheap. In Luke 6:46, He asked, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” Talk is cheap. Do not dare call Him Lord if you are not going to obey Him. The word “Lord” in the Greek is kyrios, which literally means boss, owner, master, sovereign. Our Lord is saying, “Why are you calling me boss? Why are you calling me master? Why are you calling me sovereign if you are not going to obey me? If you are mine and you acknowledge my Lordship, you will obey me. If you simply call me Lord and disobey me, you are profaning my name.”

You have an empty profession. A profession of Christ is useless unless it is backed up by a life of obedience to Christ and His Word. Our Lord gave this warning in Matthew 7:21: “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Here are individuals who had works and a profession, but their profession was not real. They had never been regenerated or converted by the power of God. Do you realize there are people like that in our churches today? Some of the hardest workers are, in reality, trying to earn their salvation and work their way into heaven, which is impossible. You can have an empty profession and a hollow,

meaningless life, or a profession with many works and still never be savingly regenerated.

The Bible says in Titus chapter 3, verses 5 and 6: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." It is the power of the Holy Spirit that regenerates and converts.

## Conclusion: Obedience Evidences Genuine Faith

Our Lord said plainly in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." If we confess Christ and claim to be His people, our lives must evidence that claim by obeying His Word. He also said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?" If I am your Lord, you will obey me. What is the real test? Obedience. Is your life being brought into conformity to the Word of God?

None of us are perfect. But when we see areas in our lives that are unbiblical and unscriptural, we change them, repent of our sins, and obey. Let us not be like those in Isaiah 48 and multitudes of others who have an empty, meaningless profession. Our profession of faith must be backed by a holy, obedient life, evidencing that God has worked in us.

Have you ever stopped to think about this? If God had not already done something in you, you would never have the desire to be holy, godly, or obedient. Only His grace enables us to persevere because of His divine preservation. It takes more than a mere profession of faith. Talk is cheap. We must live an obedient life.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your love and Your truth. Lord, we do want to be Thy people. We want to be holy and godly. We do, Father, love Thee with all of our hearts. Make us what we should be for Your honor and Your glory. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

You may contact Freedom Ministries by mail at 7400 Abercorn Street, Suite 705, PMB 175, Savannah, Georgia, 31406. Or give us a call at 912-925-0995. Visit our website at

www.freedomministry.com. Visit our website at www.dominionministry.com.

CHAPTER 13

# How to Enrage Hypocrites and Pharisees

April 6, 2014

## How to Enrage Hypocrites and Pharisees Without Even Trying

**SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 6:1-11 (KJV)**

> And it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first, that he went through the cornfields and his disciples plucked the ears of corn and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. And certain of the Pharisees said unto him, Why do you that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days? And Jesus answering them said, Have you not read so much as this, what David did when himself was hungered and they which were with him? How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him, which it is not lawful to eat, but for the priest alone. And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath. And it came to pass on another Sabbath.

> Then he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the Sabbath day, that there might be an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said unto the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose, and stood forth.
>
> Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing. Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good, or to do evil, to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he did so. Then his hand was restored whole as the other, and they were filled with madness, and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

## Introduction: The Natural Conflict Between Real and Pretend Christians

How can we enrage hypocrites and Pharisees without even trying? Every one of us knows that oil and water do not mix. Likewise, real, genuine Christians and Pharisees and hypocrites do not mix well either. All one has to do is read the Bible, and he will discover that there has always been a large difference between pretend Christians and real Christians. They have always been at odds with each other. As the old saying goes, they do not play well together, nor do they worship well together either. In fact, I would venture to say that 99.9% of most church troubles arise because of the differences between pretend Christians and real Christians.

Wheat and tares are contrary to each other. They may grow alongside each other for a short while, but when it comes to producing fruit, the tares fail. Problems arise when the tares wish to take over a field and the wheat will not allow it. The animosity is absolutely natural, that one fights against the other. One of the things that we fail to remember is this: dominion is in the hearts of the ungodly as well as in the hearts of the godly.

And so there is a natural struggle and a natural fight. It is the battle of Ishmael against Isaac. The Apostle Paul explained this battle in Galatians 4:29: "But as it was then, he that was born unto

the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." Paul stated the same principle, just a little differently, in Galatians 5:17: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary, the one to the other."

Certainly that is true. The flesh is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit is contrary to the flesh. Isaac is contrary to Ishmael, and Ishmael is contrary to Isaac. So Pharisees and hypocrites are nothing more than Ishmaels. They are after the flesh and have absolutely no heart for the things of God. They do, however, have a heart to persecute anyone who stands for God's truth and applies the law of God. Like Ishmael of old, the hypocrites and Pharisees always mock Isaac. The interesting thing is that God has a great deal to say concerning hypocrites. He also called the Pharisees hypocrites.

## Biblical Descriptions of Hypocrites

It might be possible to be a hypocrite without being a Pharisee, but it is impossible to be a Pharisee without being a hypocrite.

Job says, “Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the flag grow without water? While it is yet in its greenness and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb.” Now watch the application: “So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish.” It is interesting that a hypocrite has hope, but he says that hope shall surely perish.

Job says, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him. I will maintain mine own ways before him. He shall also be my salvation, for a hypocrite shall not come before him.” Notice that Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.” But a hypocrite is not going to come near him.

Again, the Word of God tells us: “For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?”

Obviously, hypocrites do exactly as do others in one sense of the word. They have hope. They hope. But the Word of God says their hope shall quickly perish. They have no standing before God. Therefore, they cannot come before God. And the hypocrite loses all

when he dies. Job is telling us that, even in this life, he really loses as well, because he does not delight himself in the Lord, neither does he constantly and continually call upon Him.

Everyone understands that hypocrites are always the quickest to see even the tiniest flaw and the tiniest sin in the lives of other individuals, and yet they overlook the greatest of sins in their own lives. Our Lord asked, “And why beholdest thou the mote, that is that little tiny splinter in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam, the great four by four that is in thine own eye?”

Jesus asks, “How wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine own eye? And behold, a beam is in thine own eye, thou hypocrite. First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eyes.” Obviously, hypocrites are those individuals willing to attack and persecute anyone who has the tiniest little sin while overlooking their own sins.

Our Lord accurately nails the Pharisees and the hypocrites in Matthew 23: “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 ought you to have done and not to leave the other undone.” Our Lord is not condemning them for tithing. They tithe to the minutest amount, even on these herbs, yet overlook judgment, mercy, and faith. They make sure they do this little, tiny thing while neglecting the weightier matters.

He continues: “You blind guides which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. For you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.” Notice how he puts them together.

“Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites, because you 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, you be witnesses unto yourselves, that you are the children of them that kill the prophets. Fill you up in the measure of your fathers." Then he says: "You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?"

## Jesus' Untactful Confrontation of Pharisees

Obviously, our Lord did not have very nice things to say about hypocrites and Pharisees. We could say it like this: He was completely untactful. His tact was absolutely missing. When you get to verse 33, He says, "You serpents, you generation of vipers," that is, you bunch of snakes, you slithering, crawling, wicked, wretched vipers. "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" I am afraid that we as God's people have been too tactful in dealing with such people.

It is interesting how we want to make sure that we do not upset, offend, or hurt their feelings. But our Lord was not too concerned with that. In Matthew chapter 15, He says to these Pharisees, "Ye hypocrites. Well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

He called a multitude and said unto them, "Hear and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." His disciples then asked, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?"

But He answered, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Notice what they said to Christ: the Pharisees were offended when they heard His teaching. The Lord said, "Tough. Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone." Our Lord was not too concerned about the feelings of hypocrites and Pharisees.

I am not suggesting that we purposefully and deliberately hurt and aggravate a hypocrite or a Pharisee. But if we follow the lead of our Lord, and if we obey the Scriptures, we will automatically anger them and enrage them without even trying. It will come to pass naturally—not because we are intent on hurting them, not because we want to, but because of their hypocrisy and their pharisaism. We will get the same result that our Lord got.

If you look back to Luke chapter 6 and verse 11, note what the Bible says. After our Lord got through, the Bible says in verse 11, "And they were filled with madness and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus." Note this word, madness. When the Bible says they were filled with madness, the Greek word is anoia, which refers literally to madness, to folly, to rage, and a lack of understanding.

The Greek word nous is the word for mind. When you put an alpha in front of it, it negates the word. So anoia is from the word nous.

Literally, the Bible is saying this: our Lord drove them out of their minds. They were so enraged they could not think clearly, nor could they think straight. All they wanted to do was to hurt him since they were so enraged and had become so insane.

## First Method: Violating and Opposing Their Traditions

How does one enrage a hypocrite or a Pharisee without even trying? Let us see how our Lord did it. The very first way that one enrages a hypocrite or a Pharisee without even trying is by violating and opposing their traditions. Luke 6:7 says, "And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against him." What is significant about this verse is that they watched Him to see whether He would violate their interpretation of the Sabbath and their tradition concerning the Sabbath.

Let me make this exceedingly clear: Christ did not violate the Sabbath. However, if you read through the Scriptures, you will find that Christ consistently and constantly violated and opposed their

interpretations and their traditions concerning the Sabbath. Christ angered them because He would not submit to their interpretation or to their tradition. We must make one point exceedingly clear: Christ opposed their traditions, not the Sabbath itself.

Even hypocrites and Pharisees have standards. They do. They are certainly not biblical standards, but they have standards. They have a tradition; they have a religion. It is not biblical Christianity. It has nothing to do with biblical law. However, they have a religion, and their religion is a facade, a counterfeit, an imitation. The Apostle Paul described himself in Philippians 3 as a Pharisee of the Pharisees and, touching the law, blameless. In other words, he thought he was absolutely perfect.

And yet the Apostle Paul acknowledges and confesses in Galatians 1:14, “And profited in the Jews' religion above many of my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the elders.” Notice that the Jews' religion is equated with the traditions of the elders. Paul said he exceeded in those traditions; he excelled in them. In Colossians 2:8, he gives this warning: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” He says, in effect, that we must watch out for the traditions of men. The Pharisees were absolutely notorious for following their traditions. Go in your Bibles to Mark, chapter 7.

I want to show you how absolutely bent on performing and keeping their traditions the Pharisees really were. Mark 7, beginning with verse 1: “Then came together unto him the Pharisees and certain of the scribes which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say with unwashed hands, they found fault.” They always do. “For the Pharisees and all the Jews, now watch, except they wash their hands often, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.”

This had nothing to do with sanitation or cleanliness. It was a tradition. They went through a little ceremonial washing, lest some germ of some Gentile dog had gotten on. It was a ceremony. It was a ritual.

"And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"

He answered and said unto them, "Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Watch, for laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups and many other such like things you do." Wow. And he said unto them, "Full well you reject the commandment of God that you may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother, and whoso curseth his father and mother, let him die the death. But you say, If a man shall say to his father and mother, It is Corban, that is to say a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free. And you suffer him no more to do ought for his father and mother. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which you have delivered: and many such like things you do."

So the Pharisees have their traditions based upon the Sabbath day and their traditions based upon ritualistic, ceremonial washings.

Our Lord, of course, declared that their traditions were vain and in opposition to the law of God. Moreover, he referred to them as nothing more than the traditions of men. But look what Peter says in 1 Peter 1 and verse 18: "Forasmuch as you know, you were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation or conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ as a lamb without blemish and without spot." He says your traditions did not save you.

Understand how punctilious these Pharisees were in keeping their traditions. A Pharisee can be spiritual according to his own standards and completely ungodly according to God's standards. Remember, it was the Pharisees and the scribes that delivered Jesus to the high priests, and then, of course, they delivered him to Pilate. We need to understand that both hypocrites and Pharisees are

religious. They can be pious and dedicated to their religion of humanism and traditionalism.

The reason they can be pious, listen carefully, is because they make their own rules. Do you understand? I can be as holy as anyone as long as you allow me to define holiness and make my own rules. I have told people before, "I can jump 20 feet in the air straight up, flat-footed." Everybody looks at me and says, "You can't do that." "Sure I can, if you allow me to define 20 feet straight up, or if you allow me to make my own rules."

Look at John 18:28. The Bible says, "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment, that is, to Pilate. And it was early. And they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover." They did not wish to be defiled ceremonially so that they could keep their tradition. However, it did not bother them to be defiled morally and criminally by delivering an innocent man to be crucified.

You see the double standard? It is all right to murder as long as we do not violate our traditions. You can violate God's law; that is fine, but just do not violate our traditions as well.

Humanly speaking—not from the divine side—the reason Christ was crucified was the envy and hatred that the Jews and the Pharisees had against Him for refusing to keep their traditions.

There is nothing wrong with traditions as long as they meet two requirements. First, if a tradition is biblical, there is nothing wrong with it. There were a few biblical traditions. For instance, in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." There were traditions that had been communicated. We could say that the Lord's Supper is a tradition in one sense of the word. We know it is an ordinance, but it is something that we do. Baptism would be a tradition in that sense. It is an ordinance, but it is something that we do, and it is a biblical one.

The Apostle Paul also said in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly,

and not after the tradition which he received of us." In other words, if someone will not follow the biblical tradition, we are to withdraw ourselves from him.

There would be nothing wrong with a tradition as long as it is biblical, is not contrary to Scripture, and is not binding upon anyone. I could start a tradition that everyone who comes to my front door must drink a cup of tea before entering. Is there anything unbiblical about drinking a cup of tea before coming into my house? No. But what if you do not drink tea or do not like tea? If you like tea and are more than willing to have a cup, fine. But what if somebody comes in who is allergic to tea and says, "I cannot drink that tea"? Am I to get upset? No.

## Confounding Their Thinking

If I understand that my tradition is not binding on anyone, and that everyone is free either to leave it or accept it, that is one thing. But the problem with hypocrites and Pharisees is this: they always want you to do as they say and do what they demand. Thus, when you oppose their traditions and refuse to submit to them, you enrage them without even trying. Why? Because they demand submission and place their traditions above the law of God.

That is what we read in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. When you do not do as they do, you enrage them. So how do you enrage a hypocrite or Pharisee without even trying? First, by opposing or violating their traditions. The second way is found in Luke chapter 6, verse 9: by confounding and confusing their thinking.

## Second Method: Confounding and Confusing Their Thinking

Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing. Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?

Logic, especially biblical logic, is not the forte of Pharisees and hypocrites. Our Lord's question illustrates that neither Pharisees nor hypocrites were able to think scripturally. They not only lacked the ability to think scripturally; they did not wish to think scripturally. If

they thought scripturally, they would no longer be hypocrites or Pharisees.

Two passages of Scripture forever settle the fact that no hypocrite or Pharisee has the ability to think biblically. The first is 1 Corinthians 2:14: But the natural man, that is, the unsaved man, man by nature, but the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. Therefore, a Pharisee or hypocrite has no ability to discern the things of God.

Romans 8:6-8 says: For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Obviously, they do not have the ability to think scripturally and biblically; secondly, they do not wish to think biblically and scripturally.

Now watch how our Lord boxes these Pharisees in. He confronts them with the truth by asking a simple question: “Is it lawful,” that is, according to God's law, “to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” If they answer yes—that it is lawful to do good and to save life—then the next question is, Why are you attacking me? Why are you watching me? If they answer that it is not lawful to do good or to save life, they expose and condemn themselves before the people. When they are forced to follow our Lord's logic, they do not wish to arrive at the proper conclusion. They become confounded and confused because they cannot hold to their positions and admit the natural, logical answers to His questions.

Look in verse 9 again: “Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing, is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” When our Lord asked whether it was lawful to save life or destroy it, the Pharisees were already planning to destroy His life. Go back to verse 7: “And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the seventh day, that they might have an accusation against him.” Skip down to verse 11: “And they were filled with madness and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.” Christ was doing good; they were doing evil. Christ was saving life, while they were ready to

destroy His life and allow another individual to remain totally unhealed.

Our Lord oftentimes confused and confounded His adversaries. In Matthew 21, verse 23, when He was coming to the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching and said, “By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?” They wanted to pin Him down.

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say from heaven, he will say to us, why do you not then believe him? But if we shall say of men, we fear the people, for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”

In other words, He would box them in. He would get them where they could not answer, or, if they answered correctly, they would always be condemning themselves. If the Pharisees had been honest and had logically followed our Lord’s reasoning, they would have understood the principle He was teaching.

In Luke 6:9, our Lord said unto them, “I will ask you one thing, is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good or to do evil, to save life or destroy it?” God’s law teaches us that to neglect any opportunity of doing good is to incur the guilt of doing evil. To do absolutely nothing in the face of evil is to be guilty of evil. Failure to save a life when it is within one’s power to do so is to be guilty of taking a life.

Our Lord is saying it is lawful to obey God even on Sabbath days. It is lawful to obey God at any day, any time, at any place. Period. Even if it violates the traditions of men. We cannot refuse an opportunity to do good; if we do, then we are incurring the guilt of doing evil. James 4:17 says, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not to him, it is sin.” This is another way to enrage a hypocrite and a Pharisee without even trying.

## Third Method: Explaining, Expounding, and Applying God's Law

You enrage a hypocrite and a Pharisee by explaining, expounding, and applying God's law in every circumstance. In Luke 6:10-11, we read, “And looking round about them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand, and he stretched it, he did so, and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness, and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.”

Our Lord had given the principle of the law in verse 9. In verse 10, he applies the law of doing good and of saving and healing the impotent man. The result was that they were filled with madness and communed with one another what they might do to Jesus. Religious enemies, the enemies of Christ, hate God's law and the application of that law, especially when it destroys their traditions and interpretations. Our Lord healed this man in such a way that even the Pharisees could not condemn him.

How did he do so? He simply looked at the man and said, “Stretch forth thine hand.” Our Lord did nothing but speak. The man did nothing but stretch forth his hand, and he was instantly healed. How could they accuse Christ of violating the Sabbath, even their interpretation of the Sabbath? This was done publicly.

Mark 3 gives the same passage and shows us what else the Bible says concerning Christ: “And he entered again in the synagogue and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day that they might accuse him. Then he said to the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he said unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil, to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.”

“And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored whole as the other. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel of the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.”

We need to understand this truth. The world and the devil, as well as hypocrites and Pharisees, are not concerned with what you believe, as long as you do not apply it. It is only when truth is applied that the devil, the world, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the hypocrites are enraged, because it violates their traditions and interpretations.

There is a vast difference between freedom to believe and freedom to act. The governments of the world will give you freedom of religion. What do they mean by that? They think you are free to believe whatever you want, as long as you keep it between your ears. However, when you apply the truth, you will find there is not very much religious freedom.

For example, you can say, "Brother Weaver, I believe the scripture when it says very clearly, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child.' I believe in corporal punishment." Fine. Wonderful. It is all right for you to believe that—until your child acts up in public and you apply the rod in public. Then you are reported, governmental agencies visit you, and they say that you do not have a right to discipline your child. You see, there is a difference between freedom to believe, freedom to apply, and freedom to act.

Now look in your Bible to John, chapter five. I love this passage. Let us begin reading with verse 5. You know the story of the impotent man. "And a certain man was there which had an infirmity 38 years. When Jesus saw him lie, knew that he'd been now a long time in that case, he said unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled to put me into the pool."

But while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked. And on the same day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day. It is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered and said unto them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they, What man is this which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was, for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

Now, our Lord confronts them about this incident in John 5. In John 7:23, He asks, “If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry at me because I made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day? Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” Then some of them of Jerusalem said, “Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?”

He said, you will circumcise a child on the Sabbath day, that the law of Moses should not be broken. Are you angry at me because I made a man whole on the Sabbath day? Whenever you begin to apply the law of God, folks get angry.

In Luke 13:10, we read, “And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years and was bowed together and could in no wise lift up herself.” Here is a woman bent double. “And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her and immediately she was made straight and glorified God.”

“And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day and said to the people, There are six days in which men ought to work. In them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. The Lord answered him and said, Thou hypocrite. Doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham whom Satan hath bound lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all of his adversaries were ashamed, and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.”

Can you imagine? The Pharisees were willing for the woman to be healed if she would be healed according to their tradition and interpretation. But they were angry at Jesus because he healed her on the Sabbath. They were willing for the woman to stay in pain and agony one more day just so it would not violate their tradition and interpretations. Our Lord said, “You hypocrite. You’ll loose your ox

or your ass from the stall and take him to water. And ought not I to have mercy on this woman? If you don't have mercy on your animal, can I not have mercy on this woman who also was a daughter of Abraham?"

The way that you enrage and anger Pharisees and hypocrites without even trying is simply by violating their traditions and interpretations, by confusing and confounding their thinking, and, thirdly, by applying biblical law. Why? Because our Lord said in Mark 7:2, Pharisees always find fault. If you did everything scripturally, biblically, and correctly, they would still find fault.

## Applications for Believers

We, like Christ, should always apply God's Word, even in the face of our enemies and the enemies of Christ. It is always right to do right, regardless of who is in front of us and regardless of the consequences. A failure to apply God's Word is, in essence, to be ashamed of our Lord and His Word. Our Lord said in Mark 8:38, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his holy angels." If you are ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you. It is always right to apply God's Word, even if folks are upset.

Miracles do not impress the unsaved, nor do they impress Pharisees or hypocrites. Here was a man with a withered hand; he stretched it out, and instantly he was healed. It was made whole. Yet the Pharisees were unsubdued, filled with anger and madness. A mighty work had been done in their presence, but instead of receiving it, they intended to murder the miracle worker.

We cannot rely upon our witness, our works, our good deeds, or anything else to impress the wicked. We must rely solely, completely, and totally on the grace, mercy, and power of God. Our Lord performed a miracle before them, and it was like water off a duck's back. Over and over He did that, and over and over they set about to kill Him.

## The Third Application

It is not unlawful, ungodly, or unbiblical to enrage and anger those who hate Christ by obeying Christ and doing His will. When someone is angered and enraged by a biblical act or deed, he is simply demonstrating his hatred for Christ and the Word. We must continue to obey Christ, even if our enemies are enraged because we do so. At all times and in every circumstance, we must do things the way Christ commands, not the way people want them done.

Matthew Henry said this about these Pharisees in Luke chapter 6: "They were mad at Christ, mad at the people, mad at themselves. Anger is a short madness. Malice is a long one. Impotent malice, especially disappointed malice, belonged to the Pharisees. When they could not prevent His working this miracle, they communed one another what they might do to Jesus, what other way they might take Him and run Him down. We may well stand amazed at it that the sons of men should be so wicked and do thus, and that the Son of God should be so patient as to suffer it."

When we see people mock and blaspheme not only Christ but His Word, we cannot help but think, Lord, how can You put up with this? We do not think people are as wicked, or could be so wicked, as to liberally mock and blaspheme. What is also amazing is that Christ patiently bears with them.

We must stand amazed not only at the wickedness, sins, and rebellion of wicked men, but also at the mercy and long-suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ, who endures such blasphemy. We must also stand amazed that our Lord Jesus Christ put up with our sin and rebellion until He saved us by His grace. We can ask God, Why do You not wipe these wicked men off the face of the earth? But if we ask that, we would also have to ask, Why did You not wipe us off before You were gracious and kind to us?

To enrage a Pharisee or hypocrite, to enrage the powers that be, just obey God. Apply His law in every situation, every circumstances, and you will accomplish your mission without trying. We are not called upon to appease, placate, or satisfy people. We are called upon to obey our Lord and worship and serve Him alone.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your grace, mercy, goodness, and kindness. Lord, teach us to be obedient, even in the face of the rage and anger of ungodly men. Make us holy. Make us godly. Help us apply Thy truth. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 14

# Abiding In Christ

May 13, 2018

## Introduction and Personal Anecdotes

Being with my brother Chrisman, I really appreciate getting to come up here and help him straighten Isaiah out and aggravate him a little bit, because Isaiah needs all the help he can get. It is a joy, and I appreciate the opportunity. I really do, and I would appreciate your prayers.

I want to say this before we get started today: I am glad our brother chose the song “Revive Us Again,” and we sang it first. I stepped over to my wife and said, “Now, be sure to sing this song the way our children did years ago.” It is amazing what children hear.

We have a good friend who was sick, and her children went to Sunday school. When they came home from church, she asked, “Well, did you learn anything in Sunday school?” They said, “Yes, we learned a new song.” She said, “Sing it for me.” They began singing, “Crazy, crazy, all you little children,” instead of “Praise Him, praise Him.” They heard “crazy, crazy,” so that is what they sang.

Years ago, when our girls were young, they were singing this in the back seat of the car. The chorus is, “Hallelujah, Thine the glory, Hallelujah, Amen, Hallelujah, Thine the glory, revive us again.” Our twins sang, “Hallelujah, Christ in glory. Hallelujah. Amen. Hallelujah, Christ in glory. He’s coming as soon as He can.” That is what they heard, so that is what they said. I am thankful that at least they can read now, that is for sure.

Let us open our Bibles to John, chapter 15. We are going to read the first eleven verses. I want to deal with the subject, abiding in Christ. Beginning with verse 1, our Lord says: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

"Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can you except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me you can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. And men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.

So shall you be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Continue in my love. If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full."

In my library, I have a number of books on the subject of abiding in Christ, and I have read a number of them. Truthfully, I do not think any of them really and truly helped me, because many were basically pietistic, egocentric, deeper-life-related, or simply plain nonsense. Some posited or demanded a life that absolutely no one could live or fulfill. At the same time, some authors said that unless you lived as they demanded, you were not saved. Once you read

those books and then begin looking at the Bible, reality sets in and brings you back to your senses.

Years ago, I was reading a lot of the Puritans. I was impressed not only with their piety, dedication, and exposition of Scripture, but also with the fact that they were early risers. Many would get up anywhere from two to four in the morning and begin praying, studying, and preparing their hearts and lives for the day of ministry. I thought, "I'm going to do that. I'm going to get up at four in the morning and pray for several hours before I start my day as well."

So I got up at four o'clock in the morning, knelt beside my bed, put my head on the bed, and started praying. Truthfully, when I woke up several hours later, my knees were sore. I tried it again the next day, and the same thing happened.

I felt embarrassed, defeated, and distressed. I considered myself a failure, unspiritual, and thought something was wrong with me because these men evidently did this, while I was unable to do it. Then it dawned on me that they were able to be up at four o'clock in the morning because they were in bed by six o'clock in the evening. They had no telephones, TVs, computers, or anything else.

I began to examine my life. I was a pastor, the principal and a teacher in our Christian school, the counselor, and the disciplinarian. Moreover, I was teaching three nights a week in our Bible Institute, a minimum of two hours per night, not counting the preaching I was doing on Sunday, Wednesday night, and other nights during the week. The truth was, I was getting in bed at eleven o'clock or midnight and trying to be up at four.

All of a sudden, reality set in. I realized that I could not do what they did with the schedule I had. It dawned on me that God is a reasonable being, and He expects us to be reasonable as well. That is why He said in Isaiah 1 and verse 18, "Come now and let us reason together." Whatever God demands, we must obey. But our lives are not to be lived on the basis of what God demanded 200 years ago, 400 years ago, or even 500 years ago. Our lives will be based upon the word of God.

## The Vine and Branches Metaphor

When you look in John chapter 15, there are very clear truths. Our Lord uses a very common metaphor. He says in verse 1, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." He is the vine, and He goes on to say that we are the branches. A number of commentators say that our Lord probably took this metaphor from the fact that they had just had the Passover and wine was served. Josephus says that there were vines carved on the temple door, and that is where He got it. Another commentator says there were so many vineyards there that, as our Lord walked to the Mount of Olives or anywhere else, He obviously passed a number of vineyards.

The vines and the vineyards are used repeatedly in the Bible as illustrations. You can find this imagery primarily in Isaiah 5, Psalm 80, Joel 1, Jeremiah 2, and Ezekiel chapter 19. This illustration, this metaphor of vines and vineyards, has been taught clearly throughout the Bible for ages. Jesus Christ likened Himself to the vine and His disciples, or His followers, to the branches. He calls Himself the true vine to show that He Himself is indeed true while all the other vines are false. It is like the illustration He used in John chapter 10, when He said that He is the true shepherd and all the others are hirelings.

When you stop and think about vines, there are many vines that entangle, cause you to stumble and fall, and never produce any fruit. It is only in Jesus Christ that you can have scriptural and biblical fruit.

There is another reason, I believe, that He calls Himself the true vine: to demonstrate to His disciples that their fruit was not in themselves, but must be found in Him alone. Biblical fruit, or the fruit of the Spirit, did not proceed from the ceremonial law. Neither did it proceed from pharisaical legalism, rituals, or any other source. Our Lord is saying that if there is ever going to be fruit produced in your life, it must flow through spiritual union with Him and the grace that comes from that spiritual union. So Jesus Christ says, "I am the true vine."

## Fruit as Evidence of Salvation

Secondly, the Bible teaches very clearly that if you are savingly in Jesus Christ, you will produce fruit. Notice what He said in verse 2: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it bring forth more fruit." The absence of fruit in an individual's life is a manifestation that one is not savingly united to Jesus Christ.

When you think about the parables in Matthew chapter 13, our Lord said that some bring forth thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold. It is not necessarily the amount of fruit that is to be considered, but simply fruit. In other words, you will have some fruit, in some degree and some amount, if you are savingly united to Jesus Christ. What fruit are we talking about? In Galatians chapter 5, verses 22 and 23, the Bible says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, temperance."

"Against such there is no law." Obviously, if you are united to Jesus Christ, there will be fruits in your life—fruits of the Spirit, produced because of the grace of God in your life. It is called the fruit of the Spirit because, as Romans 8:9 says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If the Spirit of Christ is in you, there will be fruit. If the Spirit of Christ is not in you, there will be no fruit whatsoever. Our Lord begins by telling us that He is the true vine and we are the branches; all true fruit comes and flows through Him, and the absence of fruit demonstrates that we are not savingly united to Him.

## Abiding is Mandatory, Not Optional

Thirdly, abiding in Christ is not optional but absolutely mandatory. Look at what He said in verse 2: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away." Then, in verse 4, He says, "Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine. No more can ye except ye abide in me." It is impossible to live a Christian life without Jesus Christ. It is amazing how many people try to be Christians without Jesus Christ. It is impossible to be a Christian without Jesus Christ, to please God the Father apart

from Jesus Christ, or to produce biblical fruit apart from Jesus Christ.

It is possible to be religious and lost. It is possible to be a baptized church member, a deacon, or a preacher and still be lost. I know plenty of preachers that have gotten saved. Isn't that amazing? I preach regularly for one down in Alabama, and he gives a brilliant testimony of how he preached for years until God actually saved him.

The point is this: it is possible to have all these things and still be lost. Churches do not save. Works do not save. Professions do not save. Soul winners do not save. Only Jesus Christ saves. You can be a church member, a worker, a deacon, or a preacher, and still be lost.

Our Lord is saying that abiding in Him is absolutely mandatory; otherwise, there will never be any manifestation of saving grace or saving fruits. There is no life apart from Jesus Christ. A refusal to abide in Jesus Christ places one in what you and I would call eternal jeopardy. What did our Lord say of the goats there in Matthew chapter 25 and verse 46? He said, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.”

A failure to abide in Christ means that one is cast out, cast away, dried up, withered, and burned. Look what He said again in verse 2: “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.” In verse 6: “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered and men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned.” Anyone who has ever had dealings with fruit trees understands that a dead limb does not produce fruit. The only thing you can do with a dead limb is sever it from the tree, and the only thing it is fit for is to be burned as firewood. That is exactly what our Lord is saying. A failure to abide in Him demonstrates that one is not saved. The only thing left is for that branch to be cut off, cast away, withered, and burned.

As I read John chapter 15, one word kept appearing over and over: “abide” or “abideth.” This little word is the Greek word menō, M-E-N-Ō, and it means to abide, to remain, to continue, to last, to endure, to tarry, and dwell.

## The Meaning of Abiding: Obedience to Christ's Word

The emphasis is exceedingly plain. In verse 4, the word “abide” occurs twice. It occurs once in verse 5, once in verse 6, and twice in verse 7. In verse 9, the word “continue” is the same word as “abide”; it is the Greek word menō. In verse 10, the word occurs twice, and the word “remain,” which is also menō, occurs once in verse 11. This one little Greek word, menō, occurs ten times in eleven verses. We must abide in Jesus Christ or be lost.

That brings us to a couple of questions. First, what does it mean to abide in Jesus Christ? Second, how do I know whether or not I am abiding in Jesus Christ? Clearly, if abiding in Jesus Christ is some esoteric experience or some deeper-life feeling, there is absolutely no way to answer those questions. Most people live by feelings. They live by experience. They do not live by the Word of God. Thankfully, the answers to these two questions are given to us in the Word of God.

Before considering other passages, look first at John 15:7. Our Lord said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Now skip down to verse 10. He said, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.” Make sure you see this, because you must look back at verse 1. Our Lord says, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.”

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away." Notice the phrase "in me." "He taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring more fruit." Verse 4 says, "Abide in me, and I in you." Then, in verse 5: "I am the vine, you're the branches. He that abides in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing." In verse 7, "If you abide in me." All through verse 7, everything is about abiding in Jesus Christ. However, there is a transition beginning in verse 7: "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." Now look at verse 10. Here is the transition very plainly: "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, even as I've kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

Look back at verse 7: "If you abide in me and my words abide in you." The words there actually refer to that which has been uttered or spoken by the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, our Lord is referring to His doctrine, His teaching, and His commandments. His word is to remain, continue, indwell, and abide in us as a living principle that regulates our affections, our life, and our actions. We are basically controlled by His word because we derive our life, sustenance, and nourishment from Him. This change comes from abiding in Christ to abiding in His Word.

## Christ as Living Word and Scripture as Written Word

Now, let me explain it like this. Most of you can probably quote John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God, and without Him was not anything made that was made." The Word there refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, in verse 14, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus Christ, then, is the living Word: "The Word became flesh."

When you think about the Bible, consider 2 Timothy 3:16–17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” The word “inspired” means God-breathed or God-exhaled. On the one hand, you have Jesus Christ, who is the living Word. On the other hand, you have the Bible, which is the written Word of God, the divine revelation of God that has been God-breathed and God-exhaled.

John 12:48 shows how our Lord puts these two things together: “He that rejecteth me,” that is, the living Word, “and receiveth not my words,” that is, the written Word, “hath the one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” Jesus Christ is the living Word, and the Bible is the written Word. You cannot maintain one attitude toward Christ and a different attitude toward the Bible, or one attitude toward the Bible and a different attitude toward Christ. No, because they are one and the same. Jesus Christ is the living Word of God, and the Bible is the

written Word of God. Men will be judged based upon not only their reception or rejection of Jesus Christ, but either their reception and rejection of the words that our Lord has given us.

Now look back in John 15. Notice verse 7, and then verse 10, because I want to answer this question about abiding in Christ. Without abiding in Him, we are lost. In verse 7, He said, “If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and shall be done unto you.” Then verse 10 says, “If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, even as I've kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.” How did our Lord abide, continue, and remain in the Father's love? He abode or abided in the Father's love by continual obedience.

## Obedience as the Pattern of Abiding

The evidence that He loved the Father was that He obeyed the Father. How do we abide in Christ’s love? Look back at verse 10: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.” Then He says, “even as” or “just as I’ve kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” Christ’s obedience must be our pattern. We must imitate Him, obey Him, and abide in His love, just as He obeyed His Father and continued in the Father’s love.

It is impossible to retain a sense of God’s pardoning love without continuing in the obedience of faith. Christ’s obedience marked out and manifested His love to the Father, and our obedience marks out and manifests our love to Jesus Christ. How do we abide in Jesus Christ? The answer is by our obedience to Him.

Our obedience does not save us, nor does it help to save us. We are saved merely by the sovereign grace and mercy of God alone. But our obedience does manifest whether or not we are saved. Clearly, this passage, as well as others, refers to the government of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke 6:46, our Lord asks, “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?” The word “Lord” means boss, owner, master, sovereign. Why call Him Lord and not do what He says? Why call Him our Master if we will not obey Him? There is a clear reference here to government. Isaiah 9:6 says, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,” and “the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful,

Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

## The Government of Christ and the Mandate of Obedience

Everybody rejoices around Christmas over the baby. Why do people love Christmas so much? Who is afraid of a baby? Have you ever stopped to think about that? Everybody wants to keep Jesus Christ as a baby. But Jesus Christ is not a baby. Jesus Christ is God incarnate, the living Sovereign and the living Savior, who ascended and is seated at the right hand of God. He holds us in the palm of His hand. He is God.

What people do not like is His government. The pastor quoted Matthew 28:18 this morning, where Jesus Christ said, "All authority in heaven and earth is given unto me." He has the absolute right to command. He has the absolute right to tell us how to live and how not to live, how we can dress and how we cannot dress. He has the absolute right to do whatever He decides and whatever He pleases, because He is God.

Can't I do as I please? You say you are a grown man. That is immaterial. Only God can do as He pleases. Only God can do that. God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases, because He is God. Therefore, our Lord, who has all authority and power, has the absolute right to tell us how we can live.

The meaning is that it is impossible to produce fruit for the Father, and impossible to continue in the enjoyment of Christ's love, where there is no obedience. In John 15:11, He said, "These things have I spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full." Wherever there is habitual obedience, there will be habitual enjoyment of the love of Jesus Christ.

So let me say it like this: obedience is not optional; it is mandatory. Our Lord said in John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

## Preservation, Perseverance, and Keeping Ourselves in God's Love

If we love Him, we will obey Him. If He is our Lord, we will obey Him. Our Lord said, “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself unto him.” If you want more of Jesus Christ, if you want more of God the Father, He says you must obey Him. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and we will come to him, and we will manifest ourselves to him.”

Our Lord also said, “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings. The word which you hear is not mine, but the Father’s which hath sent me.” Do you understand that abiding in Jesus Christ has direct reference to obedience? Our Lord could not say it any plainer than He did in John 15:10: “If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love.” That is a simple fact, a statement of truth.

You have to understand this: it is God’s grace, God’s mercy, and God’s power that gives us the ability to abide in His love and keep His commandments. On the other hand, it is our duty, our obligation, and our responsibility to keep His commandments. You have ability, and you have responsibility. The responsibility is ours; the ability comes from God.

This truth is much like what you and I know as preservation and perseverance. In Jude, verse 1, the Bible tells us that we are preserved in God the Father through Jesus Christ. God preserves us. But there is also the truth in the Bible of perseverance.

"He that perseveres to the end, the same shall be saved." He tells us to continue in faith and continue in repentance. That's perseverance. Perseverance is our responsibility; preservation is God's ability. When God preserves us in Jesus Christ, He gives us grace and mercy that enables us to persevere. Our persevering is evidence that God has preserved us. If we're not persevering in the faith, then there's no evidence that God has ever preserved us to

begin with. For those whom God preserves, He enables to persevere. Those who are abiding in Jesus Christ, He enables to obey.

Our obedience is not even our own obedience. It's ours only by the grace and the mercy of God. Just like preservation and perseverance are the two sides of one coin, abiding in Christ and obedience are the two sides of one coin. You cannot have preservation and perseverance one without the other. Neither can you have obedience and abiding in Christ, one without the other. They're the two sides of one coin. If you're abiding, you're going to be obeying. If you're preserved, you're going to be persevering.

Jude says, in verse 20, "But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." "Keep yourselves in the love of God." How do you keep yourself in the love of God? If the love of God is some little esoteric thing floating around somewhere in the universe, then you've got a real problem. Jude says that we keep ourselves in the love of God by building ourselves up on our most holy faith and praying in the Holy Ghost. You could say that if we're going to keep ourselves in the love of God, we're going to be praying in the Holy Ghost.

We're going to be building ourselves up on our most holy faith. The word "building" there is a very interesting word. It means to finish the structure on which the foundation has already been laid. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3 that he's laid the foundation of Jesus Christ, which no other man can lay. We have to build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Here he tells us that we have to build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ.

But when you look at verse 21 again, he says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." It is your responsibility to keep yourself in the love of God. Matthew Henry, in his commentary on this verse, says, "Keep up the grace of love to God in its lively vigorous actions and exercises in your souls." Then he says, "Take heed of throwing yourselves out of love to God or its delightful, cheering, strengthening manifestations. Keep yourselves in the way of God, if you would continue in his love."

Matthew Henry said, "Keep yourselves in the love of God," and then, "Take heed that you don't throw yourselves out of the love of God." Is it possible to throw yourself out of the love of God? The answer is yes. Is it possible to keep yourself in the love of God? The answer is yes.

How do we do that? If the love of God is some kind of esoteric thing floating around, we have problems. But if you look in your Bibles back just a few pages to 1 John chapter 5, you will see exactly what Matthew Henry meant and what the Scripture means when it tells us to keep ourselves in the love of God. Look in 1 John chapter 5, verse 3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous."

How can I keep myself in the love of God? By keeping His commandments. How can I make sure that I don't throw myself out of the love of God? By failing to keep His commandments. For He says this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments and they are not grievous unto us.

We build ourselves up in our faith by obedience to God and His commandments. We keep ourselves in the love of God by obedience to His commandments. Do you remember when Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce Joseph in Genesis 39 and verse 3? He ran out and left his coat. As he went out, he said, "There is none greater in this house than I. Neither have he kept anything back from me but thee, because thou art his wife. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" What was he doing? He was keeping himself in the love of God. He was refusing to violate the law of God.

When He tells us to keep ourselves in the love of God, He is telling us to keep ourselves in His commandments, because He said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." And, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and they are not grievous unto us."

Albert Barnes says, talking about keeping the commandments, "This constitutes true love. This furnishes the evidence of it, and his commandments are not grievous, that is, they're not heavy, that is, they're not difficult to be borne, and they're not a burden. The meaning is that his laws are not unreasonable. The duties which he

requires are not beyond our ability. His government is not oppressive. It is easy to obey God when the heart is right. And those who endeavor in sincerity to keep his commandments do not complain that they are hard. All complaints of this kind come from those who have no disposition to keep his commandments."

## The Test of Genuine Faith and the Spirit's Enabling

He then makes this statement: "No man ever yet heard a true Christian say that the laws of God requiring him to lead a holy life were stern and grievous." It is not grievous for me not to steal; I do not want to steal to begin with. It is not grievous for me not to murder; I do not want to murder anybody anyhow. It is not grievous for me to love my wife; I want to love her anyhow. It is not grievous for me to worship the one true and living God; He is the one I want to worship anyhow. Anyone who has a disposition to keep the law of God understands that it is not grievous.

John Gill, the great Baptist commentator, said, "Keeping the commandments of God is an evidence of love to God. This shows that love is not in word or tongue or in profession only, but in deed and in truth. And that such persons have a sense of the love of God upon their souls under the influence of which they act. And such shall have and may have and expect greater manifestations of the love of God to them." That is exactly what our Lord said in John 14.

"He that loveth me keepeth my commandments. And the Father will come and manifest himself unto him." That's exactly what He said. Another author simply said it like this: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. There is nothing else worth calling love. Love to God is the spirit of obedience. It is that which subjects the whole life to him. How can it be love to him whose authority we admit and whose perfection in the exercise of it we cannot really doubt for a moment, and yet at the same time refuse obedience to him? What is this path that his commandments mark out for us but a path of peace, as it is a path of victory over all that would destroy peace? Subjection to God is that which is peace to the whole universe."

The reason we have the troubles and problems we have in our lives is that we are not willing to submit to God. We are not willing to

obey. Practically every problem we have somehow stems from sin, from rebellion against His Word.

Some people would say, "Oh, but I'm a Christian. I don't believe that I have to keep His commandments. I'm just going to live my life the way I please. I'm going to do what I want to do, act the way I act, and live the way I live, but I am a believer. I just can't be bothered with strict details that I think would hinder or restrain me."

If you try to tell me that you are a genuine believer and are not interested in obedience, I will listen to you and allow you to express yourself, if you will then allow God to express Himself about your position. Look in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 2, beginning with verse 3. Look what the Scripture says: "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." How do I know that I really know God savingly?

Because He is enabling me to obey Him. My obedience is not perfect, and no one's is perfect in this life, but generally speaking, our lives are regulated by the Word of God. He says very clearly, “And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” He that saith, “I know Him,” and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in Him.

What does God say about a man who says that he is a believer and loves the Lord, but simply does not obey Him? God says that man is a liar and the truth is not in him. Our Lord said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” As obedience demonstrates and manifests our knowledge and submission to Him, disobedience demonstrates and manifests our rebellion to Him and the reality that we do not know Him.

First John 3:23–24 says, “This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment. And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, or abideth in Him; and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given to us.”

What is he saying? If we keep His commandments, we are abiding in Him. We know that we are abiding in Him because the Holy Spirit indwells us and enables us to obey. That is pretty simple. The word “dwelleth” in verse 23 and the word “abideth” in verse 24 are the same Greek word, menō, that you find in John chapter 15.

First John 4:13 says, “Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit.” What does the Spirit of Christ lead us to? He leads us to obey. It is the Spirit of Christ that preserves us and enables us to persevere. It is God who abides in us and enables us to abide in Him by causing us to obey and to do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him." Why? "Because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." What are those things that are pleasing in His sight? Keeping His commandments, obedience to His word, obedience to His law. In other words, if you wish to please your heavenly Father, then you must obey Him.

## Applications: Fight, Obey, and Do Not Live by Feelings

I had four daughters. Two of them are identical twins. When they were young, they would tell me, "Dad, we love you." I would tell them that I loved them, too. But I would say, "I'd rather have your obedience than anything else. I appreciate the fact that you tell me that you love me. I appreciate the fact that you'll sit on my lap and hug my neck and kiss my cheek. I appreciate that and I like that. But that means nothing if you disobey me."

Do you realize that's exactly what our God is telling us? You can profess all kind of love to Him, but if you do not obey Him, you do not love Him. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Do you really, genuinely want to please your Heavenly Father? If you do, the way to please Him is through obedience. "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous unto us."

## Applications of Abiding in Christ

The first application is this: abiding in Christ is not optional; it is mandatory. We cannot exist apart from Him. He is the vine, and we are the branches. Abiding in Him is not some mystical or esoteric act. Abiding in Him is nothing less than pure obedience to the totality of His Word. It is living in His presence. It is living in His sight.

First John 3:22 says, “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things which are pleasing in His sight.” What does that mean? It means our lives are before Him. He is watching us, and whatever we do, we are doing in His presence. If you want to please your heavenly Father, then you must obey Him.

The second application is this: we must keep ourselves in the love of God by a fervent obedience to His mercy and His grace. We cannot become apathetic. We cannot become lazy. We cannot become indolent. We cannot become lackadaisical. We have to do like Joseph: learn to flee from temptation, flee from sin, and flee from anything that is wicked and wrong. We have to purposefully, deliberately, with vigor and energy, choose to obey and actually obey. When you give in to your feelings, depression, desperation, and discouragement, you have lost your vigor. You have lost your vitality. You are saying, “I don’t have the energy to fight. I don’t have the spirit to fight.”

But I have news for you: you cannot live holily, you cannot live godly, and you cannot live obediently without fighting. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:26, “I therefore run not as uncertainly, so fight I not as one that beateth the air.” He was a shadow boxer. He said, “I’m not a shadow boxer. I’m not beating the air.”

But he said, "I keep under my body and bring it in subjection, lest by any means when I preach to others, I myself should be a castaway." He said, "I fight to keep my body under subjection. I fight to remain holy and godly." Let me tell you something, folks: it is a fight. You have to renew your mind and your thoughts, not only daily, but sometimes hourly, minute by minute, and moment by

moment. You cannot give in, give up, give out, or quit. It is a fight, and you will be in this fight until you die.

We must fight. We must abide. We must trust in God's grace and mercy. We must understand that ability belongs to Him, and responsibility belongs to us. Our Lord said, "Except you abide in Me, and I in you, you cannot produce any fruit." And if any branch abides not in Him, it is cut off, cast out, withered, and burned.

Abiding in Christ simply means that we are obedient to His word. We keep His commandments, live unto Him, and serve Him. Our lives are regulated and controlled by the word of God.

Let us suppose Isaiah is standing in front of me, and I draw back and hit him as hard as I can, knocking him to the floor. He jumps up and says, "Why did you do that?" I say, "I just felt like doing it." He replies, "I feel like breaking your neck or your arm." If I can live by my feelings and hit him, cannot he live by his feelings and hit me? We do not live by feelings. I do not do what I feel like doing; I do what God commands me to do. Whether I feel like it or not is immaterial.

Feelings are never to lead; they are always to follow. God has ordained that when we obey Him and do what is right, we will feel right. If we disobey Him, we will feel bad, because our feelings always follow our actions. If you want the joy of Jesus Christ, as He said in John 15, verse 11, you must learn to obey. Never, ever give in to your feelings. Always live by the principle of faith and the principle of obedience.

Our Lord said, "If you love me, you keep my commandments." Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your truth and for the opportunity to abide in Jesus Christ by obeying His word, just as our Lord continued loving Thee by obeying Thee. Lord, help us to continue in Jesus Christ by obeying Him. He is our Lord, our master, and our sovereign, and we bow to Him. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

# A Short and Pointed Prayer

May 27, 2018

In Psalm 119, verses 121 through 128, David said:

"I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors. Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me. Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness. Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes. I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right. I hate every false way."

## Introduction: The Value of Brief, Sincere Prayer

All of us have heard prayers that needed to be endured rather than enjoined and enjoyed. It has always been a maxim that if you pray long in secret, you do not have to pray long in public. The power of your prayers in secret will empower your brief prayer in public.

Our Lord warned His disciples concerning the prayers of the heathen and commanded them not to pray as do the heathen. In

Matthew 6 and verse 7, He said, “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” Obviously, there is indeed a vain repetition that the Word of God talks about.

Moreover, it was the Pharisees who made long prayers to promote their own religiosity and gain the esteem of men. In Matthew 6 and verse 5, our Lord said, “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.” Then He said, “Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”

In Mark chapter 12 and verse 40, still speaking of the Pharisees and hypocrites, He said, “Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.” Long hypocritical prayers merit only divine justice. Our prayers should not be hypocritical. Mostly, they should be in secret, especially if they are long. We may commune with our Heavenly Father as long as we desire.

If we want to go all day and all night, that's wonderful, too, but it's usually done secretly. Our Lord said in Matthew 6 and verse 6, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." So most of our praying should be done secretly.

Obviously, according to the Bible, it is not the length of the prayer, nor the repetitions in the prayer, that cause God to hear and answer. There are many brief and short prayers, and prayers that are very effective, given to us in the Bible. In Matthew chapter 14, verse 30, when Peter was sinking, his prayer was very short: "Lord, save me." That's short enough. He realized that if he did not receive divine help, he would simply be gone. The woman in Canaan simply prayed, "Lord, help me." That's in Matthew 15 and verse 25. When the father of the demonically possessed boy cried to the Lord for help, he said, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." In Luke chapter 18 and verse 13, the publican would not even lift his eyes toward heaven, but smote himself on the breast and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

There are many brief prayers in the Bible, though there are also some lengthy prayers. In Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, you will find much longer prayers. The reason they are longer is that these men are not simply confessing their sins; they are confessing and acknowledging the sins of the entire nation. It would be an interesting study to begin at Genesis and go all the way through Revelation, noting every prayer in the Bible, not only its length, but also the petitions involved. In all probability, the briefer prayers outnumber the longer prayers.

When you look at our text in Psalm 119, verses 121 through 128, this is a relatively short prayer. It runs just eight verses, but the petition that is so provoking is found in verse 126, when David prays, "It is time for the LORD to work: for they have made void thy law." I want you to see this prayer petition in its context.

## The Context of Psalm 119:121-128

Have you ever wondered why Psalm 119 is divided into sections, with each section containing eight verses, or why it is the longest psalm in the book of Psalms, containing 176 verses? Psalm 119 is an acrostic psalm. An acrostic is a poem in which the first letter of each line either spells a word, gives a message, or follows the alphabet.

There are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Verses one through eight in the original all begin with the Hebrew letter Aleph. The next section begins with Beth, the second Hebrew letter, and continues in order: Gimel, Daleth, He, and right on down. Some Bibles place the Hebrew alphabet ahead of each section. Each of the twenty-two letters has eight verses; therefore, Psalm 119 contains 176 verses.

When we look at Psalm 119:121-128, David is obviously praying for justice. He is fighting injustice; he has been oppressed, is still being oppressed, and is appealing to God to be his surety. He has grown weary in fighting and is longing for deliverance. At the same time, he professes his supreme love for God and his love for God's law, while his enemies hold God and His law in contempt.

In verse 121 David begins his prayer by saying, "I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors." He begins

by declaring that he has done judgment and justice—that he has done that which is righteous and holy.

## The Clean Hands Doctrine (v. 121)

The wicked may have taunted David, mocked him, and persecuted him. Yet the Bible tells us that he was maintaining his integrity. He was being oppressed, and he was asking for God's just judgment against his oppressors. He appeals to God on the ground of his integrity, his desire for God's law, and his covenant relationship to God as his child. He knows that God has seen and continues to see all the oppression and persecution that he is enduring.

Some time ago, I preached a message from Ecclesiastes chapter 5, verse 8. The Word of God says, "If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth." God is saying, "I see the oppression, and I see the injustice, and I see the wickedness." Presidents and governors and kings may see, but God says there is somebody higher, and He sees all of this.

Now here is the question: David said in verse 121, "I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors." Why does David begin this prayer with a declaration that he has done judgment and justice? Isn't that a strange way to begin a prayer? "I have done judgment and justice. Leave me not to mine oppressors." Why would David begin a prayer like that?

Here is the answer. David begins this prayer because of what is known as the clean hands doctrine. The clean hands doctrine is a biblical doctrine that has been instilled even in American jurisprudence. Under the clean hands doctrine, equity will not grant relief to a party who, as an actor, seeks to set judicial machinery in motion and obtain some remedy if such party, in its prior conduct, has violated conscience or good faith or other equitable principle.

What good would it do me to sue Tom for violating a contract if I also had violated the contract or another contract? If I am going to sue him for doing something wrong, my hands have to be clean; otherwise, all I am going to do is condemn myself. The same

principle appears in Scripture. God is telling us that our hands have to be clean. Notice Matthew 7, verse 1.

Our Lord says, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” Of course, John 7:24 tells us to judge righteous judgment. But this particular verse and passage deal with someone with unclean hands. He says, “Judge not, that ye be not judged: for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

He explains it: “Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” There is a little sliver in Caleb’s eye, and I am trying to get it out while a beam is sticking out of my own eye. I am going to condemn him because he has a little tiny sliver, and God says, “If I try to judge him because of that little tiny sliver, and I have this big beam, then I am going to be judged with the same judgment that I judge him. It is going to come right back on me.”

You remember in John chapter 8, the woman taken in adultery. They continued asking our Lord particular questions. After He knelt down and wrote on the ground, He lifted Himself up and said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” They were demanding the death penalty for this woman, and she obviously was guilty. But they were guilty of the same sin, and our Lord knew that.

He said, “You want her dead? He that is without this particular sin, you cast the first stone. Because when you kill her, it is going to come right back on you.” Being convicted in their conscience, they went out, the eldest to the youngest. Our Lord looked at her and said, “Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?” She said, “No man, Lord.” Then He said, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” Our Lord was not excusing or condoning her sin.

The law demanded a minimum of two witnesses before anybody could be put to death. There were no witnesses; they left. The woman was left unaccused, and our Lord said, “All right, you may go.”

The interesting thing is this: when you look at verse 121 in Psalm 119, David said, “I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.” David is acknowledging that he is conscious of his integrity, asking for God’s justice and judgment with clean hands. He has not wronged his enemies or persecuted them. He is not tainted. He is asking God for judgment because his conscience is clear and clean.

Paul said the same thing in Acts chapter 23 and verse 1: “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” We have never really understood the impact or importance of what we would call a clear or clean conscience. John writes about this in 1 John 3 verse 21: “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”

When you go to pray, seeking some blessing from God, and you know there is sin in your life, does it not kind of condemn you? You cannot ask boldly or come with confidence toward God because you know there are things in your life contrary to God and His Word. So John said, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” If our heart does condemn us, we do not have that confidence. Charles Bridges.

He lived from 1794 to 1869. He has a wonderful book on the ministry and another wonderful book on the book of Proverbs. But he was one of the leaders of the evangelical party in the Church of England in the 19th century. And here's what he said: “The testimony of conscience,” this is what David's talking about in verse 121, “the testimony of conscience has often been the rejoicing of the Lord's people when suffering under unmerited reproach or proud oppression.

“They have been enabled to plead it without offense in the presence of their holy heart-searching God, nay, even when in the near prospect of the great and final account, they might well have been supposed to shrink from the strict and unerring scrutiny of their omniscient Judge. Perhaps, however, we are not sufficiently

aware of the importance of moral integrity in connection with our spiritual comfort." And then he says, "...mark the boldness which it gave David in prayer."

"I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressor." We've never understood the importance of a clear conscience. If we come to God asking for justice and judgment, and we come with unclean hands, we're merely condemning ourselves. Romans chapter 2, verses 2 and 3, says, "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things." God's judgment is always according to truth. "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" No. If you're doing the same thing that you're asking God to judge, you're in essence condemning your own self. Because God is just and He will indeed judge the wicked, and if you're wicked, God will get you just like He gets everyone else.

Note verse 121 again of Psalm 119. David is clinging to his integrity. That is why he said, "I have done judgment and justice." His heart is clean in this matter; his hands are clean. He has done that which is right and holy. Yet he says, "Leave me not to mine oppressors." In other words, he still pleads for God's mercy. He begs God not to leave him in the hands of his oppressors. He may have clean hands and a clear conscience, yet he still desires mercy and divine help.

See how verses 121 and 122 mesh together: "I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors." Then he says, "Be surety for thy servant for good. Let not the proud oppress me."

## Consciousness of Deficiency and Need for Surety (v. 122)

Isn't this interesting? David is conscious of his integrity, because he says, "I have done judgment and justice." But when you get to verse 122, he is also conscious of his deficiency. Just doing good, or doing what is right, is insufficient. He still needs divine help, mercy, and grace. David knows that what he has done is not enough to please God. He needs God to undertake for him, to be his surety, to stand up for him, to be his pledge and his bail bondsman.

Albert Barnes, in his commentary on verse 122, discusses the word "surety." In Isaiah, that word is rendered, "undertake for me." Properly, it means to mix or mingle; hence, to braid, interweave, exchange, or barter. Then it means to mix or intermingle interests, to unite ourselves with others so that their interests become our own, and thus to take one under our protection, to become answerable for, or to be surety for him. When one endorses a note for another, he mingles his own interests and reputation with that person's.

If Andrew needed to borrow money but lacked the collateral or standing, and they said, "You need someone to sign with you," if I went and signed for him—though that is really forbidden in one sense of the word—I would be standing in his stead, saying, "If he doesn't pay it, I will pay it."

His interest has become my interest, and his obligation has become my obligation. The prayer here is that God would so speak, mix, or mingle his cause with that of the psalmist that he would protect the common cause at his own expense, becoming a pledge or a surety for the safety of the psalmist.

David is saying, “Be surety for thy servant for good.” Charles Haddon Spurgeon commented on verse 122: “Answer for me. Do not leave thy poor servant to die by the hand of the enemy. Take up my interests and weave them with thine own, and stand for me as my Master. Undertake thy servant’s cause and represent me before the faces of haughty men till they see what an august ally I have in the Lord my God.” In other words, “Lord, you let them see that you’re on my behalf and that you’re standing in my stead.”

When David says, “Be surety for thy servant for good,” this is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ did on our behalf when He became our Surety. He undertook our interests and made them His own. He undertook for us and stood in our place. He pledged and gave surety to God, His Father, that He would fulfill every requirement of the law, satisfy His holiness and justice, and redeem His people.

In Isaiah chapter 38, verse 14, King Hezekiah had been sick. God sovereignly healed him and added years to his life, and Hezekiah

recounted what it was like when he almost died: “Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter. I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.” “Undertake” is the same word as “surety” in Psalm 119:122. When David says, “Be surety for thy servant for good,” he is saying, “Undertake for thy servant.” That is why Hebrews 7:22 says, “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.” Jesus Christ is our Surety.

He has declared his integrity in verse 121 and his deficiency in verse 122. Look at verses 123 and 125 together: “Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.” In other words, “I’m looking, I’m waiting on you to redeem me, to save me from this unbearable situation.” Then he says, “Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy,” and, “teach me thy statutes. I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.”

## Longing for Deliverance and Deeper Obedience (vv. 123-125)

We fight against evil, sin, and wickedness. But it is not sufficient simply to fight against them, nor is it sufficient just to long for an end of strife, battle, and war. What David is saying is, “I must learn to obey in all of this.” That is why he said, “Teach me thy statutes.”

“I want to have a better obedience. Give me understanding. I want to know better how to act and how to obey.” In other words, while we are being persecuted, oppressed, mocked, and ridiculed, what really counts is that we learn to obey, learn to understand, and learn to bring our lives into greater conformity to the Word of God.

There have been good and godly men who have fought hard, with every ounce of their being, and then found themselves on the sideline. Why? Burned out. I have known pastors who preached for years and years and then simply quit preaching. The answer was, “I got burned out.”

You cannot keep putting out unless you continue taking in. David is saying, “I’ve been standing, I’ve been fighting, I’m begging you for help. But, O Lord, I’ve got to continue to take in. Teach me thy statutes. Give me understanding.” If we do not continue to receive

God's blessings, direction, and truth, each one of us would burn out. You can never cease being a student of the Word of God.

## Our Impotency and Helplessness

You have to be continually learning and continually growing in grace. That is what David is saying: "I am tired, Lord, and I am tired of this fighting, but Lord, I need to be taught. I need a greater understanding." In all of our troubles, trials, afflictions, and persecutions, the question should be asked, "Am I learning anything? Am I bringing my life into greater conformity to the Word of God? Am I becoming more obedient? Am I becoming more holy? Am I becoming more godly?" That is the question.

## The Pointed Petition: 'It Is Time for the LORD to Work' (v. 126)

See this short and pointed prayer in light of everything that has gone before. In verse 126, he says, "It is time for the LORD to work: for they have made void thy law." David was conscious of his integrity. He had done that which was right and holy. He was also conscious of his deficiency. He was not perfect; he did not know everything. He was fighting, grew tired of fighting, and realized that he needed to learn more and needed a greater obedience. Hence he prays, "Lord, I've done what I can do. I just can't do this, Lord. It's not in my hands. It's time for Thee, LORD, to work. Why? For they have made void Thy law."

The first implication is our impotency and helplessness. David said, "It is time for thee, O LORD, to work." No matter how much we pray, work, hold meetings, strive, plan, scheme, or connive, we cannot correct, repair, salvage, or save a fallen society and a depraved culture. We cannot do it. That is not to say that we should not pray, work, preach, strive, and plan. It simply means that the ability to change anything is not in ourselves.

## Implications: Human Impotence and Divine Omnipotence

There certainly is a time when the people of God should arouse themselves and put forth very strenuous efforts to curtail evil and

wickedness and to exalt the Lord in His righteousness. Certainly that. But we are impotent without Him. That is why He said in John 15:5, "Without me, ye can do" how much? Nothing. "Without me, ye can do nothing." And David understood this.

He said, "I've done judgment and justice, I've done everything I can do, and I've done it with clean hands. And I still have the wicked oppressing and fighting. It's time for thee, O LORD, to work." Do you realize that salvation is the work of God? It doesn't matter if we're talking about personal salvation, familial salvation—that is, salvation of a family—ecclesiastical salvation, salvation of a church or the ministry, or national salvation. Salvation is a work of God alone. He must intervene. He must undertake. The Bible says in Psalm 62 and verse 11, "God hath spoken once. Twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." Does it belong to man? It belongs to God.

Three passages make this clear. In Psalm 85 and verse 6, look at the request, at what David asks: "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?" He is asking for a corporate revival, that the people of God may rejoice in God. The request concerns the people of God together, not merely one individual.

In Psalm 138, verse 7, David says, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me." That is individual. David speaks of himself walking in the midst of trouble, and asks God to revive him and save him.

Then, in Habakkuk chapter 3 and verse 2, we see Habakkuk praying. Verse 1 identifies the passage as "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth." Then he says, "O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work." The prayer is that God would revive His work.

"In the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." Notice that there are three times here—the Bible has spoken about revival: twice through David and once through Habakkuk. David prayed for corporate revival, "revive us," and for individual revival, "revive me." Habakkuk asked, "revive thy work, O LORD." So here is what I am trying to tell you: revival is a work of God.

It does not matter what area it is in. I get so tickled at the church signs: "Revival next week." Boy, I wish that would be true. But really, what they should be saying is, "Meeting next week," or "Preaching next week," or "In hope of revival next week." Only God can send revival. We can have meetings, but only God can revive. So, as long—as long as we think we can, God will not. As long as we think we can control the situation, save society, save our culture, save our family, or do anything, we will never cry out to God for His help, His mercy, His grace, His strength, and His power.

The very first implication is an implication of our impotency. We have no power. We have no ability in and of ourselves. We may have a responsibility, but we do not have ability. The second thing is an implication of God's omnipotence, because Psalm 119:126 says, "It is time for the LORD to work." Lord, this is something that You need to do. We cannot convict. We cannot convert. We cannot save. We cannot revive. But God can. God is omnipotent, and the word simply means that He has all power. That is what Jesus Christ said in Matthew 28:18: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

You know what the Bible says in Proverbs 21:1? "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." The king is not in control, the president is not in control. Even George Soros is not in control. The trilateralists are not in control. God is in control. I want you to look, if you would, while holding Psalm 119, but turn to Jeremiah 32. Jeremiah 32—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jeremiah 32. Look, if you would please, at verse 17.

This is a tremendous passage. In Jeremiah, chapter 32, the Chaldeans are destroying Jerusalem and have encompassed it. God commands Jeremiah to buy some property. Jeremiah asks, “Buy property? The Chaldeans are all around. Why am I going to do this?” God tells him that he is going to return them. Look what Jeremiah says in chapter 32, verse 17: “Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.”

In verse 25, he says, “And thou hast said unto me, O Lord GOD, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.” Lord, you tell me to buy land when

the Chaldeans are going to destroy us. Then, in verse 26, “Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?”

The answer is no. There is nothing too hard for God. He can save a culture, a society, or a nation as easily as he can save an individual. That is no problem for him. We must be obedient and work as he commands, and we must learn to be absolutely dependent upon him and upon his power. We are impotent; he is omnipotent.

## When to Pray This Prayer and Our Response (vv. 127-128)

Look back to Psalm 119:126 and understand when to pray this short and pointed prayer: “It is time for the LORD to work.” Why? “For they have made void thy law.” It is time to pray this prayer when we see God's law denied, denigrated, defied, and denounced. The wicked, vile, rebellious, evil ones have made void the law. It is not simply that they broke it, violated it, or trespassed against it. They have no regard for it and have treated it as if it were nothing and of no value, to be despised and rejected as having absolutely no binding influence. The Hebrew word for “void” is “parar,” meaning to make void, disannul, make ineffectual, cause to cease, and dissolve. If they could dissolve, annul, and abrogate the law of God, they would.

That is what the wicked are trying to do. Joseph Caryl preached for forty years on the book of Job. I have many of his writings; he was a great scholar. Joseph Caryl said, “They have made void the law” means that they would not only sin against the law, but sin away the law—not only withdraw themselves from obedience to it, but drive it out of the world. They would make void and repeal the holy acts of God, that their own wicked acts might not be questioned. Lest the law should have power to punish them, they will deny its power to rule them. That is the force of this simple word, as applied to the highest transgressing against the law of God: drive it out of the world.

Charles Spurgeon said this: “Make void the law of God by denying it to be his law, by promulgating commands and doctrines in opposition to it, by setting up tradition in its place, or by utterly disregarding and scorning the authority of the Lawgiver. Then sin

becomes fashionable. A holy walk is regarded as a contemptible puritanism. Vice is styled as pleasure, and vanity bears the veil. Then the saints sigh for the presence and power of their God. Oh, for an hour of the King upon the throne and the rod of iron. Oh, for another Pentecost with all its wonders to reveal the energy of God to gainsayers and to make them see that there is a God in Israel. Man's extremity, where their need or sin is God's opportunity."

"When the earth was without form and void, the Spirit came and moved upon the face of the waters. Should he not come when society is returning to a like chaos? When Israel in Egypt were reduced to the lowest point and seeing that the covenant would be void, then Moses appeared and wrought mighty miracles. So, too, when the church of God is trampled down and her message is derided, we may expect to see the hand of the Lord stretched out for the revival of religion, the defense of the truth and the glorifying of his divine name."

The Lord can work either by judgments which hurl down the ramparts of the foe or by revivals which build up the walls of his own Jerusalem. How hardly may we pray to the Lord to raise up new evangelists, to quicken those we already have, to set his whole church on fire, and to bring the world to his feet. God's work is ever honorable and glorious. As for our work, it is nothing apart from Him.

That is why the psalmist in Psalm 90:17 said, "And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." If God does not establish the work of our hands, it is vain and useless. When do we pray? "It's time for thee to work, O God," when they have made void thy law. When we see God's law despised and disobeyed, it is time to pray that God will earnestly undertake, revive His people, and defend His honor.

When you think about the wicked, stop and think with me. Do you realize what God can do and may do? He may remove them, restrain them, revive us, or even save His enemies. However God responds is totally up to Him. He can remove them, restrain them, save them, or revive His people so that they have absolutely no influence and can do absolutely nothing.

Look in Psalm 9, verses 19 and 20. David prays, "Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men." There are a lot of men in this country that need to learn that they are just men.

Now look in Psalm 83, beginning with verse 12, where we are talking about the wicked who try to conquer the people of God, the work of God, and the house of God: "Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession." David prays, "O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: that men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth." That is essentially what David is praying for in Psalm 119:126: "It is time for thee, O LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law."

The honor and the glory of God are at stake in this issue. I have heard people say, “We’re in desperate times in this country,” and we are. I have heard people ask, “What will become of Christians and Christianity if we continue in the vein that we’re headed?” But the real question is not what will happen to us. The real question is, “How will God vindicate His honor and His great name?”

David said in Psalm 138:2, “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” When people despise and denigrate the Word of God, they are at the same time despising and denigrating the God who gave that Word. When they hate the law of God, they hate the God who gave the law. You have to understand that a king rules by his law, and our God is King of Kings. David said, “It is time for the LORD to work: for they have made void thy law.”

We need to see the rebelliousness and the idolatry of our modern-day politicians in light of this truth. What did David pray? “It is time for thee, O LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.” In Psalm 94, David asks, “Shall the throne of iniquity have

fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" Then verse 21 says, "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood."

First of all, note that it is a throne. A throne speaks of power, government, and authority. In this instance, it is a throne of iniquity, which means it is a wicked power, a wicked government, and a wicked authority. So here is the question: Shall a wicked civil government, a wicked civil leader, or a wicked civil politician have fellowship with thee, that is, with God, when that wicked civil government makes mischief legal—when it "frameth mischief by a law"?

Now, mischief in the Bible is another word for sin. So you could read it like this: "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which makes sin legal?" Abortion is legal. Sodomy is legal. Socialism is legal. Fraudulent economics are legal. There are also many other anti-Bible, anti-God, anti-Christ laws in this country that have been made legal, contrary to God.

Here is what these wicked civil rulers do: "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood." They could care less about what is right, righteous, and godly. That is why David said, "It is time for the LORD to work: for they have made void thy law." Lord, I cannot stop them or correct them, but You can. You can remove them. You can restrain them.

You can revive your people. You can do whatever You want to do. But I have no power against them; You do. Why is this passage so important? Because the honor of our Lord is at stake. His truth is at stake. His people are involved, and we shall see more persecution if things are not changed. I understand that.

But let me show you how this should affect you, just as it affected David. Psalm 119:136 says, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." Has it ever broken your heart that God is so dishonored and despised, and His Word has seemingly been denied and replaced with pure, unadulterated humanism?

Have you ever wept over the fact that God is infinitely holy, while we treat Him in such an unholy, ungodly, and unbiblical manner? Men despise Him, although all He does is bless, give, sustain, and

nourish. I find myself many times giving the Lord thanks and praise, saying, “Lord, I want to give it to You, even for those who refuse to give it to You. Thank You for life, health, food, rain, and the multitudinous blessings that I cannot even perceive.”

Psalm 119:126 says, “It is time for the LORD to work: for they have made void thy law.” I am not going to be with them. “Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right. I hate every false way.” I will not join them. I will not give in. I will not give up. I want You.

In light of Psalm 119:126, this should be our prayer: “Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.”

"But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice." That our God is God, and He has defended His honor and His Word. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your truth, for the Lord Jesus Christ, and for Your omnipotence. We pray, "It is time for Thee, O LORD, to work, for they have made void Thy law." Undertake for Thy people, but, Lord, vindicate Thy name. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

# Holiness and Obedience

December 7, 2018

It is a joy to be here, and I am thankful for the opportunity. I certainly appreciate Pastor Ashwood, this family, and Samuel. Everywhere I go, people ask me, “What’s going to happen when you die and some of the old heads?” I say, “Well, God’s going to raise up some young men.” That’s all there is to it. And He has to. He is never going to leave Himself without witness. I am thankful for young men who can preach. You need to pray for Samuel and pray for God to raise up other men, too, because we need it, I can assure you.

## Introduction: The Command to Be Holy

This message today has really been a theme in my life, so to speak. I want to deal with the subject of holiness and obedience. Notice 1 Peter 1, verses 13 through 16: “Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

Let me ask you a question: Do you have a desire or an inclination to be holy? If so, do you understand the essence of holiness? It is absolutely impossible to be holy, to know that you are holy, or to know that you are not holy unless you understand the essence of holiness.

One of the largest complaints I have received from Christians all through my ministry is this: "Holiness escapes me. I've tried to be holy. I keep trying, but I fail." There is a very logical and reasonable answer for that failure. It is because we do not understand the beginning nor the end of holiness.

The truth is that our minds and our flesh and our nature recoil against holiness. The reason should be very obvious. Our depraved nature and our flesh desire to be fulfilled even at the expense of obedience.

## The Flesh Opposes Holiness

If you would hold 1 Peter, look in your Bibles to Galatians 5, verses 16 and 17. The Apostle Paul says, "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 one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would."

The flesh fights against the spirit, and the spirit fights against the flesh; these are contrary to one another, so that you cannot do the things that you would. Mark this down in your mind: You will never be holy as long as you walk in the flesh and do those things which please you, because your flesh is absolutely, totally opposite of what God desires. Our flesh will not lie as silently upon the altar as did Isaac. It will cry and scream and beg to be satisfied.

Colossians 1:10 says that we are to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, "being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." Our goal, our aim, should be pleasing God and not pleasing ourselves. It is apparently impossible to please ourselves and to please God at the same time, unless, of course, what we want is what God wants. Every time we walk in the flesh, we are displeasing unto God.

Any time we place our flesh above the Lord, it is idolatry, because we are actually dethroning God and enthroning ourselves. According to 1 Peter 1:16, we have been commanded to be holy: “because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.” If this is a plain command, the only alternative is disobedience and rebellion. God requires us to be holy.

I preached an entire series on this from 2 Corinthians 6 and 7, and a shorter series based upon 1 Peter 1:13-16. Let me remind you of 2 Corinthians 7:1: “having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Most people today want to separate themselves from the filthiness of the flesh. I do not know anyone who claims to be a Christian who wants to roll in the ditch in drunkenness and in their own vomit. I do not know anyone who claims to be a Christian who really wants to be a thief and rob and steal.

I don't know of anyone who wants to be a Christian, or is a Christian, that wants to do those grosser, horrible things that you and I would say, "That's just repulsive." But notice what he said: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit."

So many people who would not even think of committing some of the grosser violations of the flesh are surly, rebellious, hateful, full of ill will, gossiping, and just doing absolutely that which is contrary to God. Some of the meanest people I've ever seen in my life were Christians. They're kind of like the Pharisees. The Pharisees were separate on everything external, but internally God said they were full of dead men's bones. This is why it is so important that our spirit also be cleansed and submitted. Our attitude and our disposition are to be holy as well.

The Scripture says, "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself. The Lord will hear when I call unto him." Consider the fact that the Lord sets apart him that is godly for himself. The Hebrew word for "sets apart" literally means to mark out, to be distinct, to distinguish, and to set apart. The Hebrew word for "godly" is the same word that is translated as godly, holy, or saintly.

A godly man is a holy man. He has to be, because if he is godly, that means he is likened to God, and God is infinitely holy. So God has set apart him that is godly for himself. Since God has set apart him that is godly for himself, the godly are in a very unique position. He is in a distinguished class. And David says, therefore, "The Lord will hear when I call upon him."

Everyone who ever went to school usually mocked or made fun of one we called the teacher's pet. But why was that individual the teacher's pet? Because that individual studied, usually had all the answers, turned in everything on time, did what he was supposed to do, and knew what he was supposed to know. This is what David says: "Know that God has set apart him that is godly for himself."

## Holiness Begins in the Mind

David said, “Therefore, he will answer me when I call upon him.” I do not know about you, but I would prefer to be in that class. I would prefer to be called God’s little pet. I would like that. The Bible says that God has set apart him that is godly for himself.

Let me make this statement so that we will understand at the very beginning: in order to be holy, one has to be regenerated and converted. No Pharisee, no hypocrite, no unsaved church member, or anyone else could ever, ever be holy. One without salvation might be a kind of moral, civil, upright, and even possess a degree of being upright. But one who is unconverted can never, ever be holy. You have to know the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be holy.

Peter answers for us in a very concise and succinct way what it is to be holy. The problem is this: most of us have made things so complicated in our minds. We often think this requires a great theological understanding, when in reality it does not. It is very, very simple. The Bible says, “Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

## Holiness Begins in the Mind

Holiness begins in the mind. Peter said, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind and hope to the end.” Everything begins in the mind. Without me recommending him particularly, Alex Jones has a program known as InfoWars, and the slogan that he has there is, “There is a war for your mind.” That is true, not only politically, but also spiritually. There is a war for your mind.

The Bible teaches in Proverbs 23, verse 7, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” If you will remember Wednesday night, I preached the message on keeping the heart, where God says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” When I went through that message, I showed you that the heart was, in essence, the mind. Keeping the heart is the same thing as keeping the mind.

Peter now says this a little different way. He says, “Now, wherefore gird up the loins of your mind?” In Bible times, when men wore long flowing robes, they walked.

But if they ever got ready to run, or if they ever got ready to work, they had a belt, and they girded up those robes under that belt, and then they took off. So what Peter is saying is this: You gird up the loins of your mind; you get ready to work, to think, to exert, and to do what needs to be done. He is admonishing us to work in a biblical and a holy framework.

Why does holiness begin in the mind? The answer is very simple, and that is because the mind particularly was where we were the enemies of God. Colossians 1:21 says, “And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works yet now are they reconciled.” Where were we particularly enemies of God? In our minds.

Ephesians 2:3 says, “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

Then, in Ephesians 4:17-18, the Apostle Paul says, “this I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other

Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind." The word "vanity" means the uselessness, the worthlessness. Then he says, "having your understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart."

When you think of Adam and that original sin, the sin initially and originally began in his mind. He rebelled in his mind. He thought contrary to the commands of God and contrary to the Word of God, and he actually believed that his thoughts somehow were better than the plain Word of God. Every sin begins in the mind. But let me make something else clear today: It is not just that every sin begins in the mind. Every act of holiness begins in the mind.

Every act of holiness begins in the mind. Whoever or whatever controls your mind controls your life. Peter understood this; therefore, he tells us to gird up the loins of our mind. The difficulty in girding up the loins of our mind, learning to refuse our thoughts, and choosing God's thoughts is that by the flesh we always lack God's thoughts.

Proverbs 3 contains a passage that most of you can quote. Beginning with verse 5: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. And lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes. Fear the Lord, and depart from evil." So we are to trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not to our own understanding. We are not to be wise in our own eyes. The difficult part is that we have to learn, basically, to refuse our thoughts.

Everyone understands this in light of conversion. Isaiah 55, verses 7 through 9, says: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

When a man is converted, he has to turn not only from his sin, but also from his evil way of thinking. That is why it says, "Let the

unrighteous man forsake his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord." If we must initially forsake our wicked thoughts in order to turn to the Lord, is it not reasonable, is it not logical, that if we are going to be holy, we must continually refuse our own thoughts and submit to the thoughts of the Lord? Why? Because His are higher than ours. As the heaven is higher than the earth, so are His ways and His thoughts higher than ours. In other words, the difference is life and death.

Again, the difficulty is our proud nature. We like our thoughts. If we had an open session on how to build a new building, and everyone were free to express their ideas and thoughts, guess what?

You are going to like your idea better than the pastor's, and the pastor's going to like his better than Brother Barber's, and Brother Barber's going to like his idea better than Brother James. Why? Because we like our thoughts. We think we know what is best. We think we know what should be and how it should be done. So the difficulty then is coming back and saying, "No, here's my thought and my thought is not necessarily right."

## Renewing the Mind Through Scripture

Now, I want to call your attention again to a passage. You remember the passage I quoted Wednesday night, Romans 12, 1 and 2. I want to come back to this. I want you to listen carefully. The Apostle Paul says, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

Now listen carefully: "and be not conformed to this world, but be you transformed, how, by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God."

Now, what has God done for us when He saved us? Let me show you. Look in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Colossians chapter 3. He's done a number of things, but this one is particularly connected with holiness. Watch it. Colossians chapter 3. And let's begin reading there with verse 9. Colossians 3, verse 9: "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds,

and put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

So when God saved us, one of the things that God did was He renewed our knowledge. We lost a lot of things in the first Adam, but we gained more than we ever lost in the second Adam. You remember the passage that I quoted from 2 Corinthians 10 and verse 5 where he said, "casting down imaginations and every high thing or every high thought that exalted itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Jesus Christ." Well, when the Apostle Peter says, "gird up the loins of your mind," girding up the loins of your mind is the equivalent of bringing every thought into captivity to Jesus Christ.

## Being Sober-Minded

I want you to look back, please, to 1 Peter, chapter one, and notice verse 13 again. 1 Peter, chapter one, verse 13, because now he says the same thing: "wherefore gird up the loins of your mind. Be sober." Once you've girded up the loins of your mind, now here's the command to be sober. Now, I will hasten to point out that this word "sober" has absolutely nothing to do with drunkenness. In fact, it is never used in that word or that way at all.

The Greek word is "nepho," and it is translated sober four times and watch two times. All the Apostle Peter is saying in verse 13 is this: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober." In other words, stop, pause, and make sure in a sober, calm, cool, and collected manner that your thought is a biblical thought and reflects the word and will of God. We are to calmly and accurately assess our thoughts.

Have you ever stopped to consider your thoughts? Have you ever stopped to think, "Wow, why am I thinking this?" "What should I be thinking?" Peter tells us not only to be sober, but to "hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." We are to hope to the end; that is, we are to look forward to that completed and perfect will of God in our life.

How in the world are we going to ever find the thoughts of God? The answer is that they are revealed in the Scripture. That is why in

Colossians 3:16 He said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord."

When our mind is renewed, when we have girded up our minds, when we are looking in the knowledge of God that He has revealed in His Word, and when we are calmly assessing our thoughts to make sure they are biblical, then we understand this: thoughts produce actions. Thoughts precede conduct.

## Holiness Ends in Obedience

Holiness begins in the mind. That is the first truth. Here is the second truth: holiness ends in obedience. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to former lusts in your ignorance."

Interestingly, when you read in the Bible, there are children of disobedience and there are children of obedience. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:2, "When in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." And in Colossians 3:6, "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."

So there are children of disobedience, and then there are children of obedience. If we have really renewed our mind, if we have really girded up the loins of our mind, and if it started in the mind, it is going to end in obedience. An obedient child is one that hears, submits, and obeys instantly. Think about this: delayed obedience is disobedience.

I told my girls—and I had four daughters—that they would sit on my lap as little girls, hug me, kiss me, and tell me they loved me. I enjoyed and appreciated that. But I would always tell them, especially as I got older, “I’d rather have your obedience than anything else.” You know why? Because obedience is a demonstration of love. Our Lord said, “If ye love me,” what? “Keep my commandments.”

So holiness then has to end in obedience. An obedient child is one who hears, submits, and instantly obeys. Samuel is an excellent

illustration. He had been given to Eli to serve in the tabernacle. When God called Samuel, Samuel thought it was Eli, so he jumped up, ran to Eli, and said, "What did you want? For you called me." Eli said, "I didn't call you; go back to bed." The second time God called, Samuel again ran to Eli, but Eli told him he had not called him and sent him back to bed. The third time, Eli perceived that the Lord was calling Samuel. He said, "When you hear the voice again, you just simply say, 'Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.'"

Would it not be the blessing of God if each one of us had the attitude, "Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth"? An obedient child is one that hears and responds submissively. There is no rebellion, whining, complaining, or resistance—just simply obedience.

When we know the Word of God, we know the will of God; therefore, there must be instant obedience. Paul said, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit, in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." It is true that Paul served God with his spirit, but his spirit was sending his body all over the Roman Empire while he preached and taught. If you understand that this begins in your mind, and you have a right spirit and a right attitude, you will be submissive, and your body will respond.

## Not Fashioned to Former Lusts

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.

Interestingly, the word "fashion" is exactly the same Greek word as "conform" in Romans 12:2: "I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice holy acceptable to God which is your reasonable service and be not conformed to this world." Do not be fashioned to this world.

Years ago, when we were able to get fresh milk, my wife would take it straight from the cow. We would put it in a butter churn and churn it. When she had made the butter, she pressed it into a mold, fashioned it there, and put it in the refrigerator. When the butter

hardened, she simply emptied it. And guess what? It was perfectly conformed to that mold.

God says, “No, no, no, you do not become conformed, nor do you fashion yourself according to your former lusts in your ignorance.” I am particularly thankful for the word “former.” It means that we have repented; it means that we are no longer like that. Unhappily, the best of God’s children have had times in lust and ignorance, when their own lust and fleshly desires were the whole scheme of their lives.

I can remember times when God certainly was not in all of my thoughts, although I was raised in church. Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, and any other time there was a special meeting, I was there. Yet the Bible tells us very clearly in Ephesians 2, “when 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 we all had our conversation in times past, in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.”

The word “lust” is a very simple word. Every time we hear it, we normally associate it with sexual desires, but the word is just “epithumia.” “Epi” is a preposition meaning “upon,” and “thumos” refers to passion or desire. You know what your lust is? It is whatever you set your desire upon, whatever you set your passion upon. It could be a new truck, a new house, or anything.

But we walked according to this nature. He says in verse 14, “as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.” I am so thankful the word “ignorance” is there, not just the word “former.” If you had done these things premeditatedly, that would be different. But you were totally ignorant. I was totally ignorant. Everyone who is unconverted was ignorant. That is why the Bible tells us that these people have the understanding darkened and are alienated from God through the ignorance that is in them.

Once we have become obedient children and our mind is girded up, we are no longer desiring to fashion or conform ourselves to

those former lusts in which we engaged before we were converted. Nor are we interested in conforming ourselves to those lusts in which we engaged even immediately after we were converted, when we did not know anything. I tell people that I have done more repenting since I have been a Christian than I ever did when I got converted. When I got converted, I was convicted of certain sins, and I repented of those sins, that is sure. But when I started reading the Bible, I found out a whole lot more.

I like what David said. I had to add to it—not add to the Bible, but add to it my own life. David said, and he prayed, "Remember not against me the sins of my youth." I added, "Lord, remember not the sins against me. Remember not the sins that I have committed against thee in my middle age. And remember not the sins I have committed against thee in my old age." When we do those things, a lot of times it is pure ignorance on our part. We are actually stupid. We are not thinking. We are mad. We are insane.

## Applications: The Inseparability of Holiness and Obedience

The Bible tells us that once we have girded up the loins of our mind, it ends in obedience. Once he says it begins in the mind, verse 14, it ends in obedience. "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." That is conduct. Why? "Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." As obedient children, we know that we have been called unto holiness and called to be like our Heavenly Father. In order to please Him, we must be holy. We must learn to think His thoughts and conform our lives according to His Word. It is impossible to be holy and disobedient at the same time. Holiness is vitally connected with obedience, and obedience is vitally connected with holiness.

Likewise, it is impossible to be obedient when we are ignorant of our Lord's thoughts, His ways, and what He desires for us. That's why you must study the Scripture. You must find what He thinks so that you can gird up the loins of your mind and think as He thinks.

Secondly, it is only as we think biblically that we end up acting biblically. Your thoughts precede your actions; your thoughts precede your conduct. If you cannot think biblically, you cannot act

biblically. If you cannot think rightly, you cannot act rightly. If you cannot think holily, you cannot walk in holiness. The battle is for your mind. Whoever controls your mind controls your life. The Apostle Paul said it like this: "I die daily."

The battle for our mind means that we must fight the fight twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. A young man that I taught asked a very pertinent question: "Brother Weaver, what am I to do with those thoughts and those dreams that come into my mind while I'm asleep?" Have you ever dreamed things that were unbiblical? Of course you have. I have, and sometimes they have awakened me. What I do is say, "Lord, I repudiate that. I will not have that. That is not my desire, that is not in my mind. My mind is to be obedient to thee." If it does not wake me up, if I remember it the next day, I still repudiate it. I do not want it. The battle is for the mind, and it is twenty-four hours a day.

You never separate holiness from obedience. It was the Pharisees who did that. They brought upon themselves the condemnation of Jesus Christ because they thought they were holy, but they were disobedient to Him. Holiness is conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.

In John 8:29, our Lord says, "And he that sent me is with me. The father hath not left me alone. For I do always those things which please him." Do you realize that holiness is just pleasing God? Holiness is walking in obedience. Holiness is being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. I have often said to the Lord, "O Lord, would to God that I could say, I always do those things which please you." That should be our goal. Never separate obedience from holiness. It is impossible to be holy without obedience. It is impossible to be holy without thinking God's thoughts. Holiness and obedience go together.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word, for Your truth. Help us, Lord, to be holy, to be godly, to please and honor Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen. Help us, Lord, to be holy, to be godly, to please and honor Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 17

# Community In The Old South and Confederacy

November 9, 2019

## Southern Community in the Old South

## Introduction: The Need for Community

I hope and pray this will answer some questions, even based upon what your pastor has just said. Recently, I was at Warren Luke's father's church for a conference devoted entirely to community. He called me and asked, "Would you please bring a message on community in the old South and even in the Confederacy? What it was like back in the old days?" I was happy to do that.

If you are unsure about some of the things I say tonight, I can point you to books and sermons. I would encourage everyone who has never heard the message I preached many years ago on the biblical philosophy of history to hear it, because you have no idea how important history is. History is nothing more than God's eternal decree coming to pass in time. When you understand history, you have to understand it in a theological framework.

## Biblical Foundation: Comfort and Edify One Another

Open your Bibles, if you would, to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. We are going to read verses 9 through 11, with the emphasis on verse 11, but I will be saying an awful lot of things in light of this. The Bible says, "For God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore, comfort yourselves together, and edify one another even as also ye do." That is a very interesting verse, where God says you are to comfort yourselves together and edify one another.

So here is a good question: When is the last time you have been comforted in your community? When is the last time you have been edified in your community? In times past, I have preached two messages on community: "The Necessity of Community" and "Community Peace and Protection." While I might refer to a quote or two from them, this message is totally and completely different from those two messages.

We use the word community very loosely. We think we understand the word, but in reality, we do not. If you go to dictionary.com on the internet and type in the word community, you will come up with two definitions. One of them is this. Listen carefully.

## Defining Community: Commonality is Essential

A social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage. The second definition is a group of men or women leading a common life according to a rule. We understand a certain geographical location and sharing in government, but we hardly ever grasp the fact of a common cultural and historical heritage.

When you think about the nation of Israel, everybody knows that it was divided into twelve tribes. But those tribes were also divided into families, and those families were then divided into clans. If you would read 1 Chronicles 1–9, you will find the divisions of all the tribes. If you were to take the tribe of Levi, you had the Kohathites,

the Merarites, the Aaronites, and all of them. Each one was a family, each one was a clan, and each one had its own individual insignia or flag.

When we grasp locality, we understand that we are living here in this community and sharing government, but we do not really grasp the common culture and heritage. Moreover, if we are Christians, we are supposed to be living according to a common rule, and that common rule is the Word of God. Just because people are grouped together geographically, and just because they might be sharing government, does not mean that they have community. You cannot have community without a common cultural heritage and the same faith.

When America was first begun, most people have never understood that our founding fathers basically had one faith, one culture, and one heritage. To prove that, all you have to do is look at the original charters and constitutions. Every one of the original colonies and states had in its constitution that no one could hold public office unless they confessed faith in Jesus Christ and believed in the inspiration of both the Old and New Testaments. Even Massachusetts, as liberal as it is today, said in 1644, “The laws of this colony shall be the laws of God as given through Moses.” There may have been different denominations, but every one of those denominations at least confessed that the Bible was the Word of God and Jesus Christ indeed was the Son of God.

Since that time, we are now a conglomeration of cultures, faiths, heritages, ethnicities, and ideologies, which always determine our political, religious, and economic views. There is no way in the world that you can have community with all these divisions. What we have today is fighting, fighting just to see who is going to take control. It is not just the Republicans versus the Democrats. You have Muslims fighting for Sharia law; Christians saying, "No, we don't want Sharia law, we want biblical law"; and Atheists and Anarchists saying, "No, we just don't want any law whatsoever." Instead of having a common faith, culture, or heritage, all you have now is simply fighting.

A Christian friend of mine, a good thinker, sent me a quote that he thought through and put out. He was talking about Civil War II. He said, "Civil War II will likely be fought on the basis of conflicting

cultures, identity, and ideology. We all understand the concept of nation in the geopolitical sense. Biblically, however, nation or ethnos—and ethnos is the Greek word for it—is not an amalgamated conglomeration of people from different linguistic, cultural, political, or religious persuasions. It is a particular group of people akin to a large extended family. Thus, conventions, customs, ethics, values, laws, and its applications suitable, desirous, and effective in one area are odious and even repugnant to the other. It should be noted, however, that ethnicity ought not to be an essential factor, but integration and a degree of conformity is essential to any immigration policy. Further, while aliens and sojourners are a blessing to godly theonomic societies"—that is, societies ruled by God's law—"they are a curse to a rebellion, a rebellious and antinomian society."

Multiculturalism, diversity, and unbiblical ideologies that are deficient in the concept of history and heritage do not and cannot promote community. Think of the word community. The word "com" is a preposition, which means "with," and the last part of that word is "unity." The word community basically means "with unity." It speaks of a people that are unified and that are one. We get the English word community from the Latin word communitas, which literally means "that which is held in common."

Where there is no commonality, there is no community. One big reason is that you can live on the same street and in the same neighborhood with a large number of people and never even know who they are. It is because you have nothing in common with them. Why in the world would you want to visit with someone with whom you completely differ and disagree? Why in the world would you want a friendship with someone whom you cannot even understand and they cannot even understand you?

The truth of the matter is this: We have the old adage, "Birds of a feather flock together," and that is true. We tend to gravitate to people who believe like we believe, think like we think, and have the heritage that we have. It is the same thing in the church. What is the church supposed to be? The church is supposed to be the community of faith. We confess that we have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. If we have one Lord, that means He is sovereign. We have

one faith, that means we believe the same thing. We have one baptism, that means we are unified in Jesus Christ.

## The Church as Community of Faith

When you look around today, and your pastor was talking about revival, look at our communities and the people who congregate in certain areas. Notice how horrible most communities really are. We need resurrected communities, but resurrection is always on God's terms. Here is a question that I like to ask: If our society collapsed tomorrow and you had the opportunity to rebuild from the bottom up, what law system would you use to rebuild society?

## Rebuilding Society on God's Law

You only have two choices. You can either rebuild using God's law system, or you can rebuild using man's law system. You may say, "I am going to take the best that man can give, and that is what I am going to build with." If you are going to build with the best that man can give, you might as well not build, because it is going to be under the curse of God. You remember how God cursed Jericho in the book of Joshua, chapter 6, verse 26? Joshua said this: "Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, 'Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho.'"

"He shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and he shall set up the gates thereof in his youngest son." What does that mean? It means that the man who rebuilt Jericho sacrificed his firstborn son, whose name was Abiram, when he laid the foundation, and he sacrificed his youngest son, Segub, when he set up the gates thereof. You will find that in 1 Kings 16, verse 34. So here it is: You can take the best that man can give you, and it is still under the curse of God.

If our communities are going to be resurrected, they must be resurrected according to God's terms and built according to God's law. We have to live our lives in light of that. The communities are made up of individuals first and families second. That means simply this: You are responsible to live wholly and godly before God as an individual, and then, secondly, your family comes in. Our communities and our churches are never going to be any better than the individuals and families in them. You cannot have a resurrected

community with unresurrected people. You cannot have a spiritual church or a spiritual community with unspiritual people. It is just that simple. You cannot have a community or a church that functions the way it should unless individuals and families are willing to function the way they should. You cannot have the blessings of God upon a community or a church filled with rebellious individuals. It is impossible.

## The Role of Individuals and Families

Robert Winthrop, who lived from 1809 to 1894, was a congressman and a former Speaker of the House. Addressing the Massachusetts Bible Society in 1849, he said: "All societies of men must be governed in some way or the other. The less they have of stringent self-government, the more they must have of individual self-government. The less they rely on public law or physical force, the more they must rely on private and moral restraint. Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled by a power within them or a power without them, either by the word of God or the strong arm of man, either by the Bible or the bayonet."

## Self-Government vs. External Control

If you do not have the power and grace of God to restrain yourself, there is always going to be someone who will restrain you. My wife can tell you that, when we were teenagers, if I wanted to see a police officer, I had to go uptown. I not only had to go uptown; I had to look around. You would have to search for one. You know why?

## Southern Hope

Because most people in those days at least believed the Ten Commandments, most lived by them, whether they were Christians or not. There were very few police officers in our town. But today, in that same town, you cannot drive down the road without passing four or five police cars or seeing them parked everywhere. The reason is that we have lost private moral restraint.

If we do not want the strong arm of man forcing us, we must learn what is right and holy and live according to the power of God within us. Let me tell you this: it is easy for someone who wants to do right

and live right to live with other people who want to do right and live right as well.

I want to point out four major things that were very important in the Old South. Some of you will remember and recognize these, and I want to tie them together for you at the end. The very first thing necessary for a community, whether a church community or the surrounding community, is what I will call Southern hope. Southern hope is nothing less than biblical hope: hope based upon the Bible and Christianity. Most people have no idea that the South was settled mostly by Scots-Irish people.

## Four Pillars of Southern Community

The Scots-Irish were people who had a strong faith in the Word of God, and the Bible did indeed play a very prominent part in the lives of Southern men and women. We have not understood the extent of the role that the Bible played. In fact, the southern states are known as the Bible Belt. Do you know how it got that name?

## Southern Hope: Biblical Hope

It was not given to us as a badge of honor. It was the North saying, "Well, those stupid people down there, they believe the Bible." It was given to us as mockery and ridicule. I will explain why momentarily. We have overlooked the theological aspect of the War of Northern Aggression.

When I refer to the War of Northern Aggression, you could call it the Second War for Independence, Lincoln's War Against All Christian States, the War Between the States, or the Civil War. There was nothing civil about it. The reason I refer to it as the War of Northern Aggression is that Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to invade the South. The South did not invade the North; the North invaded the South. Thus, many times, we have no idea of the theological significance of that war.

James Henley Thornwell was a Presbyterian pastor and author who truly saw what was happening. He died in 1862, after the war had begun, but before he died he wrote: "The parties in this conflict"—the North and the South—"are not merely abolitionists

and slaveholders. They are atheists, socialists, communists, Red Republicans, Jacobins on the one side"—the North—"and Friends of Order and Regulated Freedom on the other"—the South. "In one word, the world is the battleground. Christianity and atheism, the combatants, and the progress of humanity is at stake."

Thornwell was saying that it was indeed a theological war. By and large, the South was unabashedly and unashamedly Christian, believing the Bible to be the inspired Word of God. On the other hand, by and large, the North had rejected the Bible as the Word of God, rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, and gone into Unitarianism, Transcendentalism, and Rationalism.

I did not say that everybody in the South was a Christian, nor did I say that there were no Christians in the North. Of course there were Christians in the North, and there were lost people in the South. I said that, by and large, Southern people were basically Bible-oriented. By and large in the North, you had Unitarians and rationalism. That is why the South was referred to as the Bible Belt. In rationalism, you elevated your mind and thinking above the Word of God.

There were people in the North called Copperheads because they sympathized with, understood, and supported the South, although they were in the North. The elite in the North referred to them as Copperheads, a very poisonous snake that makes no sound like a rattlesnake.

## Theological War: Christianity vs. Atheism

Robert E. Lee was one of the finest Christian gentlemen who ever lived. He said, "The Bible is the book of books, a book which supplies the place of all others and cannot be replaced." He continued, "There are things in that old book that I may never 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's 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." Likely, most

people in the South believed in the Bible and were not going to forsake it for humanistic religion. Many viewed that war as a war on Christianity.

Years ago I preached a message on the theology of culture. We have seen many cultural changes in our lifetime. There cannot be a change in culture without a change in theology. Your theology has to change before your culture changes. Consider nations like India, China, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran. We have diplomats and embassies in those countries, and we give those countries money.

We try to teach them democracy, and everything that we give them is thrown away, or taken and abused and misused. Why? They will never change unless their theology changes. You cannot have a change in culture without having a change in theology.

Some of you will remember the movie "Black Hawk Down." It was when the Americans went into Somalia to capture the warlord Idi Amin, I think. Not Idi Amin. What was his name? I forget his name. Idi Amin was in the Congo. But whatever his name was, they went there to capture him.

I watched it on television, and about a year later I watched it again. I was so thankful I did, because although they killed some of the pilots, they had one pilot tied up against the wall. They had beaten him mercilessly; he was bloody. One of the warlords said this, and I am paraphrasing a little bit: "You stupid Americans, you think you can come over here and cram your democracy down our throats and keep us from killing each other? Listen." Then he said, "When killing has been a way of life for us for a thousand years."

That was their culture. Why is it that we can send grain to India and most of the grain is destroyed because they believe in reincarnation? They worship everything. They allow the rats to eat it. They allow the cows to eat it. They defecate in it. It does not matter. You are never going to change anyone's culture until you change their theology.

When you think about what happened in that war, here you have a group of people who thought they could mold the South and mold America according to their own ideas and whim. All they wanted to do was impose their will upon the South. In order to change the

South, they had to change our culture; in order to change our culture, they had to change our theology. And when that failed, when the South lost the war, they imposed Reconstruction. What was Reconstruction? It was nothing more than a way to get us to think and act the way the elite in those New England states wanted us to think and act.

## Southern Hope and Honor

You still have the same elite today, probably most of the time descendants of that same group as well. Have you ever stopped to think about political correctness? It is reconstructionism. It is designed to make everybody think alike, to make us little robots so that we can say alike. It is like the professor in England who was fired because he refused to address a six-foot-one bearded man as "ma'am." This is political correctness.

What we do not understand is the theological significance of that war. Basil Manly, a Baptist pastor and chaplain to the Provisional Confederate Congress, viewed secession not as a rebellion, but as a Christian reform movement. W. W. Bennett, in his book The Great Revival and the Confederate Armies, said that 150,000 men in the Southern Army were converted to Jesus Christ. There were two great revivals in that army.

Concerning the soldiers, Bennett said, "Their conviction of right in what they did were second only to their convictions of the truth of the Christian religion. Nor has the stern logic of events eradicated this conviction from the Southern mind. The cause is lost, but its principles still live and must continue to live so long as there remain in human nature any perception and appreciation of justice, truth, and virtue." So there is indeed Southern hope.

We are not giving up on the Word of God or on the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe the Bible is true, and we are going to act upon that Bible. We are not going to allow anyone or anything to alter our thinking. There has to be Southern hope.

## Southern Honor: The Glue of Community

There is a second thing necessary for a real community, including a community in the church: Southern honor. Honor was the glue that held the family and the community together. Men were men and women were women. Men of honor worked, provided, protected, and loved their wives and families. In the Old South, and among truly Southern people today, it is an honor to work, to be independent, not to be in debt, and not to have to depend upon the charity of others. It was an honor to be able to protect yourself and your family. You would be surprised if you searched online for "code of honor in the old South." You know what you will find? A code of honor in the old South.

The code of honor of Southern men required, number one, having a reputation for honesty and integrity. Southern men had a reputation for honesty and integrity. I was raised on a farm, and I saw my father, as a boy, make multithousand-dollar deals with other farmers. All they did was shake hands. There were no contracts drawn up; they simply shook hands.

Everybody did what they said they were going to do. I have seen my father and other farmers in that community, when one of the farmers died, go to the widow and say, "I had a deal with your husband. I owe him $10,000. Here is that money. You use it the way you see fit." They would pay the widow. The man was dead, and no one else would ever have known, but they were men of integrity and honesty, and they were going to pay that which they owed. I saw that with my own eyes.

There was a second thing: a code of honor in the old South meant that you had a reputation for martial courage and strength. That meant you could fight and were willing to fight. My father used to box professionally when he was a young man. He taught me to box, but I saw my father mad only two times in my entire life.

The first time was when my sister and I went to the dentist. I was a little boy, no more than seven or eight years old, and my sister was not much older. She was upset and sat in the chair first, while I waited to take the second chair. My father asked the dentist whether

he wanted him to stay and help control us. The dentist said, "No, no, you wait outside. I'll take care of it."

When he tried to work on my sister, she became scared, crying and screaming. The dentist took his hand, pinched her nose, and covered her mouth. He was going to smother her into submission. When I saw that, I became frightened and started screaming and crying. About that time, my dad opened the door and saw the dentist trying to smother my sister. I saw my father reach with one hand, catch that dentist, hold him against the wall, and say, "If you ever touch my children again, you'll never be a dentist again, I can assure you."

He dropped him, and we walked out. That was the first time. There was a third characteristic: self-sufficiency and mastery, defined as patriarchal dominion over a household of dependents. In other words, the man was the head of his house. He had his children under control; if they had slaves, they were under control. A fourth characteristic was a willingness to use violence if he perceived that his honor, reputation, integrity, or honesty had been challenged.

Here is the second time I saw my father become violent. There was a big controversy in the farming community, though I do not remember what it was. All the farmers in that community went to the courthouse, and the courtroom was packed. My father and I were sitting in the back. The county agent stood behind the rostrum speaking, and he publicly called my father a liar. I saw my dad stand up. When he stepped into the aisle, he walked straight toward the county agent. Before my father reached him, within ten feet, the county agent said, “No, no, no, no.”

“It was not Mr. Weaver that lied. I'm the liar. I'm the one that lied. Mr. Weaver didn't lie.” When he said that, Dad turned around, went back to his seat, and sat down. That was a code of honor in the old South. Men of every rank believed that honor was required and that you were not going to let someone simply destroy your testimony, integrity, and honesty.

North Carolinian William Pettigrew gave this advice to his younger brother: “As far as it can be done, we should live peaceably with our associates. But as we cannot always do so, it is necessary

occasionally to resist. And when our honor demands it, resistance should be done with courage." That reminds us of Romans chapter 12, verse 18: "As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Notice the qualification: "As much as lieth in you"—there are some men you cannot live peaceably with. But as much as you can, live peaceably with all men. Southern men have always been fighters.

I don't care which war you study—World War I, World War II, the Korean conflict, or Vietnam—you will find more men from the South than from any other section of the country. Alexander Solzhenitsyn said, "A decline in courage may be the most striking feature that an outside observer notices in the West today. The Western world has lost its civic courage. Such a decline in courage is particularly noticeable among the ruling intellectual elite, causing an impression of loss of courage by the entire society." Along with this is the loss of will in the West.

We cannot defend ourselves if we are not willing to die for anything. There is little such readiness—that is, to fight or to die—in a society raised in the cult of material well-being. The first thing an outsider notices in the West is a loss of courage. There was a Southern emphasis on honor, not just among men, but among women as well. The women cultivated a sense of femininity while the men cultivated trying to be a real gentleman. Wives demonstrated their femininity not only at home, but among their neighbors as well.

Robert E. Lee gave what he called a definition of a gentleman and a leader: "The forbearing use of power does not only form the touchstone, but the manner in which an individual enjoys certain advantages over others is the test of a true gentleman." There are people who are going to enjoy advantages over other people, and that is the touchstone of being a true gentleman.

"The power which the strong have over the weak, the magistrate over the unlettered, the experienced over the confiding, even the clever over the silly. The forbearing or inoffensive use of all this power or authority, or the total absence of it when the case admits it, will show the gentleman in a plain light. The gentleman does not needlessly or unnecessarily remind an offender of a wrong he may have committed against him. He can not only forgive, he can forget.

And he strives for that nobleness of self and mildness of character, which imparts sufficient strength to let the past be the past."

"A true gentleman of honor feels humbled himself when he cannot help but humbling others." Proverbs 29:23 says, "A man's pride shall bring him low, but honor upholds the humble in spirit." That is why the Bible says in Galatians 6:1, "If a brother be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Ladies, I am not going to leave you out. I want to give you what Varina Davis wrote on being a lady. Varina Davis was the wife of President Jefferson Davis. Although this is a little dated, the precepts are still here. She said, "A lady is simply someone who cares about herself and others. She sees that her garments are clean and neatly pressed. Her shoes are polished and every button is in place. She is neat and tidy even at the breakfast table and wishes to appear well to her own family. She keeps her hair clean and well-groomed and never puts her hand to her hair to rearrange it or to search for loose pins while others can see. A lady does not monopolize the conversation. She does not talk of herself or her affairs, but listens with well-simulated interest to a story that bores her."

This is the mark of good breeding. She does not sit apart with one or two friends, but makes a gentle effort to assure a good time for all with pleasant conversation. A lady does not say or do anything that will upset those around her or make them uncomfortable. She does not let any man kiss her or put his arm around her unless she is engaged to be married to him. Even then, she should be a little stingy with her favors.

When she brushes off her hat, she does not forget to brush away the cobwebs from her brain. She does not conclude that every man who has said something pleasant to her has fallen madly in love with her. A lady is possessed of refinement, which prevents her from fidgeting or playing with her handkerchief, umbrella, purse, or whatever may be in her hands. When she sits down, she remains quiet, her hands resting easily without movement, and her whole figure filled with repose.

She is calm, composed, and self-controlled at all times, yet there are no airs about her. These qualities keep her from talking and laughing loudly and prevent her from hurting anyone's feelings. A lady does not grow weary in well-doing, but encourages herself by trying to live up to the ideal woman. Proverbs 11:16 says, "A gracious woman retaineth honor, and a strong man retaineth riches." In the South, it was an honor for a man to be a man, and an honor for a woman to be a woman. When society, communities, or churches lose their honor, they lose the glue that holds them together.

## Southern Heritage: Birthright and Identity

You did not have only Southern hope; you had Southern honor. Thirdly, there is Southern heritage. Heritage is the status acquired by a person through birth. It is your birthright. We are born with our heritage; everything we have, we got from our ancestors. If you are a Southerner, you are simply a son of the South.

Many Northern people live around us, and some have bumper stickers that read, "I was not born in the South, but I got here as quickly as I could." You do not hear anybody retiring and moving up North; they always move down South. Your heritage is that which you are born with. A Southerner cannot help being Southern.

I never will forget when I was in the university, taking a class in voice and diction. Mr. Pratt, my teacher, was from the North. After one of my recitations, he said, “Mr. Weaver, you still have a southern accent.” It went all over me. I said, “Mr. Pratt, do you know why I have a southern accent?” He asked, “Why?” I said, “Because I was born in the South. I like my southern accent, and I’m planning on keeping it.”

I try to tell people how Southern I am. I do not care one thing about football, baseball, or basketball. I do not care anything about a ball. I do not watch football or baseball, and I do not even have a television. But if I pass a television in someone’s house or in a store and see the Atlanta Falcons playing a northern team, I want the Atlanta Falcons to win. The same is true with baseball. If I watch a UFC match and a Southerner is fighting a Northerner, I want the Southerner to win. If an American is fighting a Russian, I want the

American to win. If a Christian is fighting a pagan, I want the Christian to win.

Do you realize the psalmist said in Psalm 16:6, “The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage”? We do have a good heritage. He also said in Psalm 61:5, “For thou, Lord, hast heard my vows,” and, “Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name.” We have a heritage, not only as Southerners, but as Christians. You may say, “But I’m from the North.” You still have a heritage. It may not be as right as ours—but I am teasing. Regardless of where you were born, you have a heritage; and if you are a Christian, you have a real Christian heritage as well.

Major R. E. Wilson said, “If I ever disown or repudiate or apologize for the cause for which Lee fought and Jackson died, let the lightnings of heaven rend me and the scorn of all good men and true women be my portion. Sun, moon, stars all fall on me when I cease to love the Confederacy. ’Tis the cause and not the fate of the cause that is glorious.”

The war was not over slavery. Had nothing to do with it. Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, making it effectual January 1, 1863, though he wrote it in September 1862. If he was really concerned about slaves, why did he not make it effective in September instead of January? Why would he release all the slaves in the South, where he had no authority, while refusing to release the slaves in the North and in Southern places already conquered by the North? Lincoln himself testifies that the Emancipation Proclamation was nothing more than a military measure. Most people have never read it. The proclamation never freed one slave, not one.

Now consider Southern heritage, Southern honor, and Southern hope. N. B. Littlejohn sent his son off to fight the Yankees in the War of Northern Aggression. He gave him counsel that I doubt any living man today would give his son: “My son, I grasp your hand probably for the last time upon earth. You're going to meet the dangers and hardships consequent to a soldier's life. You may fill a soldier's grave. Let me impress upon your mind to never fill it dishonorably. Ever be at your post of duty, be an honor to our beloved Southland, go where your superiors order you, never turn your back upon the foe except when deemed necessary by your superior officers. Be true

to your God, yourself, and your country. Never bring reproach upon your beloved Southland and yourself. Never desert your country. And if necessary, die at your post of honor."

That was a father giving counsel to his son as he went off to fight. Henry Grady, editor of the Atlanta Constitution and the man after whom Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta is named, gave a speech before the New England Society in New York City on December 21, 1886. His address was on the New South. In concluding, he said: "The South has nothing for which to apologize. She believes that the late struggle between the states was war and not rebellion, revolution and no conspiracy. And that her convictions were just as honest as yours. I should be unjust to the dauntless spirit of the South and to my own convictions if I did not make this plain in your presence. The South has nothing to take back."

In my native town of Athens, Georgia, is a monument that crowns its central hill. That's a Confederate monument. A plain white shaft, deep cut into its shining side, is a name dear to me above all the names of men: that of a brave and simple man who died a brave and simple faith. Not for all the glories of New England, from Plymouth Rock all the way, would I exchange the heritage he left me in that soldier's death. To the foot of that I shall send my children's children to reverence him who ennobled their name with his heroic blood.

What did he say? He said, "I don't care about your Plymouth Rock. I don't care about all this thing. I'm going to send my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren to that Confederate monument."

Why would he do that? The answer is because he understood what the South was fighting for. The South was indeed fighting for independence and for truth and righteousness. In fact, the Confederate soldiers were fighting to prevent the very thing that we have today: a humanistic, godless government that seeks to control every area of our lives. That's exactly why they were fighting.

Robert L. Dabney, who was a Presbyterian pastor and a theologian, he was also A. D. Kemp, Chief of Staff to Stonewall Jackson, was speaking at the commencement of Hampden-Sydney College in 1882. By this time, everybody was talking about the New

South. Listen to what he says: "It behooves the New South in dismissing the animosities of the past to see to it that they retain all that was true in its principles or ennobling in its example. There are those pretending to belong to this company who exclaim, 'Let us bury the dead past. The issues are all antiquated and have no more practical significance. Let us forget the passions of the past. We're in a new world. It's new questions alone now that concern us.' I rejoin," he says, "be sure that the former issues are dead before you really bury them. There are issues that cannot die without the death of the people, of their honor, their civilization and their greatness. Take care that you do not bury too much while burying the dead past, that you do not bury the inspiring memories of the great patriots whose actions, whether successful or not, are the eternal glory of your race and your section, the influence of their virtues, the guiding precedence of their histories. Will you bury the names and memories of a Jackson and Lee and their noble army of martyrs? Will you bury true history whose years are those of the God of truth?"

You cannot bury history. History is nothing more than God's eternal decree coming to pass in time. When you begin to throw away your hope and your honor and your heritage, you're destroying everything that will make the foundation for community.

There's one other, and that is Southern hospitality. Do you realize the South is the most friendly and the most hospitable section of the entire country? All Southerners speak to each other. It doesn't matter whether we know anybody or not. I drive down the road and pass people on tractors, and they're waving. You can't pass an automobile or walk on the sidewalk without someone speaking to you. Black or white, it doesn't matter. They either nod their head, wave, or speak; they say something.

I had an aunt who lived in Toledo, Ohio, most of her life. When her husband, my uncle, retired, they moved within a few miles of where we lived. My aunt could not get over the fact that everyone spoke to her. They did not know her, but they would wave and speak to her. She told me one day, “I can’t get over the fact that everybody speaks to me.”

She said, “Up north where I’m from, if someone speaks to you that you don’t know, you run.” I said, “Well, if you ran down here, you’d

run yourself to death, because everybody speaks to everybody." Southerners are known for their hospitality. They love fellowship, barbecues, get-togethers, reunions, and the company of family and friends.

When I was a boy, we would go to church on Sunday morning, and some family would come home with us after church, eat Sunday dinner with us, spend Sunday afternoon with us, eat supper with us, and go back to church on Sunday night. That was not every now and then; it was every Sunday. I always wanted it to be somebody with children, so I would have somebody to play with. I never could figure out why adults wanted to take a nap on Sunday afternoon until I grew up.

If you were at our house at dinnertime, you ate with us. When Alice and I got married, we would come home to visit and sit down to a meal with people we had never seen before. It might have been a salesman or whoever happened to be there. If you were there at dinnertime, you simply ate with us. It was that simple.

Southerners shared what little they had. Robert E. Lee had called General Richard Ewell for a council and invited General Ewell to stay and have supper with him. General Ewell said, "No, I can't stay. I've got to go." Lee insisted that Ewell take his supper and eat it on his horse as he rode back to his men. Ewell took Lee's supper, and as he rode off, he opened the little bag in which it was kept and found two small cold sweet potatoes. That was it. Sweet potato was one of Robert E. Lee's favorite foods, but that was all he was going to eat, and he gave it to General Ewell.

On another occasion, General Lee was in Petersburg at the siege there. He went to a Christmas dinner, and his hostess was fairly well off. She served turkey, and General Lee was embarrassed when his hostess called him hoarding his turkey and not eating it. She asked whether there was something wrong with the turkey. He replied that he wanted to save his portion so that he could carry it to one of his staff officers who had been sick and had eaten nothing but cornbread and sweet potato coffee. Lee was doing without his meat so he could give it to a sick staff officer.

When Lee got back to his men, within a couple of days, a barrel full of turkeys arrived from the hostess. When they unpacked it, there was a turkey for General Lee and each of his staff officers. General Lee took his turkey and said, "Well, I would like my turkey to be given to the men in the hospital so they will have something nourishing to eat." He put his turkey back in the barrel, and when all the other staff officers saw that, they put their turkeys back as well. The men in the hospital got the whole barrel full of turkeys.

Here was a man sacrificing, a man willing to give. The Bible commands you in Romans 12 and verse 13, "Distribute to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality." In 1 Peter 4 and verse 9, we are commanded, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." Pastors are particularly to be examples of hospitality. In 1 Timothy 3 and verse 2, the Bible says, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality." Titus 1 verse 8 says he must be a lover of hospitality.

Southerners are naturally hospitable. They love to share the blessings of God that He gives them. In the old South, a lot of homes had travelers' rooms. In Georgia, I will be glad to show you one. A traveler's room was attached to the side of a house and contained a bed, a washbowl, fresh water, towels, and linen. Anybody riding down the road who needed a place to stay could tie and unsaddle a horse, tie a buggy, or even sometimes a car. They could wash, sleep, and stay there that night, then usually have breakfast with the people who lived there, though they did not even know them. The house in which I was raised from the age of seven had a traveler's room. You can find that in 2 Kings chapter 4, where a traveler's room was built for Elijah the prophet. That was simply part of the hospitality in the South.

Anybody was welcome to stay in that room. When I was a boy, I saw my parents help innumerable people. If a farmer lost a barn or a house, the community would come together and rebuild it. If someone was sick or died, the people would come together, take care of the sick person's chores until he recovered, and prepare food. When someone died, they would prepare food for a week or so, so the family would not have to do it.

Years ago, when I was pastoring in Jesup, Georgia, we had a neighbor who had a stroke. He was a farmer, and his land joined ours. I told his wife, "If Glenn wants me to, I'll take care of the crops until he's better." My girls and I plowed those fields, worked them, pulled the weeds, and did everything until he got better and could do it himself.

How much money did I get? I did not get anything, and I did not ask for anything. He was a neighbor and a friend. For several months, we took care of those crops. That was simply the way it was. When I was about seven years old, we had a rabid fox in our community. I remember twenty to twenty-five farmers sitting on our porch with their weapons, waiting for that rabid fox to come around.

I had a little dog named Sandy. The reason he was called Sandy is that he was bred like a fox. I was sitting on the porch listening to all those men talk when, all of a sudden, a fox came right up to the steps where the men were sitting. Several of them grabbed their weapons, and Daddy said, “No, no.” He looked back at me and said, “Son, you better get your dog. We almost shot him.” I said, “Dad, my dog is in my lap. That’s the fox.” Several of them shot. Finally, they were shooting in the dark by that time, but they found him dead the next day. Somebody got him. Here was one fox, and twenty to twenty-five men came together.

When there was a drought in the community, everybody got together and prayed. I have seen my father go around to all the other farmers; in fact, I would ride with him. He would say, “Look, we’re having a prayer meeting at the church tomorrow night at seven o’clock. You’re invited if you’d like to come.” All the farmers would get there and pray that God would be merciful and send the rain. When we had a meeting like this while I was a boy, there would be cottage prayer meetings. They usually started a couple of months before the meeting: every Friday night for two months, we would meet at someone’s house, sing and pray, and ask God’s blessing upon the meeting. I have seen as many as fifty and sixty people at a time at the prayer meeting.

The last time, one of the men who was there, who played the guitar and led the singing, turned out to be a preacher. Isn’t that amazing? Everybody came. You didn’t have to beg people to come;

everybody simply came, and they prayed. Why? We thought alike, believed alike, and had the same culture and heritage.

Bishop Benjamin Whipple was born in Minnesota in 1822. He toured the South in 1843 and 1844 to regain his health because of the weather up in Minnesota. In his diary, on November the 25th from St. Augustine, Florida, this northerner wrote: “The people of the southern states are generally much more hospitable than the northerners. And the difference must be attributed to the fact that they’re not such money-loving people. You do not see the lean, the low, mean, cupidity, that base selfishness, so striking a characteristic of one portion of the restless Yankee brethren.”

"I am more and more convinced that most of the exaggerated stories of abolitionists exist only in the imagination. And from personal observation, I know that the efforts of the abolitionists in the North have only served to injure the slave and to destroy the kind and fraternal feelings which should exist between the Northern and Southern states." He says there is a vast difference between the people of the South and the people of the North.

Hope, honor, heritage, and hospitality have always been the underpinnings of every community and every church, and the truth is still that today. A number of people may live in a geographical area, and a number may come to church from that area, but that does not make a community. Many do not even speak the same language; language can divide as easily as anything else.

Read Judges chapter 12, where 42,000 men were killed simply because they could not say Shibboleth. In 1883, Sitting Bull, a Lakota Sioux chief, was guest of honor at the opening ceremonies for the Northern Pacific Railroad. When it was his turn to speak, he said in the Lakota language, "I hate all white people.

“You are thieves and liars. You’ve taken away our land and made us outcasts.” A quick-thinking interpreter told the crowd that the chief was happy to be there and looked forward to peace and prosperity with the white people, and Sitting Bull received a standing ovation. I have news for you: it helps to know what somebody is saying.

If you want community, you need hope, honor, heritage, hospitality, and the same language. Do you realize that all these things will come together in eternity? Our hope will become reality, but we will still have honor, heritage, and hospitality, because our Lord provides everything.

The Bible says that we are to edify one another and comfort one another. You cannot do that without community or faith. If you have ever wondered why we are so divided—not just nationally, but even in our states and counties—and why we live in a fractured, disjointed, and apathetic society, the answer is that we no longer have biblical communities. We no longer have people who will work together, pray together, comfort each other, and edify each other. We no longer have any commonality, and where there is no commonality, there is no community.

You need hope, honor, heritage, and hospitality. Those things undergirded community in the Old South and in the Confederacy, and they are the same truths that undergird community in our lives today. When we learn biblically what it means to be a neighbor, it will change our lives. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves, and we cannot do that without community.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to You this day. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, teach us and help us. May we do as Jeremiah said, asking for the old paths and the old ways wherein is the truth. Help us to walk in those old paths and old ways, and help us, Father, to honor You in all that we say and do. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen. Amen.

CHAPTER 18

# Pretend Christians

November 9, 2019

## Introduction: The Prevalence of Pretend Christians

In John 8, beginning with verse 30, the Bible says, “As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Although I am not necessarily going to expound these verses, I am going to explain them and then come back to them before I end.

Your pastor said in Sunday school this morning that he had heard and read that about 70 or 80 percent of professing church members are in reality lost. Way back when R. A. Torrey was preaching—that was in the time of Dwight L. Moody—R. A. Torrey said that 90 percent of most church members are lost. A modern-day evangelist has said the same thing.

I remember a pastor in Ohio who had a huge church, 5,000 members. He made this statement: “If I can get 500 of them to heaven, I’ll be happy.” Now, he couldn’t get anybody to heaven, but I

understood what he meant. What he was saying was that 90 percent of his church was lost. And so I have come up with this message on pretend Christians. I usually begin by saying, “I’m so tired of pretend Christians.”

Evidently, there are many professing Christians—church members, anyhow—that believe Christianity is a game. They merely pretend to believe, to be Christians. They pretend to believe the Bible. They pretend to worship God. They pretend to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They pretend to be obedient, and they pretend to submit to the word of God.

In Matthew chapter 21, beginning with verse 28 and reading through verse 31, you will see exactly where I am going with this, because our Lord Himself gives this illustration. Hold John chapter 8, and look in Matthew chapter 21. Our Lord says, “But what think ye?”

## The Parable of the Two Sons

"A certain man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not. But afterwards he repented and went. He came to the second and said, Likewise, and he answered and said, I go, sir, and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" They said unto him, "The first." Jesus said unto them, "Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." So the first son, when the father said, "Go work in my vineyard," he said, "No, I will not do it." But then he repented and went. He represented the harlots and the publicans.

The father came to the second son and said, "Go work in my vineyard." The second son said, "I go, sir," and went not. Therefore our Lord looked at those Pharisees and said, "The harlots and the publicans go into the kingdom of God before you." When you read this verse, you find that pretend Christians are usually very nice and very mannerly: "I go, sir." They pretend that they are actually going to do the work, but they do not do so.

Evidently, many professing Christians, many adults, have never really grown up. When we were children, we played pretend games. I remember playing cops and robbers.

There are no longer any felons in the state of California. They are now called "justice-involved persons." That is the politically correct lingo. I saw two cartoons mocking and making fun of California. In one, a little kid said to other little boys, "Who wants to play cops and justice-involved persons?" One little boy answered, "Say what?" Another cartoon showed a man behind bars labeled "a justice-involved person," a man in a hospital bed labeled "a medically involved person," and a homeless man sleeping on the street labeled "a plastic involved person."

When we think about cops and robbers, those were pretend games. Cowboys and Indians and Yankees and Confederates were pretend games. We knew, when we were playing those games, that they were merely pretend; we were not really cowboys and Indians, cops and robbers, or Yankees and Confederates.

## The Pharisees as Pretenders

But you know, as we matured, we quit playing those pretend games. However, in the religious world, many still pretend. The Pharisees were notorious for pretending. They pretended that they were righteous, that they kept the law, and that they were holy. You know what our Lord said regarding the Pharisees? In Matthew 23 and verse 14, our Lord said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you shall receive the greater damnation." In Mark chapter 12 and verse 40, he said it again: "Which devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers, these shall receive the greater damnation."

The word "pretense" is from the Greek word prophasis, which literally means a cloak, a show, a pretext, something done under color, or a pretended cause. Their long prayers were a cloak or cover for their covetousness and wickedness in devouring widows' houses. Do you realize that the law of God says in Exodus chapter 22 and verse 22, "You shall not afflict the widow or fatherless child"? In Deuteronomy chapter 10, verse 18, speaking of God, it says, "He does

execute judgment for the fatherless and the widows and loveth the strangers in giving him food and raiment." In Deuteronomy 24 and verse 17, God said, "Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger nor the fatherless nor take a widow's raiment to pledge." Psalm 68, verse 5, tells us that God is a father to the fatherless and a judge of the widows, and that God is holy in his habitation.

Although the Pharisees pretended to keep and obey God's law, they used their long prayers as a pretense while devouring the houses of widows and orphans. Their pretense was nothing more than a cloak for their covetousness and wickedness. They willingly devoured that which God said they must not. Hence, the same thing is going on today in our churches. Let me give you an illustration. Plenty of individuals will use Christianity or religion as a cover. For instance, in the San Antonio Express and the Houston Chronicle, written on February the 19th this year, 2019, here is the headline.

## Modern Examples and Antinomianism

"Hundreds of Southern Baptist church leaders and workers have been accused of sexual misconduct over the past 20 years." The article went on to say that some of the victims were as young as three years of age. However, most of them were teenagers. Independent Baptists have also had their sins exposed over time. There have been men, pastors, that have been accused of such. Some I knew, some are now dead, some are now in prison, and some are still facing prison.

What was it that made the Pharisees pretend? In reality, it was their antinomianism. That is, they were actually against God's law. They pretended to be religious. They pretended to be right. And may I point out, it is exactly the same problem that we're having today in our churches. It's antinomianism. People are against God's law. They're not interested in following God's law. They're not interested in obeying God's law. And so they just simply pretend. And now, just like there are pretend Christians, there are also pretend preachers.

In Philippians chapter one, the apostle Paul is in prison, and something is happening while he is there: "But I would have you understand, brethren, that the things which happened to me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds

in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places. And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds"—that is, by his imprisonment—"are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

## Pretend Preachers and How to Identify Them

Then he makes this statement: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill. The one preached Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds. But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, and ye will rejoice."

So the Apostle Paul said there's some out there that are preaching. They're just pretending. The reason they're pretending is they think they're going to add affliction to my bonds. They think it's going to be worse for me. But they're just pretending, and I don't care, he said, as long as they are preaching Christ. He said, that's what works for me. So it really doesn't bother me one way or the other.

How can you tell a pretend preacher from a real preacher? The answer is twofold. You can tell who is a real preacher not only by the message, but also by the messenger. A real preacher will expound, explain, and apply the Word of God. I have often said that I do not understand these preachers who never really teach the Scripture, never explain it, and never expound it. It must be an awful lot of work for a man to speak for thirty or forty-five minutes and never use the Scripture. I do not know what all he can say, but the Bible says in Isaiah 8:20, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” If a man is not expounding, explaining, and applying the Scripture, he is not a real preacher.

The second way you can tell is by his manner, because his life will back up his message. In Matthew 7:15, our Lord says, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” Here is a man who pretends to be a real preacher, but he is not; he is a ravening wolf. Our Lord said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or

figs of thistles?" The answer is no. "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." You can tell a real preacher, first, by the message, and second, by the messenger, because his life will back up what he preaches.

There are many who have failed to hear and heed what our Lord said. In Matthew 7:21 He says, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?"—that is, preached in His name—"and in thy name have cast out devils? In thy name have done many wonderful works?"

"Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Note what He says: "I never knew you." Not, "I knew you and forgot you." I just never, ever knew you.

What we live and how we live is oftentimes more important than what we say. Do you realize that a profession has never, ever saved anybody? Anybody can make a profession. It is not a profession that saves; it is Jesus Christ who saves.

## The Nature of True Salvation: Continued Obedience

The truth of the matter is that I have known, and still know, preachers who preached for years and then God saved them. One is a very dear friend of mine in Alabama. He preached for a number of years before he was actually saved.

Now, listen very carefully. We are not perfect; we are not sinless. However, a real, genuine child of God wants to bring his life into conformity to the Word of God. He wants to be holy. He wants to obey, he wants to change, and he wants to live as God would direct him. I can point it out and proclaim it: it is here. If you are a child of God, I can assure you, this is God's will for your life, because He says so.

Look in Romans 8, and notice, if you would please, verse 29. Watch carefully. The Bible says, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Do you realize it is God's will for you, if you are a child of God, to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ? It is God's will for you to be more like Jesus Christ every day. Jesus Christ was the perfect, obedient Son of God. And now He says, It is My will that you be conformed to My Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So when people try to pretend, it is a scam. But when you try to scam people, usually you get caught. You can scam me and you can scam others, but you cannot scam God. You know what the Bible says in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 19? Listen carefully: "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his, and let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The Lord knows those who are His, and everyone who names the name of Christ must depart from iniquity.

The word "iniquity" is a very interesting word. The Greek word dikaios is the word for righteousness. When you put an alpha, or an "a," in front of it, it negates it: adikaios. That means unrighteousness. The word "iniquity" there is unrighteousness. Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from unrighteousness. Well, you ask, what is unrighteousness? First John 3:4 tells you, because the Bible says very clearly, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law." So, when you commit iniquity, you are transgressing the law. When you transgress the law, you are committing iniquity or committing sin.

You remember that question Paul asked in Romans 6, verses 1 and 2? He asked, "What shall we say then to these things?" Listen carefully: "What shall we say then to these things? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" If we truly died in Jesus Christ, if we were truly buried in Jesus Christ, and if we were truly raised in the newness of life in Jesus Christ, how in the world can we continue what we were before? It is impossible. It is impossible, because

newness of life is in direct opposition to the old man in Adam. We are not sinless.

We are not sinlessly perfect. I never will forget, years ago, I went into a dry cleaner establishment with a suit I needed cleaned. I knew that the professing owner was a Christian, or at least he professed to be one. He was standing behind the counter, and I said, “Isn’t it wonderful to have your sins forgiven?”

He looked at me and said, “I don’t know. I haven’t sinned in 20 years.” When I picked my mouth up off the floor, I said, “Well, you just broke your record because you just did.” The Bible says, “He that saith I have no sin is a liar and the truth is not in him.” We are not sinlessly perfect, but I want to show you something.

Look in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 3. This passage has really confounded a lot of people, and many try to use it to teach sinless perfection. Beginning with verse 6, the Bible says, “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.”

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

When you look at that passage, you have to say, “Well, I’ve sinned, so that must mean I’m not a Christian.” No, that is not what the passage means at all. Every one of these verbs is a present active indicative in the Greek. It means something that is continuing. So let us read it this way: “Whosoever is continually abiding in Him is not continually sinning. Whosoever is continually sinning hath not seen him, neither known him.”

"Little children, let no man deceive you. He that continually is doing righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that is continually committing sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God is

not continually committing sin, for his seed continually remains in him, and he cannot continually sin because he is born of God." And then he says, "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever is not continually doing righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

Here is the deciding factor between whether someone is a child of God or a child of the devil. The child of God is continually changing his life, continually bringing it into conformity to God. He may be a sinner, but he is not continually sinning. He is not doing it over and over.

In 1 John 2, verses 1 and 2, he says, "My little children, these things I write unto you that you sin not." I do not want you to sin, "but if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." If John were teaching sinless perfection, why would he say, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father"? Your goal is not to sin. That is for sure. But you are going to sin, and when you do, we have an advocate with the Father.

All of these passages are in the present tense. It is like Romans 6 and verse 12: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof." The Bible does not say, "Let not sin therefore be in your mortal bodies." It is in our mortal bodies. But it says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." You do not have to obey sin if you are a Christian. Sin is no longer our Lord. Jesus Christ is our Lord. Sin is not on the throne; Jesus Christ is on the throne.

In 1 John 2:3–4, we see the same truth. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” Literally, it says, “And hereby we do know him if we are continually keeping his commandments.” “He that saith, I know him, and is not continually keeping his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.”

Here is a man who says he is a Christian and yet constantly and consistently violates the law of God, going contrary to God and contrary to the Scripture. God says that man is a liar. He is not a Christian. That does not mean Christians are perfect or sinless, but it does mean that the general character of our life is one of obedience.

## The Wise and Foolish Builders

Christianity is not some off-and-on sport. There is no season to Christianity. It is not fall, therefore it is time for Christianity, or spring, therefore it is time for Christianity. Christianity is twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It is not being good and going to church on Sunday while living like a heathen Monday through Saturday. There is no time off for Christianity.

Notice what our Lord says in Matthew 7:24: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock.” “And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon the rock.”

“And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell. And great was the fall of it.”

Our Lord said, here is the difference: one hears His sayings and does them, while another hears His sayings and does not do them. Obedience to the truth and the application of the truth testify that we are truly His. We cannot be pretend Christians if we are constantly and continually bringing our lives into conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ and His word.

## Why Some Fall Away: The Flesh, the World, and Family Breakdown

Why do some professed believers who have seemingly been faithful to His Word suddenly forsake and cast off the truth? How could a real, genuine Christian turn his back upon Christ, act wickedly, refuse to repent, and disobey the Word of God? How can one seemingly turn off every vestige of truth that he has ever heard and learned, and do that which is contrary?

There are several answers. One is because of the flesh. Look in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 5 and verse 19. Our Lord said that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God. This is one reason that we die, because our flesh is wicked and wrong. Many

times Christians blame things on the devil when they are the work of their own 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.” Everything mentioned in these verses is a work of the flesh.

The devil does not have to tempt you to get drunk; that is the flesh. He does not have to tempt you to commit adultery and fornication; that is the work of the flesh. He does not have to tempt you into idolatry; that is the work of the flesh. There is another reason: the enticing, seducing, and tempting power of this world. The truth of the matter is that what does not appeal to the flesh, the world comes along and says, “Well, look, I’ll give you something.”

John Bunyan, if you've never read his book, Pilgrim's Progress, I would encourage you to do so. That book is only second to the Bible in sales. There is a character in Pilgrim's Progress by the name of Mr. Worldly Wise Man. He's advising Christian contrary, of course, to Evangelist, who's trying to tell him rightly. One author said this about Mr. Worldly Wise Man: "Mr. Worldly Wiseman is a citizen from the city of Carnal Policy, which tells us that it is a place that is ruled by fleshly strategies meant to damn its citizens to the darkest confines of eternal punishment. This man, Mr. Worldly Wise Man, attacks the scriptures, the book that Christian is holding in his hand. Mr. Worldly Wise Man is a smooth, cool soul dressed in the garb of a pastor who is married up with the world. He works in a very seducing way toward Christian, and that sometimes is the most deceptive of all means. Usually it is not outright heretical views that entrap, but the subtle seducing spirits. All his actions are exactly the opposite of the honesty and purity of Evangelist, who is doing the real nitty-gritty of pastoral work. Mr. Worldly Wise Man is a deceitful man who is constantly swayed by changing winds of popular doctrine and uses that influence very effectively on the spiritually naive." Mr. Worldly Wise Man is constantly using not only popular doctrine but political correctness to sway the spiritually naive.

Do you know why Demas forsook Paul? Do you know why Demas forsook Christ? The Bible tells you in 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 10, Paul wrote, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." The world had an appeal to Demas, and he was willing to turn his back upon the Apostle Paul and upon Jesus Christ for the world.

It is not just the allurements of the world; it is also the philosophy of the world. We are inundated with humanistic attitudes, ideas, and dispositions. Worldly philosophy is directly opposed to Christian philosophy and to the Word of God. Many fall prey because they rationalize their thinking and say, “Well, everybody is doing it,” or “Everybody believes it,” or “Everybody has this. Everybody’s walking this way.”

You know what the Bible says in Exodus chapter 23 and verse 2? “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.” Just because someone is jumping off a cliff and committing suicide does not mean that you have to do it. Just because a hundred do it does not mean that you have to do it. “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.”

When you think of feminism, transgenderism, socialism, communism, anarchy, and pedophilia, these things are not only being excused by professing Christians today; many times they are being embraced by professing Christians. Why? I suppose there are many answers, but I am going to give you one. I believe it is because there is a breakdown in the family.

The family is the most fundamental unit there is. Have you ever stopped to think that God created only three institutions? He created the family, which is a ministry of education; the church, which is a ministry of grace; and the state, or civil government, which is a ministry of justice. Which is the most fundamental? The family, because without families, you do not have a church or a state. When the family goes, so does the church, the civil government, and society.

There is a breakdown in the family, and what we see today in feminism is women demanding an equal position with the husband or above the husband. Let me explain something to you. God created Adam and God created Eve. Man and woman both have equal

standing before God: my wife and I are both creatures of God, and both can be redeemed by Jesus Christ. Women can be saved just as equally as men can be saved. But equal standing before our Creator, and equal salvation in redemption, do not mean that we are positionally the same.

There is a difference in positions. Every family has to have a head. Every body has to have a head. If you do not have a head, you are dead. It is just that simple. But if you have two heads, you are a freak; something is wrong somewhere. There can only be one head.

God has an order, and it is plain and spelled out in 1 Corinthians 11:3. There is no way in the world that we can misunderstand this. The Bible says, "But I would have you know"—this is something you must know—"I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." So God has it like this: God, Christ, man, and woman. Here is God, here is Christ, here is man, and here is woman. That is God's order, His created order.

I have heard people rail against male patriarchy, and against white male patriarchy. If you have been listening to the news, you have heard people say that the problem in this country is white males. But if you do not like God's orderly way, and if you do not like the way God established things, your argument is not with me; it is with God. God says that He is the head, then Christ, then man, and then the woman.

Ephesians 5:22 says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord." Please underline that "as unto the Lord." Notice those words. Part of the wife's submission to her husband is her submission to the Lord. If she is not submitted to the Lord, she is not going to be submitted to her husband. If she is submitted to her husband, she is submitted to the Lord. That is what he said. The passage continues: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church and he's the savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

Biblical headship does not mean that the woman is inferior, nor does it mean that submission is wicked or wrong. If I were to go to work for BJ, he hired me. Does that mean I can tell him what to do? No. He has to tell me what to do. He is the head and the employer; I would be the employee. There is submission even in business. You cannot escape submission.

Although women are equally the creation of God and can be redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ, positionally we are different. As you read through the Bible, notice that Jesus Christ is called the servant of the Father. One term that He uses of Himself repeatedly is "the sent one": "I am the sent one." Just because Jesus Christ was a servant of the Father and was sent by the Father does not mean that He was inferior to the Father. He said in John 10:30, "I and my Father are one." Submission is not wicked, inferiority, or a denial of equality. The submission of a wife to her husband is not a denial of her person and worth; it is evidence of her submission to God. It is her glory and honor to represent the church of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ Himself was in submission to His parents.

Do you confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is God? He is God in the flesh. Jesus Christ has always been God, always will be God, and there never was a time when He was not. In Luke 2, Jesus Christ was found at the temple answering questions, and His parents returned and found Him there. Luke 2:51 says, "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Jesus Christ was far superior to His parents. He created them, and as God, He was omniscient. But as a child, He submitted to His parents.

Submission is not sin or wickedness, not by any stretch of the imagination whatsoever. Jesus Christ was in submission to the Father.

Just as the wife is to be in submission to the husband, the husband is to be in submission to Jesus Christ. The husband who is in submission to Jesus Christ will love his wife the way Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. That is why the Bible says in Ephesians 5 and verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." The husband who

will not submit to Jesus Christ and will not love his wife and family the way Christ loved the church will end up destroying himself and his family.

The children are supposed to be in submission to their parents, the wife in submission to the husband, and the husband in submission to Jesus Christ. There is no way that you can escape submission. Everyone is in submission.

But we have reached the point in our society where, oftentimes, wives, if they cannot get their way, will leave. They will depart, forsake their husband and home, and, in their claim of positional equality, desert their families and try to live an independent role. Do you understand that it is not just the allurements of the world; it is the thinking of the world?

Feminism is totally contrary to the word of God. If your thinking, logic, and reasoning are not in conformity to the word of God, the only other option is that they are in conformity to the world. May I remind you what our Lord said in 1 Corinthians 1, verses 18-20? He said, "For the preaching of the cross to them that are perishing is foolishness. But unto us who are being saved, it is the power of God."

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

So there is the wisdom of the world and there is the wisdom of God. There is the philosophy of the world and there is the philosophy of the Bible.

You see, everybody has problems. Husbands and wives have problems. Fathers and mothers have problems. Children have problems. I've often said, I never ever have a problem with problems. Do you realize that every problem has a solution? Every problem can be worked out. I have a problem with people—getting people to do what's necessary to work out the problem. Do you realize, if you want to do what's right, I can help you? But if you want to do what's wrong, I can't help you. Usually what happens is you've

got somebody who wants to do what's right and you've got somebody who wants to do what's wrong.

## The Proof of Genuine Faith: Continuing in Christ

And there's a grave danger when you and I fail to submit in the areas of our life that we must submit. It's just that simple. There's a grave danger if you understand the importance of obedience and the importance of bringing your life into conformity with Jesus Christ.

If you've been keeping up with the news, you've heard about some preachers who've now turned and become an atheist. I heard one in gospel music—I don't listen to most of that stuff—but one who was supposedly high in gospel music left the ministry, left his wife, left his family, and declared to be a sodomite.

Now, my question is this: how can that happen? Let me answer it. First John 2:19 answers it: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.”

Now, please look at that: “They went out from us, but they were not of us.” Why did they leave? They were never converted to begin with. “For if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us, but they went out that it might be made manifest, they were not of us.”

The proof that you have ever savingly believed is that you continue to believe. And the proof that you've ever savingly repented is that you continue to repent. That does not mean that we're perfect, but it does mean that we're not going to leave the faith. We're not going to leave the house of God, the work of God, or the worship.

The true disciples of Jesus Christ continue in His word. Our Lord said to those who believed on His name in John chapter eight, “If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed.” In other words, “If you continue in my words, then you are truly my disciples.” If you do not continue in His word, you are a pretend Christian.

Look in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter five, verses eight and nine. We are talking about Jesus Christ: “Though he were a Son, yet

learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. He is the author of eternal salvation to all those that obey Him.

Obedience is mandatory. If you are a child of God, you are going to continue to obey Him and follow Him, change your life, and keep bringing your life into conformity to His word. Obedience is the evidence of sonship and salvation. If there is no obedience, or at least no constant, continued obedience, it is evidence of being a pretend Christian. Jesus Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all those that obey Him.

Are you perfect? No. Am I perfect? No. Do I sin? Yes. Do you sin? Yes. But when we sin, if we belong to Jesus Christ, when we see it, hear it, or know it, we turn from it.

By his grace and by his power, we oftentimes lament fiercely because of what we have done. We do it foolishly, ignorantly, and presumptuously, but we do it because we are sinners. Yet we are saved sinners. When God shows us our sin, we turn from it; we will not continue in it.

Someone has said it like this: The difference between a hog and a sheep is very simple. When a sheep falls into a mud puddle, he gets up, gets out as quickly as he can, and gets clean. When a hog falls in it, he wallows in it, loves it, and enjoys it. So if you can sin and continue to sin, there is something wrong.

He became the author of eternal salvation to all those that obey Him. Our obedience may not be perfect, but it will be the general tenor of our lives, and it will be consistent. When we know what is wrong in our lives, we will be willing to repent, turn from those things, and bring our lives into conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word, your truth, and the reality of salvation and of bringing our lives into greater conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ and to his word. Help us to love thee, live for thee, and glorify thy name. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 19

# A Biblical Philosophy of History

December 15, 2012

## Introduction and God's Command to Remember

The Lord has been so gracious to me in the last couple of weeks. I have received more messages than I can shake a stick at, and I am really thankful. I do want you to pray that the Lord will help me. Someone called me a week or so ago and was in dire straits about some answers. I gave him all the answers, and I got to thinking that this really needs to be taught. So I worked on that and got it finished. Then something else came up, and I worked on that and got it finished. There are so many things that I am eager to preach and want to preach.

Today may be a little lengthy, so listen carefully. I will quote a lot of Scriptures, and some I will ask you to turn to. You may write them down. I want you really to grasp what I will be dealing with today. The message is entitled, “A Biblical Philosophy of History.” The subtitles are, “Is History Relevant?” and, “Why Should We Study History?” Basically, it is a biblical philosophy of history.

Notice what God commands in Deuteronomy chapter 32, beginning with verse 7: “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations, ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.”

There is indeed a biblical philosophy of history. History is not only necessary and relevant; it is absolutely necessary to understanding the eternal decree of God. We are told in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 11 that God has an eternal purpose, singular, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thus we refer to that as the eternal decree of God. His decree encompassed all things. There is absolutely nothing outside of the eternal decree of God. If anything can come to pass without God or without His divine decree, then God is not God. Whatever is beyond God and beyond the control of God, that thing would be God itself. We are forced, then, as Christians, to confess and acknowledge that there is absolutely nothing beyond God and His decree.

## The Eternal Decree of God and History

Since His decree was before the foundation of the world, it is indeed an eternal decree. You may pick up any theology book, especially systematic theology, and you will always find a section on the decrees of God. The Bible speaks of the decree of God. The reason we speak of the decrees of God is that we can only think in succession, one thought after another. God is not like that. To God, it is one thought, and that one thought encompasses and entails everything that has ever come to pass, that is present, and that will ever come to pass. God has decreed everything that comes to pass in time and history. Therefore, He is able to think one thought; it is that one decree of God that encompasses absolutely everything.

History is also linear, like a straight line. It has a beginning and an ending. Whenever you hear someone talk about history repeating itself, history is not cyclical or circular; it does not go round and round. The reason we keep repeating ourselves is not that history is cyclical, but that we do not listen and do not learn. We keep

committing the same sins and making the same errors; therefore, we still reap the same judgments. History is linear: it has a definite beginning, at creation, and a definite ending, at the end of the world. History is only applicable to us.

There is no past or future with God. With God, everything is one eternal present. We are concerned with the past, present, and future, but God knows the end from the beginning because He has decreed both of them; therefore, they are both one eternal present with God. Isaiah 46:10 says, "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." The Bible says, "Declaring the end from the beginning." And when you get to Acts 17 or Acts 15, in verse 18, we read, "Known unto God are all of His works from the beginning of the world." Everything God decreed in eternity comes to pass in time. We are concerned with the past, present, and future, but we must know our past in order to obey our Heavenly Father and understand that it is His eternal decree that comes to pass in time.

## The Bible as a History Book and the Command to Teach

Once it comes to pass in time, it becomes known as history. Look at Deuteronomy 32:7: "Remember the days of old. Consider the years of many generations. Ask thy father, and he will show thee. By elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."

God commands us to remember. We must remember, consider, ask, and be taught. God did something in time when He divided the nations their inheritance. Why did He do that? What does it mean? How does it apply to us? What are we to learn? What does it mean that God set the bounds of the people? The answer to all these questions can only be learned by studying history.

The Bible is a history book. Yes, there are twelve books of history in the Bible, but in reality the entire Bible is a history book, because the entire Bible speaks either about that which has come to pass or that which is going to come to pass in time. Once it comes to pass, it

will be history. The entirety of the Bible, since it will be fulfilled in time, is one big history book. God tells us that we must know, learn, and teach.

Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 78. Beginning with verse 1, God says: "Give ear, O my people, to my law. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us."

"We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done." Have all the wonderful works that God has done been recorded in Scripture? Of course not. God has done many wonderful works in providence that are not recorded here. Now let us watch. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children, that the generations to come might know them, even the children which shall be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.

Here, then, is a passage where we are commanded not to hide the things of God from our children, but to continue to teach them and tell them all of the wonderful works of God that He has done. Many of those wonderful works are recorded in the Bible; others are recorded in other history books, but we are required to teach them.

So let us ask the question: What is history? The word history is literally from the Greek, historia, and it is just about brought down from the Greek to English letter by letter. The word history literally means inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation.

## Definition and Purpose of History

Hence, history is the discovery, the collection, the organization, and the presentation of information about past events that enables one to make applications to present situations and present circumstances. An understanding of the past demonstrates the work of God in time. That work eventually becomes history. Notice what

our Lord says to the Pharisees in Matthew 21:32: “For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him.”

Now look at that verse very closely. The publicans and the harlots believed John; that is, they repented. And then our Lord says, “And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.” The publicans and the harlots believed John, but the Pharisees, when they had seen it, repented not.

Christ held the Pharisees accountable and responsible to profit from the work of God in the lives of other people. “And you, when you saw it”—in other words, here was something that they saw, knew was real and genuine, and knew was the work of God. He held them responsible to learn from what happened in the lives of others.

History teaches us exactly how God has worked in the lives of men and women in the past. There is no such thing as a division between secular history and religious history. All history is religious because God is its author, and it comes to pass in time. Nothing comes to pass in time except that which God has ordained. We are not merely to profit from the lives of men and women; we are also to profit from all the works of God in time.

## Learning from God's Judgments in Nature and Providence

Amos chapter 4 reminds us that God chastised Israel by drought, famine, locusts, plagues, war, and supernatural interventions, yet they did not repent. When God brought each judgment upon them in succession, He said, “Yet you've not returned unto Me, said the Lord.” God brought a judgment in time, which became history, and then said, “Yet you've not returned unto Me.” Was Israel not responsible to profit from what God had done to them in time? Are we not responsible to profit from what God did to Israel in time, knowing that if we commit the same sins and fail to repent, we will have the same judgments?

Are we responsible to profit from what God brings to pass in nature? He certainly held Israel responsible for that in Amos chapter 4. In Joel chapter 1, God sent plagues of locusts, caterpillars, and

palmer worms as His judgments. The crops were destroyed, devastated, and eaten up. Are we responsible to learn from crop failures, agricultural disasters, and insect plagues? The answer is yes. There is no love, chance, fate, or fortune in a world ruled by God. Nothing comes to pass in time except that which God has ordained in eternity. When God brings it to pass in time, it is for a specific reason.

Consider all this weather: droughts, floods, and heat. Job 37:9 says, "Out of the south cometh the whirlwind, and cold out of the north." The passage continues, "By the breath of God, frost is given, and the breadth of the waters is straightened. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud. He scattereth his bright cloud. It is turned round about by his counsels that they may do whatsoever he commendeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. He causeth it."

Drought, frost, hail, whatever it may be, He causes it to come, whether for correction, for His land, or for mercy. Are we responsible to learn from meteorological and climatological events? The answer is yes. Nothing happens by chance. Whatever weather God sends is either for a blessing, for a chastisement, or for mercy.

Our word meteorology is straight from the Greek as well. Meteoros is the Greek word meaning lofty, high, above, or in the sky. Logia is logic or study. Meteorology, then, is simply the logical study of that which comes from above, or that which comes from the sky.

Does God control that which comes from the sky? The answer is yes. Jeremiah 14:22 asks, "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rains?" The word vanities here means idols. Thus, he is asking whether there are any among the idols of the Gentiles that can cause rain.

"Or can the heavens give showers? Art not thou he, O Lord our God? Therefore we will wait upon thee, for thou hast made all things." What is Jeremiah saying? Only God controls the weather. Only God can give rain and send water from the sky. The study and teaching of history will always be important because it is a compendium of all the events and people that have brought us to where we are today.

## The Danger of Erasing History

If we know where we are and where we came from, then we actually know where we are in the present. If we are unaware of the persons and events that have made us what we are today, then we are ripe for destruction. Milan Kundera said, "The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have someone write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history; before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was."

General Patrick Cleburne, who was killed at the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee, understood this principle. He said that the South had to make an all-out effort to win the war of northern aggression. "Surrender means the history of this heroic struggle will be written by the enemy, that our youth will be trained by northern school teachers. We will learn from northern school books their version of the war, will be impressed by all the influences of history and education to regard our gallant dead as traitors and our maimed veterans as fit subjects for derision."

Has it not come to pass? All you have to do to destroy a people is destroy their history. General Cleburne was right. It has happened to us. We have been completely inundated and have totally swallowed the northern view of history. When you erase a people's culture, memory, and history, you destroy the people.

Those who are, or have been, in positions of authority and in rebellion against God understand this simple truth. Karl Marx said, "People separated from their history are easily persuaded." Joseph Stalin said, "Who controls the past, controls the future. Who controls the present, controls the past." Adolf Hitler said, "The big lie is a major untruth."

"uttered frequently by leaders as a means of duping and controlling the constituency." Well, you say, Brother Weaver, I don't have too much time for history. I live in the present and have the future to worry about. History is a study of the past. Given all the demands of time in the present and concern about the future, why bother with the past?

The answer is simple. We must study history in order that we may profit from the lives, the wisdom, and the mistakes of others. If I can study and learn in a few hours, or even a few days or maybe a week, what it has taken someone else a lifetime to learn, I am much better prepared for that which is to come.

## Profiting from the Lives of Others

Do you realize that our Lord commanded us to do exactly that? James 5, verses 10 and 11, says: "Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering, affliction, and patience. Behold, we count them happy, which endure. You have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

Now let me ask you a question. Had you just rather read the book of Job and learn the principles, or had you rather go through what Job went through? Had you rather just read the book of Jeremiah and see what Jeremiah suffered, or had you rather go through everything that Jeremiah went through? I could apply that to Robert E. Lee. I could apply that to Oliver Cromwell. I could apply it to any believer in history; I can apply it to any wicked man in history, and you will see why momentarily.

Look in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, beginning with verse 32, just to show this is what Hebrews 11 is all about. I am skipping most of this, but beginning with verse 32: "And what shall I more say?"

"For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with a sword. They wandered about in

sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and in caves of the earth."

My question is, Had you just rather read Fox's book of Martyrs and learn from that or do you want to experience it yourself? Would you not rather read a book on the Scottish Covenanters? Or had you rather be thrown in the Tower of London, in a dungeon, and then taken out, drawn and quartered? This is exactly what... Take my breath and the prophets.

It's what he's telling us. Matthew Henry, who died in 1714, the commentator, said, "The remains of good and great men, like Elijah's mantle, ought to be gathered up and preserved by their survivors. That is, their works follow them, and the reward of them, they that stay behind, may be in their benefit." So we ought to gather up all the good and great works of godly men, so we who stay behind, we who are still alive, may profit.

We could apply those words to Peter, to Paul, to James, and John, and a host of others. We could also apply those words to Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Robert L. Dabney, a host of others who lived in the nineteenth century, and any other century as well.

I love what Macaulay, the historian, said: "A people which takes no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestry will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered by remote descendants." Again, I say that we have to study history in order that not only we may profit from the lives, mistakes, and wisdom of others, but also that we may see the handiwork of God in time.

R. J. Rushdoony said this about history: "History, therefore, is not the outworking of impersonal forces, but a personal conflict between the forces of God and anti-God, Christ and anti-Christ, with the ultimate victory assured to God and His Christ."

## History as Conflict Between God and Anti-God

"The Bible as a whole presents a view of history as conspiracy, with Satan and man determined to assert their right to be gods, determining good and evil for themselves. From beginning to end,

this is the perspective of Scripture, and only a willful misreading of it can lead to any other position."

History is not some impersonal force. It is the great and grand conflict between God and Satan, between Christ and Antichrist. Do we wish to avoid the mistakes, sins, and errors of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, and a multitude of others? If so, we must study their lives. Do we need and do we wish to emulate their virtues, their obedience, and their godliness? If so, we must study their lives. The same would apply, however, to Stalin, Hitler, Mao Zedong, and a host of others of their ilk. If we want to avoid their mentality and their sins, we must understand an unbiblical mindset in order that we may avoid it.

I never will forget when I was in college, I had a class on philosophy. I despised that class. I thought to myself, “I’m here to study the Bible. What do I need to know what Plato and Socrates and Aristotle said?” I thought it was a bunch of junk. They were ungodly and unsaved. Why should I learn? Several years after I was out of university, while I was studying, I found out that there is indeed a biblical philosophy. I need to know what these other men said and understand their errors so that I can refute those errors from the Word of God.

There is indeed a biblical philosophy. We must understand the unbiblical mindset as well. If we want to understand a biblical mindset, we need to study not only Scripture, but men like Lee and Jackson and Cleburne, Cromwell, Stuart, Ewell, and a host of others, discovering what made them great, how God used them, and then applying those same principles and precepts to our lives.

## Applying Principles to Historical Figures

Let me ask you: Is it important for you to know that Kings Ahab, Manasseh, and Jeroboam were wicked, vile, mass murderers? These men made war upon their own citizens. Do they deserve respect, honor, and recognition? Of course not. Why? There is a biblical answer. Romans 13:7 tells us that we are to give honor where honor is due. If a person is dishonorable, living dishonorably, and doing dishonorable things, we have no right or reason to honor him.

If you want to be honored, you must live an honorable life. Ahab, Manasseh, Jeroboam, and many others were very dishonorable wretches. Do you think that same truth might apply to William Tecumseh Sherman, Philip Henry Sheridan, and a host of other soldiers, quote unquote, politicians? How would you know whom to honor and whom to disregard if you did not study history? How would you know who was a mass murderer and who was not if you did not study Scripture? How would you know whether one warred according to the principles of the Word of God or contrary to the Word of God if you did not study history as well as the Bible?

Let me tell you why I could not and would not ever try to honor either Sheridan or Sherman. Sherman wrote to General Grant at the end of January 1865, “Our method of warfare is different from that in Europe.”

"We're not fighting against enemy armies, but against an enemy people, both young and old, rich and poor, [who] must feel the iron hand of war in the same way as organized armies." In this respect, my march through Georgia was a wonderful success. What did he just say? I didn't fight against an army. I fought against noncombatants—women and children, and old men. Again, Sherman said, "The government of the United States has in North Alabama any and all rights which they choose to enforce in war.

"To take their lives, their homes, their lands, their everything because they cannot deny that war does exist there and war is simply power unrestrained by constitution or compact. To the persistent secessionists, why, death is mercy, and the quicker he or she is disposed of, the better." Kill the women, kill the men. You don't have to be in the army or in the military. To the persistent secessionist—man, woman, boy, or girl—death is mercy, and the quicker he or she is disposed of, the better.

In a July 31st, 1862, letter to his wife, Sherman wrote, "The war will soon assume a turn to extermination, not of soldiers alone, that is the least part of the trouble, but the people. There's a class of people, men, women, and children, who must be killed or banished before you can hope for peace and order." Kill men, women, and children.

Before he started his march through Georgia, he said, "Until we can repopulate Georgia, it is useless to occupy it. But the utter destructions of its roads, houses, and people will cripple their military resources. I can make the march and make Georgia how?" He said they were going to kill the people, men, women, and children; it did not matter. After the war was over, Sheridan and Sherman went out West to take care of the Indians. General Sherman said, "The more Indians we can kill this year, the fewer we will need to kill the next. Because the more I see the Indians, the more convinced I become that they must either all be killed or maintained as a species of pauper."

"Their attempted civilization is ridiculous." And then he said this: "We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux, even to the extermination of men, women, and children." When Union soldiers went into Indian camps, they shot down old men, women, and children who were not even armed. Philip Sheridan was just as bad as Sherman, and General Grant was over them and just as bad as Sherman and Sheridan.

Grant was a cigar-smoking drunk whose administration was filled with corruption. But Grant gave Sheridan an order to destroy the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. General Sheridan then systematically looted, burned, and destroyed crops, homes, barns, and everything that he could find. Finally, he reported to General Grant that even a crow flying over the Shenandoah Valley would have to take his rations with him. There was nothing left.

I know you have heard the old adage, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." That anecdote was told concerning Sheridan during his campaign against the Indians. Commander-in-Chief Tosawi, or Silverknife, reputedly told Sheridan in 1869, "Me Tosawi, me good Indian." Sheridan is said to have replied, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead." Hence, it came down: the only good Indian is a dead Indian.

Sherman and Sheridan killed civilians, women, and children, not only in the South, but among the Indian tribes after the war was over. Why do I need to know these facts? So that I may know whether they deserve honor and recognition, and whether they fought according to the Bible. When you look at what they did and

read Deuteronomy 20:19–20 and 1 Samuel 15:6, you will find that these men made war contrary to the Bible. God forbids you to make war against creation, and God forbids you to make war against non-combatants. Yet they did exactly that.

How can you know whether Sherman and Sheridan were the good guys or the bad guys unless you study history and know the Word of God? I have been asked a simple question: Why is the War of Northern Aggression relevant? Why study something that happened 150 years ago? I can answer with other questions. If one thinks that the war of 1861 to 1865 is irrelevant because it happened so long ago, why should we study or know about the war of 1776 to 1783?

## The Relevance of Past Events and Timeless Principles

It's even further back in time. Why was the war for American independence important? What were the causes, the issues, and the principles involved? Is there a connection between the principles and the issues of 1776 and 1861? Why did our founding fathers resist and fight against George III? Were the same principles of 1776 involved in the War of 1861?

Why should we know anything about Jamestown, the Pilgrims, or the Puritan Fathers? What has 1607 and 1620 got to do with anything today? Were there causes, issues, and principles involved that are still connected to 1776 and finally again in 1861? Why did the Mayflower sail from Holland? Who was on board that ship, and why? What is the significance of the Mayflower Compact? Is it relevant today? Very obviously, 1620 is a whole lot further off than 1861. Is it relevant?

Who gets to determine whether something is relevant or not relevant? Who sets himself up as the judge of history and determines what should be studied and what should not be studied? Who has the authority to say that something happened in a certain period of time is irrelevant? Why would something in 1861 to 1865 be irrelevant when something in 1620 would be relevant? Who gets to say? Who is going to bring God's acts in time and in providence to their own bar of human reasoning and puny understanding?

Look in Romans 11, verse 33. The apostle Paul writes, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out."

“For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counselor, who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again.” Now watch: “for of Him, and through Him, and to Him are just a few things.” That is not what it says, is it? “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are just certain subjects of history that someone determines are relevant.” No. “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

Verse 36 says it all: “For of Him,” that is, originally; “and through Him,” that is, providentially; and “to Him,” that is, ultimately, are all things. Why? The answer is because all things only have meaning in relationship to God. All things only have meaning in relationship to God. He ordained them all. Nothing comes to pass in time except that which God ordained in eternity. He is the sovereign God.

If you deny God’s absolute sovereignty, if you try to say that of Him and through Him and to Him are not all things, then you may safely decide what has meaning and what does not have meaning. You then may bring God’s sovereign providence to your bar of human reasoning and human understanding, and you can sit in council against God.

I am simply asking the questions and using the same logic. If someone says that the war of 1861 to 1865 is irrelevant, why should we study something over 150 years ago? Was it important to know about 1607 and 1620? Was it important to know about 1776? Did the Solemn League and Covenant wrought out by the Covenanters have any impact upon America? Understandably, the timeline from 1638 to 1688 seems like a very, very long time ago. What possible connection could something in the 1630s, 1640s, 1650s, 1660s, 1670s, and 1680s have with us today?

You have to remember that those Scottish Covenanters were Presbyterians, and those Presbyterians in Scotland were fighting despotism and tyranny. It was their fight that had a decided effect and result upon America. Those Scots Presbyterians persevered in a

biblical framework and a biblical reference in regard to tyranny and despotism. Consequently, many of their descendants settled in the southern states. I wonder if that had anything to do with 1776. I wonder if it had anything to do with 1861.

And the answer is yes. In 1776, Horace Walpole, the Prime Minister of England, said of the colonies, "Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson." He was referring to John Witherspoon, who was the President of Princeton University and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. In England, the war for independence was known as the Presbyterian Rebellion.

An ardent colonial supporter of George III wrote home, "I fix all the blame for these extraordinary proceedings upon the Presbyterians. They have been the chief and principal instruments in all these flaming measures. They always do and ever will act against government from the restless and turbulent anti-monarchial spirit which has always distinguished them everywhere." The Presbyterians were known for fighting against tyranny. They did not like the monarchy.

Merle J.H. D'Aubigné was a Frenchman who wrote a history of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. There are two volumes on the history of the Reformation in England, available from Banner of Truth. Years ago, Alice and I intended to read a little each night before bed, but we ended up reading both books in a couple of weeks because we could not put them down. They were so riveting. D'Aubigné's old set in my library, I think, has something like eight or ten volumes. He said, "Calvin, John Calvin, was the founder of the greatest of republics."

"The pilgrims who left their country in the region of James I, and landing on the barren soil of New England founded populous and mighty colonies were his sons, his direct and legitimate sons, and that American nation which we have seen growing so rapidly boasts as its father, the humble reformer on the shore of Lake Leman." John Calvin was the founder of America through his teaching.

If someone would relegate the war of 1861 to 1862 as irrelevant because it was 150 years ago, perhaps no one would understand the biblical philosophy of history necessary to grasp the importance of

1492. Would you consider that as relevant as well? Why would you study the life of Christopher Columbus? Why did he seek a new world, and why was he willing to risk his life in discovery?

Why would an Italian be sailing under the auspices of a Spanish king and queen? What was his main desire? Did he wish to conquer for Christ? What were his words? If you think 1492 is irrelevant because it happened so long ago, how important would you consider the year 1215? What has 1215 got to do with us today? Why is it important to learn about King John and Runnymede?

Have you ever heard of the Magna Carta? One of my favorite stories concerns American tourists in England. They were at Runnymede, where a sign said, "King John signed the Magna Carta here in 1215." The American looked at his watch and said, "Wouldn't you know it, we missed it by 45 minutes." That is about how ignorant we are of history. But how important is that? Here, these nobles wrested the Magna Carta, this great charter of liberties, from King John. Do you realize that it is from the Magna Carta that we have a number of our rights enshrined in our Constitution, and that most of our rights not enshrined in that Constitution came to us from the Magna Carta through common law? Yes, 1215 is important.

If you do not understand what happened in 1215, you will never understand what happened in 1776, and you will never understand what happened in 1861. If you try to say something is irrelevant because it occurred 150 or 200 years ago, I would ask you this question: How would you then explain the birth of Christ 2,000 years ago? Obviously, time does not make principles and truth irrelevant. Principles and truth are timeless. Principles do not die; they do not have funerals.

A principle from the War of Northern Aggression is just as true as a principle from the American War for Independence. A principle from 1215 is just as important as a principle from 1861. President Jefferson Davis said, "The principle for which we contend is bound to reassert itself, though it may be at another time in a different forum." May I submit to you, for your consideration, that the very issues plaguing America today—the same issues causing unrest and division—are exactly the same issues that caused unrest and division in 1776 and in 1861? We have the same problem.

I could ask this facetiously, and I shall: Was there at least one principle from the War of Independence that would apply to the War of Northern Aggression in 1861? According to Horace Greeley, there was one. Greeley was an ardent abolitionist and a founder of the New York Tribune. On December 24, 1860, he said, "If the Declaration of Independence justified the secession from the British Empire of three millions of colonists in 1776, we do not see why it would not justify the secession of five million Southrons from the Federal Union in 1861."

Horace Greeley was not a lover of the South. But he said that if the principle from 1776 was true, it would be true in 1861 as well. There are many principles that connect 1776 and 1861, and I was being facetious when I asked whether there was just one.

Obviously, the same right of secession is applicable today, although it is hotly debated and hardly understood by most people. Secession was a peaceful solution to political problems in which Lincoln and the northern states were denying and destroying the Constitution. President Jefferson Davis said, "I love the Union and the Constitution, but I'd rather leave the Union with the Constitution than remain in the Union without it."

It is important to understand how biblical principles are played out in time and history and to see the end of those who deny and disregard them. God is not mocked. We must study history to observe the hand of God in time. Remember that God has ordained in eternity that which comes to pass in time and history.

Titus 1:2 says, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Here is an eternal decree concerning salvation: He promised it before the world began. Verse 3 says, "But hath in due times manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour." In due time, that which God ordained in eternity came to pass in time.

Someone has observed that history is a waste of time. In fact, a famous man said that history is bunk. I forget whether it was Henry Ford or somebody else. We need to be preaching the gospel, people say. My question would be, whose interpretation of the gospel are we

to preach—your interpretation of the gospel, or that which the Bible proclaims as the gospel? Usually, when someone says, "You just need to be preaching the gospel," what he means is, "You need to preach what I think you need to preach." Someone states, "The gospel is very simple."

## The Gospel as All-Encompassing Good News

It is the good news of Jesus Christ and His salvation. I certainly agree that this is an aspect of the gospel, and a very vital, pivotal, and important one. However, the word gospel comes from the Greek word euangelion, which literally means good news or good tidings. Is not all of God's Word good news? Are not all of God's acts of providence and time good news and good tidings? Of course they are.

Many people take a passage like 1 Corinthians 2:2, where the Apostle Paul said, "For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." "That is what we ought to preach: Jesus Christ and Him crucified." I understand that. But we need to read the context in which Paul said it. In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul is setting a biblical philosophy against a humanistic, worldly, fleshly philosophy. He is setting biblical wisdom against man's wisdom. For instance, he said in 1 Corinthians 2:4–5, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and the power of God, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

What is he saying? His preaching of Christ and Him crucified is a biblical philosophy, contrary to a humanistic philosophy. The phrase Christ crucified therefore speaks of a biblical philosophy as opposed to a man-made, humanistic philosophy. All we have to do is read Paul's sermons in Acts 13 and Acts 17, and we will find that his sermons are full of history and philosophy. He does not simply deal with Christ crucified.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3, the Apostle Paul says, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, and that He was buried, that He rose again the third day according to the Scripture." I have heard people

say that 1 Corinthians 3 and 4 is the gospel in a nutshell: Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, and Christ was raised from the dead according to the Scripture.

But was not Christ prophesied according to the Scriptures? Was Christ not born according to the Scriptures? Did Christ not live according to the Scriptures? Did He not fulfill the law of God according to the Scriptures? The answer is yes to all of those questions. Why would Paul say, "I'm teaching the death and the resurrection of Christ"?

You have to read everything in context. If you read 1 Corinthians 15:12–27, you find that there were some in the Corinthian church who were denying the resurrection of Christ. All Paul is doing in 1 Corinthians 15 is emphasizing that aspect of Christ which the Corinthians were denying.

The gospel is not facts about Christ. Christ is the gospel. You can believe that Jesus Christ lived, died, was buried, and was raised from the dead, and still die and go to hell because those are merely facts. Facts do not save; Christ saves. It is not facts about Christ that are the gospel; it is Christ who is the gospel. Anything and everything that pertains to Christ is the gospel.

Do you know what the Bible says in Proverbs 11:31? "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in this life, much more the wicked and the sinners." Is it not good news that God will bless His people in this life and deal with the wicked in this life as well as in eternity? Of course. How about 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." Do all things work together for our good in time and in history, or just in eternity? Is it not good news that Jesus Christ foils His enemies and makes everything work together for our good? Is it not good news that Haman is hanged on his own gallows, and that the wicked fall into the very pit they have dug? Is it not good news that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, and that God grants His people victory in time and in history?

Look at Cromwell. Look at Lee. Christ is on His throne and overrules all the desires and plans of the wicked and the ungodly.

Christ is in absolute and total control. Jesus Christ exercises dominion over everything; He reigns supreme. He is history, because history is His story. He is the centerpiece of history. All creation, all acts, and all events point to Jesus Christ. Is it not good news that Revelation 11:15 says, “...and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.” Yes, everything about Christ is the gospel, for Christ is the gospel. What we need to do is to be encouraged in, by, and through history. When we see what our sovereign God has done in time and in history, it is encouraging.

When you get down and discouraged, it is the history of God's providential acts that will encourage you. Psalm 44 says, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, What work thou didst in their days, in times of old? How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantest them? How thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out? For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arms save them, but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hast a favor unto them. Thou art my God, O King, or Thou art my King, O God, command deliverance is for Jacob."

We have heard with our ears what work thou didst in their days and in times of old. God drove out the heathen, and it was not merely the people fighting who got the victory. God gave them the victory. God enabled them and provided for them. Then he said, "Thou art my king, O God. Command and deliverance is from Jacob."

We have heard everything that God has done; we know it is true because our fathers have told us. Here is a good South Georgia paraphrase of verse 4: Do it again, O God. Do it again. The very thing that You have done in time past, do it again.

I am willing and ready for Him to do it again. I want victory in time and in history. I want to see the wicked overthrown. I want to see Babylon fall. I want to see God honored and the Lord Jesus Christ exalted and elevated. I want to see His law, and I want to see Him reigning in His righteousness on His throne. Yes, do it again, O Lord.

## Applications and Conclusion

All history is God's history. We see His hand in creation and all of nature according to Psalm 19 and Romans 1. It is not unbiblical to study geographical, meteorological, or any other history to discover the acts of God in time.

One of these days I am going to bring a message on Matthew Fontaine Maury. Maury discovered the paths in the sea based upon his study of Psalm 8, where God said that there were paths in the sea. This believer said, “If there are paths in the sea, if God said it, they have got to be there.” These ocean currents and travel lanes for ships were brought out and taught by Matthew Fontaine Maury.

He was nicknamed the Pathfinder of the Seas, the father of modern oceanography and naval meteorology, and later the scientist of the seas because of his extensive works, especially his book Physical Geography of the Sea, published in 1855. It was the first complete and comprehensive book on oceanography to be published. Matthew Fontaine Maury was also a Confederate naval officer. Here was a man who believed the Scripture and applied the Scripture, and he became known as the scientist of the sea.

It is not unbiblical to study any war or any period of time, especially if we do it to see the hand of God, His principles, and His truths and how they are applied. It is not unbiblical or ungodly, when studying a war, to ascertain who was right and who was wrong, who obeyed God and who did not obey God. If our interest is to ferret out the principles and apply them to our lives, it is right to study history, and it is wrong not to study history.

Psalm 111:2 says, “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.” If you believe God has done some great work in time and history, discover what that work is and apply it.

## The Gospel and a Biblical Philosophy of History

The second application is this: We must remember that the gospel is good news. That good news is not limited to soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. It is true that Christ is our only salvation and our only hope, but Christ has done far more than save us. He has given us an

inheritance. In the latter portion of 1 Corinthians 3, he says, “All things are yours and you are Christ.”

The gospel is anything and everything concerning Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and God of Gods. He rules and reigns. Any area that we may study and bring into subjection and submission to the Word of God is right, because He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and God of Gods, and He rules over everything.

Yes, there is a biblical philosophy of history, and that philosophy is based upon the Word of God.

Father, we ask You in the name of Jesus Christ for Your help, Your grace, and Your mercy. Make us holy, godly, and studious. Help us to learn and apply. Help us not to repeat the same stupid mistakes and sins of our forefathers by not studying their lives. Help us to see that God is not mocked, that whatsoever we sow, we will also reap. May we sow to the Spirit, that we may of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. By name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 20

# Who Are You Condemning?

December 15, 2012

Let us open our Bibles to Psalm 107, and we are going to begin reading with verse 10. Although you might think I am not going to be preaching from this passage, I will before I close. I want you to look at it. Psalm 107:10-12 says, “Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron, because they rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the Most High. Therefore He brought down their heart with labor, they fell down, and there was none to help.” Now, just recently I brought a message entitled “Who Are You Justifying?” Today the title of the message is “Who Are You Condemning?”

## Introduction: The Principle of Positive and Negative

I have told you repeatedly: anytime you study the Bible, you must remember this, that every positive has a negative, and every negative has a positive. “Thou shalt not steal” is a negative. There is always a positive, and that positive is found in Ephesians 4: we are to work with our hands and labor for that which is good, that we may have to give to him that needeth, et cetera. “Thou shalt not kill” is a negative; the positive is, “thou shalt preserve life.”

In “Who Are You Justifying?” I pointed out that there is a sense indeed in which we justify either sinners, self, or the sovereign God. Today we are talking about whom we condemn. Just as I pointed out in the last message that we are always justifying someone by whatever we do and however we live, the opposite is also true. We are also always condemning someone, whatever we do and however we live.

## Condemnation Is Not Only for the Unsaved

Most of us never ever think about the subject of condemnation. In fact, to be condemned literally means to be judged guilty in light of the law, that is for sure. But usually, when we think of the word “condemned” or the subject of condemnation, we certainly think of those who are unsaved. Our Lord said it like this in John 3:18, “He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not in the Son of God.” So those who believe are not condemned; those who believe not are condemned already. And in John 3:36, our Lord confirms this when He says, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not on the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” So normally, when we think about the word condemnation, we normally connect that word with the wrath of God, and rightly so. There are plenty of verses in the Bible that teach that those who are condemned are the subjects of God’s righteous wrath and anger.

In fact, we're told in Psalm 7:11 that God judges the righteous and is angry with the wicked every day. Stop and think about that for a moment. Sinners may have many feast days, but they never have any safe days, because there is not a moment when the anger of God is not burning hot against them. Just because many people think they are going to party up and have a grand old time, they are obviously not concerned about God's righteous anger, God's wrath, and God's judgment. Certainly, God's judgment will fall in His time upon His enemies.

Although we normally associate condemnation with those who are unsaved, condemnation is not reserved only for the unjust. Scripture shows how we may condemn ourselves, how we may

condemn others, and how we may even condemn God Himself. Let me begin with this point: it is possible to condemn ourselves.

It does not matter whether you are a Christian or a non-Christian. It is possible to condemn yourself. When I use the word condemnation, especially in relationship to Christians, understand that a Christian's condemnation is not to eternal death. The Bible says in Romans 8:1, "There is now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." When He says there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, He is saying that we will not be eternally condemned; we will not experience the wrath of God.

In fact, our Lord said it just a little differently, but teaching the same truth. He said in John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life," now listen, "and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." When He says "shall not come into condemnation," He's talking about the eternal condemnation at the day of judgment. So very obviously, when we're talking about how Christians may condemn themselves, we're not talking about condemnation at the last great day of judgment. Christians are not under that kind of condemnation. There's no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. But that does not mean that we cannot condemn ourselves. There's a way that we can condemn ourselves. So let's ask and answer the question: how in the world do we condemn ourselves? Not only as Christians, but as non-Christians as well. How do we condemn ourselves? Have you ever considered that your words and your attitudes and your actions may be condemning yourself before God?

## How We Condemn Ourselves

It is a truth of Scripture and a truth of everyday life that we are indeed condemned by our words. I read recently of a courtroom situation where a man was on trial for armed robbery. One of the witnesses testifying against him said, "He said, 'This is a hold up, give me all your money.'" The defendant blurted out, "That's not what I said. I said, 'Give me your money or I'll shoot.'" Needless to

say, it did not take the jury very long to condemn the man. He was condemned out of the words of his own mouth.

Although there is no eternal condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, we still may condemn ourselves with our own words. In Job 9:20, Job said, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me. If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." Then Eliphaz, in trying to answer Job, said in Job 15:6, "Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I. Thine own lips testify against thee." We can be condemned by the words of our own mouth. Scripture teaches this exceedingly clearly and easily: our own mouths testify against us.

Notice what our Lord says in Matthew 12:34: “O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. “But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment.” “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

Every idle word that proceeds out of your mouth—by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned. Matthew is teaching us that the whole tenor of our conversation will be evidence against us. We condemn ourselves with our own words.

Have you ever stopped to think how we do not really consider what we say at times, or how our words often hurt? When I was a child, and when most of you were children, you had this little rhyme: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.” But the truth is, names do hurt. Words do hurt. All you have to do is let someone call you ugly, fatty, skinny, or whatever—something that you do not like—and you will understand that words hurt.

Every idle word, every vain word, every useless word, we are going to be called in to account for. The reason our words are so important is that the words we speak reveal the state of our heart. They reveal our mind. That is why the Bible says in Proverbs 23:7, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” In other words, you are ultimately

going to act out, be, and do what you think and what you say. That is why Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” Now look in Matthew 15, since you are right there, and let us begin reading in verse 18. We are talking about words.

Our Lord is explaining to His disciples in Matthew 15:18: “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man.” For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man. Again, “Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man.”

It is the words that we speak and the attitudes that we demonstrate and manifest that reveal the very state of our heart and the very state of our soul. No wonder our words condemn us, because they reveal the innermost thoughts of our heart.

I can listen to you and tell you what is on your heart, because ultimately it is going to come out. I can listen to you and tell you what kind of individual you are, what is important to you, and what is not important to you, by the tone of your conversation. You can do the same thing for me. It is our words, therefore, that reveal our attitude. Our attitudes always lead to actions. Thus, God is going to judge our words.

James says, “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” If I were to ask you to raise your hand if you had said something in your life that you wished you had never said, everybody would raise their hand. James said that if we want to be perfect, we have to be able to bridle our tongue. But no one can do that.

Once those words go out of our mouth, we cannot call them back. A good illustration of that is the emails we send. Once we hit that send button, we cannot get it back. It is gone, and everybody sees it. It wants to look at it. Or it can be anywhere and everywhere. I never

will forget the story I heard about a man who had lied about his neighbor.

A man had spread the rumor to two or three different people. He came under real conviction and went to the pastor, asking what he could do. The pastor told him to catch a chicken, pluck its feathers, and that night put one feather on each doorstep where he had told the lie.

The man did so and returned the next morning, saying he had done exactly as instructed. Asked what he should do next, he was told to gather the feathers and bring them back. He replied that he could not; the wind had blown them he did not know where.

The pastor said, “You do not know where all of your words have gone, nor all the lies you have told. The only thing you can do is go to the man against whom you have lied and to the people against whom you have lied concerning him. Repent and make it right. But that does not mean you have stopped the rumor.”

Look down, please, in James 3:6. “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. So is the tongue among our members that defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.” One man said the tongue is like an automatic sewing machine set on fire of hell—those who have used one know how fast it is.

The Scripture tells us that as Christians especially, we are admonished and commanded to use language that cannot be condemned. In Titus 2:8, Paul says, "Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

Paul says in Ephesians 4:29, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth," but he goes on to say, "but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." On the one hand, he says, let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. On the other hand, when you speak, speak that which is good to the use of edifying—that is, that it may build up and strengthen someone rather than hurt them and rather than condemn them.

James says, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by earth, neither by any other oath, but let your yea be yea, and your nay be nay, lest ye fall into condemnation."

Here is the tenor of what James is saying: You never have to punctuate your conversation with expletives and cursings if you mean what you say and say what you mean. I never will forget when I was a boy, there was a man who was of small stature. I suppose he tried to make up for his smallness of stature by taking God's name in vain just about every breath that he took. He cursed consistently, constantly. Even as a small boy, I despised being around him.

I could not stand it. I did not want it. I was not a Christian, but I knew that something was wrong. I asked my father about it one day, and all my father said was, "I suppose he's trying to make up for his lack of size." I don't know. But I learned a valuable lesson from that. If you say what you mean and mean it when you say it, everybody will understand, yes. Everybody will understand, no. You don't have to use anything else.

This is what James is saying, because we are going to give an account for our words. If we understand that by our words we shall be justified and by our words we shall be condemned, we might want to learn to pray as David did in Psalm 141:3: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

I will be absolutely honest. There are times, although it is painful, exceedingly painful, when it really pays to bite your tongue and not say what you really truly want to say. Because once those words go out, they can never ever be taken back. So we may condemn ourselves by our words. Secondly, we may condemn ourselves by our unbiblical and unjust judgment and condemnation of others.

In Luke 6:37, our Lord says, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged. Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned. Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." I am showing you how we may condemn ourselves. Look at it again: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." In other words, here is the lex talionis, the law of retribution. God is saying that you had better be careful with your judging, because ultimately you are going to be judged in the same measure and in the same way that you judge. Be careful with your condemning, because

you will be condemned in the same measure and in the same way that you condemn.

We see the same principle in Matthew 7, beginning with verse 1: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." So He says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." You could also read that, "Condemn not, that ye be not condemned." What our Lord is condemning here is unjust, unkind, and unbiblical judgments. He is condemning this kind of judgment, not every judgment.

Usually, this type of judging occurs when we are trying to judge someone's motives or someone's intent. You see, these verses do not prohibit all kinds of judgment; they prohibit a certain kind of judgment. There are plenty of judgments in the Bible that are commanded. In fact, the Bible tells us in John 7:24 that our Lord said, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." So we are commanded, on the one hand, to judge not, and on the other hand, to judge righteous judgment. What am I being prohibited from doing when He says, "Judge not"?

Suppose Pat said something about me, and I think, “That dirty rotten skunk meant it like this. You just wait till I get him. I will fix him.” What have I done? I heard what he said, placed my own interpretation upon it, interpreted it wrongly, and condemned him without asking what he meant. There is always a difference between a fact and our interpretation of that fact, between a fact and our perspective on it.

What God forbids me to do is judge someone’s motives and intentions, because I do not know them. I cannot know them unless I ask. I could say, “Don, what did you mean by that?” and give him the opportunity to explain. I do not always have to interpret everything in the worst possible light.

When Christ says, “Judge righteous judgment,” this is what it means: if Don does something contrary to Scripture, I can look at his actions, see what the Bible says, and say, “Don is wrong based upon the Word of God.” That is righteous judgment. I am not condemning

him; God is condemning him for his unbiblical and unrighteous actions.

Very obviously, then, there is good judging and bad judging. Matthew chapter 7 and Luke chapter 6 are directed against rash, hard, uncharitable, and unbiblical judgments—when we think evil where no evil exists. I am often asked this because I preach in many places. Pastors usually do not tell me about the church's affairs or the condition of the people. I generally preach whatever the Lord lays on my heart. Inevitably, people come and ask, "Didn't the pastor tell you to preach that? Did he tell you anything about me?"

The answer is no. He did not tell me anything about them; I do not even know them. Sometimes they take what I said as a personal slam against them. But I did not know them and had never heard of them. I simply preached, and the Holy Spirit applied it. Yet people normally place a bad interpretation upon something, and if they do not ask, they will never know. Many times we do not judge righteous judgment because we do not even know the Word of God. Christ does not condemn judging as a magistrate.

Magistrates do that all the time, because judging judicially is not only right, it is also necessary. Judging people's actions based upon the law of God is right and necessary. But what He forbids is for you and I to judge hastily and harshly, without any thought of extenuating circumstances, without giving someone an opportunity to explain what they said or what they meant, or why they did what they did.

So it is impossible for you and I to know motives and intents. God does indeed require that we judge righteous judgments. The scribes and the Pharisees were noted for their private judgments. They not only condemned our Lord's disciples, they condemned our Lord Himself. Therefore our Lord said to the Pharisees in Matthew 12:7, "But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." So they condemned Christ, who was guiltless.

There are many who are quick to judge and swift to condemnation based upon their own standards and their own thoughts. You know what the Bible says in Proverbs 18:13: "He that answereth a matter

before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." When you begin to judge and condemn without really knowing the whole story, God said it is folly and shame. Moreover, Proverbs 15:18 says, "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things."

So God is forbidding us to judge unjustly, unrighteously, unbiblically, or harshly, especially when we try to judge the motives and intents of others. First Peter 4:8 says, "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." The person who has biblical love in his heart is willing to overlook and forgive a lot of things, especially those that would come as a personal insult.

Thirdly, we may condemn ourselves by grudging. Christians may condemn themselves with their words, by their unjust and unbiblical condemnation of others, and by grudging. James 5:9 says, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned."

"Behold, the judge standeth before the door. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned." The word "grudge" here literally means to groan not, grumble not, groan not, sour and sullen one with another. Why is it that we grudge? Sometimes we grudge because someone is happier than we are, someone has more than we have, or someone has better advantages than we have. Maybe they have a better family or better opportunities. We grudge it; we groan and cry out against it.

One commentator I read fairly often is Albert Barnes, who is usually pretty good. But Barnes, on this passage, does a very interesting thing. On the one hand, he denies what grudging is, and then, on the other hand, he turns around and says this is why people grudge. You cannot have it both ways. Very obviously, grudging is grudging.

My favorite illustration of what it really means to grudge is this. When I was a boy, seven, eight, or nine years old, I was raised on a farm. We had a hog pen with hogs in it, and on our back porch we had a five-gallon bucket known as a slop bucket. All the coffee that was not finished at breakfast went into that bucket. Any toast that was not eaten went into it, as did any eggs. After dinner, what you

did not eat of that piece of corn went into the slop bucket, along with a half-eaten biscuit. The same thing happened with supper. Whatever was left went in the slop bucket. By the end of the day, that five-gallon can was usually pretty full. It was my job, either that night or the next morning, to take the slop bucket out and pour it into the hog trough.

You've done that, haven't you, Linda? You'd pour it into the hog trough. The big old sows would come, put their mouths down, and drink it up, kind of like Ron drinks his coffee—really enjoying it. Suddenly one sow would hit a piece of corn, take it in her mouth, turn, and run. What would the other sows do? They would run after her, grunting and pushing, trying to take it away. They were not content to go through their slop until they found their own piece of corn; they wanted the one she had.

You can have five dogs and five T-bone steaks. Throw the first one out, and one dog gets it and runs off. Where are the other four? Chasing him. You have one for each of them, but they will not wait to get it. They begrudge the fact that someone has something they do not.

And here is what he says: “Grudge not, brethren.” Let us be honest. Are you listening to me? Some people are better looking than we are. Some have more hair than I do. I do not begrudge Alma because he has a better head of hair. I am thankful he does, and thankful Vicki has not pulled it out yet.

That might be in the next four or five years, but who knows? I'm just saying. If Mark has a million dollars, I'm thankful Mark has a million dollars. I'm not concerned. I don't grudge him; I'm happy that he has it. But we say, "Man, I wish I had kids like that. I wish I had a new car like that. I wish this. I wish that." We become unhappy, sullen, and sour because we do not have what everybody else has.

We can condemn ourselves. We can even grudge against the wicked, which is really ungodly. Psalm 37:1 says, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." It does not make me envious of Hollywood movie stars who go through wives like they do clothes. I do not want to be like

that. I do not want to be like those individuals who have a new car today, wreck it tomorrow, and get another new car. Who cares? What do they have? "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity, for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

Where are they going to be in judgment, and where are they going to be on judgment day? Why would we be envious of the wicked? Why would we desire anything that they have? No, God says, "Grudge not." You do not grudge against the wicked, and you do not grudge against each other. If God blesses somebody with more than you, you should say, "Thank you, Lord, for being merciful and gracious and kind to them. And I pray they'll use it for your honor and your glory."

That is the way it should be. I can wait my turn until God blesses me with something, and then you will say, "Thank you, Lord, that you blessed him." So, we can condemn ourselves. It is possible to condemn ourselves either by our words, by our unjust condemnation, or by grudging. Secondly, I want you to note, it is possible to condemn others.

## How We Condemn Others

It is true that the wicked often condemn the just, and of course they do so unjustly and unrighteously. Sometimes that condemnation is done legally, through the judicial system. There have been plenty of godly and righteous people who have been unjustly condemned, and it is getting easier and easier to have that done to you. The Bible says in Proverbs 17:15, talking particularly about the judges, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord."

Then God asks in Psalm 94:20-21, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" He is talking about judges and governments. Shall a throne—that is, a government, a throne of iniquity, a wicked government—have fellowship with God when that wicked government makes sin legal? Then he goes on to say, "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood." In other

words, he is talking about a legal, judicial condemnation when there should have been no legal, judicial condemnation.

Now, although I am talking about the fact that it is possible to condemn others, I am not particularly talking about the condemnation of the just by the wicked. I am referring to the fact that the righteous often condemn the wicked. We do not condemn the wicked through a court of law, since obviously they control most of the courts. However, we may condemn them spiritually and judicially before the judge of all the earth.

Have you ever thought about this? How do we condemn the wicked? How do we evidence their wickedness and the just deserts of their wicked conduct? The answer is, by obedience to God's law. You remember I started this message and told you that every positive has a negative, and every negative has a positive. Do you realize that one of the results, one of the effects, of living a righteous, godly, holy, obedient life is that you condemn the wicked when you do that? Has that thought ever hit you—that you condemn the wicked by living a righteous, holy life? The word condemn is katakrino, and one definition of that Greek word simply means "to give judgment against one by one's good example and to render another's wickedness more evident and more censurable." So we can condemn by living a godly, holy life.

Matthew 12:41 shows us what it means to condemn, and this is the same word used here.

Our Lord said it like this: “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”

Now notice: the men of Nineveh—and Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and Assyria was a wicked, ungodly nation—are going to rise up and condemn this generation. Why? They repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here. Jesus Christ was there, and you will not listen to Him. These people who

repented will end up condemning those who did not repent. How? They repented, they believed, and they heard. These had the presence of Christ and failed to repent.

Then He said the queen of the south, that is, the queen of Sheba, traveled across the desert on camels to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Here, a greater than Solomon is here; Christ the Son of God is here. You will not even walk across the street to hear Him. The Queen of the South is going to stand up and condemn you.

The men of Nineveh, by their repentance and obedience, condemned those who did not repent and obey. The Queen of the South, by her traveling, hearing, and repenting, condemned those who would not listen.

Hebrews 11:7 says, “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” How did Noah condemn the world? By his faith and by his obedience. He believed God. He obeyed God. You know what the Bible says in 2 Peter 2:5?

It was the preaching and teaching of Noah about the truth of God that condemned the old world. It was not just his preaching, but his obedience. The Bible says in 2 Peter 2:5 that God spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly. What was Noah doing? Noah was preaching the truth, exercising faith, and obeying God; and the Bible says that by his obedience, he condemned the world.

We condemn others by our obedience. If we obey and others do not, the very fact that we obey condemns those who refuse to obey. Every positive has a negative, and every negative has a positive. Proverbs 28:4 says, "They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them."

If we as Christians want to praise the wicked and support them in their wickedness, then we simply violate God's law and do what they are doing. But if we want to honor God, we keep God's law; and as we keep God's law, we are contending with them. The word contend literally means to fight against. How do we fight against evil? The

most basic, most fundamental way is by being obedient ourselves to the Word of God. If we are not obedient to the Word of God, nothing else really matters. God is not going to honor our fighting when we are not obedient ourselves. One of the qualifications to live for God and fight for God is to obey God ourselves. He says very plainly, "They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them."

So it is possible to condemn ourselves. It is possible to condemn others. And it is possible to condemn our God. Psalm 107:10 says, "Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound with affliction and iron." Why in the world are we bound in affliction and iron? Here is why: "Because they rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the Most High: Therefore he brought down their heart with labor."

## How We Condemn God

"They fell down, and there was none to help." How did they condemn God? They rebelled against the words of God and condemned the counsel of the Most High. The counsel of the Most High is His Word as well. God said in Isaiah 55:11, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

How do the wicked condemn God? How do we condemn God? Psalm 10:13 says, "Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it." How is the wicked man condemning God? He is denying His Word and the truth of God's judgment. He says that God is not going to require him to stand before Him and give an account of himself; God is not going to judge him. He condemns God by condemning the counsel of God, by condemning the Word of God.

Thoughts and words always lead to action and conduct. Our Lord Himself was condemned and crucified by the wicked and rebellious rulers of His day. He foretold His death in Matthew 20:18: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death." Then, in Mark 14:64, when the high priest had all his counsel

there, he said, "Ye have heard his blasphemy: what think ye?" The Scripture says, "And they all condemned him to be guilty of death." Why did they condemn Christ? They rejected His words, refused His counsel, and refused to bow to Him.

But you say, “Wait a minute, Pastor. Christ has been crucified, and we cannot condemn Him any longer the way He was condemned at His crucifixion.” That may be true, but it is not true that we can no longer condemn Him.

In Luke 7:28, our Lord says concerning John the Baptist, “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.”

I used part of this verse when I dealt with who you are justifying, but now I want you to note who you are condemning.

All the people and the publicans justified God. They said, “God is right, we’re wrong. We need to repent. We need to submit to the teaching and the Word of God.” But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves. They refused His words, refused to bow, and refused to submit. They condemned God in justifying themselves. They did not say, “God is right and we’re wrong.” They said, “We’re right and God is wrong.”

When you and I refuse the counsel of God, refuse to live by the Word of God, and refuse to do that which is biblical and right, we are condemning God and saying, “God, You’re wrong and we’re right.” It is possible not only to condemn yourself and others, but also to condemn God. If we believe that God is worthy to be honored, obeyed, worshiped, and served, then we will bow to Him and to His Word, submit to Him, and bring our lives into conformity to His Word. If we do not believe that God is worthy, we refuse to obey Him. Thus, we condemn Him and justify ourselves.

It is impossible to live without either justifying or condemning God. You are always either justifying Him or condemning Him. He alone is worthy and deserves our obedience and worship. But when

we condemn Him, we say, “No, He doesn’t deserve that. I deserve to do what I want, to please myself, and to live the way I want to live.” When you justify yourself, you condemn God.

## Conclusion: The Inescapable Choice

What did the Bible say in Psalm 107:12? They condemned God by rejecting His counsel. The only way that we condemn God is when we refuse to obey, because in our actions and attitudes, if not in our words, we are saying, “You’re not worthy. I am.” We justify our actions by condemning God. Most people are so quick and ready to curse God and condemn Him so that they may justify themselves. Either God is right and we’re wrong, or we’re right and God is wrong. There is no in-between. We justify ourselves and condemn God, or we condemn ourselves and justify God.

They that forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep God's law contend with the wicked. So, the last time I asked, who are you justifying? Now I ask, who are you condemning? You will either condemn God or justify God. You will either condemn yourself or justify yourself. So who are you justifying, and who are you condemning?

Father, we are thankful for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and for His words and His truth. We ask, Lord, that You would indeed be pleased to apply the message to our hearts. Help us to learn Your Word, to be obedient, to be godly, and to be in a position where we may be blessed of Thee. Lord, we can only be that as we repent and acknowledge that Thou art right in every detail, and that we are sinners and wrong. Enable us by Thy divine power to obey Thee and bring our lives into greater conformity to Your Word. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 21

# Who Is Your God?

November 10, 2015

**SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 4:34-40 (KJV)**

## Introduction: The Question of Who Your God Is

"Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was showed that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God, and there is none else beside him. Out of heaven He made thee to hear His voice, that He might instruct thee. And upon earth He showed thee His great fire, and thou heardest His words out of the midst of the fire. And because He loved thy fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in His sight with His mighty power out of Egypt, to drive out nations from before thee, greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, and to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day. Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the

> earth beneath there is none else. Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes and his commandments which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth which the Lord thy God giveth thee forever."
>
> So the question has to be asked: Who is your God? Who do you serve? Man is innately religious. He always has a deity. His deity may be Mammon, it may be Baal, it may be Moloch, or some other false god. But usually man is always going to recognize a superior or a supreme being. It is simply in his nature. I suppose its being in your nature is very telling from what one atheist said publicly before he called himself an atheist. He said, "Thank God I don't believe in a God." Well, obviously it is in man by nature.

## Intellectual vs. Practical Atheism

Intellectual atheism is often inconsistent. If a man truly believes there is no God, he dethrones God and enthrones himself, placing himself on God's throne. Thus he has a god—really, it is himself—because he does according to his own will, law, and pleasure, whatever he wants to do.

Intellectual atheism is far easier to discover and deal with than practical atheism. A practical atheist is someone who will admit there is a God. In fact, he may even say that he believes in God. I will go further: many times he is a professing Christian. He says, "Yes, there is a God, and yes, I believe in that God," and yet he lives as if there were no God. He does not recognize God's law or commandments. He lives like the intellectual atheist, only for himself. He ignores God, forgets God, and does not consider Him. For all practical purposes, his profession of faith is absolutely worthless. Our churches are full of such people.

Most professing Christians are practical atheists. I can say that because they are absolutely ignorant of God and His law, and they live as if there were no God—as if God had not spoken, as if God had not given directions for every area and sphere of life. They disregard God and His law. They try to relegate it to the Old Testament and

say, "Well, that's just Old Testament," as if the Old Testament were not as much the Word of God as the New Testament.

It seems to me that in 2 Timothy 3:16, when the Apostle Paul wrote, "All Scripture is inspired of God, and given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction, and righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished under every good work," he had in mind particularly the Old Testament, because the New Testament had not been completed at that time. The Old Testament is just as much the Word of God as the New Testament.

So many people say that they are Christians and worship the Lord Jesus Christ. But in Titus 1:16, the Apostle Paul dealt with such individuals: "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, unto every good work reprobate." They profess that they know God, but in works—that is, in the way they live and act—they deny Him.

In other words, that is in essence a practical atheist. It is someone who will confess with his mouth, acknowledge with his tongue there is a God, or maybe even say that Jesus Christ is God and, yes, I believe in Him, but then he totally ignores Him in every area and every avenue of his life. There is a good illustration given to us in 2 Kings chapter 17.

## Biblical Examples of Hypocritical Worship

What has happened in this particular passage is that the king of Assyria has conquered the ten northern tribes. He has conquered those tribes of Israel and takes them into captivity into Assyria. Then he brings pagans from other areas of the country that he has captured and places them in the cities of Israel. They are pagans, and they have all their false gods and are worshiping all their false gods. God sends lions among them to destroy them because of their sin and wickedness. So they send to Assyria for a priest that they might learn how to live according to the God of the land.

You have to remember, pagans were polytheistic. They believed in many gods. Moreover, they believed that each god was local,

localized. In other words, he had local power and local authority, but he was not the supreme sovereign of the entire universe.

Second Kings chapter 17, verse 23, tells us how God removed Israel out of His sight: "Until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets, so was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day. And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Kutah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel. And they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there that they feared not the Lord. Therefore the Lord sent lions among them, which slew some of them. Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, 'The nations which thou hast removed and placed in the cities of Samaria know not the manner of the God of the land. Therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.'"

"Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, 'Carry thither one of the priests whom you brought forth from thence, and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land.'"

The priests that God carried away into captivity were not priests of the Lord Himself, because Israel had the two golden calves in Dan and in Beersheba. These were priests of the golden calves; they were not necessarily God's priests. So, back in verse 27: "Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, 'Carry thither one of the priests, whom you brought from thence, and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land.' Then one of the priests, whom they had carried away from Samaria, came and dwelt in Bethel, taught them how they should fear the Lord," that is, according to the worship of the golden calves.

"Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities where they dwelt. And the men of Babylon made Succoth Benoth, that was their god. And the men of Quth made Nergal. And the men of Hamoth made Eshema. And the Avites made Nimhaz and Tartac. And the Sepharvites burnt their children

in fire to Adrammelech and Enamelech, the gods of Sepharvon. So they feared the Lord and knelt unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the Lord and served their own gods after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence."

"Unto this day do after the former manners. They fear not the Lord, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandments which the Lord commanded the children whom the Lord had made a covenant and charged them, saying, 'You shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them. But the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, with great power and a stretched out arm, Him shall you fear, and Him shall you worship, and to Him shall you do sacrifice. And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment which He wrote for you, you shall observe to do forever. You shall not fear other gods.' And the covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, neither shall you fear other gods. But the Lord your God you shall fear, and He shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies." Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner.

"So these nations"—that is, all these wicked reprobates—"feared the Lord and served their graven images, their children, and their children's children, as to their fathers, so do they unto this day." Here were people saying, "Look, we are in trouble; lions are among us. What in the world are we going to do? Oh, I know what we'll do: we'll send to Assyria and get a priest who will tell us how to pacify the God of the land." They openly and with their lips professed to worship Him, but then turned around, made their own gods, sacrificed to them, and worshipped and served them.

Basically, they simply ignored God. Their verbal profession was absolutely useless. They ignored Him, His will, His Word, His commandments, and His statutes, just like the average professing Christian today. In fact, you have to look around and say that professing Christendom is double-minded. We are as double-minded as the people in the days of Zephaniah. In Zephaniah chapter 1, God speaks of all the people He is going to judge and destroy. In verse 5, He says He will judge "them that worship the

host of heaven upon the housetops, and them that swear by the Lord that swear by Malcolm" or Molech. God said, "Yes, I'm going to judge these out-and-out idolaters. They are worshiping the host of heaven upon the housetops, but I'm also going to judge those who swear by the Lord and swear by Molech."

In other words, they were trying to serve both, and God says that is absolutely impossible. So here is the pressing question: Who is your God? When I ask, "Who is your God?" I am not talking about the God you profess with your lips or your mouth. Which God do you really, truly, actually, and genuinely worship and serve? Do you realize that in the Old Testament and the New Testament, God complained about people who worshipped Him with their lips?

But their hearts were far from Him. Isaiah 29:13 records the Lord's complaint: "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips to honour me, but to remove their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of man."

Here He is complaining about a people who make a profession with their mouth, acknowledge Him, and confess Him, but who really do not worship and serve Him. They draw near with their words, yet their hearts are far from Him; their fear toward Him is merely taught by the precept of man.

In Matthew chapter 15, beginning with verse 7, our Lord quotes from Isaiah and applies that Scripture to the people in His day. He says to the Jews and the Pharisees, "Hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Thus the same outward profession may conceal a heart that does not truly worship God.

"But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Our Lord said, "In vain do they worship me." In other words, I do not accept it. I will not have it. It is not mine. I will not claim this type of worship because their hearts are far from me. Our God is not necessarily the one that we profess with our lips and mouth. Our God is the one that we actually serve and obey. Profession and practice are not necessarily the same thing.

We agree that they should be. We should practice what we profess, but that is not always true. Many people profess, but they do not practice. Our Lord said in Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." You will value and esteem where your heart really and truly is. He then said in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters. Either he will love the one and hate the other, or he will cleave to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

No man can serve two masters. You are either going to love one and hate the other, or cleave to one and despise the other. We must determine and know who our God really and truly is. How do we know who our God is? David could say, "My God is the Lord Jesus Christ." Really? He just confessed and acknowledged that. Is there any other way that I can tell?

## The Consideration: Knowing and Considering God's Revelation and Salvation

And the answer is yes. Scripture gives us the answers. In Deuteronomy 4, look at verses 39 and 40, because these are the two verses to consider today. We will go back and get the context, but notice what God says: “Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord, He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath. There is none else. Thou shalt keep therefore His statutes, and His commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee forever.”

First of all, consider verse 39. God says, “Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart.” Here is a consideration. When God says “know therefore this day,” the word “know” is the Hebrew word yada, which literally means to know and to perceive, to discern, to know by experience, to recognize, to acknowledge, to understand, and confess. “Consider” is the word shub, which means to return, to restore, to bring back, or to turn back as in repetition, as you turn something over and over in your mind. It could be another word for meditate.

God is telling you that you must know and consider something. What are you to know and what are you to consider? First of all, they were to know and consider the greatness of God in His revelation—the greatness of God in His revelation. Deuteronomy 4:32–33 says, "For ask now of the days that are past, which went before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth. And ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such great thing as this, or have been heard like this? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard and lived?"

When you stop and think about what God did to those Israelites whom He brought out of Egypt, He actually revealed Himself to them. They heard His voice. He came down on the mount with great fire and smoke, and He spoke to them out of that fire. They heard the voice of God. God was pleased to reveal Himself to them, and they needed to consider that God had not done this to any other people.

He did not do it to the Egyptians, or the Samaritans, or Sumerians, or anybody else. He did it to Israel, His people. So here is my question: Do you know and have you considered that God has been pleased to reveal Himself to us? Have you thought about that? Do you understand that the only way we can know who God is, or anything about God, is that He has revealed Himself?

When you begin to talk about revelation, you have to understand that there are two types: general revelation and special revelation. What do I mean by general revelation? Let me give you two types of what we would call general revelation.

The very first type is creation. Psalm 19 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork, day unto day uttereth knowledge, night unto night showeth speech. There is no voice nor language where their speech is not heard." Anybody can look at creation and say, "There must be a God. Look at the order and the power involved in this. Look at all of these things together, and you have to know: yes, there is a God."

In fact, Romans chapter 1 says that even the judgment of God against the ungodly tells you about God. He is holy and powerful. But here is the thing about creation, and about general revelation: it

may tell you that there is a God, but it does not tell you anything about Him other than that He is powerful, and possibly holy. Does it tell you that He is merciful? Does it tell you that He is gracious? Does it tell you on what basis He would have mercy upon you?

Another type of general revelation is conscience, Romans chapter 2. When the Apostle Paul talks about even the heathen who by nature do those things contained in the law, he says their conscience is meanwhile either accusing or excusing them.

I do not care where you go in the world, or what kind of pagan people you are talking to; usually, most everyone acknowledges that rape, robbery, and murder are bad, wrong, and wicked. You can go to the darkest tribe of Africa, and if some African goes around, hits his neighbor in the head, and murders him, they will tie him to an anthill, pour syrup or honey on him, and let the ants eat him. They know that is wrong. But if the neighbor attacks him and he kills the man in self-defense, they knew nothing to him. In other words, their consciences know basically right and wrong.

Your conscience is a type of general revelation. It can tell you some basic things about right and wrong, but it does not tell you everything God has declared to be true, right, and holy, nor everything He has declared to be wicked, wrong, and ungodly. The Bible tells us that it is by the law that we have the knowledge of sin. Thus, conscience and creation are general revelation.

When it comes to special revelation, I am going to give you two. We have had creation and conscience, which are general revelation; now we have the commandments, or the Word of God, which are special revelation. In fact, all of God's Word is essentially commandments. I am not speaking only of the Ten Commandments. All of God's Word is true. He commands us in His Word and throughout His Word. It is true that God gave us the Ten Commandments, in Exodus chapter 20 and Deuteronomy chapter 5.

This is the special revelation of God. How do I know that God is just? God has revealed it. How do I know that He is holy, merciful, and the God of salvation? God has revealed it. Everything I know about God comes from special revelation. God has revealed Himself in His Word.

The fourth way God has revealed Himself, also through special revelation, is in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us plainly in Hebrews chapter 1, “God who in times past spoke to our fathers in different ways and in divers manners, hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son whom He made heir of all things.” God has given us the full and final revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. God is not some figment of someone's imagination.

God is not some design of an idol maker, nor is He the product of wishful thinking. God is the only One, and He happens to be the only One who has revealed Himself in His Word. God is exactly as He revealed Himself in His Word. It does you no good to say, “Well, I hope God is like such and such. I wish God was like this.” No, God is not like you think, like you want, or like you wish. He is as He has revealed Himself in His Word.

So He tells them that they should know and consider, first of all, that God has been pleased to reveal Himself unto them. We need to consider that as well. The only reason we know anything about God is that God has been pleased to reveal it.

Now, secondly, if you look in verse 34, they were to know and consider the greatness of God in their salvation. “Where hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes.”

Do you understand what these Israelites saw? They saw those judgments in Egypt. They saw the rivers turn to blood. They saw the frogs. They knew about the lice. They knew the death of the firstborn. They knew all of this firsthand. They were eyewitnesses. It was a tremendous, miraculous, and marvelous deliverance that God made for them.

So here is my question: Do you know and have you considered the greatness of God in salvation in Jesus Christ? It is true that we were not alive physically when Christ was alive. We did not see His miracles as many did. We were not there physically when He was crucified, raised from the dead, or ascended into heaven. However,

we may be there by faith, and we certainly were there covenantally, because the Bible says, when He died, we died.

When He was resurrected, we were resurrected. When He ascended into Heaven, we ascended with Him. When He was glorified, we were glorified. We can rest in this fact: God has sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Yes, we see and know the great salvation that God has given us in Jesus Christ. Now, here is my question: Why did God reveal Himself to these people? And why did God save these people?

You are going to tell me, "He did so just out of his own grace and mercy," which is true, but look in verse 35. He tells you why: "Unto thee it was showed that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God. There is none else beside him." God said, "I reveal myself and I saved you that you might know that I am God alone. There's no one else." So, do you know the one true and living God? Do you understand that there is none beside Him? He alone is God.

He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. We must know this truth, acknowledge it, consider it, and not only confess it with our mouths and tongues, but consider it in our hearts. We must turn it over and over in our minds, constantly reminding ourselves that there is one God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. He is the supreme sovereign of the entire universe.

Here is a consideration in verse 39: "Know therefore this day and consider it in thine heart." Let me give you something else that we are to know and consider. Secondly, verse 39 contains a declaration—not just a consideration, but now a declaration: "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord, He is God in Heaven above, and upon the earth beneath there is none else." You must consider that God is the absolute Sovereign of Heaven and Earth; there is none other.

## The Declaration: God is the Only Sovereign Lord

It is important not only to grasp this fact but also to understand this truth. Why did God keep telling them, "You shall not fear the gods of the Amorites, you shall not fear the gods of all these nations"? Because they are not God. They are not God.

Hold Deuteronomy 4, but turn to Isaiah 45. Look at what God says to Cyrus, the king of Persia. In verse 1 He says, “Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand have I holden, to subdue nations before him. And I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two lead gates, and the gates shall not be shut.”

The Persians came in and destroyed the Babylonians. Under Cyrus, the people were allowed to leave Babylon. God says this is the Cyrus. In verse 4 He says, “For Jacob my servant’s sake and Israel mine elect, I’ve even called thee by thy name, I have surname thee, though thou hast not known me.”

Cyrus was not a Christian. He did not know God, yet God sovereignly chose him and even named him. God said, “Thou hast not known me.” Why? Verse 5 says, “I am the Lord and there’s none else. There is no God beside me. I girded thee, though thou hast not known me, that they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else.”

God raised Cyrus up and allowed him to let the Israelites leave Babylon and go free, that they might know He was God and God alone.

He says, “Tell you and bring them near, yea, let them take counsel together. Who declared this from ancient time? Who told it from that time? Have not I the Lord? Look, and there is no God else beside me, a just God and Savior, there is none beside me.”

Let me put it to you bluntly: Allah is not God, nor is he a god. Buddha is not God. None of the gods of the nations are God. There’s only one ultimate, only one absolute, only one supreme being, only one sovereign, and that is the one true and the living God who’s revealed Himself in His Word through the Lord Jesus Christ. May I remind you of Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 4 where God said, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one.” He is not only one, He is the only one.

When you come to the New Testament in 1 Timothy chapter 3 in verse 16: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.” Listen now: “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in

the world, and received up in glory." So without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. What's that mystery? God was manifest in the flesh. One God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ.

That's why in 1 Timothy 2 and verse 5 the Bible says, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." So when our Lord was born, we refer to that as the Incarnation, that is when God actually manifested Himself in flesh. So Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the Sovereign God of Heaven and Earth. Do you know it? Do you confess it? Do you consider it? Do you meditate upon it over and over in your mind? Do you remind yourself of this truth consistently and constantly, that there is just one God? And He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ.

Now, let me tell you what I've just done. I've just set you up. Because everyone sitting in this room says, "Well, wow, I believe that Jesus Christ is God. I believe that He is the Sovereign, Supreme Lord of Heaven and Earth. I believe that." Well, look in verse 39 of Deuteronomy 4 again. Carefully, because there is a third truth here that I'm going to show you. In verse 39 of Deuteronomy chapter 4, he says, "Know therefore this day and consider in thine heart"—that's the consideration—here's the declaration: "that the Lord, He is God in Heaven above, and upon the earth beneath there is none else." So, if you consider and you know God's revelation, God's salvation, and you confess and acknowledge this declaration that He is God, He's the Sovereign,

## The Implication: Therefore Keep His Commandments

He is the Supreme One. That brings me to the third truth: there is an implication. What is the implication of God being the sovereign, Supreme One? Look in verse 40: "Thou shalt keep, therefore, his statutes and his commandments, which I commend thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee forever."

Notice one word: "therefore." It indicates that verse 40 is a conclusion based upon what precedes. Everything Moses has written in Deuteronomy chapter 4 leads to this conclusion: since God is God,

and He is the only God, we must therefore keep His commandments and His statutes.

There are not two gods in the Bible. Some say, “There’s the God of the Old Testament, and there’s the God of the New Testament.” No, there is only one God. Jesus Christ is the same God in the Old Testament as He is in the New Testament. God is immutable; He does not change. That is why Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.” He is immutable. He does not change. His law does not change.

If God is God and God is sovereign, therefore we must keep His law; we must obey Him. This poses another question: Why did God give us His law? Look at Deuteronomy 5:1: “And Moses called all Israel and said unto them, ‘Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep them, and do them.’” God gave us His law that we may learn it, keep it, and do it.

God’s law is not simply good advice or sound reasoning. God’s law is a demand and a command. A king rules by his law, whether you are speaking of Saul, the first king of Israel, or Rehoboam, or Jehoiakim.

I don't care who you are talking about. I don't care if you are talking about the king of England, or the king of Spain, or King Obama. I mean, let's be honest. That's why he could care less about the Word of God. That's why he could care less about the Constitution, because he's claiming to be a law unto himself. A king rules by his law, and that is true when it comes to the sovereign God of heaven and earth. God rules by His law. His law is an expression of His will for our lives. He is telling us how we're to live, how we're to think, and how we're to conduct ourselves.

In Deuteronomy 5:31, God says, "But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it. You shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you. You shall not turn to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that you

may live, and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess."

Did you see what God just said? God said, "I don't want you turning to the left hand or to the right hand. I don't want you adding to or taking from. You do exactly as I tell you, that it may be well with you, and that you may live long upon the earth." So God is giving us His law for our benefit. He is commanding us.

Deuteronomy 6:1–3 says, "Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land whither you go to possess it, that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command thee, thou and thy son and thy son's son, all the days of thy life, and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it, that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey."

Go back to verse 1: "Now these are the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord your God commanded to teach you." Why? "That you might do them." In other words, God says, "You need to learn My Law." Why?

Not so that you can appear intellectual or argue with people, but so that you can obey it.

Look in verse 2: “That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments.” How do you know that you fear God? You obey Him. You keep His law and His statutes. It is just that simple.

I hope you have noticed in these few brief verses that there are numerous blessings attached to obedience, and numerous curses attached to disobedience. We have not been reading about those curses because, in this passage, God is accentuating the positive. “You obey me,” God said, “you’ll be blessed. You’ll have help. You’ll live long life. You’ll be prosperous.”

Now look in Deuteronomy chapter 6 at verses 24 and 25: “And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always, that He might preserve us alive as it is this day.

And it shall be our righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God as He hath commanded us."

## Imputed vs. Practical Righteousness

There are several obvious truths here. Again, in verse 24, God says He has commanded us to keep His law that we might fear Him, and that our keeping His law is for our good always, that He might preserve us alive. Obviously, keeping God's law is not something that lacks benefits. God is not saying, "I'm giving you my law because I hate you, because I despise you, or because I want to keep you from having a good time." He is saying, "I'm giving you my law so that I can preserve you, and you can be blessed and have a long and fruitful life."

Now look at verse 25: "And it shall be our righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God as He hath commanded us." Wow! God says that if we obey Him, it shall be for our righteousness. Does that mean that we are working for our salvation, seeking to earn our salvation, or that we can be saved by doing good and keeping the law?

And the answer is absolutely no. Never. That is not what this verse means. Numerous verses in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament teach that no one is saved, or can be saved, by the deeds of the law. For instance, 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."

No one is justified by the Law. The Law demands three things of every individual: personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. There is not one individual who can give the Law what it demands. You cannot give it personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. If you were to become absolutely perfect today and, from this time forth, never sinned again, internally or externally, would that get you to Heaven? No. What about all those sins you committed before you became perfect? You still are going to have to answer for those sins.

No one is saved by keeping the Law. In Romans 3:28, the Apostle said, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without

the deeds of the law." So here is my question: How can God say that if we obey Him it is for our righteousness? It shall be our righteousness.

There is a difference between imputed righteousness and a practical righteousness. We are saved by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only individual ever to come into this world who kept the Law personally, perfectly, and perpetually. Galatians says, “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the Law, that He might redeem those that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

Why was Christ made under the Law? He was made under the Law so that He could work out an absolute perfect righteousness. He kept the Law personally, perfectly, and perpetually. Jesus Christ also died as our substitute and our sacrifice in order for there to be forgiveness of sins.

God does not simply forgive us our sins. If the only thing God ever did for us was forgive us of our sins, would that get us into the presence of God? No. You need more than forgiveness of sins to get into the presence of God; you need a perfect righteousness. Jesus Christ not only died to forgive us our sins, He worked out and earned a perfect righteousness, which is imputed to us.

Our Lord’s obedience to the law, His sacrificial death, His substitutionary atonement, His propitiation, and His intercession—these things alone are the basis and foundation for salvation. No one will ever be saved apart from the Lord Jesus Christ; it is just that simple. He imputes His righteousness to us.

Our obedience does not help to save us. Salvation is not synergistic. It is not partly the work of God and partly the work of man. It is not God and man working together. It is God and God alone. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It’s the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”

We are saved by grace through faith: “For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It’s 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 foreordained that we should walk therein." What is practical righteousness? It is that which demonstrates that we have been saved by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is a demonstration, manifestation, and evidence that we have genuinely been saved by grace through faith.

Our Lord said in Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 25 that, if we obey Him, it shall be our righteousness. Would you call a fornicator, a whoremonger, and an adulterer a righteous man? No. Would you call a thief, a robber, and a conman a righteous man? No. Would you call a violent, hateful murderer a righteous man? No. Who, then, would you call a righteous man?

It is someone who obeys God and submits to Him, bringing his life into conformity to His Word. In other words, it is someone who is practically obedient—someone who is practically righteous. And we can only be practically righteous if we have been imputed righteous by Jesus Christ. So, it is Ephesians 2:10.

## Obedience as the Test of True Faith

If you want to know who your God really is, and how you can know specifically, go back in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 17. This is the passage where God sent the Israelites into captivity because of their sins against Him, and where all of these pagans got into Israel. Notice verse 6: "In the ninth year of Hosea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Hala, in Habor, by the river of Gozan, in the cities of the Medes. For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods." How do we know that Israel feared other gods? We know because God told us. But what was the practical manifestation that they feared other gods? Look in verse 8. Part of verse 7 says, "and had feared other gods," and verse 8 says, "and walked in the statutes of the heathen whom the Lord cast out from before

The children of Israel and the kings of Israel which they had made. So what were they doing? They were casting God's law and His commandments behind their back, and they were obeying the

laws of heathen kings and heathen gods. They were not obeying God. If they had feared God, they would have been keeping His law, but they did not fear God.

“Yet the Lord testified against Israel and against Judah by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, ‘Turn you from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.’ Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them. And they followed vanity”—that is, idolatry—“and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them.”

“And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves into evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of His sight. There was none left but the tribe of Judah only.” And Judah did not last much longer. “Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.”

How do we know that Israel feared other gods? Because they did not obey the one true and living God, but they did obey the laws of their false gods and of the heathen. They simply did not obey God. It is no different in the New Testament. Your obedience demonstrates who your God is, and your disobedience also demonstrates who your God is. Do you remember the passage in Luke 6:46, where our Lord said,

"Why called you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?" The word "Lord" is kurios in the Greek. It is where we get the English ideas of sovereign, boss, owner, or master. Jesus was asking, "Why are you calling me boss? Why are you calling me sovereign if you are not going to do the things which I say unto you?"

How do we know that Jesus Christ is our Lord? If He is our Lord, we obey Him. If He is not our Lord, then we disobey Him.

It is like Pharaoh when Moses said, "Thus saith the Lord, let my people go." What did Pharaoh say? "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." He was saying, in effect, I am not going to obey Him; I do not recognize Him.

Our Lord said in John 14:21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." In verse 24 He said, "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." Our Lord made it very simple: if you love Him, you will keep His sayings; if you do not love Him, you will not keep His sayings.

Now turn to 1 John chapter 5, beginning with verse 2: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments." How do I know that I love Francis? It is not because I fall on his shoulder, embrace him, and say repeatedly, "I love you." I love him because I act biblically and scripturally toward him and his family. That is what the Scripture says: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments." You must remember Romans 13: love is the fulfilling of the law.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). What is it to love God? It is to keep His commandments. What is it to fear God? It is to keep His commandments. What is it to honor and worship the one true and living God? It is to keep His commandments.

Look in 1 John 2:3: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” How do I know that I am genuinely saved? How do I know that I know the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ? According to this verse, He is enabling me by His grace to bring my life into conformity to His Word, to keep His commandments.

That does not mean that I am perfect, spotless, or sinless. It does mean that, as a general tenor of my life, I am obeying Him. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”

Now look at 1 John 2:4: “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” Here is a man who professes with his mouth that Jesus Christ is his God and his Lord, yet his life is one of practical disobedience, ignoring God and ignoring God's Word. What does God say? That man is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

So here is my question: Who is your God? Your God is not simply the one that you profess with your lips and acknowledge with your mouth. Your God is the one that you obey, the one that you honor and worship, and to whose Word you bring your life into conformity. What did He say? Know and consider that there is no other God in heaven above or on earth beneath. God says, “I am he, and there is none else.” Therefore, you will keep His commandments. If you acknowledge that God is the Sovereign, you will keep His commandments.

Because when you acknowledge that and consider it in your heart, you know that He's God of gods, King of kings, and Lord of lords, and beside Him there is none other. So when you look around the world today and hear people say, "Well, I'm a Christian," just look at their lives. See whom they practically obey. See whom they practically worship. It's not just what you say with your mouth; it's what you do with your life.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before thee this day. We thank you for your word and your truth. We pray that you'd help us, Lord, not only to acknowledge with our lips and mouth that thou art God and God alone, but that you would help and enable us to obey thee and bring our lives into conformity to your word. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

# Source Notes

Chapter 1: Christ and the Adultrous Woman
JW01067 | 2002-10-20 | SermonAudio

Chapter 2: Feared by Your Enemies
JW01014 | 2004-06-27 | SermonAudio

Chapter 3: Why God Does Not Answer Most Prayers
JW01001 | 2004-10-17 | SermonAudio

Chapter 4: Who's Paying Attention
JW00979 | 2005-04-03 | SermonAudio

Chapter 5: Committing the Sin of the Jews
JW00872 | 2007-09-20 | SermonAudio

Chapter 6: 1 Sanctification & Sexual Purity
JW00868 | 2007-10-22 | SermonAudio

Chapter 7: 3 Sanctification & Sexual Purity
JW00867 | 2007-10-22 | SermonAudio

Chapter 8: I Will Love the Lord
JW00855 | 2007-12-23 | SermonAudio

Chapter 9: Total Warfare
JW00847 | 2008-02-24 | SermonAudio

Chapter 10: The Pleasure of the Lord
JW00757 | 2010-01-24 | SermonAudio

Chapter 11: How to Love The Lord With All Your Heart
JW00645 | 2012-08-12 | SermonAudio

Chapter 12: It Takes More Than a Profession of Faith
JW00636 | 2012-11-04 | SermonAudio

Chapter 13: How to Enrage Hypocrites and Pharisees
JW00580 | 2014-04-06 | SermonAudio

Chapter 14: Abiding In Christ
JW00418 | 2018-05-13 | SermonAudio

Chapter 15: A Short and Pointed Prayer
JW00415 | 2018-05-27 | SermonAudio

Chapter 16: Holiness and Obedience
JW00390 | 2018-12-07 | SermonAudio

Chapter 17: Community In The Old South and Confederacy
JW00347 | 2019-11-09 | SermonAudio

Chapter 18: Pretend Christians
JW00348 | 2019-11-09 | SermonAudio

Chapter 19: A Biblical Philosophy of History
JW01337 | 2012-12-15 | YouTube

Chapter 20: Who Are You Condemning?
JW01338 | 2012-12-15 | YouTube

Chapter 21: Who Is Your God?
JW01408 | 2015-11-10 | YouTube

# Topical Index

Chapter titles and section headings are listed with the pages on which they begin.


**1**

1 Sanctification & Sexual Purity p. 115

**3**

3 Sanctification & Sexual Purity p. 135

**A**

A Biblical Philosophy of History p. 351

A Short and Pointed Prayer p. 277

A Time for Mercy and a Time to Show No Mercy p. 171

Abiding In Christ p. 259

Abiding in Christ p. 259

Abiding is Mandatory, Not Optional p. 263

Action: Love Demonstrated by Obedience p. 162

Affection: Setting Our Hearts on Things Above p. 160

An Exhortation p. 118

Application: Obedience as the Key to Answered Prayer p. 68

Applications and Conclusion p. 149, p. 371

Applications for Believers p. 256

Applications of Abiding in Christ p. 275

Applications: Examining Our Love and Obedience p. 166

Applications: Fight, Obey, and Do Not Live by Feelings p. 274

Applications: Gratitude and Warning p. 188

Applications: Pay Attention to Your Own Business and Trust God's Sovereignty p. 85

Applications: The Inseparability of Holiness and Obedience p. 306

Applying Principles to Historical Figures p. 360

Attitude: Knowing God's Person and Providence p. 156

**B**

Background of Thessalonica and the Epistle p. 117

Being Sober-Minded p. 302

Believers Should Take Pleasure in God p. 197
Believing Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God p. 101
Biblical Condemnation of Oppressing the Poor and Perverting Justice p. 75
Biblical Descriptions of Hypocrites p. 243
Biblical Examples of God's Protection p. 49
Biblical Examples of Hypocritical Worship p. 393
Biblical Foundation: Comfort and Edify One Another p. 310
Biblical Love Fulfills the Law p. 12

## C

Chosen by Free Grace, Not Works p. 193
Christ and the Adultrous Woman p. 11
Christ as Living Word and Scripture as Written Word p. 266
Christ's Return in Flaming Fire p. 187
Church Discipline and the Living Dead p. 27
Civil vs. Religious Forgiveness p. 25
Committing the Sin of the Jews p. 91
Committing the Sins of the Jews p. 91
Common Interpretations of Loving God p. 209
Community In The Old South and Confederacy p. 309
Conclusion and Prayer p. 113
Conclusion: Justice, Mercy, and Lawless Enforcers p. 30
Conclusion: Obedience Evidences Genuine Faith p. 238
Conclusion: The Inescapable Choice p. 389
Conclusion: The Measuring Stick of Obedience p. 223
Condemnation Is Not Only for the Unsaved p. 374
Confession Must Come from the Heart p. 228
Confounding Their Thinking p. 250
Consciousness of Deficiency and Need for Surety (v. 122) p. 283
Consequences of Rejecting God's Kingship p. 109

## D

David's Determination: 'I Will Love the Lord' p. 153
David's Dominion p. 170
Defining Community: Commonality is Essential p. 310

Definition and Purpose of History p. 354

## E

Exhortation by the Lord Jesus p. 118

## F

False Profession in Jeremiah's Day p. 228
Feared by Your Enemies p. 33
Feared By Your Enemies p. 33
First Method: Violating and Opposing Their Traditions p. 246
Four Pillars of Southern Community p. 315
Fruit as Evidence of Salvation p. 263

## G

God Commands and Establishes p. 43
God Condescends to Take Pleasure in Us p. 198
God Is Not Always Merciful p. 175
God Takes Pleasure Only in His People p. 192
God Works Mediately Through Obedience p. 40
God's Prior Love as the Foundation p. 153
God's Promise to Those Who Seek His Pleasure p. 191
Gospel Obedience and Perseverance p. 46

## H

History as Conflict Between God and Anti-God p. 359
Holiness and Obedience p. 295
Holiness Begins in the Mind p. 298, p. 299
Holiness Ends in Obedience p. 303
How to Enrage Hypocrites and Pharisees p. 241
How to Enrage Hypocrites and Pharisees Without Even Trying p. 241
How to Love The Lord With All Your Heart p. 207
How to Love the Lord with All Your Heart p. 207
How We Condemn God p. 387
How We Condemn Others p. 384
How We Condemn Ourselves p. 375

## I

I Will Love the Lord p. 151
Identity and Character of the Accusers p. 13
Illustrations of Fear vs. Faith p. 35
Implications of 'We Have No King but Caesar' p. 104
Implications: Human Impotence and Divine Omnipotence p. 286
Imputed vs. Practical Righteousness p. 406
Intellectual vs. Practical Atheism p. 392
Introduction and Controversy of the Passage p. 11
Introduction and God's Command to Remember p. 351
Introduction and Historical Context p. 115
Introduction and Personal Anecdotes p. 259
Introduction and Review p. 135
Introduction and Review of Psalm 18 p. 169
Introduction and Scripture Reading p. 91, p. 225
Introduction to Psalm 18 p. 151
Introduction: The Command to Be Holy p. 295
Introduction: The Great Commandment p. 207
Introduction: The Natural Conflict Between Real and Pretend Christians p. 242
Introduction: The Nature of Fear p. 34
Introduction: The Need for Community p. 309
Introduction: The Prevalence of Pretend Christians p. 333
Introduction: The Principle of Positive and Negative p. 373
Introduction: The Problem of Not Paying Attention p. 71
Introduction: The Problem of Unanswered Prayer p. 51
Introduction: The Question of Pleasing God p. 191
Introduction: The Question of Who Your God Is p. 391
Introduction: The Value of Brief, Sincere Prayer p. 277
It Takes More Than a Profession of Faith p. 225

## J

Jesus Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King p. 96
Jesus Quotes the Shema in Mark 12 p. 212
Jesus' Response and the Law of Jealousy p. 18

Jesus' Untactful Confrontation of Pharisees p. 245
Jesus' Warning Against Empty Profession p. 237
Justified Freely, Without a Cause p. 195

**L**

Learning from God's Judgments in Nature and Providence p. 355
Longing for Deliverance and Deeper Obedience (vv. 123-125) p. 285
Love as an Act of the Will p. 155
Love Connected to Commandments in Deuteronomy 6 p. 211
Love Is Demonstrative and Evidenced p. 216
Love Is Not Sentimentality p. 211

**M**

Modern Examples and Antinomianism p. 336
Motivation: The Eternal Reward of Doing God's Will p. 142

**N**

National and Personal Application p. 110
New Testament Evidence: Love Is Obedience p. 214
Not Fashioned to Former Lusts p. 304

**O**

Obedience as the Pattern of Abiding p. 267
Obedience as the Test of True Faith p. 408
Old Testament Evidence: Love Is Obedience p. 213
Other Specified Areas of God's Will p. 140
Our Actions Demonstrate Love p. 161
Our Impotency and Helplessness p. 286

**P**

Personal Application: How to Walk and Please God p. 129
Practical Applications of Loving God p. 219
Practical Necessity: We Must Be Taught p. 120
Preservation, Perseverance, and Keeping Ourselves in God's Love p. 269
Pretend Christians p. 333
Pretend Preachers and How to Identify Them p. 337
Principle 1: A Time for Mercy and a Time for No Mercy p. 171

Principle 2: Total Warfare Is Sometimes Lawful and Right p. 179
Principle 3: Psalm 18 Applied to Christ's Return p. 184
Profiting from the Lives of Others p. 358
Progressive Reality: Abound More and More p. 132
Psalm 137 and the Destruction of Babylon's Children p. 182

**R**

Rebuilding Society on God's Law p. 313
Rejecting God's Kingship in 1 Samuel 8 p. 103
Renewing the Mind Through Scripture p. 301

**S**

Salvation by Grace Alone, Not Works p. 225
Salvation Given Before the World Began p. 195
Sanctification and Sexual Purity p. 115, p. 135
Sanctification Central to Salvation p. 145
Scriptural Proof of the Principle p. 65
Second Method: Confounding and Confusing Their Thinking p. 250
Self-Government vs. External Control p. 314
Six Prerequisites for Effective Prayer p. 54
Southern Community in the Old South p. 309
Southern Heritage: Birthright and Identity p. 323
Southern Honor: The Glue of Community p. 319
Southern Hope p. 314
Southern Hope and Honor p. 318
Southern Hope: Biblical Hope p. 315
Strength and Might in Loving God p. 209
Swearing Falsely Profanes God's Name p. 236

**T**

The Accusers Depart and the Woman's Forgiveness p. 22
The Affirmation: This is the Will of God p. 138
The Bible as a History Book and the Command to Teach p. 353
The Blame-Shifting Condemnation of God p. 73
The Church as Community of Faith p. 313
The Clean Hands Doctrine (v. 121) p. 280

The Consequences of Rejecting God's Kingship p. 109
The Consideration: Knowing and Considering God's Revelation and Salvation p. 397
The Context of Psalm 119:121-128 p. 279
The Context: Keeping Our Words and Vows p. 79
The Danger of Erasing History p. 357
The Declaration: God is the Only Sovereign Lord p. 401
The Dilemma: A Trap for Jesus p. 15
The Eternal Decree of God and History p. 352
The Exaltation of Christ as Lord and Messiah p. 98
The Example of Josiah: Hearing God's Word p. 51
The Explanation: What is Sanctification? p. 142
The Flesh Opposes Holiness p. 296
The Gospel and a Biblical Philosophy of History p. 371
The Gospel as All-Encompassing Good News p. 368
The Government of Christ and the Mandate of Obedience p. 268
The Holy Spirit Authenticates True Confession p. 230
The Implication: Therefore Keep His Commandments p. 403
The Insult of Disobedience p. 232
The Jews Crucified Christ p. 92
The Meaning of 'Taketh Pleasure' p. 192
The Meaning of Abiding: Obedience to Christ's Word p. 265
The Nature of True Salvation: Continued Obedience p. 338
The Necessity of Obeying Clear Commands p. 141
The Obligation to Love God p. 208
The Parable of the Two Sons p. 334
The Pharisees as Pretenders p. 335
The Pleasure of the Lord p. 191
The Pointed Petition: 'It Is Time for the LORD to Work' (v. 126) p. 286
The Preeminent One: God is Higher and Regards p. 83
The Principle of Lex Talionis in Prayer p. 64
The Problem of Empty Profession p. 227
The Problem of Sexual Impurity p. 118
The Prohibition: Marvel Not p. 78

The Promise: Enemies Will Fear You p. 48
The Proof of Genuine Faith: Continuing in Christ p. 348
The Proposition: When You See Oppression and Perversion of Justice p. 74
The Relevance of Past Events and Timeless Principles p. 363
The Role of Individuals and Families p. 314
The Scribes and Pharisees p. 13
The Source of Blessings: God Causes p. 39
The Test of Genuine Faith and the Spirit's Enabling p. 272
The Third Application p. 257
The Three Elements of Biblical Love: Attitude, Affection, Action p. 156
The Vine and Branches Metaphor p. 262
The Will of God Revealed p. 136
The Wise and Foolish Builders p. 342
Theological War: Christianity vs. Atheism p. 316
Third Method: Explaining, Expounding, and Applying God's Law p. 253
Total Warfare p. 169, p. 179

## V

Victory Assured for His People p. 199

## W

What Pleases God: Fear and Hope p. 200
When to Pray This Prayer and Our Response (vv. 127-128) p. 289
Who Are You Condemning? p. 373
Who Is Your God? p. 391
Who's Paying Attention p. 71
Who's Paying Attention? p. 71
Why Did the Jews Crucify Christ? p. 94
Why God Does Not Answer Most Prayers p. 51
Why God Takes Pleasure: For His Name's Sake p. 196
Why Some Fall Away: The Flesh, the World, and Family Breakdown p. 342

# Scripture Index

Scripture references identified in chapter readings, headings, and manuscript text are listed with their page locations.


### Genesis

Genesis 3:15 p. 104

Genesis 39 p. 271

### Exodus

Exodus 15:13-16 p. 39

Exodus 20 p. 219

Exodus 20:15 p. 221

Exodus 23:27-30 p. 39

Exodus 34 p. 49, p. 177

### Leviticus

Leviticus 18 p. 28, p. 29

Leviticus 19:12 p. 236

Leviticus 19:18 p. 155

Leviticus 20:10 p. 17

Leviticus 21:6 p. 236, p. 237

Leviticus 22:32 p. 236, p. 237

### Numbers

Numbers 5 p. 18, p. 19

Numbers 5:11-31 p. 19

Numbers 15 p. 163

Numbers 32:23 p. 84

### Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 1:16-17 p. 77

Deuteronomy 2 p. 181

Deuteronomy 2:30-34 p. 181

Deuteronomy 3:3-6 p. 181

Deuteronomy 4 p. 397, p. 402, p. 403

Deuteronomy 4:32-33 p. 398

Deuteronomy 4:34-40 p. 391
Deuteronomy 5:1 p. 404
Deuteronomy 5:31 p. 404, p. 405
Deuteronomy 6 p. 209, p. 211, p. 212
Deuteronomy 6:1-3 p. 405
Deuteronomy 6:1-9 p. 211
Deuteronomy 6:13 p. 236
Deuteronomy 6:4 p. 212
Deuteronomy 6:5 p. 155, p. 210
Deuteronomy 7 p. 194
Deuteronomy 7:9-10 p. 85
Deuteronomy 10:20 p. 236
Deuteronomy 11 p. 41
Deuteronomy 11:1 p. 155, p. 163
Deuteronomy 15 p. 75
Deuteronomy 17 p. 63
Deuteronomy 17:7 p. 23
Deuteronomy 18 p. 98
Deuteronomy 18:18-19 p. 96, p. 97
Deuteronomy 19 p. 23
Deuteronomy 19:13 p. 175
Deuteronomy 20:19-20 p. 362, p. 363
Deuteronomy 22:22 p. 17
Deuteronomy 23 p. 176
Deuteronomy 24 p. 335, p. 336
Deuteronomy 26 p. 220
Deuteronomy 28 p. 38, p. 39, p. 40, p. 41, p. 43, p. 44, p. 45, p. 47
Deuteronomy 28:1-14 p. 33
Deuteronomy 29:29 p. 86, p. 137
Deuteronomy 30 p. 164
Deuteronomy 32:7 p. 353

## Joshua

Joshua 8:10 p. 45
Joshua 21:45 p. 45

Joshua 22 p. 213
Joshua 23 p. 214

### 1 Samuel

1 Samuel 8 p. 103, p. 104
1 Samuel 12:12 p. 104
1 Samuel 15:1 p. 181
1 Samuel 15:6 p. 362, p. 363
1 Samuel 17 p. 36, p. 37

### 2 Samuel

2 Samuel 22 p. 151, p. 152
2 Samuel 23 p. 152

### 1 Kings

1 Kings 16 p. 313

### 2 Kings

2 Kings 22 p. 64
2 Kings 22:7-20 p. 52

### 1 Chronicles

1 Chronicles 1 p. 310, p. 311
1 Chronicles 29:2 p. 210

### 2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles 14 p. 42, p. 43
2 Chronicles 17:10 p. 49
2 Chronicles 20:29-30 p. 49
2 Chronicles 34 p. 223
2 Chronicles 35 p. 62
2 Chronicles 35:25 p. 62
2 Chronicles 36:15-16 p. 97

### Ezra

Ezra 7:6 p. 63

### Job

Job 1:21 p. 159, p. 160

Job 9:20 p. 376
Job 15:6 p. 376
Job 37:9 p. 356

## Psalm

Psalm 7:11 p. 374
Psalm 8 p. 371
Psalm 9 p. 291
Psalm 10:13 p. 387
Psalm 15 p. 80
Psalm 16:6 p. 324
Psalm 18 p. 151, p. 152, p. 155, p. 166, p. 169, p. 170, p. 171, p. 172, p. 184, p. 185, p. 186, p. 187, p. 188
Psalm 18:1-3 p. 151
Psalm 18:37-50 p. 169
Psalm 19 p. 371, p. 398
Psalm 25:11 p. 196
Psalm 33 p. 41
Psalm 37:1 p. 383, p. 384
Psalm 41 p. 76
Psalm 42 p. 161, p. 162
Psalm 44 p. 370
Psalm 50 p. 84, p. 85
Psalm 50:20-21 p. 84, p. 85
Psalm 50:21 p. 85
Psalm 61:5 p. 324
Psalm 62 p. 287
Psalm 66 p. 66
Psalm 68 p. 335, p. 336
Psalm 73 p. 81, p. 82, p. 83, p. 161, p. 162
Psalm 76 p. 86
Psalm 76:10 p. 86, p. 87
Psalm 78 p. 354
Psalm 80 p. 262
Psalm 83 p. 291

Psalm 85 p. 287
Psalm 90:17 p. 290
Psalm 90:8 p. 85
Psalm 94 p. 291, p. 292
Psalm 94:20-21 p. 384, p. 385
Psalm 97:10 p. 222
Psalm 100:3 p. 192
Psalm 103:1 p. 209, p. 210
Psalm 107 p. 373
Psalm 107:10 p. 387
Psalm 107:10-12 p. 373
Psalm 107:12 p. 389
Psalm 111:2 p. 197, p. 198, p. 371
Psalm 113 p. 198
Psalm 119 p. 277, p. 279, p. 282, p. 283, p. 288
Psalm 119:121-128 p. 279
Psalm 119:122 p. 284, p. 285
Psalm 119:126 p. 288, p. 289, p. 291, p. 293
Psalm 119:136 p. 292
Psalm 137 p. 182
Psalm 137:8-9 p. 183
Psalm 138 p. 287
Psalm 138:2 p. 291
Psalm 141:3 p. 379
Psalm 147:10 p. 200
Psalm 147:11 p. 200, p. 201
Psalm 148 p. 43, p. 44
Psalm 149 p. 191, p. 197, p. 199
Psalm 149:4 p. 197, p. 199

## Proverbs

Proverbs 3 p. 300
Proverbs 4:23 p. 156, p. 376, p. 377
Proverbs 5:18 p. 219
Proverbs 8:36 p. 110, p. 111

Proverbs 11:16 p. 323
Proverbs 11:31 p. 369
Proverbs 15:18 p. 381, p. 382
Proverbs 15:3 p. 83, p. 84
Proverbs 16:7 p. 49, p. 204
Proverbs 17 p. 76, p. 77
Proverbs 17:15 p. 384
Proverbs 18:13 p. 381, p. 382
Proverbs 19:17 p. 76
Proverbs 21:1 p. 288
Proverbs 21:13 p. 76, p. 77
Proverbs 22:16 p. 76, p. 77
Proverbs 23 p. 299
Proverbs 23:7 p. 376, p. 377
Proverbs 24 p. 77, p. 78
Proverbs 28 p. 66, p. 67
Proverbs 28:4 p. 386
Proverbs 29:23 p. 322
Proverbs 30:14 p. 77
Proverbs 31 p. 77, p. 78

## Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 5 p. 73
Ecclesiastes 5:1-8 p. 71, p. 85, p. 86
Ecclesiastes 5:8 p. 84

## Isaiah

Isaiah 1 p. 261
Isaiah 5 p. 262
Isaiah 6 p. 202
Isaiah 8:20 p. 337
Isaiah 9:6 p. 267, p. 268
Isaiah 10 p. 87
Isaiah 13:16 p. 183
Isaiah 29:13 p. 227, p. 228, p. 396

Isaiah 43 p. 84
Isaiah 44:8 p. 84
Isaiah 45 p. 402
Isaiah 46:10 p. 353
Isaiah 48 p. 225, p. 238
Isaiah 48:1-2 p. 227, p. 235
Isaiah 55 p. 43, p. 300
Isaiah 55:11 p. 387
Isaiah 58 p. 191, p. 192

## Jeremiah

Jeremiah 2 p. 262
Jeremiah 5:1-2 p. 228
Jeremiah 13:14 p. 178
Jeremiah 14:22 p. 356
Jeremiah 21:7 p. 178
Jeremiah 31:3 p. 154
Jeremiah 32 p. 288
Jeremiah 32:30-33 p. 232
Jeremiah 35:1 p. 233
Jeremiah 35:1-19 p. 232
Jeremiah 35:11-19 p. 233

## Ezekiel

Ezekiel 11:5 p. 83, p. 84

## Daniel

Daniel 2:22 p. 83, p. 84
Daniel 4:37 p. 88
Daniel 9 p. 95, p. 96

## Hosea

Hosea 1:6 p. 177, p. 178

## Joel

Joel 1 p. 262

### Amos

Amos 5:15 p. 222

### Jonah

Jonah 2:9 p. 104

### Nahum

Nahum 1:3 p. 85

### Zechariah

Zechariah 1:12 p. 178, p. 179

### Malachi

Malachi 2:7 p. 62, p. 63

Malachi 3:17 p. 193

### Matthew

Matthew 1:21 p. 146

Matthew 5:17 p. 17

Matthew 5:7 p. 172

Matthew 6 p. 277, p. 278

Matthew 6:21 p. 397

Matthew 6:24 p. 397

Matthew 6:7 p. 57

Matthew 7 p. 280, p. 281, p. 380

Matthew 7:15 p. 337, p. 338

Matthew 7:21 p. 237, p. 338

Matthew 7:24 p. 342

Matthew 11 p. 125, p. 127

Matthew 12:34 p. 376

Matthew 12:41 p. 385

Matthew 12:7 p. 381

Matthew 15 p. 220, p. 250, p. 278, p. 376, p. 377

Matthew 15:18 p. 377

Matthew 16 p. 125

Matthew 18 p. 172

Matthew 20:18 p. 387, p. 388

Matthew 21 p. 252
Matthew 21:22 p. 56
Matthew 21:32 p. 354, p. 355
Matthew 22 p. 207
Matthew 23 p. 244, p. 335
Matthew 25:40 p. 218
Matthew 28 p. 127
Matthew 28:18 p. 101, p. 119, p. 268, p. 288

## Mark

Mark 3 p. 253
Mark 4 p. 67, p. 68, p. 127
Mark 4:24 p. 130
Mark 6 p. 127
Mark 7 p. 247, p. 250
Mark 7:2 p. 256
Mark 8:38 p. 256
Mark 11:24 p. 56
Mark 12 p. 209, p. 212
Mark 12:29 p. 212
Mark 14 p. 99
Mark 14:64 p. 387, p. 388

## Luke

Luke 1:49 p. 142, p. 143
Luke 2 p. 346
Luke 2:23 p. 143
Luke 2:51 p. 346
Luke 6:1-11 p. 241
Luke 6:10-11 p. 253
Luke 6:37 p. 379, p. 380
Luke 6:46 p. 130, p. 167, p. 237, p. 267, p. 268, p. 409
Luke 6:7 p. 246
Luke 6:9 p. 252
Luke 7:28 p. 388

Luke 8 p. 67, p. 68
Luke 8:18 p. 130
Luke 10 p. 209
Luke 10:37 p. 173
Luke 11 p. 54
Luke 12:32 p. 204
Luke 13:10 p. 255
Luke 15:10 p. 201
Luke 18 p. 53
Luke 19 p. 112

## John

John 1:1-3 p. 97, p. 266
John 3 p. 159
John 3:18 p. 374
John 3:36 p. 374
John 4 p. 15
John 5 p. 255
John 5:24 p. 375
John 6:44 p. 122
John 6:44-45 p. 122
John 7:23 p. 255
John 7:24 p. 281, p. 380
John 8 p. 12, p. 13, p. 14, p. 18, p. 23, p. 24, p. 31, p. 333
John 8:29 p. 307
John 10:27 p. 229, p. 230
John 10:30 p. 346
John 11:21 p. 73
John 12:48 p. 266, p. 267
John 14 p. 55, p. 123, p. 124, p. 164, p. 165, p. 224, p. 272
John 14:13-14 p. 56
John 14:15 p. 214, p. 238, p. 268
John 14:21 p. 108, p. 410
John 15 p. 95, p. 267, p. 276
John 15:10 p. 269

John 15:11 p. 268
John 15:25 p. 195, p. 196
John 15:5 p. 286, p. 287
John 15:7 p. 265
John 16:26 p. 56
John 17 p. 100, p. 143, p. 158
John 17:23 p. 144, p. 145
John 18 p. 103
John 18:28 p. 249
John 18:31 p. 17, p. 18
John 18:36-37 p. 91
John 19 p. 92, p. 93, p. 104
John 19:15 p. 105

## Acts

Acts 2:36 p. 98, p. 99, p. 100
Acts 2:47 p. 231
Acts 3:15 p. 101
Acts 4 p. 105, p. 106
Acts 5:29 p. 108
Acts 5:31 p. 101
Acts 10:39 p. 93, p. 94
Acts 13 p. 368
Acts 15 p. 353
Acts 16 p. 99
Acts 17 p. 353, p. 368

## Romans

Romans 1 p. 371
Romans 1:4 p. 102
Romans 1:9 p. 200
Romans 3 p. 95, p. 195
Romans 3:20 p. 406
Romans 3:24 p. 196
Romans 3:28 p. 406, p. 407

Romans 6 p. 339, p. 340, p. 341
Romans 8 p. 147, p. 148, p. 339
Romans 8:1 p. 375
Romans 8:26-27 p. 59
Romans 8:28 p. 159, p. 369
Romans 8:6-8 p. 251
Romans 8:7-8 p. 153
Romans 8:9 p. 148, p. 263
Romans 9 p. 176, p. 177
Romans 9:21-22 p. 88
Romans 10:13 p. 229
Romans 10:9-10 p. 228
Romans 11 p. 39, p. 40, p. 364
Romans 11:35 p. 153, p. 154
Romans 12 p. 301, p. 328
Romans 12:1-2 p. 138
Romans 12:2 p. 304
Romans 13 p. 214, p. 410
Romans 13:10 p. 132, p. 162, p. 163
Romans 13:7 p. 360
Romans 14 p. 130
Romans 14:10 p. 130
Romans 15 p. 185

## 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 1 p. 131, p. 347
1 Corinthians 1:30 p. 144
1 Corinthians 2 p. 368
1 Corinthians 2:14 p. 251
1 Corinthians 2:2 p. 368
1 Corinthians 2:4-5 p. 368
1 Corinthians 3 p. 131, p. 270, p. 368, p. 369, p. 371, p. 372
1 Corinthians 5:1-13 p. 27
1 Corinthians 6:9 p. 146, p. 147
1 Corinthians 9:26 p. 275

1 Corinthians 11:3 p. 345
1 Corinthians 12:3 p. 230
1 Corinthians 15 p. 369
1 Corinthians 15:12-27 p. 369
1 Corinthians 15:3 p. 368, p. 369

## 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 3:6 p. 231
2 Corinthians 5:10 p. 130
2 Corinthians 6 p. 189, p. 297
2 Corinthians 7:1 p. 297
2 Corinthians 8:5 p. 139
2 Corinthians 9 p. 221
2 Corinthians 10 p. 302
2 Corinthians 10:5 p. 156
2 Corinthians 13 p. 119

## Galatians

Galatians 1:14 p. 247
Galatians 1:4 p. 139
Galatians 4 p. 159
Galatians 4:29 p. 242, p. 243
Galatians 5 p. 296
Galatians 5:17 p. 242, p. 243
Galatians 5:19 p. 342, p. 343
Galatians 6 p. 224
Galatians 6:1 p. 322

## Ephesians

Ephesians 1 p. 40, p. 45, p. 100
Ephesians 1:4 p. 143, p. 144
Ephesians 2 p. 55, p. 305
Ephesians 2:10 p. 408
Ephesians 2:2 p. 303
Ephesians 2:3 p. 299
Ephesians 2:8-9 p. 226, p. 407

Ephesians 4 p. 153, p. 373
Ephesians 4:17-18 p. 121, p. 299, p. 300
Ephesians 4:20 p. 121, p. 122
Ephesians 4:28 p. 221
Ephesians 4:29 p. 378
Ephesians 5 p. 346, p. 347
Ephesians 5:22 p. 345
Ephesians 5:25 p. 155
Ephesians 5:25-27 p. 144, p. 149
Ephesians 6 p. 139
Ephesians 6:6 p. 139

## Philippians

Philippians 1 p. 46
Philippians 1:29 p. 88
Philippians 1:9 p. 132
Philippians 2 p. 46
Philippians 2:13 p. 204, p. 205
Philippians 2:5 p. 156
Philippians 3 p. 247

## Colossians

Colossians 1:10 p. 296
Colossians 1:21 p. 121, p. 153, p. 299
Colossians 1:28 p. 128
Colossians 2:8 p. 247
Colossians 3 p. 301, p. 302
Colossians 3:1-2 p. 60
Colossians 3:16 p. 302, p. 303
Colossians 3:2 p. 161
Colossians 3:6 p. 303
Colossians 4:12 p. 141

## 1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 2:18 p. 117
1 Thessalonians 3:12 p. 132

1 Thessalonians 4 p. 140
1 Thessalonians 4:1 p. 118, p. 129, p. 132
1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 p. 135
1 Thessalonians 4:3 p. 137, p. 149
1 Thessalonians 5 p. 53
1 Thessalonians 5:18 p. 140

## 2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 1 p. 187
2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 p. 187
2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 p. 148
2 Thessalonians 2:15 p. 249
2 Thessalonians 3:10 p. 179
2 Thessalonians 3:6 p. 249, p. 250

## 1 Timothy

1 Timothy 2 p. 56, p. 403
1 Timothy 3 p. 127, p. 328
1 Timothy 3:16 p. 97, p. 123
1 Timothy 6:2 p. 127, p. 128

## 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 2:2 p. 128
2 Timothy 3:16 p. 393
2 Timothy 3:16-17 p. 266

## Titus

Titus 1 p. 328
Titus 1:16 p. 158, p. 167, p. 393
Titus 1:2 p. 367
Titus 2:8 p. 378

## Hebrews

Hebrews 2:10 p. 145
Hebrews 3 p. 47
Hebrews 4:13 p. 83, p. 84
Hebrews 5 p. 46

Hebrews 5:12 p. 128
Hebrews 6:10 p. 218
Hebrews 7:22 p. 284, p. 285
Hebrews 9:28 p. 226
Hebrews 11 p. 56, p. 358
Hebrews 11:7 p. 386
Hebrews 12:14 p. 149, p. 150
Hebrews 13:5 p. 199
Hebrews 13:8 p. 404

## James

James 1 p. 56
James 2:13 p. 172
James 2:8 p. 155
James 3:6 p. 378
James 4 p. 204
James 4:17 p. 86, p. 252
James 5 p. 358
James 5:9 p. 382

## 1 Peter

1 Peter 1 p. 148, p. 248, p. 295
1 Peter 1:13-16 p. 297
1 Peter 1:15-16 p. 144
1 Peter 1:16 p. 297
1 Peter 3 p. 141
1 Peter 4 p. 328
1 Peter 4:1-2 p. 139
1 Peter 4:8 p. 382

## 2 Peter

2 Peter 1 p. 124
2 Peter 2:5 p. 386
2 Peter 3:18 p. 122

## 1 John

1 John 2 p. 122, p. 123, p. 124, p. 127, p. 165, p. 341
1 John 2:12 p. 196, p. 197
1 John 2:15 p. 142
1 John 2:19 p. 348
1 John 2:20 p. 122
1 John 2:27 p. 125, p. 126, p. 128
1 John 2:3 p. 410
1 John 2:3-4 p. 341
1 John 2:4 p. 108, p. 411
1 John 3 p. 66, p. 162, p. 282
1 John 3:14 p. 221
1 John 3:16 p. 216
1 John 3:22 p. 275
1 John 3:23-24 p. 273
1 John 3:4 p. 339
1 John 4:10 p. 154
1 John 4:13 p. 274
1 John 4:18 p. 34
1 John 4:19 p. 154
1 John 4:7-8 p. 222
1 John 5 p. 157, p. 165
1 John 5:14-15 p. 58, p. 59
1 John 5:2 p. 214, p. 215
1 John 5:3 p. 108, p. 410

## 2 John

2 John 1:6 p. 216

## Jude

Jude 1:1 p. 46

## Revelation

Revelation 4:11 p. 205
Revelation 11:15 p. 369, p. 370
Revelation 19:1-6,11-16 p. 187

**WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE**

# Your companion study guide

*Romans: Law, Obedience, and Sanctification*

Follow the Scripture references, reflect on each lesson,
and use the written-response space to apply what you learn.

**Scan to open the matching study guide**

Downloadable PDF | 8.5 x 11 inches
No sign-in required

studyguides.weaverbiblecollege.com

If you cannot scan the code, visit the address above
and search for this book by title.